

## Grant Writing Support Program Contractor

### Request for Services (RFS)

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation is seeking a qualified contractor to support the development and ongoing implementation of a new program aimed at providing grant writing support to its grantees. The hired vendor will work closely with Foundation staff to both develop and implement the program. This is expected to include identifying experienced grant writers, establishing processes that promote coordination among participating organizations, developing materials to promote the opportunity, matchmaking between participating organizations and selected grant writers, and creating feedback mechanisms to improve the program and measure its impact.

<b>RFS Release Date:</b>	January 17, 2024
<b>Questions Due:</b>	January 24, 2024
<b>Full Applications Due:</b>	February 15, 2024
<b>Contract Duration:</b>	May 2024 – May 2025 (12 months)
<b>Response Format:</b>	<b>Submit via <a href="#">online application portal</a></b>
<b>RFS Contact:</b>	<b>Marquita Mbonu</b> Director, Healthy Communities <a href="mailto:marquita.mbonu@bcbsncfoundation.org">marquita.mbonu@bcbsncfoundation.org</a>

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**Note:** Pre-submission inquiries regarding this opportunity may be addressed via email to [marquita.mbonu@bcbsncfoundation.org](mailto:marquita.mbonu@bcbsncfoundation.org). Questions will be answered individually and compiled into a Frequently Asked Questions document for everyone to see that is posted to the Foundation's website by January 29, 2024.

## **Background**

The Blue Cross NC Foundation has active grants with more than 120 nonprofit organizations, with different backgrounds, sizes, missions, and geographic locations, that work across our five focus areas: Access to Care, Early Childhood, Healthy Communities, Healthy Food, and Oral Health. Our grantees are committed to improving the health and well-being of North Carolina communities, and those living within them, by co-creating innovative strategies and solutions with community members and diverse stakeholders.

In order to achieve our goal of helping make North Carolina one of the healthiest states in the nation, we recognize the need to increase the flow of resources to our grantee partners and others working in the field so they can continue, and ultimately increase, their leadership and other activities to promote system changes that contribute to a healthier North Carolina. To this end, we are launching a new program to increase the dollars flowing from private and public entities – both in North Carolina and nationally – in order to support and expand capacity of organizations working in communities across the state. This is particularly important as COVID-era grants – which had specifically supported innovation and the development of community-based and community-engaged programs and infrastructure – come to a close.

This program will support Foundation grantees, and potentially other organizations over time, to engage professional grant writers for proposal development and submission to private, state, and federal funding opportunities.

## **Scope of Work and Deliverables (12 Months)**

The consultant will work closely with Foundation staff to co-design the initial approach for launching and coordinating the program. This will include obtaining input from grantee partners and other stakeholders, identifying grant writers, developing program priorities and parameters, and clarifying any decision-making and other processes to support program coordination. Throughout this engagement, Foundation staff will review and provide input on the program's development.

## **Potential Consultant Responsibilities**

- **Program Design and Implementation** – Responsibilities will involve designing and implementing the program closely with Foundation staff, with periodic input from grantees and other stakeholders. The contractor will need to identify a timeline and steps to successfully launch and coordinate the program.
- **Identify and Develop Relationships with Grant Writers** – Develop a diverse pool of relevant, experienced, successful grant writers to support the Foundation's grantee network. The contractor will be responsible for identifying, vetting, and recommending potential program grant writers and supporting the development of a scope of work. The Foundation will hold individual contracts with grant writers.
- **Matchmaking** – The contractor will be responsible for matchmaking between nonprofit organizations and suitable grant writers based on the needs and goals of the organization and the specific grant application. The contractor will also support nonprofits by offering resources they can use to set expectations and successfully manage their grant-writer consultant relationship. The contractor will assist with developing communications materials to market the program based on program priorities.

- **Establish and Implement Feedback Loops** – Develop a mechanism (e.g., feedback survey) to follow up with nonprofits during/after participation in the program and for the grant writers to provide feedback on the process. The feedback should be useful to inform the implementation of future work and understanding the impact of this program.
- **Regular Check-ins with Foundation Staff** – Schedule regular check-ins with Foundation staff throughout the development and launch of this new program. Key early work will include developing a mutual understanding of roles and the specific scope for deliverables, regular reporting, and a process to support the Foundation’s awareness and approval of resource requirements to implement each match.

**Deliverables related to the development and on-going implementation of the program include:**

- **Grant Writers** – Recommend and vet experienced grant writers considering grantee needs and criteria. We are estimating that a diverse pool of 5-10 experienced grant writers will be necessary to deliver on our goal of serving at least 20 organizations a year. The contractor will develop a list of relevant and experienced grant writers who can support Foundation grantees with submitting competitive funding applications. The Foundation will review all recommendations and approve all or a subset of the recommendations and hold the contracts.
- **Intake and Tracking System** – Identify/develop and utilize software and programs to efficiently track and manage grantee requests for support. By the end of the contract, the Foundation should have an established intake and tracking system for the program. We’d like to establish an infrastructure that can accommodate a varying number of participants – ranging from a minimum of 20 in the first year to potentially more than 100 based on growth of the program.
- **Project Plan for Matchmaking** – Develop a project plan for matchmaking that is relevant for use with different funding applications, a pool of participating grant writers, and the variety of nonprofit organizations that will use the program. This may include developing decision support tools for participating organizations to support a successful match. The approach should consider and be reflective of a diverse range of organizational contexts reflective of the nonprofit sector in the state.
- **Check-in Points with Nonprofit Participants** – Develop and implement tools and an appropriate timeline for checking in with nonprofit participants to gauge progress and provide additional resources or support, as needed.
- **Reports/ Updates** – Develop regular check-in cadence with Foundation staff and provide regular (e.g., monthly or quarterly) reports highlighting program and feedback information.
- **Implementation and Ongoing Coordination of the Program** – Following program development and launch, the contractor will continue to use the framework to support ongoing coordination. Future work will be informed by what we learn within the first 12 months as a result of this initial contract.

### Desired Skills, Qualities, and Attributes

- Proven experience in providing consulting support for grant writing to a diverse range of nonprofits, resulting in successful funding applications at the state and national level with both private and public entities.
- Active participation in grant writer networks and/or existing partnerships to identify relevant grant writers.
- Excellent organizational and project management skills, with strong interpersonal skills.
- Demonstrated experience in program management and coordination, while ensuring that an equitable and inclusive approach is maintained throughout the work.
- Ability to establish and maintain relationships with both nonprofits and Foundation staff.
- Knowledge of the nonprofit sector in North Carolina.

### Anticipated Budget and Timeline

Based on others' experience in the field, we anticipate this contract will be under \$150,000 for this work with additional funds for grant writer contracts. However, we have the flexibility to adjust based on budget proposals. We anticipate this contract will be structured with fixed and variable components to support the planning and startup phases of the work and initial coordination of the program.

Key Activity	Date
RFS Released	January 17, 2024
Submit Questions About the RFS or Scope of Work	By January 24, 2024
Summary of Answers Posted to Website	January 29, 2024
Proposals Due	February 15, 2024
Finalist Conversations	March 25- April 3, 2024
Decision Notification	April 2024
Finalize Scope of Work and Contract Start	May 2024
Contract End	May 30, 2025

### Proposal Requirements & Process

The Foundation and contractor will collaborate to develop a specific work plan and scope of work prior to starting the contract. The process to select the contractor will include three steps.

- Interested applicants will submit a brief proposal that responds to the prompts in the Proposal section below.
- Foundation staff will review all submissions and schedule calls with select applicants with whom we'd like to further explore the opportunity.

- A single finalist will be identified to engage the Foundation in developing a full scope of work that will include an initial planning period and implementation.

To be considered for this opportunity, applicants must complete an [Online Application](#) to provide information about their organization, prior experience, and proposed approach. Proposals should be limited to five pages. **Proposals are due by Thursday, February 15 at 11:59PM ET.**

**As part of the online application process, applicants will provide answers to the following:**

1. Briefly describe your organization, including its mission, vision, and how you center equity in your work.
2. Describe your prior experience relevant to the proposed project. What have you learned that will be helpful for working with nonprofits in North Carolina?
3. What are your initial thoughts on how you would identify, recruit, and vet skilled grant writers? How might your previous experiences or relationships facilitate this?
4. What are the key considerations and questions you would consider when matching grant writers and Foundation grantees?
5. Please submit a preliminary (high-level) project plan outlining:
  - a. Main deliverables and expected timeline (i.e., general expectations for how long each piece will take to launch. e.g., program design will take place over “x” months).
  - b. Method/approach to grantee participation in the development of the program, including any special considerations to promote equitable access to this offering.
6. What challenges do you anticipate and how might we navigate these?
7. Please provide bios for anyone working on the project and what their role might be.

### **Budget**

Based on others’ experience in the field, we anticipate this contract will be under \$150,000 for this work with additional funds for grant writer contracts. However, we have the flexibility to adjust based on budget proposals. We anticipate this contract will be structured with fixed and variable components to support the planning, startup phases of the work, and initial coordination of the program.

Please submit a budget based on the required resources needed to complete this work over a 12-month period. *(Not included in the page count.)*

### **References**

Please provide two references from nonprofit organizations that can speak to your work. *NOTE: We would not contact references until the final stage.*

**Proposal Review & Evaluation**

Proposals will be reviewed based on the requirements of this RFS. A preliminary review will be completed by Foundation staff. Finalist interviews will allow for conversations to take place regarding submitted proposals and will help to round out the understanding of approach and experience. We anticipate a decision by the end of April 2024.

**Contract Duration**

The duration of the contract is from May 2024 – May 30, 2025.

**Contact for Questions**

Organizations interested in this opportunity are welcome to submit questions by January 24, 2024 to be included in an FAQ which will be posted to the Foundation website by January 29, 2024.

Please direct questions to Marquita Mbonu, Director, Healthy Communities at [Marquita.mbonu@bcbsncfoundation.org](mailto:Marquita.mbonu@bcbsncfoundation.org).

**Assumptions**

Blue Cross NC Foundation is not liable for costs incurred by any firm or individual associated with the preparation of a response to this RFS.

**About the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation**

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation is a private, charitable foundation established as an independent entity by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina in 2000. Over the past two decades, the organization has worked with - and supported - nonprofit organizations, government entities, and community partnerships across the state, investing \$220 million into North Carolina through more than 1,400 grants. Within its focus areas of early childhood, healthy communities, healthy food, and oral health, the Foundation strives to address the key drivers of health, taking a flexible approach designed to meet identified needs in partnership with the community. Learn more at [bcbsncfoundation.org](http://bcbsncfoundation.org).