



GRASSROOTS FUNDING COMPETITIVE NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Description:

The Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board (WCCMHB) seeks proposals from small, community-based organizations that are positioned to deliver meaningful and innovative services to the communities in Winnebago County they serve.

WCCMHB will prioritize funding to smaller organizations that are not current awardees of WCCMHB Core funding, with characteristics such as being geographically aligned with the community they serve, or utilizing local solutions to solve local problems. Preference will be given to organizations with operating budgets equal to or less than \$1 million. Proposals must align with one of the following components of the Community Support System areas outlined in Program Year 4-6 Strategic Plan: Mental Health Treatment, Case Management, Family & Community Support, Client Identification & Outreach.

Proposals must also identify one of the following target populations as defined in the Program Year 4-6 Strategic Plan: Adults with Serious Mental Illness (18+), Children Serious Emotional Disturbance (3-21), Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (0-5), or Substance Use Disorders (applicants will be asked to specify if for adults or children).

Funding Availability:

Up to \$2 million is available for total funding, to be disbursed over two years (June 1st, 2026 to May 31st, 2028). Up to \$10,000.00 of approved expenses may be utilized for “Program Start-Up” costs between March 1st, 2026, and May 31st, 2026. Organizations may only request a maximum of \$100,000.00 per year, for a total of \$200,000.00 (including any relevant start-up costs). Up to ten awards will be made.

General Funding Information:

The WCCMHB will award funding for Grassroots proposals based on target populations and priority areas as laid out in the Program Years 4-6 Strategic Plan. Target populations include Serious Mental Illness (18+), Serious Emotional Disturbances (3-21), Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (0-5), and Substance Use Disorders (all ages). All services must be for Winnebago County residents only. Proposals that include school-based services or holistic development services such as Social Emotional Learning (SEL), mindfulness, or mentorship programs will not be considered for this funding opportunity by the WCCMHB at this time.

Project proposals may include direct personnel or contracted professional services for the purposes of supporting the proposal’s identified priority area. Awarded programs will be reimbursed for approved expenses on an expenditure basis. Evidence of expenditures will be



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required for direct personnel and professional service contracts. Overhead costs will not require evidence of expenditures and will be calculated as a flat percentage based on budgeted direct personnel and/or contractual. Programs with direct personnel budget may use a flat-rate of 30% for overhead expenses, compared to 70% for direct personnel. A program with contractual services may use a flat-rate of 15% of contract costs for overhead and management expenses. Programs with both direct personnel and contract expenses shall seek guidance from WCCMHB to calculate a prorated flat-rate for overhead and management expenses.

Who May Apply:

- Not-for-Profit Corporations: Must be registered as a not-for-profit for at least three years prior to applying for funding, in good standing with the State of Illinois and established as a Section 501(c)3 under the Internal Revenue Code

In order to be eligible for Grassroots funding, organizations are required to:

1. Adhere to all requirements as listed in the WCCMHB Funding Policy;
2. Cannot currently be an awardee of the PY4-6 Core Program Grant;
3. Hold a Gold Star of Transparency, or higher, on Candid. Evidence of Gold Star of Transparency will be requested within the full application, should the Letter of Interest (LOI) be chosen to proceed to submit a full application;
4. Have, at a minimum;
 - Executive director or equivalent leadership position
 - Established personnel (if relevant) and board governance policies
 - Relevant insurance coverage (including but not limited to general liability, professional liability, workers' compensation, etc.); and
5. Meet one or both of the following criteria:
 - Be physically geographically aligned with the community they serve (all organizations must reside in Winnebago County);
 - Approaches to services and interventions are founded in local knowledge and first-hand experience with the challenges faced in the community.

Proposals that feature evidence-based and/or research-based practices will be prioritized. All organizations must submit a recent audit or professional financial review should the LOI be chosen to proceed to submit a full application. If neither was completed, rationale must be provided. Evidence of obtaining the Gold Star of Transparency on Candid will be requested within the application, should the LOI be chosen to proceed to submit a full application.

Through the funding application and review process, all organizations must demonstrate financial sustainability, accountability, reliability, stability, and appropriate service of value to the persons to be served, all as determined by the WCCMHB.

Submission and Timeline Details:

The WCCMHB is using Foundant for LOI and application proposals. The link to the portal and other WCCMHB resources can be found on the Funding Resources page of the WCCMHB website. The submission portal will be available for all LOI's from August 11th, 2025 to September 12th, 2025. All submissions are due at 5:00 pm CT on the day of the deadline.

The WCCMHB recognizes that smaller organizations may not have much experience with grant writing and management, yet may still wish to apply for WCCMHB funding. Therefore, LOI's that are invited to submit a full application will have from November 5th, 2025 to December 5th, 2025 to develop a mentor-mentee relationship with an experienced organization that will share its grant writing and grant management knowledge and experience. These organizations can be found at the applicant's discretion, as long as mentor organizations have the following criteria:

- At least three years of handling government funding (local, state, and/or federal monies);
- At least three years of experience with grant management and reporting;
 - Preference will be given towards agencies that have a team or position dedicated to grant management or compliance
- A similar mission and vision to the applicant's organization

Preference will be given to organizations that develop this mentor-mentee relationship. Should an organization apply to the Grassroots funding opportunity with a fiscal agent or sponsor, that meets the above criteria, the fiscal agent/sponsor will be considered the mentor.

LOI Process and Criteria:

Emphasis will be placed upon the proposal's strength in addressing each of the following criteria:

- Does this organization and proposal meet all the eligibility criteria?
- Does this proposal identify and address a mental health and/or substance abuse issue within the community?
- Is this proposal aligned with the WCCMHB Strategic Plan?
 - i.e. CSS Components, Target Populations, goals/impacts
- Is this proposal realistic to achieve?
 - i.e. cost-effectiveness, safety/risk concerns, appropriate accreditation/licensing

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LOI's will receive one of the following:

- Receive Application
- Receive with Modifications
- Deny

Application Process and Criteria, If LOI is Selected:

Emphasis will be placed upon the proposal's strength in addressing each of the following criteria:

- 1) **Agency Description:** i.e. Agency history, Insurance, Adequate Personnel, Governing Policies, Accreditation/Licensure
- 2) **Proposal Description:** i.e. Vision/Mission, Service Description, Definition of Population Served, Extent of Services (location, hours, etc.), Evidence-based or Research-based practice
- 3) **Mission & Vision:** i.e. CSS component, Target Population, Strategic Plan 2.0 Alignment, Collaborations
- 4) **Impacts:** i.e. Qualitative Data, Quantitative Data, Participant Experience
- 5) **Budget:** i.e. Budget items, direct/indirect costs, total amount requested

Applications will receive one of the following:

- Approve
- Deny

Evaluation of Proposals:

WCCMHB allocation and contracting decisions are made in meetings open to the public and live-streamed on the WCCMHB YouTube Page. Decisions will be based on statutory mandates and community priorities as laid out in the WCCMHB Strategic Plan.

The WCCMHB strives to ensure that the standard of services delivered are of the highest degree possible, that the WCCMHB is free from any negative influences caused by conflict of interest situations, and that there are equitable mental health system practices and outcomes in Winnebago County. Board members have a duty to avoid self-serving or conflict of interest situations by virtue of their positions or decision-making authority.

The WCCMHB Grassroots Rubric will be used as a guide in reaching funding allocations. WCCMHB reserves the right to not select a proposal or to submit a new notice of funding for re-defined services. WCCMHB also reserves the right to enter negotiations with selected providers for all or part of the proposal components based on its selection criteria.