



The Texas Equitable Vaccine Uptake Fund: Invitation to Funders

THE NEED

By the middle of June 2021, Texas reached full vaccination against the COVID-19 virus for nearly 40% of its total population. Experts place a vaccination rate goal for community public health 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 vaccine, 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 **Your Shot Texas - 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 at-risk 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 philanthropy to support meaningful work to protect the health of vulnerable Texans and advance 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 12 and authorities anticipate approval for vaccines for younger children later this year, time is of the essence. The Fund launched in early April 2021 with an initial round of grants made in late May and a subsequent round to be launched in June. 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.

Initial Grants

In the first round of awards, the Fund made grants totaling \$403,800 to the following organizations:

Acts of Hope Center
Ark-Tex Council of Governments
Area Health Education Center of the Mid Rio Grande Border Area of Texas
Boat People SOS, Inc. – Houston
Gulf Coast Leadership Council
East Texas Immigrant Advocacy & Resource Center
Hispanic Leadership & Management Foundation
La Union del Pueblo (LUPE)
Mi Familia Vota Education Fund
Texas Organizing Project Education Fund
The Immunization Partnership

LEADERSHIP

A Governing Committee for the Fund is setting the direction, priorities, and grantmaking strategy. The Arnold Ventures, Episcopal Health Foundation (EHF), the Meadows Foundation and Methodist Healthcare Ministries (MHM) comprise the current members of the Governing Committee.

A Grants Review Committee evaluates grant applications and makes recommendations for funding. Representatives of participating funders comprise its membership.

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

OPPORTUNITY

The group anticipates the need for additional resources and will use vaccine uptake data and reports on community progress to inform any subsequent funding decisions. 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 Your Shot Texas Fund:

Episcopal Health Foundation
Meadows Foundation
Methodist Healthcare Ministries

Arnold Ventures
Cullen Foundation
Cullen Trust for Health Care
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health

Carl B. & Florence E. King Foundation
Lyda Hill Philanthropies
The Rockwell Fund, Inc.
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

For more information, see the Your Shot Texas website:

<http://bit.ly/YourShotTexas>