

# Minnesota Public Health Infrastructure Fund Innovation Projects

## REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

This application itself will reside in REDCap; you can find information about this funding opportunity and the application questions below for your reference and planning purposes.

### IMPORTANT DATES

1 March 2024	Request for applications (RFA) released.
5 March 2024	Optional Informational webinar at 12:30 p.m.
6 March 2024	Optional informational webinar at 2:00 p.m.
18 March 2024	Optional Office Hours for Q&A at 2:00 p.m.
20 March 2024	Optional Office Hours for Q&A at 10:00 a.m.
22 March 2024	Last day to submit email questions about the RFA.
29 March 2024	Proposals due (until 11:59 p.m.).
1 July 2024	Estimated start date for projects.

### Purpose

The purpose of these funds is to identify new ways for Minnesota’s public health system to fulfill Foundational Public Health Responsibilities by supporting and learning from projects that **test new delivery models and/or processes that have the potential to benefit multiple jurisdictions**. In order to do this, applicants will be expected to partner with other entities (e.g., other counties, CHBs, or tribes) outside of their own jurisdiction. For this application, jurisdiction is defined as a Community Health Board (CHB) or Tribal nation.

This funding is just one element of Minnesota’s journey to modernize and strengthen the public health system. Part of the way we strengthen our system is to implement system change. This grant program exists to look systematically at innovative ways to deliver foundational public health responsibilities.

### Background

In its 2021 session, the Minnesota Legislature passed a budget that included \$6 million annually for the Commissioner of Health to provide funding for community health boards and tribal governments to build foundational public health capacity across the state and pilot new organizational models for providing public health programs, activities, and services. The Commissioner of Health must work with the [State Community Health Services Advisory Committee \(SCHSAC\)](#) to determine the process for distributing these funds.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) consulted with SCHSAC in the fall of 2021 and winter of 2022 before releasing the first round of grants to community health boards. Sixteen community health boards are currently receiving funding that will conclude June 30, 2024.

SCHSAC, the Local Public Health Association (LPHA), and MDH formed a [Joint Leadership Team](#) to guide together the work of transforming Minnesota's public health system. In 2023, SCHSAC, informed by the Joint Leadership Team, approved recommendations for the second round of grant funding described in this Request for Applications. SCHSAC affirmed a clear purpose for these funds, determined the scope of work, and endorsed specific project requirements. The purpose is outlined above, while the other items are outlined below.

## Funding Availability

\$6 million/year is available to support Minnesota Public Health Infrastructure Innovation Projects.

- MDH will award up to \$2.5 million/year to applicants that are current MN Public Health Infrastructure Fund grantees to continue promising projects. Projects initially funded in the first round (2022-2024) are eligible to apply for up to two years of continued funding.
- At least \$3.5 million/year will support new projects. New projects will be funded for two years with a two-year option to renew. Award amounts for new projects are likely to range generally between \$100,000 - \$400,000/year, but applicants are encouraged to apply for the resources they need to ensure a successful project. **Final funding amounts will be negotiated during the contracting process.**

Applicants must submit budget estimates for year 1 and year 2 of the grant period. See [financial management expectations](#) below for more information.

## Eligibility and Other Requirements

**Eligible entities.** Community health boards (CHBs) and tribes are eligible to apply.

**Scope.** Funds will support projects within any Area or Capability in the [Foundational Public Health Responsibilities Framework](#).

**Application Requirements.** Based on consultation with SCHSAC and informed by the Joint Leadership Team, applicants for funds are required to:

- Collaborate across jurisdictions (CHBs or Tribes)
- Demonstrate benefit to Minnesota's public health system
- Demonstrate buy-in from others on how partner jurisdictions will benefit from the work
- Identify how proposed projects support the vision for a seamless, responsive, publicly supported public health system

**Other Expectations.** Selected grantees will be required to:

- Submit an initial project plan by July 31, 2024 and adapt that plan throughout the course of the project, as conditions and information change
- Participate in regular check-ins with PHP staff by phone/video
- Participate in in-person and/or virtual grantee meetings, likely 2-4 times during the project period (plan for one in-person meeting/year)
- Be responsive to other PHP evaluation activities to be determined (e.g., occasional written reports, interviews, focus groups, or other activities)
- Share information about their work and their lessons learned with others
- Submit invoices quarterly

**Financial Management.** Applicants are required to submit budget estimates for both year 1 and year 2 of the grant period, as separate annual budgets. Instructions are embedded in the RedCap application.

Budgets will be negotiated during the contracting process. Grantees should ask for the resources they need to support the proposed project, such as staff salaries, subcontracts, supplies, training, technology, and expenses related to supporting meaningful community engagement. Grantees will need to provide information about proposed subcontracts in accordance with the [Financial Guide for MDH Grants to Community Health Boards](#).

Please note:

- Grantees may revise their budgets as needed during the grant period. MDH recognizes that local conditions and circumstances change over time and project needs evolve. Budget revisions should be sent to the Center for Public Health Practice lead staff for approval and must be consistent with the goals of the project and the purpose for these funds.
- Budget revisions are required whenever there is a change of 10% or more in any line item. Grantees do not need prior approval to move funds that are less than 10% of a budget line item.

**Evaluation.** There are no specific performance metrics for these funds at this time. MDH's Center for Public Health Practice is interested in learning:

- What kinds of delivery models show promise assuring foundational public health responsibilities across Minnesota;
- How communities benefit from enhanced capacity of local public health departments;
- The scalability of different models; and
- The things that help advance or get in the way of system change, including, but not limited to:
  - Types of governance and/or organizational structures
  - Appropriate staffing levels

- Bureaucratic and/or policy levers or barriers
- Distribution of financial resources
- Structures and strategies for collaboration and partnership
- Community conditions
- Particular aspects of administrative, business, or organizational infrastructure

Staff from the Center for Public Health Practice will provide regular coaching and technical assistance to support project teams throughout the grant period and will convene grantees to support the sharing of knowledge, skills, and lessons learned.

Applicants are encouraged to identify their own success measures and incorporate evaluation activities into their workplans.

## Planning Resources

Some helpful resources for thinking about potential projects and public health system transformation work in Minnesota include:

- [The Six Conditions of System Change Framework](#)
- [Two Loops of System Change Framework](#)
- [Transforming Minnesota's Public Health System for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Report to the Legislature](#)
- [Minnesota Public Health Cost and Capacity Assessment: Summative Report](#)
- [PHAB Center for Innovation](#), including case studies from the [21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Community](#)
- Additional Minnesota [System Transformation Information and Resources](#)

## Selection Process

MDH will convene a broadly representative application review team that may include:

- A SCHSAC representative to the Joint Leadership Team
- An MDH representative to the Joint Leadership Team
- An LPHA representative to the Joint Leadership Team
- A representative from the Office of American Indian Health
- Local Public Health leaders and SCHSAC members from jurisdictions that are not applying for funds
- External partners with relevant knowledge and expertise

Evaluation criteria can be found on the [MN Public Health Infrastructure Fund website](#).

- In addition to application scores, funding decisions will take into consideration the benefit to the statewide public health system; geographic representation; variety of projects; and sizes/types of jurisdictions involved.
- MDH reserves the right to withhold the distribution of funds in cases where applications submitted do not meet the necessary criteria.
- MDH reserves the right to waive minor irregularities or request additional information to further clarify or validate information submitted in the application, provided the application, as submitted, substantially complies with the requirements outlined in this document.
- This application process does not obligate MDH to award a grant agreement or complete the project, and MDH reserves the right to cancel this application process if it is considered to be in its best interest.

## Questions about this Funding

MDH will offer two informational webinars for applicants where questions can be raised as well as two optional office hours for more informal Q&A. CHS Administrators and public health directors will receive links to these meetings via the CHS-PHN list. Tribal public health leaders will receive this information from the Office of American Indian Health. In addition, questions can be emailed to [health.ophp@state.mn.us](mailto:health.ophp@state.mn.us). Responses to emailed questions will be posted on the [MN Infrastructure Fund website](#) and updated regularly. The last day questions can be submitted is March 22, 2024.

## Application Questions

Applications will be submitted using REDCap. A link will be sent to all CHS Administrators and Public Health Directors through the CHS/PHN email list. Tribal health directors will receive this link through communication from the Office of American Indian Health.

Indicate which foundational areas or capabilities this application will be addressing. You may check more than one.

Foundational Areas: Communicable Disease Control, Chronic Disease & Injury Prevention, Environmental Public Health, Maternal, Child & Family Health, Access to & Linkage with Clinical Care.

Foundational Capabilities: Assessment and Surveillance, Community Partnership Development, Equity, Organizational Competencies, Policy Development & Support, Accountability and Performance Management, Emergency Preparedness & Response, Communications.

## Project Description

### For all projects:

1. Describe your project. What new delivery model(s) or process(es) are you testing and how does this align with the [purpose of the funds](#)? (up to 500 words)
2. Describe what led you to this project and why it is important to the project partners. (up to 500 words)
3. Describe the benefits partnering jurisdictions will gain (e.g., knowledge, skills, resources, abilities, etc.) as a result of this project. (up to 500 words)
4. Describe how this project will support transforming Minnesota's public health system into one that is seamless, responsive, and publicly supported. (up to 500 words)
5. Who is on the project team? Identify the individual names, roles, and responsibilities of up to eight people. **[RedCap Table Format]**
6. With each jurisdiction and/or partner identified, describe what you have done, or are currently doing, to set a strong foundation for successful collaboration on this project. (up to 500 words)
7. Describe how public health leadership from all involved jurisdictions will actively support this project. (up to 500 words)

**REDCAP Check-box for Continuation/New Project**

**For continuation projects:**

8. Describe your key accomplishments from the first two years of funding and what you have learned so far about transforming the ways in which foundational public health responsibilities are organized, funded, and/or delivered in Minnesota. (up to 500 words)
9. Describe how this project, and Minnesota's public health system more broadly, would benefit from an additional two years of funding for your project. What would additional time and resources allow the project team to do, and why is it important? (up to 500 words)

**General Project Information [for all projects]**

1. List the community health board or tribe that will be the fiscal host for this application.
2. List the person who will be leading/coordinating the project and their contact information.
3. How much staff time will be dedicated to this project? Tell us the number of staff and the estimated total FTE that will be involved.
4. **Checkbox to acknowledge the project requirements and expectations outlined above.**

**Budget**

Applicants will be asked to enter into RedCap estimated budgets and budget narratives for each grant year, from July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025 and from July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026.

## Definitions

Jurisdiction: For the purpose of this grant application, a Community Health Board or Tribal Nation.

Minnesota's public health system: The governmental public health system of the Minnesota Department of Health, local public health departments, and tribal public health departments.

Six Conditions of Systems Change: "Six interdependent conditions that typically play significant roles in holding a social or environmental problem in place," as defined in the FSG report [\*The Water of Systems Change\*](#).

## Public Data and Trade Secret Materials

All applications submitted in response to this RFP will become property of the State. In accordance with [Minn. Stat. § 13.599](#), all applications and their contents are private or nonpublic until the applications are opened.

Once the applications are opened, the name and address of each applicant and the amount requested is public. All other data in an application is private or nonpublic data until completion of the evaluation process, which is defined by statute as when MDH has completed negotiating the grant agreement with the selected applicant.

After MDH has completed the evaluation process, all remaining data in the applications is public with the exception of trade secret data as defined and classified in [Minn. Stat. § 13.37](#), subd. 1(b). A statement by an applicant that the application is copyrighted or otherwise protected does not prevent public access to the application or its contents. ([Minn. Stat. § 13.599](#), subd. 3(a)).

If an applicant submits any information in an application that it believes to be trade secret information, as defined by [Minn. Stat. § 13.37](#), the applicant must:

- Clearly mark all trade secret materials in its application at the time it is submitted,
- Include a statement attached to its application justifying the trade secret designation for each item, and
- Defend any action seeking release of the materials it believes to be trade secret, and indemnify and hold harmless MDH and the State of Minnesota, its agents and employees, from any judgments or damages awarded against the State in favor of the party requesting the materials, and any and all costs connected with that defense.
- This indemnification survives MDH's award of a grant agreement. In submitting an application in response to this RFP, the applicant agrees that this indemnification survives as long as the trade secret materials are in possession of MDH. The State will not consider the prices submitted by the responder to be proprietary or trade secret materials.

MDH reserves the right to reject a claim that any particular information in an application is trade secret information if it determines the applicant has not met the burden of establishing

that the information constitutes a trade secret. MDH will not consider the budgets submitted by applicants to be proprietary or trade secret materials. Use of generic trade secret language encompassing substantial portions of the application or simple assertions of trade secret without substantial explanation of the basis for that designation will be insufficient to warrant a trade secret designation.

If a grant is awarded to an applicant, MDH may use or disclose the trade secret data to the extent provided by law. Any decision by the State to disclose information determined to be trade secret information will be made consistent with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act ([Ch. 13 MN Statutes](#)) and other relevant laws and regulations.

If certain information is found to constitute trade secret information, the remainder of the application will become public; in the event a data request is received for application information, only the trade secret data will be removed and remain nonpublic.

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*To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-210-3880.*