

Health Equity Innovation Awards Application

Frequently asked questions



At Excellus BlueCross BlueShield we are committed to addressing health disparities that impact our members and the communities we serve. Through strategic partnerships with local community-based organizations, we invest in initiatives that promote equity and improve health outcomes.

We seek proposals for innovative initiatives or projects that have demonstrated success in reducing disparities, have the potential for expansion, and include clearly defined goals for reducing health disparities and improving health equity.

If we have already received funding from Excellus BlueCross BlueShield in this calendar year, can an organization apply for the Health Equity Innovation Award?

Yes. If you have received funding from Excellus BlueCross BlueShield in this calendar year, you are still eligible to apply for a Health Equity Innovation Award. However, priority will be given to organizations that have NOT received other financial support from Excellus BlueCross BlueShield Healthcare this calendar year.

Can an organization apply for more than one Health Equity Innovation Award?

We encourage organizations to submit only one Health Equity Innovation Award application per calendar year to allow a diversity of organizations to participate. If you have questions about your application, please reach out to the Community Investments and Partnerships Lead in your region.

Can the Health Equity Innovation Awards be used to cover administrative costs, such as salaries?

We generally do not provide funding for ongoing operational support, maintenance, or construction of facilities, scholarships, or loans. Our focus is on health improvement initiatives, and we encourage you to align your proposals with this goal. We review proposals and will make a decision on a case by case basis. However, preference will be given to programs with lower administrative costs. Administrative costs may include but not limited to, indirect expenses necessary for program management, such as staffing time dedicated to reporting, budgeting, and compliance.

Can you define what “innovative” means in reference to a Health Equity Innovation Award?

Innovation is the process of creating and applying NEW ideas, products, services or methods to improve things or solve problems in unique ways. This includes both producing new concepts and putting them into practice to achieve real benefits.

Past Health Equity Innovation Award example:

Program name: Get it Done!

Organization: Common Ground Health

Region: Rochester (Monroe County)

Goal: Reduce health disparities and improve outcomes for African Americans and Latinos residing in the City of Rochester and Monroe County, New York through ongoing health and health literacy education, screening and testing events, and referrals to health and non-health related resources.

Innovation: Barbers and beauticians serve as trusted community health workers in providing access to health information and resources.

Impact: Over 30 barbershop and beauty salons engaged; Over 3,700 Narcan kits distributed; Over 8,700 contraceptives distributed; Close to 1,000 pieces of health literature distributed.

If our organization received an award for a program in the previous year, can we reapply for the same program this year?

Yes, you may apply again. However, preference is given to new initiatives unless you can show significant growth or expansion and outline any new or additional health outcomes you aim to achieve. Growth and expansion can include but are not limited to, an additional target population, geographic area, and additional or new services or products.

When does the funding need to be used?

Preference will be given to programs that allocate funding toward program-related expenses within the 2026 calendar year, with the expectation that all funds will be fully expended by December 31, 2026.

If our organization does not offer Excellus BlueCross BlueShield benefits or does not offer any health insurance, can we still apply for a Health Equity Innovation Award?

Yes, you are still eligible to apply. We prioritize collaborating with organizations that align with our mission to help people in our communities live healthier and more secure lives through access to high-quality, affordable health care.



Questions?

For more information about Excellus BCBS Community Investments and Partnerships, please visit ExcellusBCBS.com/Community

