Youth as Health Care Change Agents: Supporting Youth Development Programs
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Updated January 31, 2024

General Foundation Questions

What is the Atrius Health Equity Foundation?

We are a non-profit, philanthropic organization based in Eastern Massachusetts. In June 2022, the Atrius Health Equity Foundation was funded by the conversion of Atrius Health into a for-profit corporation. We operate independently of Atrius Health and are governed by a Board with extensive experience in health care, government, and public health.

What is the vision of the Atrius Health Equity Foundation?

We aim to close the gap in life expectancy across neighborhoods in Eastern Massachusetts. We plan to make large-scale strategic investments in neighborhoods to turn the tide on the health conditions that cut short too many lives. We anticipate that these initiatives could potentially be led by trusted, community-based organizations and community-based primary care providers such as community health centers and would encompass the upstream causes of poor health.

Why is the Foundation focused on Eastern Massachusetts?

We are based in Eastern Massachusetts, and our focus on Eastern Massachusetts is consistent with the terms of the agreement that funded the Foundation.

How does the Foundation define Eastern Massachusetts?

We consider Eastern Massachusetts to comprise the following counties: Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, Suffolk, Plymouth, Bristol, Barnstable, Dukes & Nantucket.

How is the Atrius Health Equity Foundation different?

We aim to address the root causes of poor health stemming from inequity and poverty, making concentrated investments in communities in Eastern Massachusetts with the lowest life expectancies. In collaboration with community-based organizations and health providers, we hope to support holistic solutions that encompass education, employment, economic mobility, and other structural factors, striving to build vibrant, healthy, and equitable communities for everyone.

Youth RFP Questions (* Additional FAQs added January 17, 2024, ** Additional FAQs added January 31, 2024)

Who is eligible to apply?

Applicants should be organizations that are tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. To be eligible for funding, organizations must be headquartered in and serve a community of Eastern Massachusetts (defined as Essex, Middlesex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Bristol, Plymouth, Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket counties). Additionally, organizations must be based in (i.e. have a physical presence in) and serving a community (city/town or Boston neighborhood) with low life expectancy. If you have questions about your eligibility, please contact us at grants@atriusfoundation.org.

Can my organization submit more than one letter of inquiry for this opportunity?

Organizations should submit no more than one letter of inquiry for this opportunity.

***Can my organization submit one LOI as a lead applicant and be a subgrantee on multiple other proposals?**

The intent of this RFP is to support organizations that are community-based and deeply grounded in the communities they serve. In general, organizations should not be applying multiple times via multiple submissions.

Do I need to be a healthcare organization to apply?

No, lead applicants do not need to be healthcare organizations. Given the focus on improving community health outcomes and strengthening local ecosystems, applications will be stronger if they include effective collaborations with community-oriented healthcare organizations, such as community health centers and other community-based providers.

What does the Foundation mean by partnerships?

This program seeks to improve community health outcomes and strengthen local ecosystems. We would like for this program to foster collaboration across sectors. For example, the lead applicant and collaborating organizations could include youth and educational organizations, community-oriented healthcare organizations, social service organizations, advocacy and organizing organizations, and/or local governmental entities (these will vary across communities and this list is meant to be illustrative only).

**** Can partnerships be with organizations in the same community?**

Absolutely! Partners can be in the same community and we strongly value the community building and coordination that result from these partnerships. Partners may also include organizations in different communities, but keep in mind that one of the criteria for evaluation is how the program strengthens local ecosystems.

Does this program need to exclusively serve youth from low-income families with our targeted health condition?

No. Programs should explain how they will specifically outreach to youth from low-income families with the targeted health condition but programs need not be limited to only this population. For example, programs might establish relationships with clinical sites to refer families or focus recruitment on specific neighborhoods/census tracts within their community that have high rates of the health condition.

*** What health conditions should the projects address?**

Given the Foundation's focus on life expectancy, we are particularly interested in programs that include a focus on a leading cause of premature mortality in Massachusetts, such as cardiometabolic disease (heart disease, hypertension, diabetes). Other leading causes of premature mortality in Massachusetts include cancer and behavioral health conditions. We encourage applicants to consider the leading causes of premature mortality within their own communities and to work to address a leading cause.[1]

*** Must the programs address a specific health condition or can the project address health generally? Can programs address more than one specific health condition?**

We ask applicants to focus on a specific cause of premature mortality in their community when designing their programs. We recognize that programs may evolve over time to address additional disease areas and to reflect the needs of the community, and this evolution is supported and welcome.

**** Can programs address broader health issues such as wellness, nutrition, exercise and trauma?**

Programs focusing on these broader issues should explain how addressing them will impact a specific health condition that causes premature mortality in their community.

Do I need to serve youth of all ages (12-24) in this program?

No. We recognize that youth across this age range have vastly different interests and needs. We encourage you to identify the specific segment of youth you propose to serve and ensure that your proposed program is appropriate and tailored to that age group's strengths and needs. (******Conversely, we have also received questions from organizations that *do* wish to serve the full age spectrum. Serving the entire age spectrum is also allowed. Please ensure that programs are appropriate and tailored to each age group's strengths and needs.

[1] If you need data on premature causes of mortality by community, data compiled by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health is available here: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/deaths-of-massachusetts-residents. Community health needs assessments are also valuable sources of information.

* Is it a requirement for programs to engage or interact with families of youth participants?**

We would like programs to expand the impact of their programs beyond the youth participants, to include families—broadly defined—and the broader community. We recognize that, especially for certain populations of youth, it is not always possible to engage families, so while this engagement is encouraged it is not strictly required if there is a specific barrier to doing so.

*** Can applicants propose an existing program or a new program?**

Applicants are encouraged to build on existing programs and resources and to consider where Foundation funding could best supplement rather than duplicate existing opportunities and resources.

Can I apply for funding to establish programs in multiple communities?

Each application should focus on a single community (city / town / Boston neighborhood). The intention of this program is to improve community health outcomes and strengthen local ecosystems. We seek to fund programs that go deep in a single community, rather than span multiple communities.

****Can the proposed program serve youth who come from outside the proposed community?**

While we would like proposals to identify and *focus* on a specific community, we encourage applicants to translate this in ways that are flexible and that make sense for their programs and communities. For example, programs might wish to continue to serve youth who move out of their service area, or might allow youth to self-define their neighborhood or city/town, rather than imposing strict geographic criteria.

What does it mean for the project to be "community-led"?

Applicants should describe in their LOI how they will center participating youth and families in the leadership of the program. This can be accomplished in any number of ways, such as by establishing a project steering committee that includes youth and family participation, creating a youth council that identifies and addresses community health priorities, or building youth and family participation on the organization's board. Engagement should be on-going and bi-directional. For example, one-time focus groups or surveys are not sufficient evidence of community leadership.

*** What data collection is required?**

The LOI template asks applicants to identify the health outcome(s) that they expect to influence. A detailed evaluation plan is not being requested at this time. In the LOI, applicants should describe the health outcome(s) they expect to impact, whether in the short or long term (recognizing that some impacts will occur after the grant period is over). These outcomes could apply to youth, family members, and/or the community.

Can my proposed project budget include capital expenses?

While the RFP is geared toward programmatic funding, we recognize that small amounts of capital expenditures may at times be necessary for the purpose of implementing programs. For example, this could include improving a meeting space to make it wheelchair-accessible or more conducive to the proposed programming. Any proposed capital expenditures should be strictly necessary for the purpose of the project and should be fair and reasonable.

****How much of our budget can go to capital expenses?**

Applicants should ensure that any proposed capital expenses are necessary, modest (i.e. not extravagant), and fair and reasonable. We recommend discussing with us in advance if capital expenses are more than 10% of the project's total proposed budget or over $250,000.

****What does it mean for stipends to be "robust"?**

We aim for economic supports provided through the program to be significant enough to impact the economic circumstances of participating youth and their families. Please include an amount that is appropriate for your program and community. As one data point, we note a floor of $500-$600 per month in the design of some basic income programs, but strongly encourage applicants to consider what is appropriate to the age of the youth and the expected activities/level of involvement as well as any potential negative impacts on benefits eligibility. We also recognize that for some programs, particularly those serving older youth, stipends may be appropriately set at much higher levels, such as at or above entry level wages, in order to be competitive with other employment opportunities.

****Can funds be used to support scholarships or mini-grant opportunities for projects initiated by youth participants?**

Funds to support youth and youth leadership in these ways are appropriate uses of proposed funds.

****How much do we have to know now about the sustainability of the program?**

In your planning, please think about how your proposed program can ignite longer term change, through organizing and advocacy. At the LOI stage, a detailed plan is not required.

****Will the Foundation fund organizations under fiscal sponsorship?**

For this grant opportunity, the Foundation is more likely to fund organizations that have their own 501(c)(3) statuses because of the transparency and oversight that accompanies that designation. However, we will consider requests from organizations that have fiscal sponsors and will request a copy of the memorandum of understanding between the two entities. Another option is for community-based organizations/groups who may not have a 501(c)(3) designation to apply in partnership with other organizations.

How will LOIs and grant applications be evaluated and approved?

Foundation staff will perform an initial review of all LOIs to remove applications that do not meet the eligibility requirements or that are not responsive to the RFP. Remaining LOIs will then be reviewed and scored by Foundation staff, outside reviewers and Board members. Some factors that will be considered in the review process are listed in the RFP. The Foundation's Board will approve grant awards.

***How many grants will be awarded?**

The Foundation anticipates making approximately 2 to 6 grant awards but this number is subject to change. The Foundation has not predetermined a total amount of funding for this initiative. The final number of awards will be dependent on the Foundation's review of LOIs and applications.

When should I expect to receive a response?

After you submit your LOI by email, you should receive a confirmation from our staff within 48 hours. If you do not receive the confirmation email, please email us at grants@atriusfoundation.org. The timeline for decisions can be found on the LOI page.

Notices are sent via email. We encourage applicants to add @atriusfoundation.org addresses to their approved senders list and to check their spam folders regularly.

If my LOI or application was declined, can I get feedback?

We are happy to provide feedback once the grant cycle is over. We will share information about the date after which staff will be able to provide feedback.

**Administrative Checklist

As previously noted, staff will be screening all LOIs for eligibility, before they are sent for review. These are the administrative criteria for LOIs to move forward to the next step. In the interest of transparency, we are sharing this checklist with you. If you have any questions about your eligibility, please contact grants@atriusfoundation.org.

1. Is the lead applicant a 501c3 public charity (or has a fiscal sponsor)? (yes/no)
2. Is the lead applicant registered/up to date with filings with the Attorney General? (yes/no)
3. Is the lead applicant registered/up to date with filings with the Secretary of State? (yes/no)
4. Is the lead applicant headquartered in Eastern Massachusetts? (yes/no)
5. Which city/town/Boston neighborhood does the proposal serve?
    a. Is the city/town/Boston neighborhood listed in the RFP appendix? (yes/no)
    b. If no to above, is there an explanation provided for why the proposed city/town/Boston neighborhood should be considered? (yes/no)
6. Does the lead applicant have a physical presence in the city/town/Boston neighborhood they propose to serve? (yes/no)
7. Does the requested budget meet requirements? (yes/no)
8. Is the LOI complete (all questions answered, budget template completed)? (yes/no)

These are the minimum *administrative* criteria for moving LOIs to the next phase of review. Staff will also review to make sure that the LOI is *programmatically* responsive to the RFP.

A note about phishing and other scams: Please note that we do not charge a fee at any stage of our application process. We do not request any information related to bank accounts or any private information. If you have doubts about the authenticity of an e-mail, letter or telephone communication purportedly from, for, or on behalf of the Foundation, please email us at grants@atriusfoundation.org before taking any further action in relation to the correspondence.

The Foundation reserves the right to modify, add to, amend, or eliminate any of its eligibility requirements or funding policies at any time.