



The Texas Equitable Vaccine Uptake Fund: Invitation to Funders

THE NEED

At the beginning of May 2021, Texas reached full vaccination of 27% of its population against the COVID-19 virus. Experts place a vaccination rate goal for herd immunity purposes at 75-90%. Even when controlling for incomplete data on race, the vaccination rates for Hispanic and Black residents in Texas lag relative to the population numbers. As the COVID-19 vaccine supply becomes more readily available, some communities face barriers in accessing the vaccine and some remain hesitant to get vaccinated, as shown in several recent research reports. The reasons for the hesitancy vary across groups including lack of facts about the vaccines, historical mistrust of the healthcare system or government, and politicization of the pandemic.

We know that communities of color and other marginalized groups have suffered disproportionately and continue to be at greater risk for adverse health and economic impacts from the pandemic. While government and private providers play a critical role in vaccine uptake, we know that trusting relationships in communities of color and other marginalized populations are critical to increasing access and overcoming hesitancy. Many of these trusted actors need strengthened linkages with health providers and/or cannot accept government funding to support their vaccine uptake activities. This leaves a critical gap for private philanthropy to fill.

ABOUT THE FUND

Philanthropy has played a key and diverse role in supporting communities during the pandemic. Inspired by early conversations with Grantmakers in Health, a group of Texas foundations identified a critical equity-focused need in which Texas philanthropy can play an important role:

Reducing inequities in the uptake of vaccines.

The **Texas Equitable Vaccine Uptake Fund** (the Fund) provides grant dollars to community-facing groups around the state to address COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and barriers to access among vulnerable and historically marginalized populations, including people of color and under-resourced rural and urban communities. Intended grantees of the Fund are the organizations with existing relationships in these communities. Grants will support outreach and engagement activities meant to directly result in increased vaccination rates among the people whom the organizations serve.

With the numerous demands on funders' time and resources, the Fund provides an opportunity for funders to support meaningful work to protect the health of vulnerable Texans and support community public health goals. The Fund has selected an excellent management team that can

deliver efficiencies in the process of granting funds and confidence in good stewardship of philanthropic dollars.

Eligible Grantee Organizations

Tax exempt organizations, primarily 501(c)(3) non-profits, and fiscal sponsors for organizations that may be smaller will be eligible for these grants. The Fund seeks to support organizations with existing connections to the target communities. The Fund is not intended to be a source for pass-through funding for other organizations to re-grant, except for organizations working in a strategic collaboration and sharing dollars in alignment with the goals of this Fund.

Timing

Now that the vaccine is readily available to all residents over the age of 16 and authorities anticipate approval for vaccines for children in the summer, time is of the essence. The Fund launched in early April 2021 with an initial round of funding to occur in May and a subsequent round soon after. Grant periods will be for six months.

The evolving nature of the pandemic and the vaccine roll-out process requires a planned level of flexibility. The Fund has initial plans for an 18-month timeframe with the intent to adjust as needed for subsequent funding rounds.

Geography

The service area is the State of Texas. The Fund will accommodate the geographic limitations that any participating funder may have.

Several communities throughout the state have already deployed a focused approach for their service area, so the Fund seeks to-coordinate with those efforts to prevent duplication and work to offer resources in all areas of the state.

Grant Size

Based on lessons from grantmaking for 2020 Census Complete Count initiatives, the Fund anticipates offering a wide range of grant awards. The Fund will remain responsive to the local needs and strategies of groups carrying out the work at the grassroots level.

Reporting & Learning

The Fund will intentionally capture the outputs and outcomes of grantee activities, in addition to lessons learned, for future collaborative efforts in two interim Fund update reports and a final Fund Impact Report. These will be shared with all funders who give to the Fund.

LEADERSHIP

A Governing Committee for the Fund is setting the direction, priorities, and grantmaking strategy. The Episcopal Health Foundation (EHF), the Meadows Foundation and Methodist Healthcare Ministries (MHM) comprise the initial members of the Governing Committee, with additional members anticipated to join soon.

A Grants Review Committee is being assembled to evaluate funding proposals and make recommendations for funding. Representatives of participating funders will comprise its membership.

The Greater Houston Community Foundation (GHCF) serves as the fund administrator. GHCF will receive funds from participating funders, manage the grantmaking process from solicitation of applications to close-out of completed grants, and support the Governing and Grants Review Committees as needed.

Funders that make a significant contribution to the Fund, relative to their annual grantmaking, are eligible to serve on the Governing Committee. Funders contributing \$100,000 or more may appoint a representative to the Grants Review Committee.

OPPORTUNITY

The fund leadership set an opening goal of raising \$5 million by June 1 for the statewide effort with two rounds of funding to be granted by July 2021. As of May 1, more than \$2 million has been raised in early support with additional gifts under consideration among prospective partners. The group anticipates the need for additional resources and will use vaccine uptake data and reports on community progress to inform any subsequent funding goals. Every gift makes an impact, and we invite you to join this initiative to ensure an equitable uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine across the State of Texas. The Fund is grateful to the donors listed below for their early vote of confidence in the Texas Equitable Vaccine Uptake Fund:

Episcopal Health Foundation
Meadows Foundation
Methodist Healthcare Ministries

Arnold Ventures
Ben and Maytee Fisch Foundation
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
Lyda Hill Philanthropies
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

For further information, please contact:

Elena Marks
Episcopal Health Foundation
emarks@episcopalhealth.org

Oanh Maroney-Omitade
Methodist Healthcare Ministries
omaroney@mhmc.org

Kathy Smith
The Meadows Foundation
ksmith@mfi.org

Amanda Timm
Consultant to
Episcopal Health Foundation & the Fund
Amanda.timm.713@gmail.com