



## Innovation Lab Grants: Fall 2021 Request for Proposals

### Overview

HealthSpark Foundation invites applications for collaborative grant projects that will build a better safety net system in Montgomery County. Projects must align with the vision, guiding principles, and set out to achieve one of the six goals identified in the [Safety Net Resiliency Initiative Framework](#).

The Framework is the result of a months-long community-driven process in 2020 to gather lessons learned about the safety net system in Montgomery County, building off a similar process conducted in 2017. Over 200 service providers shared their experiences and contributed their insights to envision what a better safety net system looks like and how to make it happen in light of the pandemic, growing racial inequality, and other experiences throughout the year. HealthSpark Foundation is grateful for their insights and for all the work of direct service providers in Montgomery County – they exemplify the strength and creativity of our community.

This Request for Proposals reflects the priorities identified by Montgomery County community partners in this process. HealthSpark Foundation recognizes that the challenges presented by COVID-19 persist and the burnout many are experiencing at this time, yet as the community continues to respond to the immediacy of the moment, our partners voiced a desire to seize this moment as an opportunity for transformative change, as captured in the Framework.

A snapshot of the Framework:

**Vision:** We envision a resilient and financially sustainable safety net that allows anyone in MontCo to access high quality, coordinated, equitable, and culturally appropriate services no matter who they are, what they need, or where they live.

We believe that a strong safety net benefits everyone, and Montgomery County's safety net will thrive through a shared commitment to nourish and sustain it. Montgomery County's safety net will be:

- **Connected:** Collaborating to share resources, learning, and ideas, and to bring people together to recognize their common bond

- **Respected:** Positioning the safety net system to be recognized as an essential element of every community, and to be appropriately and consistently funded to deliver comprehensive and integrated services
- **Person-centered:** Serving individuals more holistically, integrating services across organizations, and ensuring a healing-centered approach to trauma and easy access to services
- **Equitable:** Making concrete progress to address disparities rooted in race, class, gender, sexual identity, differential abilities, and language differences
- **Impactful:** Providing effective connections and services to improve lives and communities

#### Shared Principles

- **Common voice:** Promote the importance of the safety net system, leverage more support for it, and stand together for what is just
- **Anti-racism:** Work to root out racism and make the safety net system anti-racist and equitable
- **Justice:** Ensure access to equal education, health care, technology, services, and opportunity for all
- **Dignity:** Uphold the dignity of every member of every community
- **Partnership:** Develop strong, trusted partnerships that reduce redundancy and strengthen services
- **Community:** Build community with relationships, solidarity, and equity at the center

#### Goals\*

1. Build the safety net system's capacity to advance racial and social justice.
2. Put an end to chronic underfunding and cut the red tape of the safety net system.
3. Sustain technology advances and support equitable access to technology.
4. Support the emotional well-being of safety net staff and community members.
5. Strengthen the operational practices of safety net providers.
6. Build a more vibrant, active, and inclusive community.

\*It is important to note that building the safety net system's capacity to advance racial and social justice emerged as the most urgent goal, reflecting the recognition that racism and social injustice underpin many of the dynamics that create the need for the safety net system and weaken its ability to deliver comprehensive solutions. While the first goal is to build the safety net system's capacity to advance racial and social justice, the work is not limited to that one goal; rather, this commitment should be reflected in every grant project submitted.

Systems change projects are those that address and improve how a system works. This includes projects that seek to reimagine how programs and services can achieve impact; realign relationships and resources between funders, service providers, the community, and system users; redevelop rules and regulations; adjust policies and practices; and address problematic cultural norms and incentives in order to achieve greater wellbeing and impact for all people, particularly people who have been marginalized or underserved. **The intent is to fund projects that will test and hopefully advance ideas for improving the functioning and performance of the**

safety net system, not just the functioning and performance of individual organizations involved in the project. HealthSpark Foundation seeks projects that have the potential to be replicated or scaled-up to make a broader impact. For more information on our approach to grantmaking, please visit [www.healthspark.org/grantmaking](http://www.healthspark.org/grantmaking) .

During this round of the Innovation Lab, HealthSpark is inviting applications for Design Grants. Design Grants offer grant funds to support the development of a safety net systems change project idea over a roughly six- to nine- month period. More information on grant specifications is included below in the section labeled Innovation Lab Design Grants.

### **What the Innovation Lab Does Not Fund**

The Innovation Lab does not fund direct service projects, rather it seeks to support projects that will explore how to prevent the need for services and how to make services more efficient, accessible, and inclusive. As well, HealthSpark Foundation is investing in racial equity/social justice training through a partnership of three county nonprofit collaboratives, the Racial Equity Learning Community, and therefore is not funding racial equity/social justice training through the Innovation Lab.

### **Applicant information session**

We will host a virtual grant information session for interested applicants. The session is not mandatory, but participation is encouraged, especially for first time applicants.

Tuesday, September 28, 2021

9:00 am- 10: 00 am

Virtual session

[Register for the information session.](#)

A recording of the session will be posted on our website on or around October 1, 2021.

### **Proposal Submission**

Grants are submitted through the Foundation's grant portal, Foundant. The link to apply is: <https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Login?urlkey=npchf>

Organizations that have not applied to HealthSpark Foundation before will need to set up their account in our system first (one account per organization, please). If you are unsure if your organization already has an account established, or need assistance with log in credentials, please email [info@healthspark.org](mailto:info@healthspark.org) or call us at 215-716-5400.

**The deadline to apply is November 1, 2021 by 5pm.**

All applications will be reviewed by Foundation staff, its advisors, and members of the Foundation's Grants Committee. The total number of grants awarded will depend on the number and quality of applications received. The Foundation will notify applicants of their approval or denial by the Grants Committee by early December and those organizations offered a grant will be required to sign and return a grant agreement before funds are distributed. Unless specifically approved in advance, all grants will commence on or after January 1, 2022.

If you have questions about this grant opportunity, please call or email Emma Hertz, Director of External Affairs at [ehertz@healthspark.org](mailto:ehertz@healthspark.org) or 215-716-5400.

## Innovation Lab Design Grants

The Innovation Lab grant program is designed to support systems change projects that will create a more financially resilient and high quality, coordinated, equitable, and culturally appropriate safety net system.

Design Grants are short-term planning or "proof of concept" grants of up to \$30,000. Design Grants are intended to support the development of an idea for a system change, to design and conduct a small-scale project to help answer fundamental questions about the roles of partners, the value of the innovation to consumers and sponsoring organizations, and to identify long-term funding strategies if the model proves of value, or to conduct other forms of research. Design Grants are provided to a lead organization applying in partnership with at least one partner organization that may be either a for-profit or nonprofit business (or one functioning with support from a fiscal intermediary or sponsor).

The Innovation Lab projects and partners that have been funded to date illuminated four sustainability outcomes of interest to HealthSpark Foundation. They may assist potential partners with developing and presenting projects for the Innovation Lab. Some projects pursue one or more of these outcomes:

- **Prevention:** Focusing on preventing the need for safety net services
- **Inclusion and Equity:** Embedding inclusion and equity in the development and delivery of safety net services and resources
- **Efficiency:** Building the efficiency of safety net service delivery and operations
- **Access:** Increasing access to safety net services and resources by addressing barriers and disparities

HealthSpark intends to award up to 10 Design Grants this round.

Grant specifications:

- A. The projects must align with the [Safety Net Resiliency Initiative Framework](#).
- B. Applicants must be able to clearly describe the intended systems change effort. Design Grants are meant to give organizations the time and resources to fully outline a systems

change initiative, build trust with their partners, articulate specific roles for each partner organization, research best or evidence-based practices if applicable, identify training and infrastructure needs (e.g. computer systems, outcomes measurement tools, etc.), assess underlying costs and identify options for ongoing financial support if implemented, create business plan timeframes or thresholds needed for a successful implementation, and similar activities.

- C. Anticipated expenses and activities could include: Research, partner convenings, project planning, technical assistance, consumer engagement stipends/support, community engagement materials, and other activities that will position the project for launch. Administrative costs may be included in the project provided they relate to the project itself (for example, Executive Director or other staff time associated with managing the project, and proportionate overhead). Note: project funds are not intended to provide direct services to consumers, including client case management.
- D. Applicants are strongly encouraged to engage the intended beneficiaries of their services in meaningful ways into the planning, decision-making, and design of their project and to compensate them appropriately for their time and expertise (using Design Grant funds is allowable and encouraged for this purpose).
- E. Projects must serve Montgomery County residents; applicants must have a 501(c)(3), or have a fiscal intermediary/sponsorship relationship, or be a religious organization, or part of Montgomery County government. Applicants must apply with at least one additional partner organization or entity.
  - a. Organizations that are not Montgomery County-based (i.e. statewide or national organizations) should clearly demonstrate their connections and work to date in Montgomery County, the relationships to organizations in Montgomery County, and their connection to and understanding of Montgomery County residents and their needs.
- F. HealthSpark is eager to learn from the projects and to engage in collaborative learning with its grantee partners. HealthSpark is comfortable assuming prudent risk if it is afforded an opportunity to learn from each endeavor, and therefore encourages creativity, new ideas and partnerships, and potentially ideas that partners have thought about for a long time, but not tried. Consider this a research and development opportunity to build back better.
- G. All partners are expected to participate in up to four Innovation Lab Learning cohort convenings during the project term to share lessons learned, explore alternatives to their initial ideas, and to nurture new or existing relationships. These meetings are typically 90 minutes and are scheduled in advance.

## **Background**

### **About HealthSpark Foundation**

HealthSpark Foundation is a private, independent foundation serving Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. Our mission is to invest in nonprofit organizations, networks, and coalitions promoting a more just and healthy community. Since 2017, our efforts have focused on building

a more just and financially resilient social safety net through our 10-year effort called the Safety Net Resiliency Initiative. The crises of 2020 offer an opportunity for HealthSpark to build on its prior work and relationships, and to re-envision Montgomery County's safety net. Learn more at [www.healthspark.org](http://www.healthspark.org) .