



Essex County COVID-19 Response Fund:

Behavioral Health Partnership Grants *Working collaboratively to deliver better health outcomes and systems*

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT:

Behavioral health challenges were significantly impacting Essex County residents prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Essex County experiences significantly higher rates of overdose, binge drinking, and poorer rates of overall mental health than Middlesex, Suffolk, or Worcester Counties. But Essex County has significantly less capacity for Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) and a shortage of behavioral health providers. Compared with the rate in 2019, a 31% increase in the proportion of mental health–related emergency department (ED) visits occurred among adolescents aged 12–17 years in 2020. In June 2020, 25% of surveyed adults aged 18–24 years reported experiencing suicidal ideation related to the pandemic in the past 30 days. In 2019 and 2020, 14% of ALL EMS encounters in the state of MA involving Opioids occurred in Essex County (MA Ambulance Trip Reporting System, DPH, May 2021). And Black and Hispanic individuals are 24% and 22%, respectively, less likely to receive follow-up care after an opioid related hospital encounter than whites – and the odds of getting care are half as likely in Metro Boston (Boston Public Health Commission, 2019).

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the immediate and downstream impacts have significantly increased behavioral health issues for countless youth, families, and individuals. We have seen alarming increases in suicide, substance use admissions and mental health care provider burnout.

While these data points cause great concern, we have also seen silver linings throughout COVID such as greater collaboration, attempts at integration of services, improved national awareness of these complex challenges, and reduction of the stigma that surrounds mental health.

Because of the great needs for behavioral health services and the current landscape of collaboration and innovation, ECCF, and its funding partners (Evelyn Lilly Lutz Foundation, Peter and Elizabeth Tower Foundation, North Shore Community Health Network and other donors), have come together to provide “partnership grants” that

improves behavioral health in Essex County.

WHAT IS A PARTNERSHIP GRANT?

ECCF believes that when people and organizations work together with common goals and metrics, each doing what they do best, we can change the system for the better. Sometimes it's nonprofits working with for-profit providers. Other times it's nonprofits working with municipal entities. And often times, it's all three working together to pilot a program, launch a tested solution or expand/scale a service or program. And philanthropy is a part of the system. The goal of a "partnership grant" is to invest in organizations that work together towards a common goal that has community impact.

Past Examples of Partnership Grants:

- An organization operating a food/meal program working collaboratively with a food pantry sharing transportation and staffing to produce 30% more elder meals to meet the need of food insecurity in an Essex County community.
- A regional coalition of food organizations, social service organizations and medical institutions create GIS maps to illustrate supply, demand & need to collectively develop a Regional Food Assessment that will allow for strategy and efficiencies of the food ecosystem.
- A regional emergency shelter partnership between three municipalities and two nonprofits to support the homeless needing quarantine and isolation during COVID.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP GRANTS:

FUNDING FOCUS

For the purposes of the Think Lab and grant cycle, ECCF is intentionally using the term Behavioral Health versus Mental Health to ensure we are being inclusive to all aspects of mental wellness. For this cycle, our definition of Behavioral Health encompasses all contributions to mental wellness. This includes psychological state, substance use disorders, wellness, behavior, habits, and other impacts such as poverty, discrimination, or abuse on behavioral health.

Our intention is to develop, test or scale solutions that can improve the Behavioral Health sector in Essex County by working collectively to identify the root causes that lead to health issues and systemic barriers to care. The goal of this work is to redistribute and reallocate the assets we have in Essex County; to reimagine and

reinvent how we do things; and reskill and rebuild the workforce. This will be an opportunity to collectively co-invest in ideas that address the following from a systems perspective:

- Greater access to services that are culturally relevant and meet people where they are
- Reduce barriers to access such as but not limited to transportation, language or stigma
- Greater integration of behavioral health services in housing, healthcare, and food security
- An improved or expanded workforce by collaborating with local higher education, medical institutions and advocacy efforts for more sustainable wages and benefits

ECCF understands the data that those most impacted by behavioral health challenges include Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant populations, youth, elderly, those with physical and intellectual disabilities, people experiencing homelessness, and others living in poverty. These populations, due to racial and systemic inequity, stand to suffer disproportionately due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, and therefore proposals that address these populations will receive special consideration.

Applications that include non-traditional partners such as businesses or municipal entities that help serve the most under-resourced populations are welcome in this grant process. It is not required to have a behavioral health provider or as part of your proposal.

ELIGIBILITY

- At least one 501c3 organization must be a part of the partnership applying for funding. (Our grants are limited to 501c3 nonprofit organizations, groups fiscally sponsored by a 501c3 nonprofit organization, or other charitable organizations able to receive a tax-deductible contribution, such as schools, faith-based organizations, and other public entities or municipalities that can demonstrate charitable purpose.
- Partnerships must include two or more organizations such as, a for-profit business(es), nonprofit(s), and municipal leader(s). Additional partners may be added if the project is invited to the full application process. All partners must demonstrate a meaningful connection to the project and its objectives. Note: We are aware of the time it can take to establish meaningful collaborations and are expecting to assist and discuss potential partnership ideas with applicants.

- Funding will only be provided to organizations serving those in Essex County and priority will be given to organizations who are based in Essex County
- Organizations who received prior COVID-19 Response Fund grants are eligible to apply.
- These grants are designed to be utilized within an 18-month implementation period.
- Based upon the charitable structure of the Essex County COVID-19 Response Fund, grants CANNOT be awarded:
 - To individuals
 - For sectarian or religious purposes. COVID-19 Response Fund grants to faith-based organizations may only be used for non-conditional relief work and available to all qualified applicants without obligation
 - For political purposes
 - For debt or deficit reduction
 - For capital campaigns for buildings, land acquisition, or endowment
 - To support academic research

APPLICATION REVIEW AND TIMELINE:

ECCF, and its funding partners, enlist the help of grant review volunteers that read, evaluate and prioritize applications based on a rubric to help create fairness and transparency during the application review process. These community volunteers are recruited based on experience in the behavioral health sector and/or their engagement and experience in our Essex County communities.

The application will follow these parameters:

- Behavioral Health Partnership Grants Open (online application): November 9th
- Info Sessions hosted by ECCF: TBD (Nov and Dec)
- Letter of Intent to apply (by nonprofit lead): due by Friday February 11, 2022 at 5:00 PM
- Invitations to apply (given by ECCF to nonprofit lead) (online application): By Friday March 18
- Applications due (by nonprofit lead): due by Friday April 15, 2022 at 5:00 PM
- **Site visits:** conducted through May (virtual pending COVID restrictions).
- **Grants notified:** by the end of June 2022

PRIORITIES FOR PROPOSALS:

Given the large number of expected applications, the most competitive proposals will include one or more of the following:

- The application is grounded in data and can clearly outline the ability to impact people in Essex County (whether in one or more communities in Essex County or County-wide)
- Prioritize seniors, communities of color, youth, immigrants, individuals with intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, substance use disorders or other co-occurring conditions and other vulnerable populations.
 - NOTE: this work, while focused on the most vulnerable, has the intention of being able to work with all communities across Essex County not just the six gateway cities. ECCF recognizes the disparities that are very present in some of our rural communities and other “non-gateway” communities
- Grant funded proposal addresses multiple social determinants of health such as the impact of race and ethnicity and the impacts on the brain due to poverty and trauma
- The application can leverage additional resources (private, local/state/federal) that can extend these grant dollars.
- The application can improve behavioral health while advancing economic and workforce solutions.

Request Amount:

- Grants in the amounts of \$25,000 - \$100,000 will be considered and awarded based on needs and size/scope of application outcomes

Additional Information & Guidance

HEADER: CONTACT:

- Carol Lavoie Schuster, Vice President for Grants, Nonprofit and Donor Services
- c.lavoieschuster@eccf.org
- 978-777-8876 x133
- Or cell (only during business hours M-F 9 am – 5 PM) 617-308-2722
- PLEASE PUT THE FOLLOWING HEADER SUBJECT ON YOUR EMAIL: **Behavioral Health Partnership Grants**