

FUNDING
OPPORTUNITY
ANNOUNCEMENT

Civic Engagement and Advocacy Coalitions

2026





OPPORTUNITY OVERVIEW

Health Forward Foundation is announcing an open funding opportunity to support civic engagement and advocacy coalitions. We will award up to \$6.5 million to be distributed in 2027 and 2028.

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 participation 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.

We recognize that lasting policy change is often achieved through collective action. We invest in and support coalitions that bring together organizations and communities around shared priorities to leverage collective resources and expertise. Health Forward's advocacy and investments 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 the impact we seek.

While Health Forward engages in many advocacy activities, including lobbying, aligned with our policy agenda and purpose plan, we understand that the voices and interests of people are best expressed by the people themselves — and by organizations that understand and reflect their lived experiences. This funding opportunity is intended to support nonprofits in their direct engagement in policy advocacy.

Civic engagement, including advocacy, is crucial for advancing democracy and adopting policies that build inclusive, powerful, and healthy communities, which is core to Health Forward's purpose. To achieve change, advocacy and other civic engagement activities 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 a wide range of civic engagement activities.

As with all our funding opportunities, we prioritize our communities of focus. By working to improve the lives of people who experience the greatest injustice in health outcomes, we center people of color whose outcomes are shaped by structural racism and other socioeconomic conditions and people in rural areas where systemic barriers hinder optimal health.

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

Deadlines

NEW! November 24, 2026: Consultation must be completed. For this round, Health Forward is piloting a mandatory consultation for all applicants.

November 20 will be the last day to request a consultation. The purpose of this consultation is to get to know your organization and assess your alignment with our strategies for this funding opportunity while answering any questions you have. An application will be sent to you if you are eligible and aligned with this funding round.

December 2, 2026: Applications due at noon. Health Forward may seek additional information after this date as needed to fairly consider all requests.

March/April 2027: Funding decisions will be made in March, with dollars going out by April. This is part of a larger best practice in the field of philanthropy, known as [All by April](#).

Funding term

Up to 24 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. Fiscal sponsorship is available, and may be required, for organizations that do not have a 501(c)(3) designation or may benefit from additional operational or technical support.

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](#). For more information on our purpose plan, and our Power strategies and initiatives, please visit our [website](#).

Connect with us!

New to this funding opportunity

All applicants **MUST complete** a consultation with a Health Forward team member before applying.

The application will not be available to you until you complete this step. 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.

Why civic engagement?



Health Forward recognizes 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, and a growing body of evidence connects it to improved health outcomes.

The Health and Democracy Index, developed by the Healthy Democracy Healthy People, shows that states with more inclusive voting policies and greater civic participation are healthier. In addition, in June 2022, the American Medical Association similarly recognized voting as a social determinant of health, citing the positive relationship between civic engagement and health outcomes. Voting and civic engagement has led to policies improving access to health, including Medicaid expansion, paid leave, and an increased minimum wage.

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 activities, including advocacy, with our communities of focus and in line with our policy agendas. Our focus is on communities of color and residents of rural communities of all ages in our service area, including youth prior to voting age and young people early in voting age.

Why coalition building?

Civic engagement is most powerful when organized collectively — which is where coalition building comes in. A coalition is an alliance that is forged to achieve a common objective. These partnerships can be temporary or long-term, formal or informal, and they often bring together diverse members who contribute unique perspectives and skills. Coalitions are common in advocacy — people and organizations with a shared overall policy goal can organize to propose specific policies and influence decision-makers in favor of a shared policy goal. The primary purpose of a coalition is to combine the strengths and efforts of its members to achieve a specific objective that would be difficult to accomplish alone. Benefits include an amplified voice, expanded reach, pooled knowledge and resources, and increased credibility.

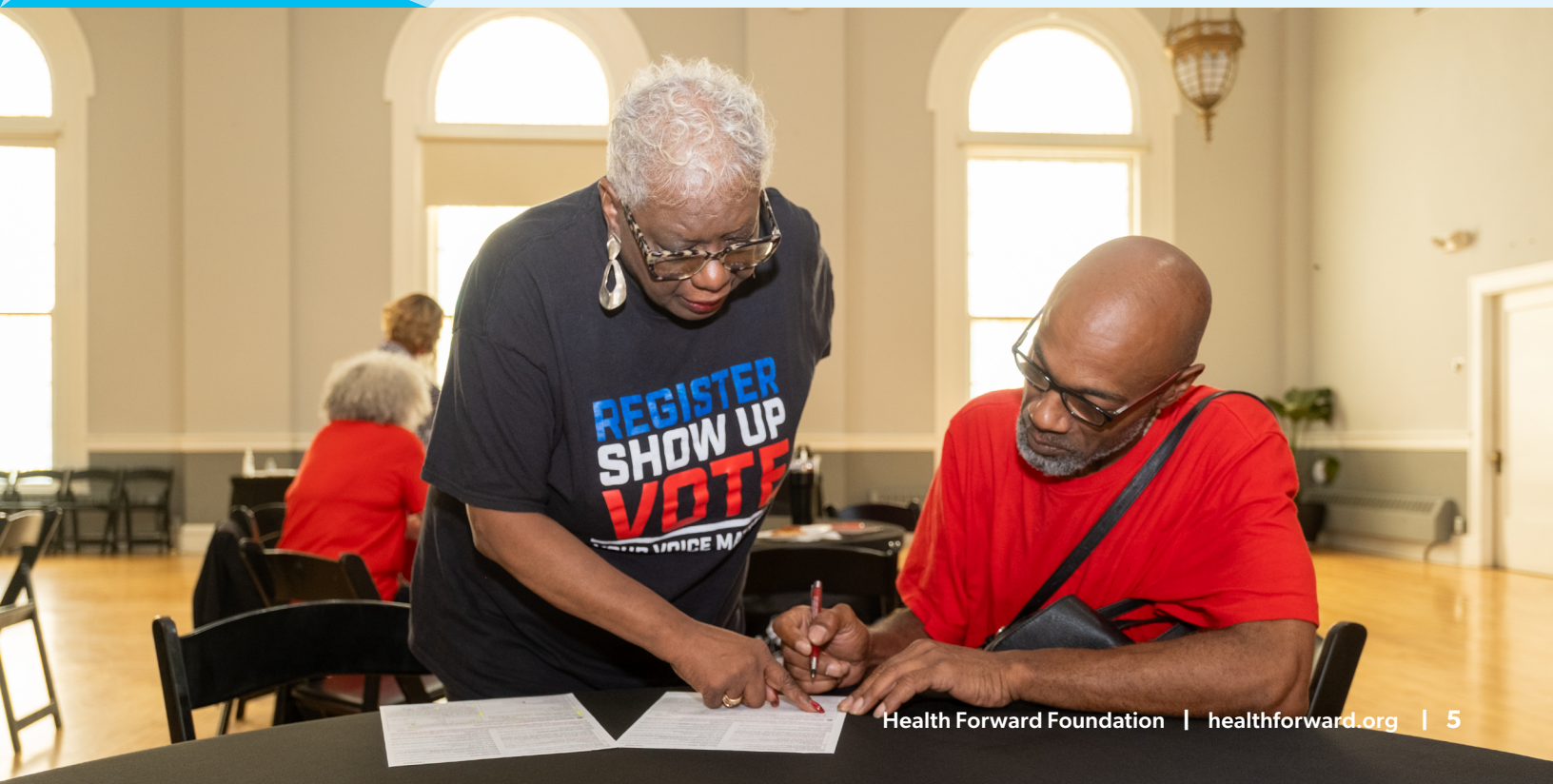


FUNDING PRIORITIES

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

- Community organizing and power-building aligned with our policy agenda
- Voter registration
- Non-partisan voter engagement, education and GOTV
- Advocacy aligned with Health Forward's policy agenda
- Youth and young adult civic engagement and civic education, including youth prior to voting age, with a strong focus on participation in our democracy
- Narrative change, messaging, and strategic communications related to policy, advocacy and democracy
- Research and evaluation on specific policy issues impacting our communities and aligned with our policy agenda
- Coalition building that aligns strongly with Health Forward's policy agenda
- Census-related work to prepare for the 2030 census

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 rooted in the community who are organizing community members and growing civic power
- Organizations advocating for — or working against — specific policy issues in Kansas or Missouri
- 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 (e.g. young voters, individuals with felony convictions, naturalized citizens)
- Organizations wanting to grow their capacity to do policy and advocacy work
- Organizations working with youth (under 18) and young adults (18–24) doing civic engagement and education programming
- Organizations reducing barriers to voting and civic engagement and 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
 - Attracting and retaining health care talent reflecting our prioritized communities of focus
 - 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, participation in our democracy, and the freedom for people to pursue legislative and constitutional changes through initiative petitions and ballot initiatives

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

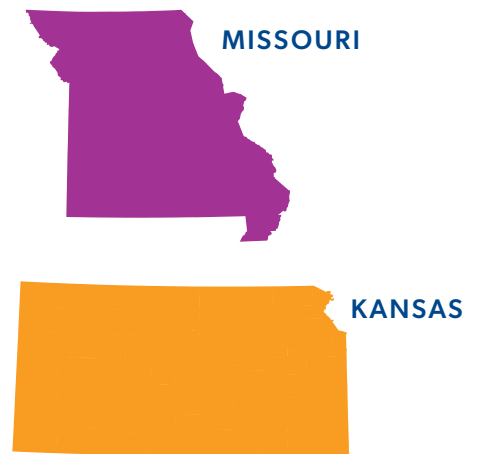
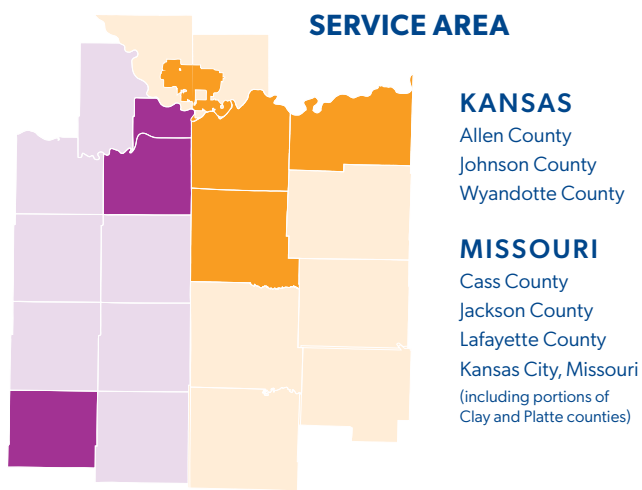
Health Forward Foundation has generally applicable eligibility criteria that must be met by all applicants for all our funding opportunities. These criteria are available on our website. We also encourage you to review frequently asked questions.

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 those portions of Clay and Platte counties

OR

- Work state-wide in Missouri or Kansas



AND

- Work in alignment with Health Forward's mission, vision, values, and purpose plan



NOTE

Health Forward will not fund organizations, advocacy, or projects that are partisan in nature or focused on electing or opposing candidates for elected office. Other eligibility criteria are available on our [website](https://healthforward.org).

OUTCOMES WE SEEK

Health Forward has identified specific outcomes related to this funding opportunity. The table below outlines two-year and five-year outcomes we seek.

Five-year outcomes

(Medium-term and Ecosystem level)
By 2031...

Community Organizing

Funded partners and the communities they serve have built a larger, more resilient ecosystem of community organizers. This means that organizing groups are operating at greater scale and sophistication through shared and innovative strategies and tactics, that sustains people and power-building practices, prevented burnout, and expanded organizing initiatives across Health Forward's service area.

Civic Engagement and Advocacy Ecosystem

The civic engagement and advocacy field became stronger, more equitable, and more interconnected, with effective power sharing between white-led (or historically well-resourced) organizations and community-based organizations.

Contributed to a robust civic infrastructure in which residents, organizers and advocates had the knowledge, tools, resources and partnerships needed to influence policy outcomes and strengthen democratic systems.

Prioritized two-year outcomes

(Near-term and Funded Partner Org Level)

- Organizing initiatives reached more places and people within Health Forward's service area.
 - Sustained the capacity of funded partners engaging in community organizing.
 - Grew the number of opportunities to support organizers and grassroots organizing programs.
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- Grew the capacity of funded partners to engage in year-round advocacy.
 - Grew the capacity of funded partners to engage in year-round voter engagement.
 - Funded partners leveraged their unique role within the ecosystem in service to a shared priority.
 - Grew the number and scale of voter registration and voter education programs.
 - Grew the influence of organizations representing historically excluded communities with policymakers.
 - Funded partners coalesced around a shared priority.
 - Grew the number of community-based leaders serving on public decision-making bodies (e.g., boards, coalitions, advisory groups, campaign leadership teams).



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 of partners funded through this opportunity at least 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 co-design opportunities tailored to those needs. 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.

NEW THIS YEAR: All applicants must complete a consultation before accessing the application. You will need to submit a request for a [consultation online](#) to discuss your organization's fit with Health Forward's priorities within our civic engagement and advocacy strategies. Our [impact administration](#) team is available to assist you in submitting your consultation request if technical challenges arise.

Once you have successfully completed the consultation (if needed), you will 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 March with dollars being distributed by April.

[Cori Stites](#) and [Ashley Beard-Fosnow](#) are available to discuss your organization's fit with Health Forward's priorities within the civic engagement and advocacy space.

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).