

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
AND ADVOCACY COALITIONS | 2025





OPPORTUNITY OVERVIEW

Health Forward is announcing an open funding opportunity to support civic engagement and advocacy coalitions. We will award up to \$5.9 million in gifts to be distributed in 2025 and 2026.

In our previous funding rounds, civic engagement and advocacy coalitions were presented as two separate funding opportunities. This year, we have taken the opportunity to combine the process into a single funding opportunity. This strategic shift represents how both civic engagement and advocacy are closely linked in advancing democracy and adopting policies that build inclusive, powerful, and healthy communities, which is core to Health Forward's purpose. To achieve change, civic engagement and advocacy must work hand in hand to build power and promote policies that support equity and health. As such, Health Forward will invest in organizations supporting either or both of these activities.

This funding opportunity supports and builds community power by advancing civic participation and engagement in democracy for all ages. Civic engagement is one of many social factors that influence the health of people and communities given its connection to increasing health equity, racial equity, and economic inclusion. Civic engagement is central to Health Forward's purpose of building and amplifying community power. Advancing participation in democracy is one of our core Power strategies, which we are pursuing by supporting and connecting organizations working on civic engagement, community organizing, and advocacy.

Organizations with shared interests often form coalitions to pool and leverage limited resources to achieve a common goal. The saying that there is power in numbers is especially true in advocacy. Coalitions are one effective medium for collective advocacy. Health Forward's advocacy efforts and funding priorities are guided by our policy agendas for [Kansas](#) and [Missouri](#). Our policy agendas represent the advocacy goals and priorities that we identified alongside the community to advance our purpose and achieve our mission and the outcomes we seek.

While Health Forward engages in advocacy and lobbying aligned with our policy agendas and [purpose plan](#), we understand that the voices and interests of people are best expressed by the people themselves — and organizations that understand and have shared personal experiences. Our aim is to support these organizations through this funding opportunity.

HEALTH FORWARD'S PURPOSE

Health Forward Foundation is committed to supporting and building inclusive, powerful, and healthy communities characterized by racial equity and economically just systems.

KEY INFORMATION

Purpose area

Power

Strategy

Increase civic engagement in democracy

Deadline

April 2, 2025: Applications are due at noon. Health Forward may seek additional information as needed to fairly consider all requests.

May 2025: We aim to make funding decisions by the end of May.

Funding term

Up to 22 months*

Funding type

We strive to award our funding as unrestricted gifts. However, we may restrict some awards to a specific purpose or budget on a case-by-case basis.

Our purpose plan

Our work is guided by our purpose plan; our four purpose areas – People, Platform, Place, and Power; and our related strategies and initiatives. This funding opportunity relates to our Power purpose area and specific strategy to increase civic participation in democracy and is integrative in its relation to the policy goals throughout our purpose plan and policy agendas. For more information on our [purpose plan](#), and our Power strategies and initiatives, please visit our [website](#).

Connect with us!

Applicants who have not previously applied for our funding should request a [consultation](#) with a Health Forward team member before applying. Additionally, we are available to consult with existing partners as well, and connecting with our team to answer any questions you may have or clarify the process or opportunity is encouraged.

*In upcoming funding cycles for civic engagement related activities, Health Forward will shift to an earlier timeline to better accommodate the needs of organizations doing work related to the legislative session and ballot cycles. This is part of a larger best practice in the field of philanthropy, known as [All by April](#).

WHY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

Health Forward acknowledges civic engagement as one of many social factors that influence the health of people and communities. Civic engagement has the power to advance health equity, racial equity, and economic inclusion. There is a growing body of evidence connecting civic engagement with the improved health of people and communities. The Health and Democracy Index developed by the Healthy Democracy Health People shows that states with more inclusive voting policies and greater levels of civic participation are healthier. In addition, in June 2022, the American Medical Association further acknowledged voting as a social determinant of health due to the positive relationship between civic engagement and health outcomes.

Civic engagement is a powerful tool to provide voice to those who are closest to the issues in need of solutions and can shape policies that address community needs.

Health Forward seeks to advance civic engagement and advocacy among our communities of focus or issues that advance our community informed and data driven policy agendas. Our focus is on communities of color and residents of rural communities of all ages in our service area as data evidences that these communities face the far most significant barriers to health and have the worst health outcomes and departures. Civic engagement and advocacy is important for residents across the lifespan, including for youth prior and young people early in voting age, as younger people who are civically engaged build the habit of lifelong engagement for longer term impact.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

Health Forward will fund specific civic engagement and advocacy activities including (but not limited to) one or more of the following:

- Voter registration
- Non-partisan voter engagement and education
- Community organizing aligned with our policy agenda
- Youth and young adult civic engagement and civic education
- Messaging, communications, research, and evaluation on specific policy issues impacting our communities and aligned with our policy agenda
- Advocacy coalitions that align strongly with Health Forward's policy agenda

Please [reach out](#) to discuss your organization's specific fit with this funding opportunity.



WHO SHOULD APPLY?

There are many kinds of community-based organizations that may be a fit for this funding opportunity. The work of these organizations should align with Health Forward's policy agenda for Missouri or Kansas. Here are some illustrative examples:

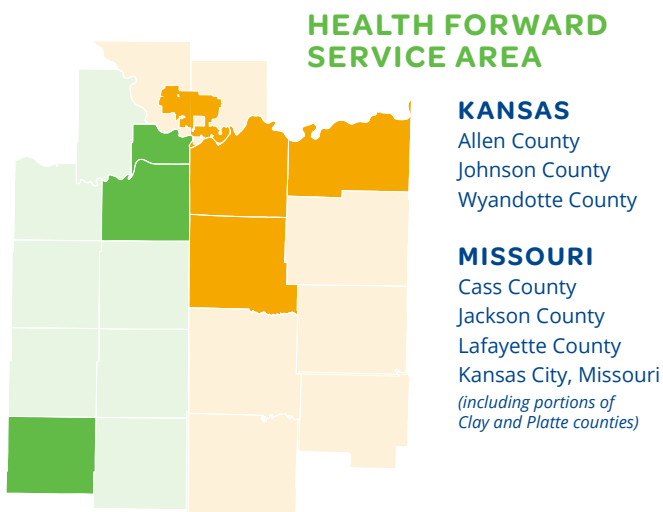
- Organizations advocating for — or working against — specific policy issues in Kansas or Missouri related to our purpose plan and policy agendas
- Organizations doing non-partisan voter registration in Missouri or Kansas, especially with a focus on community members with the greatest disparities in voter registration and voter turnout
- Organizations wanting to grow their capacity to do policy and advocacy work
- Organizations rooted in the community who are organizing community members
- Organizations working with youth (under 18) and young adults (18-24) doing civic engagement and education programming
- Organizations educating and equipping community members to participate in voting and civic engagement
- Organizations educating the community on issues before state or local legislatures or on a ballot
- Organizations working on a white paper or organizing a messaging campaign around specific policy issues or the connections between civic engagement and health
- Organizations seeking to improve the reporting, evaluation, and learning from their policy and advocacy work
- Organizations seeking to improve their policy and advocacy communications
- Coalitions or membership organizations that collectively advocate in one or more of the following areas:
 - Reducing health disparities and increasing access to care
 - Organizations working to improve maternal health outcomes particularly for those facing the greatest disparities
 - Telehealth/telemedicine equity and access
 - Organizations working toward policy changes for the reimbursement of food under insurance for its medicinal and preventative abilities
 - Organizations that advocate for community health workers, paramedicine, and doulas including, but not limited to, their certification and reimbursement under Medicaid
 - Culturally relevant health care
 - Diversification of the health sciences workforce
 - Broadband infrastructure and access, equipment affordability and accessibility, and digital literacy skills
 - Affordable, quality housing and pathways to achieving and maintaining equitable and affordable homeownership
 - Voting rights and the freedom for people to pursue legislative and constitutional changes through initiative petitions

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

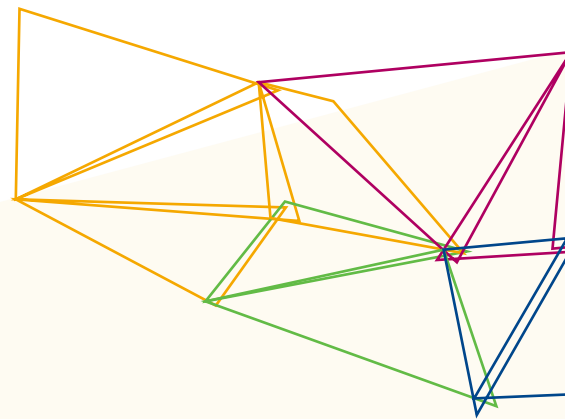
Health Forward Foundation has generally applicable eligibility criteria that must be met by all applicants for all our funding opportunities. These criteria are available on our website. We also encourage you to review frequently asked questions.

To be eligible for this funding opportunity, the applicant must:

- Work in parts of Health Forward's Service Area — Wyandotte, Johnson and Allen counties in Kansas and Cass, Jackson, and Lafayette counties in Missouri, as well as all of Kansas City, Missouri, including portions of Clay and Platte counties
- Work in alignment with Health Forward's mission, vision, values, and purpose plan



Note: Health Forward will not fund projects or advocacy focused on electing or opposing candidates for elected office. Other eligibility criteria is available on our [website](#).



OUTCOMES WE SEEK

Health Forward has identified specific outcomes related to this funding opportunity:

- Increased effectiveness of community organizing and civic participation
- Increased scale of community organizing and civic participation
- Increased voter registration and turnout in targeted districts
- Adoption of policies that promote civic participation
- Adoption of policies related to Health Forward's policy agendas



SHARED LEARNING AND SUPPORT BEYOND THE CHECK

In addition to dollars, funded partners will have access to learning opportunities and additional support. Health Forward anticipates that we will convene the entire cohort twice a year, taking into account the timing of the legislative sessions and election cycles. We encourage organizations funded through this opportunity to attend these sessions to benefit from engaging with similarly situated organizations and to help strengthen the field. In addition, Health Forward will collaborate with funded partners to identify needs and strive to co-design opportunities tailored to those needs, as our resources may allow. These optional opportunities may include trainings, workshops, shared tools or technologies, contracted services, learning cohorts, etc.

APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

Health Forward strives to have a transparent and fair application and review process, and we want to be available to assist every applicant. We strongly encourage you to consult with a member of our team before submitting your application.

[Cori Stites](#) and [Nate Madden](#) are available to discuss your organization's fit with Health Forward's priorities within the civic engagement and advocacy space prior to your submission. You can also submit a request for a [consultation online](#) to discuss your organization's fit with Health Forward's priorities within the civic engagement and advocacy space. Our impact administration team is available to answer any technical questions that arise during the online application process.

Begin your application by accessing our [applicant portal](#). A Word document template is included with this funding announcement, which you can use to prepare your responses to the application questions before entering them into our online portal. New applicants will need to set up an account through our applicant portal. If you need assistance, contact our impact administration team at impactadmin@healthforward.org or 816-241-7006.

Following the application submission, our impact strategists will begin to review proposals. During this period, we may follow up with you for additional information to better understand your proposal and your organization. Health Forward will work to announce funded partners by May with dollars being distributed afterwards.

DEFINITIONS

Here's what we mean
when we say...



Health Forward has developed a [glossary of terms](#) to create shared understanding internally and externally with partners. This includes terms commonly used by Health Forward and relevant to this funding opportunity, such as: capacity building, civic engagement, community engagement/ participation, community organizing, equity, power, racial equity, and small/grassroots organizations. Specific to this funding opportunity, we have a few additional terms not included above:

ADVOCACY COALITION

People and organizations with a shared overall policy goal who organize themselves to suggest specific policies and work to affect the policymaking process to those with the ability to change policy in favor of the coalition's shared policy goal.

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

A group of people engaging in shared learning, best practices, and solving a set of problems around a topic of interest to fulfill individual and group goals.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic engagement encompasses a broad range of activities related to democracy, from supporting a community-based organization to voting. It's a strategy and an outcome that fosters social cohesion and amplifies the power of citizens by aggregating individual voices. Community members are most effective in solving problems and holding institutions accountable when they act collectively.

CIVIC EDUCATION

Civic education, teaching young people about their rights, responsibilities, and how government works to help prepare youth for participation in their communities and in democracy; it may also incorporate civic engagement as a real-world learning approach.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ PARTICIPATION

Promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes. It requires the active participation of people in the decision-making processes that shape their communities and their lives. Civic engagement leverages knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to achieve the desired impact.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Community organizing is a process of building power through collective action in order to advance shared interests. It is a method of engaging and empowering people with the purpose of increasing the influence of groups historically underrepresented in policies and decision-making that affect their lives and achieve desired goals in their social, political, economic, and physical environment.

GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT

Also known as core support, core operating support, or unrestricted funds, these sorts of dollars allow organizations the flexibility to take care of day-to-day operations or expenses, as well as investing in building organizational infrastructure for the long term.

HEALTH EQUITY

Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthy. It requires actively removing obstacles to health that drive health disparities – barriers that are rooted in structural racism and economic inequity, such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences. It means actively building the conditions for health including good jobs with fair pay, high-quality education and housing, safe environments, health care, and equal access to power.

POWER SHARING

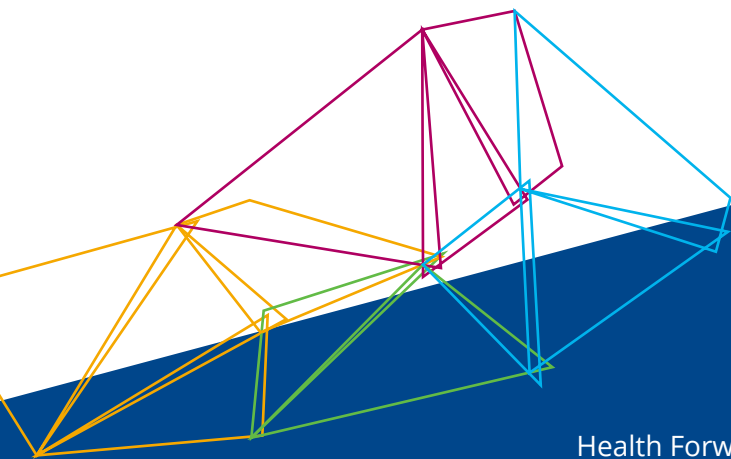
Power sharing refers to inclusive decision-making which redistributes power, money, and resources to people and communities (e.g., people of color and specific socio-economic groups) that have historically been excluded from power. Sharing power requires nurturing transparent, trusting relationships and co-creating strategies and solutions with people closest to the challenges to advance health equity.

STRATEGIC LEARNING

Using evaluative methods to help groups/coalitions learn rapidly to be flexible and adaptive with strategy and tactics to achieve better outcomes.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Providing targeted support to an organization or coalition to help improve or build the capacity of an organization in a given area.



ABOUT HEALTH FORWARD

Health Forward Foundation is a nonprofit conversion foundation formed in 2005. Every day we work to support and build inclusive, powerful, and healthy communities characterized by racial equity and economically just systems. Healthy people need healthy communities. We recognize that racial equity and economic inclusion overlap. We cannot have one without the other. We also recognize that our effort to build racial equity and economically just systems commits us to changing the education, health, and political systems that make up our society. These changes mean healthier people, an increase in community power, and creating equitable and just places. We invite you to learn more about Health Forward Foundation by visiting our [website](https://healthforward.org).