



Improving the state of  
New York's health.

October 2020

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# Request for Proposals

## Patients as Partners: Advancing Equity

Applicants must first complete an online letter of inquiry form. The online letter of inquiry form and instructions are available in the [Apply for Funding](#) section of the NYSEHealth website. The deadline for the online letter of inquiry form is **Tuesday, December 8, 2020, at 1 p.m.** Following a review of submitted online inquiry forms, selected applicants will be invited to submit full proposals, with a deadline of **Thursday, February 18, 2021, at 1 p.m.**

### Deadlines

Online Inquiry Form:  
December 8, 2020, at 1 p.m.

Full Proposal (*invited applicants only*):  
February 18, 2021, at 1 p.m.

### I. About the Foundation

The New York State Health Foundation (NYSEHealth) has a broad mission to improve the health of all New Yorkers, especially the most vulnerable. To achieve meaningful impact, the Foundation makes grants, informs health care policy and practice, and spreads effective programs that work to improve New York's health system. The Foundation's grantmaking is focused on two priority areas: Building Healthy Communities and Empowering Health Care Consumers. We also engage in responsive grantmaking through a Special Projects Fund and maintain a special interest in Veterans' Health.

### II. Background and Vision

NYSEHealth's priority area on Empowering Health Care Consumers is focused on two core strategies: (1) promoting information transparency in price, quality, and patient experience and (2) engaging patients as partners in health care and health policy decision-making.

Patients must be more than bystanders in health care. At the clinical level, patients should be empowered to get their personal needs met and have a voice in their own health care decisions. At the policy level, patients and consumers should have a seat at the table to help drive and inform decisions that affect health care policy, quality, access, and costs in New York State.

But in practice, patients are often marginalized rather than placed at the center of the health care system. Numerous barriers minimize the patient's role, especially for people of color. While all patients should be valued as partners, patients of color can face particular obstacles, including racism, bias, mistrust, and gaps in communication between patients and physicians. For example:

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- Health care providers can exhibit [implicit bias](#), which can contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in health care and health outcomes;
- Explicit and implicit biases may influence health care provider [diagnosis and treatment decisions](#);
- Based on the history of bias and racism in the health care system, a majority of African Americans have [low levels of trust](#) in the health care system and believe that people are [treated unfairly based on race or ethnicity](#) when they seek medical care;
- Providers are less likely to engage in [shared decision-making](#), the practice of facilitating patient-physician discussions to select a treatment option, with people of color;
- Patients who [feel disempowered](#) may be reluctant to communicate openly about their needs and preferences, shaping their expectations of the health care system;
- Despite efforts to build a more patient-centered health care system, patients' [voices and experiences](#) are not routinely elevated; and
- Patients and providers express a desire to [build mutual trust](#).

While such patterns have existed for a long time, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and deepened racial inequities across New York State. We should seize the moment for change. Meaningful and trusted partnerships between health care providers and patients of color are essential for addressing these racial, ethnic, and cultural inequities and disparities in health care. Elevating and amplifying the voices of patients of color will help ensure that patients' priorities, preferences, and experiences guide efforts to create a more equitable health care system, and ultimately to reduce and eliminate racial health disparities.

### III. The Funding Opportunity

For NYSHealth, health equity means that everyone has the opportunities and resources they need to be as healthy as possible and that no one is disadvantaged. Although improving health equity has been an underlying theme and goal of many of the Foundation's projects, this request for proposals (RFP) aims specifically to advance racial health equity by engaging patients as partners. Many New York State-based organizations are implementing innovative approaches to address health inequities. The Foundation is interested in learning more from a broad range of these organizations representing consumers from across the State.

NYSHealth will provide grants to engage patients as partners in their health care, with a focus on advancing equity. Although there are numerous segments of the population that experience health inequities, this RFP focuses on those related to race and ethnicity.

The RFP invites project proposals that seek to implement system improvements, practice innovations, or interventions designed to give patients of color a meaningful role in their health care at the systems and individual levels. Projects will fall into two areas:

- (1)** promote health care organizational structure and governance that is culturally responsive to the needs, preferences, and experiences of patients of color; and
- (2)** promote shared decision-making opportunities and approaches that account for what matters most to patients of color.

NYSHealth encourages proposals that draw from the latest evidence about emerging and best practices related to engaging patients, caregivers, and family members. Projects should address issues such as cultural barriers, trust, health literacy, and/or bias among health care providers and in the health care system. As examples, the RFP might fund projects that:

- Incorporate patients of color and consumer voices into the design of clinical patient-engagement strategies; implementation of organizational crisis and emergency response policies and procedures; and development of patient-centered quality outcomes;
- Integrate routine and active participation from consumer-led community networks and coalitions into health care institution governance and decision-making;
- Build patient and physician communication competencies for engaging in shared decision-making with patients of color, including conversations about how what matters most to patients influences treatment decisions (e.g., quality of life, cultural preferences, trust-building, cost);
- Identify and test solutions to address bias in treatment decision aids and clinical decision algorithms; and
- Test innovative telehealth and other digital or online tools to foster exchange of health information and shared decision-making with a focus on digital and health literacy.

View [related projects](#) previously funded by NYSHealth.

#### IV. Eligibility and Funding

To build the capacity of New York State-based organizations to advance the field, all applicants are required to be New York State-based. Applicants may partner or subcontract with a non-New York-based organization if it offers resources and expertise beneficial to the project. Priority will be given to organizations and projects led by people of color and projects that meaningfully engage consumers and patients from communities of color.

Applicants may apply for a grant of up to \$200,000. Projects will be assessed for the appropriateness of budget to the proposed scope of work and timeline. Funds requested must be commensurate with the work proposed. Budget will be an important factor in selecting the most competitive proposals.

Project durations may vary. Some competitive projects can be completed more quickly and result in impact sooner than others. Larger, more ambitious projects may take longer to complete.

#### V. Selection Criteria

The most competitive proposals will broadly address a racial health equity issue as well as have the potential for widespread replication and/or impact a large number of organizations, consumers, and patients beyond the applicant's own organization and the people it serves. Proposals should demonstrate how the project will meaningfully engage people of color in the design, management, and execution of the work.

All online inquiry forms are reviewed internally by Foundation staff, who will then invite selected applicants to submit a full proposal for review. Full proposals will be assessed by both Foundation staff and a panel of external reviewers who possess a diverse set of expertise.

Criteria for inviting applicants to submit a full proposal include:

- A clear articulation of need and a focus on engaging patients of color as genuine partners in their health care;
- Substantive consumer or patient involvement as a prominent feature of the project;
- The degree to which the project will have system-level, regional, or statewide impact; and
- The applicant represents a new grantee for the Foundation.

## VI. Application Process

Step 1: All applicants are required to complete an online inquiry form. The deadline for the online inquiry form is December 8, 2020, at 1 p.m.

Step 2: After reviewing all inquiry forms, NYSHealth staff members will advise applicants on whether to submit a full proposal. Selected applicants will be e-mailed specific submission instructions. The deadline for the full proposal is February 18, 2020, at 1 p.m.

Programmatic questions regarding project ideas should be addressed to: Program Officer MaKaya Saulsberry at [Saulsberry@NYSHealth.org](mailto:Saulsberry@NYSHealth.org) or Program Assistant Jannel Tillman at [Tillman@NYSHealth.org](mailto:Tillman@NYSHealth.org).

Technical questions regarding the online application system should be e-mailed to [grantsmanagement@nyshealth.org](mailto:grantsmanagement@nyshealth.org).