

OUR COMMITMENT TO HEALTH JUSTICE

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (Blue Cross) has put our members at the center of health care for nearly 90 years. We show up for everyone like they're the only one and guide our members to the exceptional health care they deserve. Affordably. Equitably. Seamlessly. As a community-focused, not-for-profit health plan, we are deeply committed to help all Massachusetts community members lead healthier lives.

Central to achieving this mission is ensuring a healthier, more equitable, and just community. Doing so requires developing partnerships with civic and community leaders to dismantle the physical, mental, and emotional barriers to wellness. **This approach is rooted in justice and understanding social factors — at the individual, family, neighborhood, city, state, and national levels — that influence health outcomes.** To guide our efforts, we have identified three focus areas:



FOOD JUSTICE

Ensure access to healthy, culturally relevant food and to build a sustainable food system.



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Overcome the disproportionate impact of pollution and environmental degradation on under-resourced communities.



RACIAL JUSTICE

Strive to eliminate systemic, institutional, and interpersonal racism that contributes to disparate health outcomes.

Our **Health Justice strategy** is part of the company's overall strengthened commitment to be a **leader in health equity**. We're dedicated to closing the health gap for our members and the community through a comprehensive strategy that tackles the root causes of these disparities:

- Our clinical and quality improvement teams, embedded in our **core operations**, gather critical member data and collaborate with provider networks to address inequities in care.
- The **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation** leverages its research expertise, charitable grants, and advocacy programs to illuminate and address these challenges across the Massachusetts health system.
- This **corporate citizenship program** broadens our focus to address specific social drivers of health, like access to healthy food, environmental justice, and racial equity.

Furthermore, we pledge to operate within a context of respect and trust-based philanthropy, a core set of values aimed at advancing equity, changing the power dynamic, and building mutually accountable corporate and community partnerships. We approach this work in a spirit of humility and collaboration.

2024: PRIORITIZING RACIAL JUSTICE

Blue Cross recognizes racism as a persistent **public health crisis** and healthcare as a **racial and social justice issue**. Data show the profound and widespread health inequities and disparities faced by racial and ethnic minorities in Massachusetts today, resulting from a long history of systemic racism, bias, and inequitably designed healthcare and social systems. These disparities are driven by a complex interplay of factors, including social drivers of health that influence health risks, and quality of life. Many of these factors are rooted in longstanding racist structures, policies, and practices, both within Massachusetts and across the United States.¹

Through this partnership and grant program, we will support our non-profit partners' efforts within their communities and organizations to advance racial justice and dismantle the systemic, interpersonal, and institutional racism that contributes to unequal health outcomes.

FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

The 2024 Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Health Justice Partnership and Grant Program fosters strong collaboration with our partner organizations. Following the selection process, we facilitate in-depth discussions to create multi-faceted partnerships built on respect. Through these collaborative planning sessions, we identify how to leverage our corporate resources to advance and support each partner's mission. This includes delivering on defined capacity-building projects through skills-based or pro bono volunteering, financial support, and thought leadership. We further foster connections within the cohort through trainings, convenings, and networking opportunities on relevant topics.²

The Health Justice Partnership & Grant Program is a **two-year commitment** providing the following to each selected partner:

YEAR 1	\$50,000 in general operating support	Up to \$140,000 in total support per organization
	Up to \$20,000 in pro bono support	
YEAR 2	\$50,000 in general operating support	
	Up to \$20,000 in pro bono support	

ELIGIBILITY

The 2024 Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Health Justice Partnership & Grant Program is open to organizations and programs that:

- Are a registered 501(c)(3) community-based organization or utilize a fiscal agent with 501(c)(3) status.
- Serve communities located in Massachusetts.
- Actively work to advance racial justice in the communities you serve and embrace practices based on the principles of equity and inclusion within your organization.
- Have the capacity to commit time and staff to participate in relevant, skills-based organizational development opportunities provided by our pro-bono support.

¹ "Racism and Racial Inequities in Health: A Data-Informed Primer on Health Disparities in Massachusetts". Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation. December 2021. (<https://www.bluecrossmafoundation.org/publication/racism-and-racial-inequities-health-data-informed-primer-health-disparities>)

² Pro bono activities will be developed in collaboration with selected grantees following the grant award. Applicants should consider the staffing and timing commitment needed to fully leverage this opportunity.

Blue Cross will lend its support in ways that bring value to our members and employees by serving the community with no discrimination by age, race, sex, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or disability. We will not support individuals; religious organizations for sectarian or religious purposes (secular programs of faith-based organization that meet criteria will be considered); fraternal, political, or lobbying organizations; school groups; and organizations based in or that serve communities outside of Massachusetts or entities that are not 501(c)(3) non-profits organizations.

OUR APPROACH: CENTERING RACIAL EQUITY

In the pursuit of a healthier, more equitable, and just community, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts prioritizes partnerships that commit to the following:

- **Representative Leadership:** balance of leadership, governing structure, and staff that reflect the diverse communities served.
- **Empowering Historically Excluded Voices:** involvement of historically excluded communities in developing solutions and partnerships that address racial justice.
- **Investing in Changemakers:** historically underfunded non-profits in Massachusetts, particularly those who are at the forefront of dismantling systemic racism.
- **Elevating Local Leaders:** the power to create change lies with those closest to the challenges brought about by systemic racism. We support and amplify the impact of leaders with lived experience who are working to address racial inequities in healthcare.

KEY DATES AND PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Applications must be completed and submitted electronically by **July 8, 2024**, through our online portal. **Only complete applications, including all required attachments, will be reviewed.** We cannot accept proposals submitted after the deadline, via email, or through methods other than the online portal. If you encounter difficulties accessing the portal, please contact us before the deadline to discuss alternative submission options.

ACTIVITY	KEY DATES
General Information Session: An overview of the program, eligibility criteria, and frequently asked questions. Click here to register.	Wednesday, June 12, 12:15-1:00PM
Virtual Office Hours: Ask questions or get feedback during live sessions with Blue Cross team members. Click here to schedule a time.	Monday, June 17, 1:00-3:00PM Tuesday, June 18, 2:00-4:00PM Thursday, June 20, 10:00AM-12:00PM Friday, June 21, 10:30AM-12:30PM
Proposal Deadline	Monday, July 8, 2024
Application Evaluation	Friday, July 12 - Monday, September 16, 2024
Finalists Contacted	Friday, September 20, 2024
Finalist Conversations	Friday, October 18, 2024
Selected Partners Notified	Friday, October 25, 2024
Official Public Partner Announcement	November 2024

INSTRUCTIONS: APPLYING FOR THE HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP AND GRANT PROGRAM

1. Access the Application

- Click [here](#) to access the online application for the Health Justice Partnership & Grant program.
- **New Applicants:** If this is your first time applying for support from Blue Cross, you will need to create an account and profile within the online portal.
- **Technical Issues:** If you encounter any difficulties creating an account, please contact grantsconnect-support@yourcause.com for assistance.

2. Complete the Online Form

- Please note: The **online application system does not allow saving and returning later**. We recommend gathering all necessary information and documents before beginning the application process.
- Please carefully complete all sections of the online application, providing the requested information accurately.
 - **Contact information.**
 - **Massachusetts Service Area** (select all that apply): Central, Greater Boston, North Shore, South Shore/South Coast/Cape Cod, and the Islands, and/or Western.
 - Link to your organization's most recent **IRS Form 990**.
 - Upload **Racial Justice Application questions**.

3. Racial Justice Application Questions

- Save your responses to the Health Justice Partnership & Grant application questions (**available on the next page**) as a **single PDF document**. Attach this document in the designated section labeled *Upload your answers to the Health Justice Partnership & Grant application questions*. Please note, **applications are limited to four pages**.

CONTACT INFORMATION

- Angel Santos Burres, Manager, Corporate Citizenship and Business Operations | angel.santosburres@bcbsma.com
- Brie Tangney, Senior Manager, Corporate Citizenship | brianne.tangney@bcbsma.com
- Yvonne Tang, Senior Director, Community Investments and Social Impact | yvonne.tang@bcbsma.com



HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP & GRANT PROGRAM

RACIAL JUSTICE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Please limit your application to a **maximum of four pages in PDF format**, following the instructions provided.

About your organization

1. What is the name of your organization?
2. What is your organization's mission?
3. What is your annual budget and the number of staff employed?*
4. Who are the communities and populations your organization serves?
5. How is your leadership, board governing structure, and staff connected with and reflect the communities your organization serves?

Commitment to racial justice

1. How are you actively working to advance racial justice in the communities you serve?
2. How do you facilitate the involvement of historically excluded communities in developing solutions and partnerships that address racial justice?
3. How are you implementing the principles of equity and inclusion within your organization?
4. How are resources allocated to racial justice work at your organization, particularly if you are a program within a larger organization?

APPENDIX: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The review committee will use the following definitions and classifications while evaluating application:

- **Community-based organization:** A nongovernmental organization that has demonstrated effectiveness as a representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and that helps members of that community obtain environmental, educational, or other social services.
- **Health disparity:** A particular type of health difference or outcome that is associated with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage linked to historical discrimination or exclusion.
- **Health equity:** Supporting communities to attain their highest level of health in a fair, just, and collaborative model.
- **Historically excluded/systemically excluded/marginalized groups:** Any group of people that has been historically excluded from full rights, privileges and opportunities in a society or organization.
- **Trust-based philanthropy:** A core set of values rooted in advancing equity, shifting power, and building mutually accountable relationships between corporate and community partners. For additional information, click [here](#).
- **Under-resourced/underserved communities:** Populations sharing particular characteristics, as well as geographic communities, who have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life.
- “Racial Equity Data Road Map: Data as a Tool Towards Ending Structural Racism”. Massachusetts Department of Public Health. December 2020. (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/racial-equity-data-road-map-pdf>):
 - **Racial equity lens** means explicitly considering race, ethnicity, and racism in analyzing issues, looking for solutions and defining success.
 - **Racial equity** work includes activities or programs that create and reinforce policies, attitudes, and actions for equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment and outcomes for all people, regardless of race. The goal is to eliminate inequities between people of different races and ethnicities, and to increase the success for all groups.
 - **Structural racism** is racial bias across institutions and society over time. It is the cumulative and compounded effects of an array of factors such as public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms that work in various, often reinforcing, ways to perpetuate racial inequity.