

Call for Proposals

Healthy Neighborhoods Fund:

An Initiative to Build Healthy and Active Communities across New York State

(Invitation Only)

Deadline: Proposals must be submitted by 1:00 p.m. on September 10, 2014

I. Background

Growing evidence shows that that our ZIP code has a greater impact on our health than our genetic code. The neighborhoods in which people live—where family members play, study, work, and worship—affect health in multiple and complex ways. Studies have shown that a neighborhood's socioeconomic condition will affect whether residents have healthy diets and exercise regularly. The availability of safe playgrounds and sidewalks, after-school physical activity programs for young people, and affordable nutritious food will encourage healthy behaviors and help people adopt and sustain them. People are also more likely to thrive if they live in a community with easy access to good jobs and economic opportunities, and alongside neighbors who look after one another. Living in neighborhoods without these essentials, the population is more likely to be burdened with high rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, asthma, depression or other chronic illnesses. In sum, place matters.

The New York State Health Foundation (NYSHealth) is launching the ***Healthy Neighborhoods Fund*** to help four to six New York State communities transform into healthier and more active places where people of all ages can thrive. This initiative aligns with the Foundation's diabetes prevention initiative, which aims to tackle some of the underlying problems that have led to high rates of diabetes and obesity (one of the key risk factors for diabetes). Our vision is to build communities where people of all ages have ample opportunities to lead a healthy life.

NYSHealth is investing an initial \$2 million in the program. The typical grant will be \$300,000 over two years and will depend on the size of the population that will be affected by the grant initiative. Larger grants will be considered in special circumstances and budgets of less than \$300,000 are expected in smaller communities. NYSHealth staff will discuss budgets with each applicant prior to the final proposal submission deadline.

The New York Community Trust (NYCT) will invest [additional funds to support *Healthy Neighborhoods efforts in the South Bronx*](#). NYCT will also partner with NYSHealth to offer coordinated technical assistance to the neighborhoods funded through the initiative and will jointly support an evaluation of the *Healthy Neighborhoods Fund* initiative.

Additional funders are expected to join the effort and will complement the efforts of the communities participating in the *Healthy Neighborhoods Fund* initiative.

II. What is the Need and the Opportunity?

The link between health and place has been well established. Good health outcomes are more prevalent in neighborhoods where people have easy access to nutritious, affordable food; safe and walkable streets; and active playgrounds and public spaces. Other elements of a healthy community include strong educational, civic, and cultural institutions. The health of a population is also closely tied to access to safe and stable housing, economic opportunities, and job security.

According to the 2014 [County Health Rankings](#) by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, Niagara County and the Bronx rank among the least healthy places in New York State. The high rates of disease and early death result from preventable health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, and asthma. Exacerbating this already critical situation is the growing obesity epidemic, which greatly increases the risk for diabetes and other chronic diseases. These counties also rank low on factors that influence health: access to healthy and affordable food; social and economic factors like job security, education, and family and social support; and the built environment. These factors also influence the personal choices people make that would hinder or facilitate positive health outcomes.

Health outcomes (such as length of life, quality of life, and burden of disease) also vary within counties across pockets of neighborhoods, cities, and towns. For example, the South Bronx is one of five communities in New York City with the highest rates of diabetes (14%, compared with 12% in Bronx County overall and 10% in New York City).

The neighborhoods, cities, and towns with some of the worst health outcomes also have the highest rates of poverty, unemployment, and poor housing. In some places with the poorest health outcomes, poverty rates hover at 40% or higher.

The good news is that these issues are not intractable. However, the complexity and magnitude of these problems require solutions of equal or greater scale. A multi-faceted, concerted effort is needed to tackle the various neighborhood factors that contribute to poor health outcomes. A comprehensive approach to improve health by saturating low-income neighborhoods with resources that address the social, cultural, economic, and physical aspects of the community has been gaining traction in states including California, Colorado, and North Carolina. To have an enduring impact on health, such an approach requires that local businesses, government agencies, advocacy groups, schools, faith-based organizations, and community residents work together to foster a culture of health that offers individuals and families the opportunity to make choices that lead to healthy lifestyles.

Obesity is one area that offers some hope that interventions supporting individual behavioral changes—coupled with aggressive policy changes at the local, state, and national levels—can improve the health of a population. After more than three decades of steady increases, rates of childhood obesity have leveled off and in certain states have begun to decline. The rates of decline, though small, were seen in cities and states that were among the first to adopt a

comprehensive approach to obesity prevention. For example, cities like New York and Seattle, which are among the top places showing declines in obesity rates, have implemented a series of policies related to the availability of affordable fresh food and places where people can be physically active.

The task at hand is to continue building on this progress and ensure that improvements begin to spread to all neighborhoods—especially those with high rates of poverty and poor health. It is also important that community residents are engaged and supported to take advantage of these policy changes, and that the interventions are designed to be sustainable.

The growing evidence supporting comprehensive, multi-faceted approaches to improve the health of communities is at the core of the *Healthy Neighborhoods Fund*. Through this initiative, NYSHHealth and other funders will join forces to support investments across New York State that bring together partners, resources, and solutions to address the multiple factors in communities that drive and facilitate healthy lifestyles.

NYSHHealth expects that the work of the communities supported through the *Healthy Neighborhoods Fund* will help to inform similar efforts in communities throughout New York State. The Foundation is committed to sharing the results and lessons of *Healthy Neighborhoods Fund* projects and spreading promising and effective interventions.

III. The Initiative

NYSHHealth is launching the *Healthy Neighborhoods Fund* to support the development of healthy and active communities. Through community-led solutions and policy-driven processes, applicants will be expected to tackle a range of activities that will help create neighborhoods with greater access to nutritious, affordable food; safer streets; and active playgrounds and public spaces. In addition, applicants will need to enlist the active participation of community residents to develop opportunities for healthy and active living. For example, applicants should consider working with local Parent Teacher Associations, tenant associations, senior centers, Head Start programs, local businesses, housing and city planning agencies, and others to catalyze opportunities for people to participate in programs and activities (like the National Diabetes Prevention Program, walking groups, sports, and exercise programs designed for children and adolescents) that promote health and prevent disease. Active involvement of community residents will go a long way in helping to build more resilient communities that can sustain and defend positive environmental changes.

Successful applicants will also identify and work on opportunities to address other neighborhood factors that facilitate or hinder healthy lifestyles, like the presence of economic opportunities and job security, as well as strong social ties within the community. The latter are often driven by assets such as vibrant cultural opportunities that engage citizens in a broad range of arts and other community activities.

In sum, applicants are expected to address three core priorities:

1. **Increase the availability of healthy, affordable food.** Examples of key indicators include increased access to farmers' markets; increased availability of healthy food for students in pre-K through high school; improving access to healthy options in local restaurants; and increased availability of fresh produce at local groceries.
2. **Improve the built environment.** Examples of key indicators include increased proportion of streets, parks, playgrounds, and other open spaces that are safe and conducive to physical activity for all residents; established Complete Streets policies; increased opportunities for regular, vigorous physical activity; increasing opportunities for healthy living in new housing initiatives; and improved traffic management for pedestrians and bicyclists.
3. **Link community residents to programs that support lifestyle changes.** Examples of key indicators include increased number of people participating in evidence-based programs to support healthy weight among children and adolescents; increased number of programs that help enhance emotional and mental wellbeing; and increased local participation in the National Diabetes Prevention Program.

Applicants that also include one or more of the following additional priorities will be favorably considered:

4. **Bolster economic opportunities.** Examples of key indicators include increased job opportunities in growing industries; strengthened training and career development for young adults; and increased number of residents with access to social supports that can improve income security.
5. **Amplify art and cultural engagement.** Examples of key indicators include increased number of cultural institutions promoting healthy communities and increased number of residents participating in arts and cultural activities that can strengthen social ties among neighbors.

Competitive applications will creatively leverage existing programs and environmental and policy changes across schools, daycare centers, civic organizations, local businesses, housing and city planning agencies, and primary care settings to address these priorities.

NYSHealth, in collaboration with other funders, will provide technical assistance to help communities achieve their goals. Technical assistance options will be based on the needs and focus areas of each community.

The communities selected to participate in this initiative will be required to participate in a Foundation-funded external evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation is to facilitate learning and to assist in the replication of successful programs in other communities.

IV. Who Can Apply

The Foundation has identified communities that have a high burden of health inequities and have demonstrated readiness and traction to tackle the range of activities required by this Call for Proposals. Based on conversations with key leaders, 10 communities have been invited to apply for *Healthy Neighborhoods Fund* grants. The Foundation will select four to six finalists to submit full proposals.

For this initiative, a community is defined as a neighborhood or municipality (city, town, or rural county). Applicants must clearly define their catchment area and indicate the size of the population that will be affected by the initiative. To maximize the reach of the investment, the target population should be no less than 10,000 and no more than 500,000 people.

Communities must identify a lead entity that will submit the application. The lead entity must be a New York-based organization. Public agencies (including local government), existing 501(c)(3) entities, and for-profit organizations are eligible to apply.

V. Selection Criteria

The following factors will be considered for the selection of communities:

- Community need based on burden of disease, health inequities, and poverty rates;
- Readiness to leverage public and private resources that will lead to transformative changes to an active and healthy community;
- Existing partnerships across a diverse group of stakeholders from different private and public sectors, including local government, community-based organizations, businesses, and residents—especially among the underserved. Local government leadership and staff (such as planning commissioners, city council members, community planners) must be involved;
- Established track record in coordinating, leading, or facilitating community-wide interventions and policy changes;
- Demonstrated support and commitment from community partners to prioritize efforts to address active and healthy living in the community;
- Demonstrated ability to identify and align additional financial and technical resources for this initiative; and
- Clear set of measurable goals.

The lead entity must have substantial experience convening, planning, and implementing community-wide interventions. Demonstrated ability to forge and nurture strong public-private partnerships will be an important element considered when assessing the strengths of the lead organization. It is expected that the lead organization will have to persuade and engage multiple stakeholders from various sectors—such as school districts, State and local policymakers, county health departments, other community-based organizations—to make changes in their own policies, systems, and programs and to align their efforts toward the common goals of the initiative.

Lead organizations must also demonstrate their capacity to implement and scale their effort. The following core competencies will be used to assess this capacity:

- a. **Leadership effectiveness:** forge and nurture strong public-private partnerships with organizations, corporations, and community leaders and execute decisions related to the allocation of limited resources;
- b. **Deep and trusted relationships within the community:** long-term engagement, access, and credibility in the community;
- c. **Management effectiveness:** organize collaboration between themselves, their partners, residents, and other community leaders to implement their strategies;
- d. **Strategic clarity:** vision and capacity to launch successful initiatives; and
- e. **Ability to raise significant additional funding:** the lead organization will need to identify and execute a plan to raise or redirect existing private and public funds to expand the breadth and depth of the intervention (e.g., identifying resources from the Department of Parks and Recreation and working collaboratively to invest in the rehabilitation of existing parks and public spaces to make them safe and functional for active living).

The lead entity will take responsibility for overall coordination of and accountability for the initiative.

VI. Selection Process

Interested communities should complete and submit the *Healthy Neighborhoods Fund* initial [application form online](#) by **1:00 p.m. on September 10, 2014**. Selected applicants will be notified by **September 30, 2014**. Finalists will be invited to meet with technical experts to help refine and develop full proposals.

The full proposals from these selected applicants will be due by **1:00 p.m. on November 4, 2014**. Proposals will need to include a timeline with project priorities, metrics that will be used to track progress, and letters of support from partner organizations.

The review committee will conduct site visits with lead entities and key partners to learn more about the community's goals and objectives. Applicants will be notified of final funding decisions by **November 25, 2014**.

VII. Budget

Lead entities will be required to submit a budget and budget justification with their applications. The typical grant will be \$300,000 over two years and will depend on the size of the population that will be affected by the grant initiative. Larger grants will be considered in special circumstances and budgets of less than \$300,000 are expected in smaller communities. NYSHealth staff will discuss budgets with each applicant prior to the initial application deadline.

Funding from the Foundation can be used to support project personnel and consultants who work to execute and track the goals of the project. Key personnel must focus time and energy in identifying new and existing resources that can be invested toward the goals of the community effort. For example, the lead entity should have the capacity to work with public agencies (e.g., Departments of Parks and Recreation, Transportation, and City Planning) to align resources to improve the health of neighborhood residents.

Funds can also be used to complete an assessment of assets, opportunity, and niche areas within the targeted community that can support the goals of this initiative. For example, organizations can use geographic information systems (GIS) mapping to categorize existing programs that can increase access to affordable nutritious food or to examine zoning regulations that can be changed to help facilitate the development of spaces for active living.

Finally, the Foundation wants to ensure that barriers to healthy and active living that are identified and prioritized by community residents are addressed in a timely way. Applicants should set aside 25% of their requested budgets to address the needs and priorities articulated by community residents. For example, if community residents prioritize the need for street lights in a local park, then funding from this grant could be used to purchase and install them.

NYSHealth funds cannot be used for any lobbying activities.

VIII. Application Timeline

September 10, 2014, by 1:00 p.m. – Initial Application Form and Budget due

September 30, 2014 – Applicants notified of initial selection and invited to apply with a full proposal

November 4, 2014, by 1:00 p.m. – Full Proposals due from invited applicants

November 25, 2014 – Notification of final award selections

IX. How to Apply

Complete the initial application form online at

<https://NewYorkStateHealth.foundationconnect.org/GrantsManager/Pages/LOI.aspx?OrgID=00D8000000d0Xg&InquiryRT=012C0000000QVqz>

X. Inquiries

Please direct programmatic inquiries to Jacqueline Martinez Garcel, Vice President, at martinez@nyshealth.org or 212-584-7672.

Please direct technical questions about using the online application system to the NYSHealth Grants Management Team at grantsmanagement@nyshealth.org or 212-584-7689.