

2026 CAPACITY BUILDING GRANTS REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

MICHIGAN HEALTH ENDOWMENT FUND

The Health Fund’s Capacity Building grant program will accept submissions in two cycles. Our first cycle has closed, and our second cycle opens for all eligible organizations on **April 8, 2026**. Proposal consideration for Cycle 2 will be based on the following deadlines.

2026 CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM — CYCLE 2

May 14, 2026

REQUIRED Concept papers due [in our grants portal](#) by 5 p.m.

July 15, 2026

Proposals due [in our grants portal](#) at 5 p.m.

November 2026

Awards announced

December 1, 2026

Earliest start date for funded projects

A. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Health Fund views capacity building as supporting nonprofits to identify, invest in, and carry out specific changes that they believe will help better achieve and sustain their missions. This grant program is unique among Health Fund initiatives because it invests in the core functions of organizations and their collaboratives, rather than specific project-related objectives.

The intent of this grant program is:

1. To assist health-focused, community-based organizations in becoming stronger, more effective institutions within their community, allowing them to spend more time and energy focused on their mission and collaborative efforts.
2. To increase or improve collaboration among providers, service agencies, the business community, and community-based organizations within a community to address health issues in a sustainable way.

Our [Strategic Framework](#) prioritizes work that improves the health of older adults and children and addresses [our key focus areas](#). We will prioritize applications from organizations or collaboratives whose missions align with these populations or priorities.

Applicants can choose to apply for either an organizational or a collaborative capacity building grant through our Capacity Building program.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Organizational capacity grants are designed to help health-focused, community-based organizations across Michigan increase their effectiveness or sustainability. **Capacity building grants will cover time-limited, one-time expenses to help an organization reach a specific operational goal. Requests for general operating support or unrestricted funds will not be considered.**

Requests should focus on internal organizational capacity rather than coalition, community, or program development. Applicants should consider what internal work would be most essential to ensuring the organization's consistent, effective, and sustainable function within the community it serves. Some examples include:

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- Financial management
- Streamlining operations
- Business or revenue development
- Merging resources or administrative functions between nonprofits

EVALUATION AND LEARNING

- Creating a learning organization
- Developing an organization-wide evaluation plan
- Data collection and management
- Interpreting and utilizing findings

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Staff or board training*
- Succession planning
- Initiatives to combat employee burnout

TECHNOLOGY ENHANCEMENTS

- Streamlining services through technology improvements
- IT infrastructure to support health and community information exchange

While the examples above are not exhaustive, these four categories represent the areas in which we have seen the most impactful organizational change through our grantmaking over the past four years.

****NOTE:** When we review requests for training, we look for specific trainings that promote sustainability or add new expertise to an organization to help it serve its community better. General professional development requests will not be competitive.*

COLLABORATIVE CAPACITY

Collaborative capacity building grants will support community-based and community-led work that creates a sustainable foundation for cross-sectoral collaboration and coordination designed to spur progress on a key health issue(s). Projects should target a specific place such as a neighborhood, school(s), city, county, or region and/or a specific group within a defined geography. These grants are intended to assist with startup costs for new cross-sector, collaborative efforts or to expand the scope and health impact of an existing collaborative.

The Health Fund seeks proposals that plan to work through cross-sector collaboration to address health issues aligned with the Health Fund's [priority areas](#), health disparities, or social

determinants of health. **Proposals should focus on building the structure and capacity of the collaborative rather than implementing programming.**

Applicants are encouraged to use an existing framework or model for collaboration and to work with a neutral party, such as a consultant or facilitator, throughout the planning process.

The lead applicant or backbone organization must demonstrate the ability and capacity to lead a collaborative effort. Additionally, each member of the collaborative must be committed to providing either monetary or in-kind resources to the effort.

B. ELIGIBILITY

Nonprofits, federally recognized Tribes, local units of government, and the State of Michigan are eligible for grants. Organizations do not need to be based in Michigan, but all project activities must occur in Michigan. To be eligible to apply for a grant under this initiative, applicants must:

- Be recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt organization;
- Have a current audit or independently reviewed financial statements (preferred) or 990 (accepted); and
- Have at least one paid FTE (e.g., one full-time employee or two half-time employees)

EXCLUDED FROM FUNDING CONSIDERATION

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clinical research | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Existing operations and staffing costs for ongoing programs |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Loans | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tuition costs and related fees |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Health-related emergencies* | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Organizations that discriminate because of age, race, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or gender. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Capital projects and major equipment purchases, including vehicles | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Litigation | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lobbying activities | |

*The Health Fund might in some situations consider support to address longer-term rebuilding or other needs following emergency situations.

NOTE ON ORGANIZATION SIZE

Capacity building grants are highly competitive, and we often prioritize organizations with limited financial resources where our funding can serve as a critical enabler of strategic growth. This approach allows us to equitably support initiatives where external funding is more critical to success. **Larger organizations or those with capacity to implement work through discretionary dollars are less likely to be funded through this initiative.**

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

Grant requests may not exceed a **maximum budget of \$300,000. Grants can be up to 2 years in duration, but the total request is limited to \$300,000.**

All applicant organizations may allocate up to 30% of the total grant budget for indirect costs. All indirect expenses included in the grant budget, including those charged by project partners, subcontractors or consultants, count toward the indirect cost limit.

The Health Fund recognizes the importance of supporting indirect expenses and encourages organizations to request the maximum amount to support those costs.

C. APPLICATION PROCESS

BEFORE STARTING: APPLICATION READINESS CHECKLIST

Prior to developing a request, potential applicants should review the following questions to assess whether this is the appropriate grant program and the right time for a submission.

1. Does the mission of your organization or partnership align with one of the Health Fund's priority areas or populations?

Our [Strategic Framework](#) prioritizes work that improves the health of older adults and children and addresses our key focus areas. Reviewers are looking for proposals that show how the capacity building work will help your organization grow and lead to a measurable impact on people's health.

2. Is your organization or partnership ready to take action now?

Proposals that are still in the idea stage or lack a clear plan are unlikely to rise to the top. You should have momentum and clarity on what you want to do and how you'll do it.

3. Have you completed a recent organizational needs assessment?

Applicants should be able to demonstrate that they've done this critical analysis to ensure that requests are addressing clear, high priority needs. Requests from organizations who have not completed an assessment are unlikely to be competitive. We've provided a [suggested free resource](#) on our website that may help organizations complete this process.

4. Have you explored our non-grant resources as an alternative to a grant?

The Health Fund offers a robust suite of non-grant capacity building supports to help health focused nonprofits meet common organizational needs. Check to see if the work you are proposing can be completed through [Catchafire](#) or one of our [other non-grant resources](#) before applying. Requests that could be addressed through these resources instead of a grant are unlikely to be competitive.

5. Does your request address a specific, one-time organizational need or unique collaborative opportunity?

Competitive proposals will focus on a time-limited, one-time expense to help an organization or collaborative improve a specific operational goal or function rather than multiple areas of need.

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, this may not be the right opportunity or right time for your organization to seek grant funding. We've developed additional clarifying questions to help applicants prepare their project concepts under specific priority areas mentioned above. [You can view them here.](#)

STEP 1: CONCEPT PAPER/CONCEPT CALL, REQUIRED

Applicants are **required** to register for a concept call or submit a concept paper for feedback. Concept papers must be submitted through our form in [our grants portal](#) and should be no more than 10,000 characters, including spaces (about two pages). Note that you will enter your project narrative into a plain text field, so there's no need to spend time formatting your

document. Concepts that are competitive will receive an invitation to submit a full proposal. Non-competitive concepts will not be invited to apply.

Due to very high levels of interest in this program, this step allows applicants to refine their proposals to make them more competitive, while preventing others from investing significant time on applications that are not aligned with our funding priorities.

NEW FOR 2026: All concepts will be managed through the Health Fund’s grants portal, so you will need an account in order to schedule a concept call or submit a concept paper. **New users must request an account by May 7** using the “*Create an account now*” button on the [grants portal](#) login page. We cannot guarantee timely access to the portal for requests received after that date.

To help applicants submit written concepts in Fluxx, [we’ve created this short video](#) that walks through the process. For instructions on registering for a virtual concept call in Fluxx, please [refer to this video](#).

Whether submitting a written concept paper or presenting on a call, applicants should prepare to address the following:

- Project title
- Estimated request amount
- Geographic reach of your organization or collaborative
- Project narrative, including:
 - Problem statement or key issue you aim to address
 - Brief overview of the project
 - Potential impact (short- and long-term)
 - Timeline / duration
 - Key collaborative partners and responsibilities of each partner
 - Brief description of how the estimated request amount would be spent

Before signing up for a concept call, please [read this document](#) that outlines what to expect and shares tips on making the most of this time. Calls are limited in availability and are meant as an accessible option to organizations, such as those with resource constraints.

STEP 2: APPLICATION, BY INVITATION ONLY

Applications must be submitted through the [Health Fund’s grants portal](#) after confirmation of invitation by our staff. While the application does not have a page limit function, please limit the total narrative to the equivalent of 8 single-spaced pages using standard 12-point type and one-inch margins. Attachments do not count toward the 8-page limit.

D. MORE INFORMATION AND FURTHER QUESTIONS

HELPFUL HINTS

- **Start with an organizational assessment.** Organizational capacity needs may appear to be clear, but an [organizational assessment](#) can help determine where to focus your capacity efforts first and make your proposal more competitive.
- **Clearly explain your project and the internal capacity issues it will address.** Limit the use of buzzwords and jargon throughout your proposal in favor of plain language that accurately describes your intended impact.

- **Anticipated organizational or collaborative improvements should be clear.** Describe how the funding will help your organization or collaborative reach a specific goal, and the impact it will ultimately have on the community you serve.
- **Select outcomes that will help you know how your grant is doing.** The outcomes you choose to measure should be related to your grant activities, should change over time, and can be qualitative or quantitative. For more information about our capacity building outcomes, [please click here](#).

For more tips and additional information:

- Visit the [Capacity Building program page](#).
- View our [FAQ](#).
- View our application worksheets for [Organizational Capacity Building](#) and [Collaborative Capacity Building](#) for application questions and required documents. Note: **We do not recommend starting work on a full application until you've received an invite to apply in your concept paper feedback.**
- Check out our list of [resources for health data](#) and other tools.
- Check out [our guide for capacity building outcome measures](#). If you have additional questions about how to select an outcome measure, please contact Veronica Marchese (vmarchese@mihealthfund.org).

If you have further questions, please contact us at grants@mihealthfund.org.