

Innovation Grant Program

Request for Proposals

Summary

- **Purpose** – Innovation grants are made to **innovative, new projects** to improve the health and wellbeing of Louisianians.
- **Amount** – Grants are generally less than \$25,000 in support of projects that take less than one year to complete.
- **Eligibility** – Only Louisiana-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations may apply.
- **Applying** – Requests are made through a Letter of Intent, submitted online at BCBSLAFoundation.org (Smart Simple)
- **Deadlines** – March 1 & Sept. 1

Purpose

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation (Louisiana Blue Foundation) recognizes the need to foster innovation as a means of improving health and wellbeing in Louisiana. Through this program, we hope to encourage a **research based and scientific approach** to philanthropy through **testing ideas and seeing what works**. The first step in that process is challenging the status quo with new ideas.

Our goal is to find exciting, emerging ideas and social startup initiatives that have the potential to disrupt negative trends in health, education and other issues that directly impact quality of life for Louisianians. A successful Innovation grant project may be a new **pilot intervention**, plan or approach.



Please read the next section carefully.

Take a moment to read the next section closely to make sure your idea is the right fit for this fund, which is what will make it stand out. This grant fund receives many applications each cycle. In order for our small team to keep up, we don't consider or provide feedback on those submissions that don't meet the criteria.

How to Apply

The Innovation grant program is for new, experimental ideas. Grants are given to promote innovation by funding new pilot projects through their first year.

You should apply for an Innovation grant if:

- You have a narrow, **specific problem** you're trying to solve; AND
- You are presenting a **new and innovative approach** to solving that issue.
- The problem relates to health and/ or kids issues in Louisiana
- The innovative solution would be an issue faced by others in Louisiana and the organization is willing to share lessons learned - both if the effort works and if it doesn't.

All Innovation grant applications should:

Explain how your proposal is a new, innovative approach to solving the problem you have identified above; AND

Explain how you are substantially revising or altering an existing best practice, such that your proposal represents a new approach.

We do not fund Innovation grant proposals for the following:

- Existing programs or ongoing organizational support (general operation/programmatic funds)
- Existing best practices support
- Replicating or expanding a program or approach that already exists

Application Components

- **Online Letter of Intent** - We accept online Letters of Intent submissions twice a year (March/Sept.) Letters of Intent should outline the project, its partners, a brief statement of need, key progress indicators and outcomes for success, evaluation methods and how funds will be used.
- **Full Application** – Based on Letters of Intent, we will invite the most compelling applicants to complete a formal application. This formal application will provide a narrative outline of the project, target audience/geography, need, deliverables, use of funds and partners (if applicable).

Selection and Awards

Submitting a Letter of Intent is only the first step. If a project is selected for consideration, we will ask applicants to submit a formal application online. Submitting a full application is not a guarantee of funding. We cannot guarantee that we will invite every interested organization to submit a full application.

Funding is limited; we cannot fund every project even if it meets our criteria for success.

The maximum amount awarded per grant will be \$25,000 over one year. The Louisiana Blue Foundation staff will evaluate full applications based on several criteria with assistance from a panel of experts. This information will be presented to the Foundation's Board of Directors, at whose sole discretion grants are awarded.

The ideal Innovation grant project is:

- A new approach to an established need or addressing an overlooked community need
- Backed by theory or research
- Comprehensive and systemic, addressing root challenges of public health issues
- Properly staffed by an organization with capacity to complete the project.
- Solving a clear and important problem with measurable outcomes
- Scalable and, if successful, able to be replicated in other places.

If your organization receives an Innovation grant award, your grant contract will stipulate a final report on progress/program with data.

Need Help?

Check out the Additional Information below for more information. If you still have questions, email us at bcbslafoundation@lblue.com.

Please include your name, organization name, your contact information, and interested grant program name.

Additional Information

Below, we've gathered answers to the most common questions we receive. We kindly ask that you review this session before reaching out. As a small team supporting many nonprofit partners, we appreciate your help in keeping our inbox manageable by checking here first!

Example Goals with Key Progress Indicators for Health Issues:

Health Issue	Key Progress Indicators for Goals
Food Insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ # of households receiving additional food resources ■ % increase in access to healthy food
Access: Primary Care Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ # and % increase of primary care providers/future providers
Childhood Immunizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ # of children served who receive all recommended vaccines by age 35 months
Chronic Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ # of people with fewer chronic conditions (arthritis, asthma, chronic kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cardiovascular disease, cancer, depression and diabetes)

2025 Grant-Making Priorities & Projects

<p>Healthcare Workforce & People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Innovative approaches to shorten time to graduation, increase efficiency of programs etc. ■ Currently underdeveloped sectors of work – primary care & mental health 	<p>Maternal & Infant Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Expanding doula numbers, access and usage ■ Engaging expecting mothers to programs/ supports/ care, particularly around healthy food access and nutrition ■ Expanding high-quality home visiting and maternal mental health access efforts for those in need 	<p>Mental Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increasing/ expanding provider training ■ Increasing rates of accessing care at appropriate times, particularly as measured by HEDIS/ local health data. ■ Decreasing rates of opioid and related substance abuse addiction
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2025 Priorities and Projects, continued:

Health Outcomes

- Improving Childhood Vaccination Rates, particularly as measured by HEDIS/local health data.
- Improving Hypertension and Diabetes outcomes generally and via medication adherence, particularly as measured by HEDIS and local health data.
- Efforts that will measurably improve Louisiana's results on America's Health Rankings/ HEDIS Measures or other national/ regional/ state measures.

Collaboration

- Opportunities to back strong local leadership/plans, such as Community Health Plans, that are likely to improve health outcomes in measurable ways
- Opportunities to leverage your grant funds to attract other philanthropic partners, national, or regional investments to Louisiana that otherwise would not be possible

Projects: Nevers and Maybes

Generally "No" Topics: Details

Education

- **Health & Mentoring:** Maybe
- **Direct Education Services:** No
- We generally do not fund Pre-K, K-12 or Higher Education Efforts and specifically do not fund in places where public funds are already available to pay for programs, for example the primary operations of schools or universities.
- Where we do invest in education it tends to be in places where there is:
 - **A direct health outcome as a primary output**, such as a school-based health pilot focused on health screenings, or efforts to expand the number of nursing graduates from a university.
 - **Leveraged or catalyzed funding**, where our funds fill a gap and bring others to support, such helping schools access to Medicaid Funds, or regional healthcare workforce investments where your grant is matched by another funder.

Government Partnerships

- We generally do not fund government led and administered programs and specifically will not have our funds allocated to general government budgets.
- We have invested in some instances where government has already invested heavily and has real “skin in the game” in success of the project, such as cities raising other funds or tax revenue to improve walkability, safety and health.

Infrastructure

- We generally do not fund infrastructure projects and specifically will not fund healthcare facilities or other items that should be covered by medical/ insurance reimbursement or community development items that should otherwise be covered by public tax dollars
- Where we have invested is under unique circumstances which involve:
 - Where there is a clear and measurable health outcome in the reasonably short-term from the investment
 - Where others are also substantively investing and/ or where our funds can be used to help leverage others
 - Where there is a unique and compelling case of why this investment needs to be made at this time and can’t otherwise be covered by existing means

Healthcare Services

- We generally do not fund items that would be considered direct health care and will not fund healthcare providers, services or other items that would otherwise be covered by medical/ insurance reimbursement
- Where we do invest in this arena it tends to be in place where:
 - There is a safety-net need that isn’t being met and where non-profit providers are filling the gap
 - Where there are systemic or multi-partner issues that are being addressed in compressive ways and where we can be a partner to addressing these issues

Eligibility

Per our Board of Directors, we do not fund the following in any circumstances:

- Organizations that discriminate in their provision of goods and services based on race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sex, age, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, veteran status, or marital status
- Organizations that do not have a 501(c)3 or appropriate non-profit designation and/ or are not in good standing with the Louisiana Secretary of State
- Research and development of medicines and medical devices, including trials and therapeutic related efforts
- Individual or individual fundraisers, athletic teams, pageants, profit making enterprises or other efforts where the aim is not specifically and explicitly working to improve the health and lives of the people of Louisiana
- General operating/programmatic requests from existing non-profits, recognizing that our grants are designed to be short-term in nature.