ACTIVATION FUND GUIDELINES & FAQs

The Activation Fund provides support for discrete, one-year projects designed to help community organizations move to the next level of capacity and effectiveness. This may involve one or more of the following:

- Developing creative and innovative approaches to alleviate community health concerns;
- Enabling partnerships with other organizations to address health issues with new strategies;
- Exploring emerging health challenges and opportunities; and/or
- Improving facilities to enhance or expand service delivery.

The Health Foundation does not identify specific health issues as funding priorities; rather, it responds to health-related needs identified by local communities.

FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS:

Examples of the types of funding requests considered include but are not limited to: one-time training or professional development; pilot programs or demonstration projects; program planning or initial implementation costs; discrete capital projects/equipment purchases; and technology purchases. Requests for general operating support, and startup or seed funding to hire staff for new organizations are not considered.

In general, grants are limited to a 12-month duration (July 1 – June 30) for projects that will not require ongoing fundraising for continuation beyond the end of the grant period. While amounts vary, grants are typically in the range of $60,000 - $125,000. Payments are usually made in two installments, with half at the beginning of the grant period and half at the midpoint, but exceptions may be considered when requested in advance. Grantees are asked to provide evidence of liability insurance coverage as a provision in the grant agreement. Organizations without coverage may include the cost of purchasing insurance as indirect costs.

Organizations should prioritize needs internally and submit only one request per grant cycle. While there is no required waiting period between proposal submissions, the Foundation aims to support as many organizations as possible; therefore, preference may be given to organizations that have not received Foundation funding within the last 12 months.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

Requests are considered from non-profit organizations with a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) designation as determined by the Internal Revenue Service, programs or coalitions operating under a fiscal sponsor with verified tax-exempt status, and government or quasi-government entities (e.g. municipalities, school districts). The organization must either be located in or provide services for individuals who live or work in the Foundation's geographic service area (see map), which consists of the 81 cities and towns in Worcester County and some surrounding towns.

In general, the following types of requests are <u>not</u> considered:

- Endowments;
- Undesignated support for capital campaigns;
- Sponsorship of events;
- Scholarships;

- Recurring operating expenses (as the sole purpose of the grant);
- Retirement of operating deficits/debt; or
- Electoral activities or candidates for public office

ACTIVATION FUND TIMELINE:

Deadline dates will be posted on the Foundation's website for each active grant cycle.

INFORMATION SESSIONS & STAFF CONSULTATIONS:

Each year the Activation Fund opens, the Foundation hosts information sessions for interested applicants to provide clarification regarding the application guidelines and answer questions related to eligibility. Specifics related to timing and registration for information sessions will be posted on the website for each active grant cycle. New applicants and those with specific questions related to proposed projects or ideas are encouraged to reach out to Jennie Blake, Vice President for Programs, at jblake@thfcm.org to arrange a virtual meeting to seek guidance.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

The Activation Fund has a two-step application process. At each phase, the required materials should be sent via email to info@thfcm.org by the posted deadlines. Organizations that submit a concept paper in Phase I will be notified if invited to apply for a grant in Phase II.

Phase I: Interested applicants may download and complete the **Phase I AF Cover Sheet** on the website, and submit it, along with **a One-Page Concept Paper** (11 pt. font, 1-inch margins) outlining the proposed project and grant amount requested, and a list of Board members with affiliations (for nonprofit organizations) or a list of senior leaders/staff (for government/quasi-government agencies) by the deadline posted on the website**.** Concept papers should include the following:

- Brief summary of the organization's mission, core programs/services, and geographic service area
- Project description and its anticipated impact on organizational capacity (e.g., numbers served)
- Estimated costs (if known), request amount, and other sources of support (if any)

Phase II: Organizations invited to apply are asked to download the **Phase II AF Cover Sheet**, **Phase II Application Form** and **AF Project Budget Form** from the website and submit these forms along with required attachments listed on the cover sheet by the deadline posted on the website. Required financials include the IRS Form 990 or financial statements (audited, if available) for the most recent fiscal year. Organizations applying with a fiscal sponsor are asked to download and submit a **Fiscal Sponsor Commitment Form** as well.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS:

Funding requests are reviewed by Foundation staff and Directors and decisions are made by the Foundation's Board of Directors. Requests are assessed on multiple criteria, including, but not limited to: demonstration of need; organizational capacity and commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion; clarity of goals and outcomes identified; impact on marginalized populations; and plans for sustainability beyond the grant period.

Successful applicants typically possess these characteristics:

- Strong staff and board leadership
- Representation of the community served in decision-making
- Track record of sustainable operations (or a fiscal sponsor that is financially stable)
- Proven program effectiveness
- Measurable goals and objectives

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & SUPPORT:

Grantwriting Support

Organizations invited to submit Phase II applications will have the option to schedule a free consultation with an experienced grant writer who can help with application development.

Supplemental Financial Support

Organizations with annual operating budgets less than $500,000 may request up to 10% of direct project costs for unrestricted, supplemental support aimed to build capacity.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ACTIVATION FUND:

Jennie Blake, Vice President for Programs
Phone: (508) 438-0009 x 6
Email: jblake@thfcm.org

ACTIVATION FUND FAQs

1. *What health issues does The Health Foundation fund? What types of support are provided?*

   The Foundation does not identify specific health issues/priority areas for funding and strives to be flexible and responsive to community needs. The Foundation applies a broad definition of health, which encompasses the social determinants of health (SDOH), factors that contribute to health disparities and inequities. Examples of SDOH include: safe housing, transportation, and neighborhoods; racism, discrimination, and violence; education, job opportunities, and income; access to nutritious foods and physical activity opportunities; polluted air and water; and language and literacy skills**. There is not a preference for (or a cap on) funding for any specific health issue or focus area.** For examples of health issues that have been addressed through other grants, please see the list of previous Activation Fund grants on the website.

   The Foundation will consider support for discrete projects or programs aimed to build capacity that can be completed within the one-year grant period. Examples of the types of support considered include: training or professional development; pilot programs or demonstration projects; program planning or initial implementation costs; discrete capital projects/equipment purchases; and technology purchases. Requests for general operating support, and startup or seed funding for new organizations <u>are not</u> considered.

2. *Is my organization eligible to apply for an Activation Fund grant this year if it applied for and/or received a grant last year?*

   While there are no restrictions on applying for grants in consecutive years, preference may be given to organizations that have not received Foundation funding within the last 12 months.

3. *Can my organization submit two different Activation Fund project ideas?*

   Organizations should prioritize needs internally and submit only one concept paper per grant cycle. If multiple applications are received from the same organization, the Foundation will contact staff at the organization and ask that they select one proposed project for consideration.

4. *Are organizations with pending 501(c)(3) tax status eligible to apply?*

   Only organizations with a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) designation, as determined by the Internal Revenue Service, and/or those operating under a fiscal sponsor with tax-exempt status, are eligible to apply.

5. *What is a fiscal sponsor and/or how do I find a fiscal sponsor for my program or project?*

   A fiscal sponsor is a tax-exempt nonprofit organization that provides fiduciary oversight, financial management, and other administrative services to help build the capacity of unincorporated coalitions or groups, or incorporated organizations that are not tax-exempt. For those looking for a fiscal sponsor or considering serving as a fiscal sponsor, the National Council on Nonprofits website has a list of useful resources.

6. *What if my organization's geographic reach is broader than the Foundation's geographic service area, spanning statewide or nationally?*

    Primary consideration is given to nonprofits located in and directly serving individuals who live or work in the 81 cities and towns in the Foundation's geographic service area. The Foundation may also consider requests from organizations that are based elsewhere and propose a project specifically targeting or benefiting individuals in the Foundation's geographic service area. If only a portion of the project falls within our service area, applicants should seek co-funding that will support the portion of the project outside our service area.

7. *What are the chances of my project being funded?*

    Historically, approximately one in five requests received in the initial phase of the application process are selected for funding through the Activation Fund.

8. *What does the Foundation mean by sustainability of a proposed project?*

    Plans for how projects will continue after funding from the Foundation ends will vary depending on the type of project proposed (program, capital, etc.). For programs, a strong sustainability plan involves having a dependable, long-term funding source and goes beyond applying for more grants for additional funding. Examples may include third-party reimbursement, a revenue-generating activity that covers costs, or evidence of a varied donor base (i.e., limiting reliance on one or two donors). For capital projects, sustainability plans might need to address ability to cover related operating costs and/or ongoing maintenance needs.

9. *Does the Foundation allow part of an award to pay for indirect costs?*

    It is the policy of the Foundation to allow organizations to allocate up to 10% of total direct costs for the reimbursement of indirect costs (e.g., fixed costs associated with operation and management of the organization, such as rent/mortgage, utilities, insurance, accounting & administrative staff).   The following items must be omitted from the total direct costs on which the indirect cost calculation is based: subcontracting arrangements, capital improvements (including renovation and purchase), and equipment purchases. Guidelines for calculation of indirect costs are included within the Project Budget Form required with applications in Phase II.

    Organizations with annual operating budgets less than $500,000 may request an additional 10% of direct project costs for unrestricted, supplemental support aimed to build capacity.

10. *Is it helpful to reach out to Foundation Directors directly to discuss a proposal?*

    It is strongly recommended that all questions be directed to Foundation staff.

Updated January 2025