

SUMMARY

The Basic Needs Giving Partnership (BNGP) envisions thriving, equitable communities across Northeast Wisconsin. Throughout a 10-county area, we invest in local and regional solutions that address root causes of poverty in alignment with our values of trust and collaboration, curiosity and learning, and equity with a systems-based approach.

Grants in this cycle will provide **multi-year flexible funding** for **collaborative systems change projects**. We define systems change as collaborative efforts that aim to shift and transform policies, practices, mindsets, and decision-making structures that hold a problem in place.

We will fund efforts that align with one or more of the following grant priorities:

- Early Care and Education (ages birth to 5)
- Housing Access
- Mental Health
- Substance Use

Preference will be given to organizations that apply an equity lens to their work.

Multi-year Award Amount: Up to \$300,000

Grant Duration: 3 years

To Apply: Submit an Intent to Apply form by Friday, April 11, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. (CST)

ELIGIBILITY

We invite proposals from organizations that meet the following criteria:

- You are an organization with a 501(c)(3) status, a governmental body such as a school or municipality, or you have a fiscal sponsor that is an eligible organization.
- Your initiative is focused within one or more of these geographic areas: Brown, Calumet, Green Lake, Kewaunee, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, Waupaca, Waushara, and Winnebago counties and the Oneida Nation.
- Your initiative focuses on at least one of the grant priorities: Early Care and Education (ages birth to 5), Housing Access, Mental Health, and Substance Use.
- Your initiative focuses on systems change—aims to address the root cause(s) of why a problem continues to exist—and is working in collaboration with the community to affect this change.
- Your organization does not currently have a BNGP multi-year grant.

GRANT PRIORITIES

This cycle will support organizations whose systems change initiative focuses on at least one of these priority goals:

Early Care and Education (ages birth to 5): All families have access to timely, affordable, and quality child care. Communities are supported by child care options that meet the needs of families, quality care that supports the early learning and development of infants and young children, and funding models that provide sustainable support for birth to 5 systems of care.

Housing Access: All households have access to timely, safe, affordable, and supportive housing. Communities are supported with the housing options needed for all life stages and circumstances, a Housing First approach to permanent housing (housing needs come before anything less urgent like getting a job), and affordable housing units that meet the needs of all household sizes and incomes.

Mental Health: All individuals and families have access to timely, affordable, and quality mental health services that honor the needs, goals, and supports of each person seeking care. Communities have a system of care that provides peer, community, and clinical mental health care to infants, youth, and adults and funding models, including insurance coverage, that provide sustainable compensation for mental health services.

Substance Use: All individuals and families have access to timely, affordable, and quality substance use services that honor the needs, goals, and supports of each person seeking care. Communities have a system of care that provides peer, community, and clinical substance use support and funding models, including insurance coverage, that provide sustainable compensation for treatment and recovery services.

To see what advancing these goals could look like, please see these [Grant Priority Examples](#).

SYSTEMS CHANGE, EQUITY, & COLLABORATION

Multi-year grants will support collaborative systems change initiatives. Systems change takes time. We believe multi-year grants give organizations the time needed to examine the deeper causes of poverty, build relationships and trust, and foster shared leadership—including with community partners and people who are directly impacted—and to reimagine equitable solutions to complex community problems.

What do we mean by systems change? We define systems change as efforts that address the root causes of the most pressing needs in our community by transforming policies, practices, mindsets, and decision-making structures. Bureaucracy, barriers to service, and policy decisions (or indecision) create inequities and hold poverty and other complex issues in place. When systems aren't working, it leads to overwhelmed service providers and leaves people and communities without access, choices, or opportunities to what they need to thrive (quality child care, stable housing, etc.).

Systems change efforts often take the shape of policy advocacy and community-driven initiatives aimed at achieving equitable, long-lasting solutions to complex community problems. This type of work focuses on building relationships and trust to foster a shared vision, aligned goals, and collaborative action across organizations, agencies, and sectors. By engaging in systems change efforts, we are asked to challenge our assumptions about a problem and why it persists, reflect on our own role in maintaining the status quo, and work across community to reimagine and transform how the work is done to achieve long-lasting, equitable solutions.

Policy advocacy: efforts aimed at influencing and actively working to equitably change public policy (e.g. legislation, government budgets, ordinances, and administrative rules). Activities might include developing policy strategy, public awareness efforts to build support for policy change, relationship and coalition building, shifting narratives and mindsets around the issue and the policy solution, meeting with decision makers, speaking before administrative bodies, and more.

Example: an organization coordinates an advocacy initiative that engages mental health providers, parents with children who need mental health services, nonprofits, government agencies, and schools to influence policy aimed at expanding Medicaid mental health coverage for children.

Community-driven solutions: brings together organizations, stakeholders, and people who are directly impacted around a purpose to equitably address a community-level problem (such as child care deserts, housing instability, inability to access mental health services) by significantly changing or reimagining current processes and practices across organizations and agencies. Activities might include coalition building and/or backbone support, sharing leadership and decision-making within the initiative, mapping out current process/practices, developing an action plan, shifting narratives and mindsets around the issue to foster community-wide support around the issue and the solution, ensuring resources and supports are available for critical organizations to implement change, and more.

Example: a coalition of housing providers, advocates who have lived experience with housing instability, employers, and municipal planners work together to ensure unconditional, immediate, and permanent housing by equipping organizations with the support needed to create and implement a plan to advance a housing first approach in their community.

What’s the difference between direct services and projects that change systems? Creating a community where everyone thrives requires responding to people’s most immediate needs while also focusing on long-term change. Direct service offers urgent relief to people in need where systems change goes upstream to address the root of why folks are in need in the first place. It's the difference between providing emergency rental assistance for people facing eviction amid high rent increases (direct service) and advocating for policy change to increase the number of affordable housing units (systems change). Below are examples of direct service and systems change activities.

Direct Service Activities	Systems Change Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Addresses the here and now, responds to immediate and short-term needs of a community ● Offers programs and services that meet peoples’ direct needs ● Provides skills development, training, and education at an individual level ● Distributes resources such as food, clothing, etc. ● Refers individuals in need to direct services and programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seeks a long-term or permanent solution to a problem ● Focuses on building relationships and trust with partners and community members ● Challenges the status quo ● Advocates for changes to public policy, ordinances, and regulations ● Changes the “rules” to the system across many organizations/agencies, leading to reduced barriers and increased access ● Intentionally shifts decision-making power and centers people who have lived experience to have voice and leadership ● Collaborates and coordinates action across organizations and sectors

Example 1, addressing the lack of childcare in a community due to workforce shortages:

Direct services might look like providing workforce development training to ensure a skilled workforce...while systems change might look like advocating for policies for sustainable funding to ensure family-supporting wages and benefits for childcare workers.

Example 2, timely access to substance use treatment:

Direct services might look like providing crisis counseling in a community where people in need of substance use services have to wait several months to access treatment and supportive services...while community-driven systems change might look like agencies and treatment providers working together to create a no-wrong-door approach that ensures anyone can access treatment within 14 days or less.

How can you tell if your project is systems-change focused? *

- Does your proposed initiative primarily work directly with individuals to meet an immediate need (for example, shelter, child care, counseling)? If so, it's likely direct service work and not systems change.
- Are you aiming to solve the issue permanently? If so, you might be doing systems change work.
- Are you listening to diverse perspectives, questioning long-held assumptions and practices, and asking what ability and responsibility your organization has to affect change? If so, you might be doing systems change work.
- Does your initiative center and engage people directly impacted by the issue you are working to address? If so, you might be doing systems change work.
- Are you working to impact policies or to change the "rules" to how the work is done across organizations/agencies while shifting decision-making power to include people impacted? If so, you are probably doing systems change work.

**Inspired by Social Justice Partners LA*

What do we mean by applying an equity lens? What are we looking for? Equity is about each of us having fair and just access to opportunity, participation, and belonging—where all of us have what we need to thrive. We recognize the poverty in our region does not impact all communities equally. BNGP believes in acknowledging the wealth and power imbalances deeply embedded in our systems and institutions. Achieving our vision of *thriving, equitable communities* will require us to address these disparities as we seek economic well-being for everyone in Northeast Wisconsin.

Efforts that address systems are about disrupting the things that are holding the problem in place. This also applies to how we approach community change work itself. People who are held at the margins of community and who are experiencing the greatest barriers to opportunity are often left out of the conversations and decisions that impact their lives.

For BNGP, advancing equity in this work means we are challenging our assumptions about why a problem exists, each of us assessing our roles in the system—the barriers we may be holding in place and our ability to effect change—and shifting power to include people who are directly impacted. This means working closely with groups and communities who have been historically under-resourced and excluded through cultural and systemic practices based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and/or geography.

Priority will be given to efforts applying an equity lens by:

- Deepening their understanding of who is experiencing the greatest barriers to the issue at hand.
- Building relationships with and authentically engaging people who have lived experience with the issues the effort is addressing.
- Shifting resources and decision-making power to historically underinvested and underrepresented communities.

What are we looking for in collaboration? Complex community issues can't be solved by one organization alone. Systems change initiatives invest in building relationships, listening to learn and better understand, and aligning toward a shared purpose to solve a problem. These partnerships work at multiple levels across organizations and sectors to create deep and lasting change.

We recognize that nonprofits already work together in many ways, and we want to support collaboration that feels authentic and meaningful. We are open to flexible approaches to how initiatives engage partners and people with lived experience. Below are some examples of what collaboration could look like—other forms of working together can also apply.

- An organization whose primary purpose is to coordinate and align many partners to advance the work (such as backbone support, a collective impact initiative, etc.)
- A single organization actively listening to and partnering with organizations and people with lived experience toward the success of the work
- Multiple organizations working together to address an issue, working across sectors and with community to find a solution to the problem

GRANT AWARDS

The Basic Needs Giving Partnership will be investing \$3,000,000 into multi-year grants this cycle. Depending on the range of requests, we anticipate awarding 10-15 grants across our 10-county region.

Award Amounts: BNGP will accept requests for *up to \$300,000*

Grant Duration: 3 years

Funding can be used to support a number of needs, including (but not limited to): subgrants, stipends, staffing, overhead costs, project costs, technical assistance, training, and events. We encourage organizations to include the full and real costs to support and implement their proposed initiative.

Grants will be made to advance the work of existing projects and to cultivate new or emerging efforts. To help you consider ways that funding could support your work, we've provided examples of support needs current and new initiatives may have. Please don't be limited to these examples.

Existing initiatives: These efforts may have years of effort behind them. They have established trust and deepened relationships with partners, created shared goals, developed strategies and a plan for action, and may have started to take action to address the problem. You may be looking for support to enhance the initiative's capacity, expand relationships, engage new sectors and/or people with lived experience, broaden your reach, revamp strategies based on what you're learning, and/or begin to implement your plans.

Emerging initiatives: These efforts may be new or in an early stage. Organizations involved may have a general sense of the problem, initial relationships may be established, and you may have begun to identify possible solutions. You may be looking for support to engage more partners, deepen your community’s collective understanding of the problem, establish shared goals, and build alignment and ownership as you develop strategies and create a plan for action.

If you’re in the early stages of a systems change project and don’t feel that you’re quite ready to apply for a multi-year grant with us, consider an application in our single-year grant cycle. Likewise, if your project is well underway and you have a specific, short-term need that you’re seeking funding for, the single-year cycle might be for you. A one-year grant could provide your systems change effort with funding for planning, capacity building, engaging historically excluded communities in new conversations, policy efforts in the community, and more.

Reach out to Stephanie (stephanie@bngpwi.org) if you’d like to discuss your proposal or to talk through which BNGP grant cycle might be the best fit for your project.

APPLICATION & TIMELINE

Our multi-year grant cycle has a two-step application process. The first step is to submit an Intent to Apply form, which provides us with a summary of your request and lets us see if your project is a good fit. Submissions will be reviewed to determine who will be considered to submit a full proposal. Invited organizations will receive additional details and staff support in submitting their full application.

Important Dates:

April 11:	Intent to Apply form is due by 5:00 p.m. (CST)
Late May:	Invitations to complete full grant applications will be sent
July 10:	Full applications are due by 5:00 p.m. (CST)
Late August:	Awards will be announced

To Apply: Visit the [grants page](#) on our website to learn how to create an account in the BNGP grants portal. Once registered, you’ll be able to sign in and access your account in this and future grant cycles. From your account, you’ll be able to complete and submit the Intent to Apply form. You will also have the option to upload video responses to the proposal questions or to provide a written response.

We’ve compiled [FAQs](#) to support organizations as they consider applying. You can also preview the [intent to apply questions](#) and [full application questions](#) outside of the grant portal.

If you have any questions along the way or would like to set up a time to discuss your proposal, please email Stephanie Gyldenvand, Director of Grantmaking (stephanie@bngpwi.org).

DECISION MAKING

Intent to Apply submissions will be reviewed by staff for eligibility and alignment with the grant guidelines. Staff will prepare recommendations for grant committee consideration, and the committee will make final decisions on which organizations will be invited to submit a full proposal. Each full proposal will be reviewed by staff and grant committee members. The committee will discuss and approve funding decisions. Grants approved by the committee are sent to the BNGP board to affirm.