



The Funds at Five

June 2026



— Massachusetts —
COMMUNITY HEALTH AND
HEALTHY AGING FUNDS

Executive Summary

The Massachusetts Community Health and Healthy Aging Funds (The Funds) distributed its first grants in 2020 following the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) revision and update of Massachusetts’s Determination of Need (DoN) regulation. The initiative was created to distribute community health funding more equitably across the Commonwealth. The Funds at Five Report demonstrates the impact five years of investment have made across Massachusetts and celebrates the immense work of The Funds’ awardees.

The Funds distributes grants through three funding streams: Community Health Improvement Planning (CHIP); Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change (PSE); and Healthy Aging. The report shows the initiative’s impact across three categories: the united approach across all three funding streams, the focus on the social

determinants of health, and the community centered strategies awardees apply to build healthier communities.

While the awardees work across funding streams, The Funds uses an approach that identifies various essential components of systems change. Five such components are a focus on national, state, or local policies; shifting internal or organizational policies, practices, and processes; resource distribution and access to services; relationships, connections, and community engagement; power shifting; and mental models, beliefs, and narratives. Across all three funding streams, awardees focus on each of these five components. Notably, 83% of awardees work to improve the quality of connections and communication between organizations, partners, and community members. Read more about The Funds’ approach across funding streams on page 14.

Percentage of Awardees Working on Each Component of Systems Change	CHIP	PSE	Healthy Aging	Total
Relationships, connections, and community engagement	100%	82%	67%	83%
Resource distribution and access to services	62%	48%	67%	59%
National, state, and local policies	8%	63%	67%	46%
Internal or organizational policies, practices, and processes	69%	44%	17%	43%
Powershifting	31%	41%	33%	35%
Mental models, beliefs, and narratives	31%	33%	33%	32%

The Funds also focuses on the social determinants of health (SDoH), or the factors that influence health and well-being. While awardees work across multiple social determinants, there are four that characterize much of the work across funding streams: built environment; social environment; housing; and education, employment, and access to health services. A majority of awardees work in the built and social environment in the PSE (60%) and the Healthy Aging (70%) funding streams. Read more about The Funds' commitment to addressing the SDoH on page 24.

Percentage of Awardees Working on Core Social Determinants of Health	PSE	Healthy Aging	Average
➤ Social Environment	29%	45%	37%
➤ Built Environment	31%	25%	28%
➤ Housing	24%	15%	20%
➤ Education, Employment, and Access to Health Services	16%	15%	15%

Finally, The Funds measures impact based on the strategies that awardees pursue. Awardees do their work in a variety of ways, including building power with residents as best as they can. Five primary strategies that awardees use are advocacy and organizing; storytelling; pursuing partnerships; power shifting; and changing internal policies and practices. Read more about The Funds' multiple strategies for achieving change on page 43.

This report details the many ways these impacts have been achieved and shares the tools, approaches, and commitments that will sustain future success through this initiative.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Massachusetts Community Health & Healthy Aging Funds (The Funds) team has so many people to thank for the ongoing success of this initiative. Your support, resources, attention, brilliance, and perspective have been invaluable to every step of this project's history. This report celebrates five years of The Funds and the team hopes that as you read and review this report, you see yourselves and all the contributions you've made to build this project. We specifically want to name our funder, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, whose vision and guidance allows this work to continue. We want to thank our awardees—past and present—who show up consistently and have contributed their lived experience and expertise as well as implementing diverse approaches and strategies that have made positive impacts across the Commonwealth. We want to thank our designer, Olga Vanegas, for her expertise in creating a visually compelling report. Finally, we want to extend a deep appreciation to every member of HRIA's Funds team who drafted, edited, read, and contributed to this report. We would not have reached this milestone without the contributions of every person who has ever touched this project and all the work it has supported.



Dear Partners and Community Members,

Every great transformation begins with a spark—an idea, a moment, or an investment that shifts power and possibility. The Massachusetts Community Health and Healthy Aging Funds was created to ignite these sparks across the Commonwealth. By redirecting the energy and resources of our health system into the very roots of health—housing, opportunity, safety, and belonging—The Funds are fueling communities that are building the future they deserve.

Since their launch, The Funds has invested over \$45 million to support bold, upstream solutions that address the root causes of health inequities. These initiatives are reshaping systems and building a future where health, opportunity, and belonging are accessible to all.

In the pages ahead, you will discover the tangible impacts of these investments and the bold, community-led strategies behind them. From housing and racial justice to healthy aging and cross-sector collaboration, each initiative is a spark lighting the way toward a

Massachusetts where health, housing, and opportunity are promises—not privileges.

This impact report highlights the incredible work of our grantees—coalitions, organizations, and advocates—who are leading the way with courage, creativity, and commitment. Their stories demonstrate what is possible when communities are trusted to lead and institutions follow.

Thank you for being part of this movement. Together, we are proving that equity is not just a value—it is a verb.

With gratitude,

Dr. Robert Goldstein
Commissioner, MA Department of Public Health



Every great transformation begins with a spark—an idea, a moment, or an investment that shifts power and possibility.



Photo caption: Lawyers for Civil Rights

Introduction

The Massachusetts Community Health and Healthy Aging Funds (The Funds) envisions a world where all communities in the Commonwealth thrive. The Funds was created to support communities that have been historically excluded from a system that prioritized investments in communities where hospitals were located.

In 2017, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) completed a landmark revision to the Determination of Need (DoN) regulation paving the way for this vision, which distributes resources that were once concentrated in areas in and around Boston, to reach all parts of the Commonwealth. Administered by Health Resources in Action (HRiA), a non-profit organization working to improve and reimagine public health, The Funds provides grants to organizations and communities through equitable grantmaking and capacity-building to address the

root causes of health inequities.

Central to The Funds' mission is a commitment to dismantling structural racism and advancing health and racial equity. The Funds' team recognizes that systems and policies that have long marginalized underrepresented populations shape health outcomes. By investing in community-led solutions and fostering policy, systems, and environmental change, we aim to create conditions where all people can thrive.

Grounded in the principles of trust-based philanthropy and an analysis of health inequity centered on the social determinants of health, The Funds partners with municipalities, coalitions, and community-based organizations to address root causes of inequities.



The Funds is composed of three funding streams to meet these goals:

- 1 Community Health Improvement Planning (CHIP)
- 2 Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) Change
- 3 Healthy Aging

Together, these values guide our work to disrupt barriers to health and catalyze lasting change across Massachusetts:

- **Intentionality** – Embedding equity in every decision
- **Ambition** – Driving bold, transformative change
- **Community-Centeredness** – Elevating solutions from those closest to the challenges
- **Accountability** – Building trust through transparency and responsiveness
- **Growth Mindset** – Learning and evolving to meet community needs

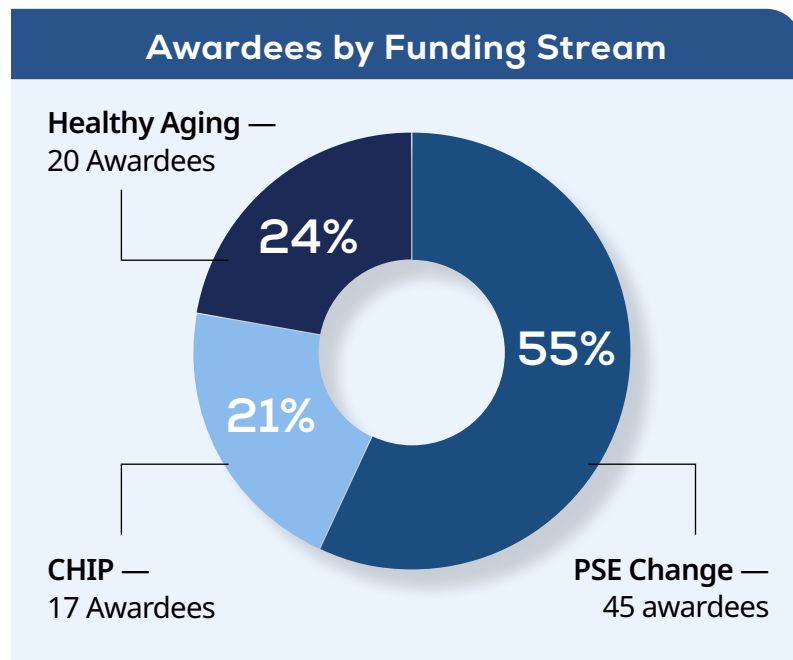


Photo caption: Family Nurturing Center

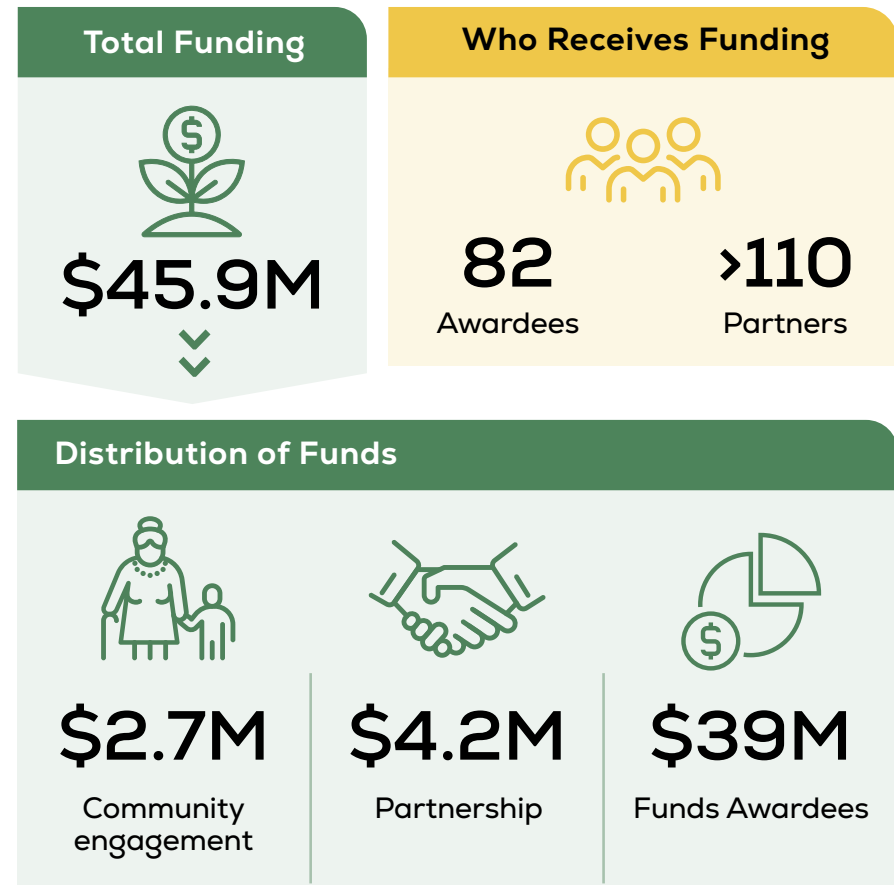
Investing in Community Health & Healthy Aging

Before discussing impact stories from The Funds to date, we want to share high-level insights from the initiative so far. In this section, we share the number of awardees the initiative has served, the number of dollars distributed, where our awardees work, and the types of individuals they serve.

Most of the data in this report pertain to awardees granted in 2020 and 2022 through data collected via surveys, group discussions, and interviews. See [appendix](#) for more information on methodology.

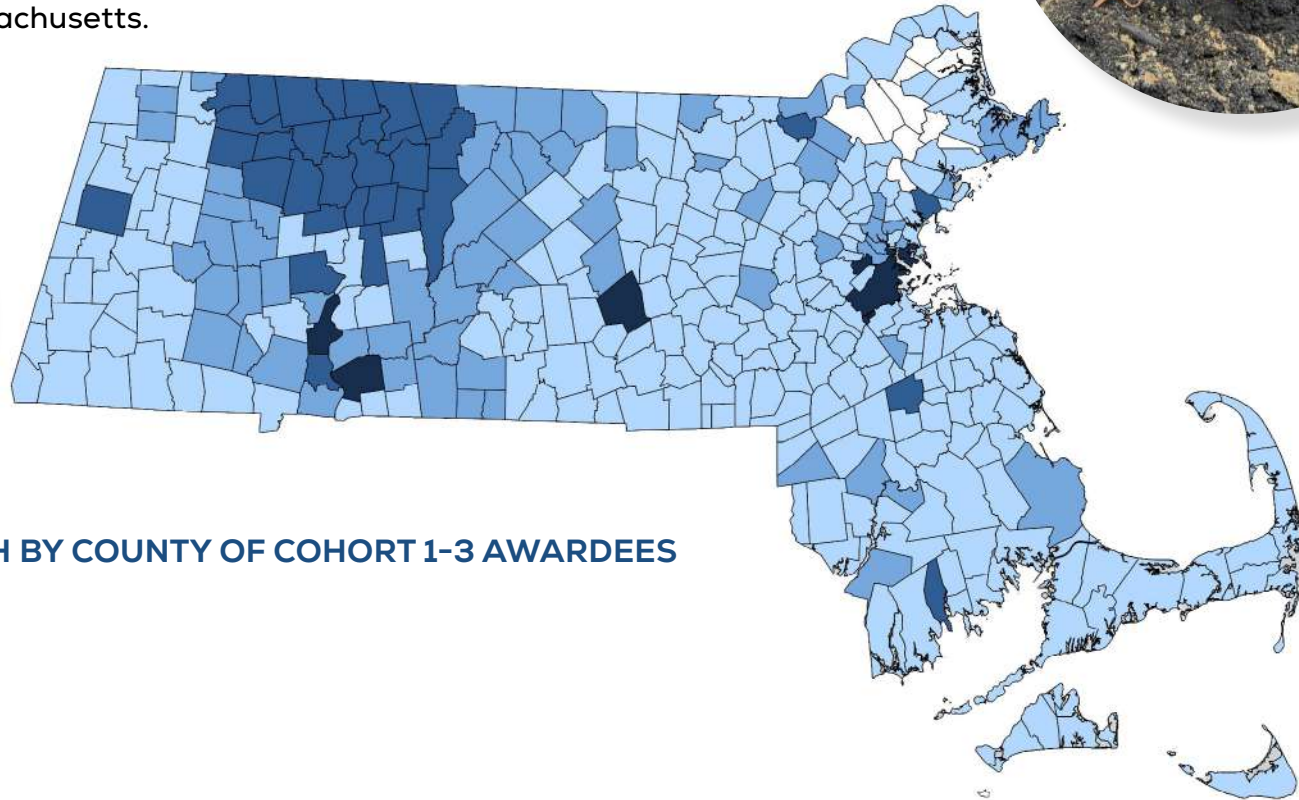


OVERVIEW OF AWARDEES FROM 2020-2022



Geography

One core tenet of The Funds is the equitable redistribution of resources throughout the state through grants. The map below is a visual representation of the geographic reach of grantees from cohorts 1, 2, and 3. Darker colors on the map represent regions where more awardees focused their efforts. Notably, The Funds distributed considerable resources throughout western and northwestern Massachusetts, a region that has traditionally experienced less financial investment compared to more urban areas in eastern Massachusetts.



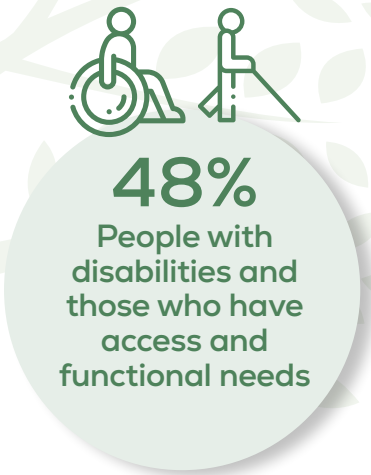
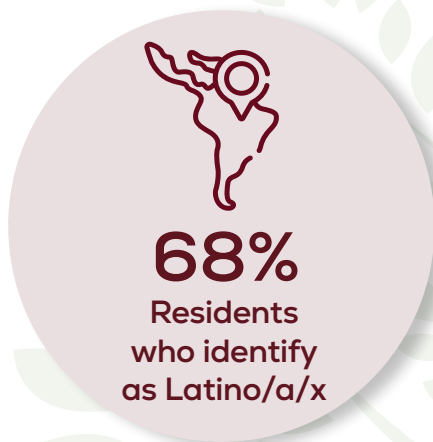
GEOGRAPHIC REACH BY COUNTY OF COHORT 1-3 AWARDEES

- No awardees
- 1-3 awardee
- 4-6 awardees
- 7-11 awardees
- 12-15 awardees

Photo caption: Top: Southeast Asian Coalition of Central Massachusetts. Bottom: Family Nurturing Center

Population

Populations served by Cohort 1 and 2 awardees





Measuring Impact

- **Three Funding Streams United in Approach** **10**
- **Understanding the Social Determinants of Health** **17**
- **Strategies for Change** **35**

In this section, we share stories and insights about the impact of The Funds. The section explores the three funding streams, strategies awardees use to drive the work, and the social determinants of health they are addressing. We use data, quotes, narrative, images, and much more to tell the stories of our awardees' various projects and the range of their work.

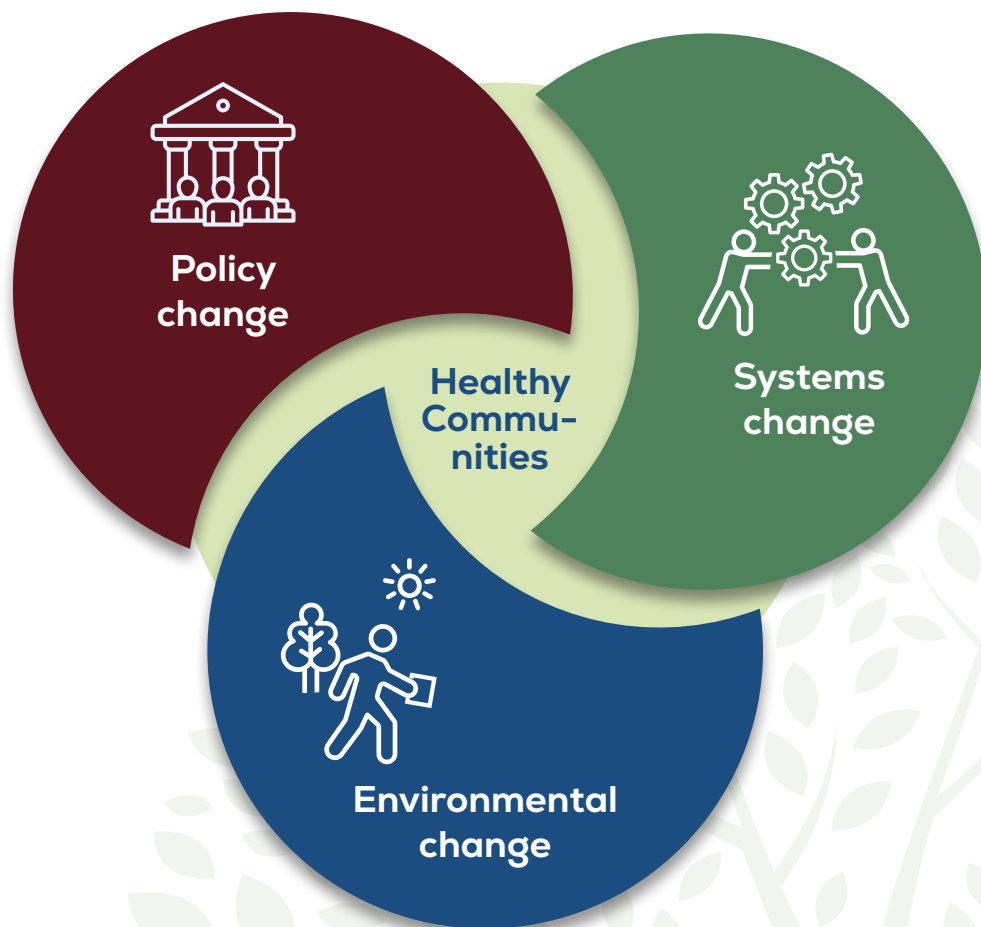
Three Funding Streams United in Approach

The Funds operates on the belief that policies, systems, and social and physical environments are historically based in structural and institutional racism and other forms of oppression. To respond to these forces that shape the health of our communities, awardees address policy, systems, and environmental change in their approaches. Distinct from direct service delivery or programmatic work, these approaches make long-lasting, systems-level changes within communities so that healthy choices are available to all residents.

Policy change is not only passing or changing legislation. It also includes ordinances, resolutions, mandates, regulations, or rules.

Systems change creates fundamental shifts in how problems are solved and changes the way resources and services are distributed.

Environmental change involves shifting the economic, social, or physical conditions that affect health outcomes.



Measuring Impact

This focus on systems change is what ties each of the three funding streams that make up The Funds. The Funds distributes grants through three streams: Community Health Improvement Planning (CHIP); Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change (PSE); and Healthy Aging. Regardless of the funding stream, there is a focus on work that shifts underlying structural factors that create and sustain inequity.

That work is done in multiple ways, but 85% of awardees prioritize building relationships, connections, and community engagement as a start to their work.

In this section, we discuss each funding stream and give an example of what type of work awardees do within that funding stream.



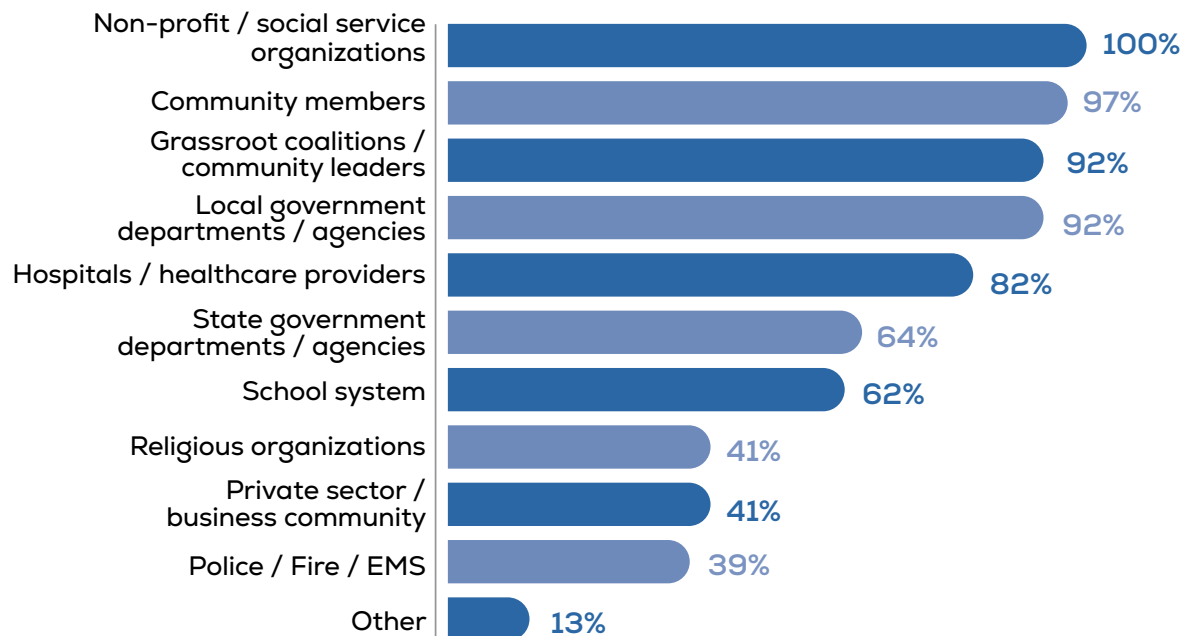
Percentage of Awardees Working on Each Component of Systems Change	PSE	Healthy Aging	CHIP	Total
> Relationships, connections, and community engagement	82%	67%	100%	83%
> Resource distribution and access to services	48%	67%	62%	59%
> National, state, and local policies	63%	67%	8%	46%
> Internal or organizational policies, practices, and processes	44%	17%	69%	43%
> Powershifting	41%	33%	31%	35%
> Mental models, beliefs, and narratives	33%	33%	31%	32%

Community Health Improvement Planning

The Funds supports the development and implementation of local and regional Community Health Improvement Planning (CHIP) processes. CHIPs are long-term, collaborative efforts to improve health and advance equity by creating a plan that prioritizes and addresses health based on a community health needs assessment. Each CHIP serves as an overarching plan that is not duplicative of other planning or programming, yet leverages, coordinates, and aligns strategies across initiatives to achieve more substantive impacts.

Through CHIPs, communities have strengthened cross-sector collaboration among public health departments, local governments, community-based organizations, and residents. As a result, they are identifying health priorities that support policy, systems, and environmental change, and building shared ownership, shifting power, and implementing strategies that reflect the lived experiences and needs of those most impacted. These awardees build partnerships with multiple different entities to achieve their work.

PERCENTAGE OF AWARDEES WORKING WITH EACH TYPE OF PARTNER ORGANIZATION



“By fostering authentic partnerships across institutions –including policymakers, justice systems, and community organizations– the work creates a shared accountability for addressing structural inequities.”

- UTEC

Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester - CHIP Awardee

The Coalition for Healthy Greater Worcester (CHGW) is on a mission to improve community decision-making, health, and well-being for residents in the region. By convening fellow coalitions working on interconnected issues such as racial equity, trauma-informed care, behavioral health, food justice, and housing stability, CHGW fosters collaboration across traditionally siloed sectors to reduce duplication of efforts, maximize collective resources, and promote mutual accountability and trust.

Community engagement sits at the center of this CHIP through the strong investment in the Community Conversations initiative, an on-the-ground program designed to surface identified needs and priorities directly from residents. When paired with concrete data and evidence, these conversations have fueled real progress toward policy and systems change in Worcester.



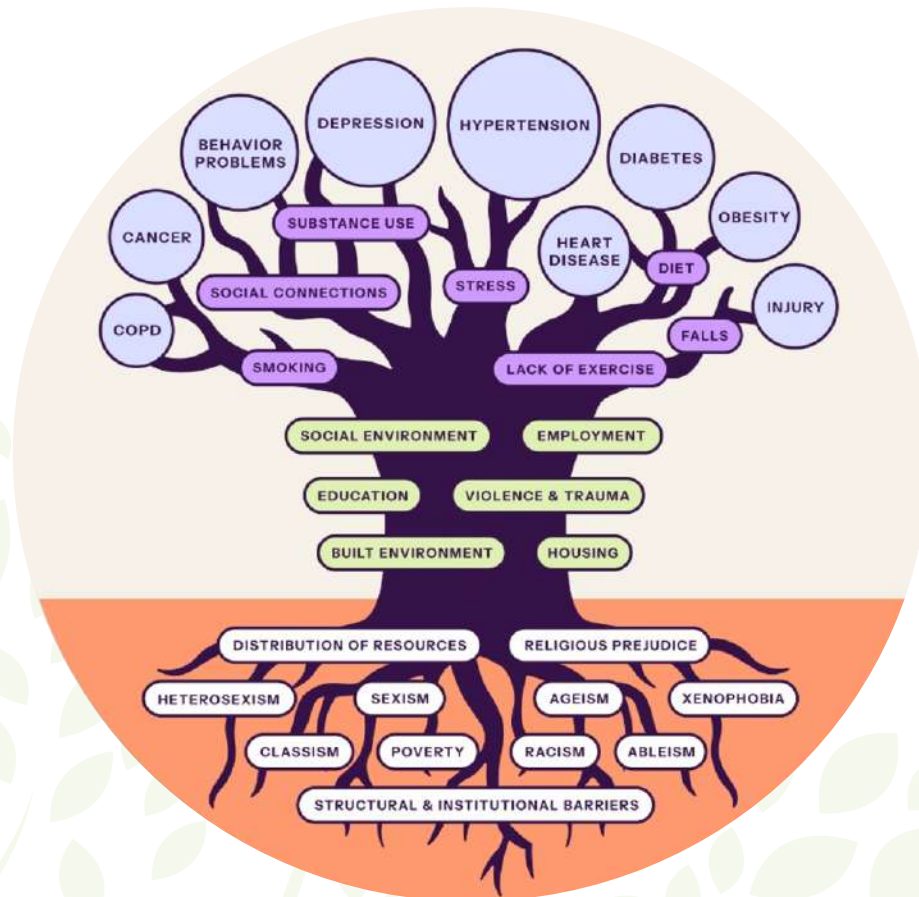
HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ CHGW won fare-free bus service, which significantly increased ridership and improved access to essential services. A survey found that 70% of residents support continuing the fare-free policy, with nearly half of riders indicating they would reduce or stop using the bus if fares returned.
- ▶ The Worcester Trauma, Resiliency, and Racial Equity Institute, a CHGW initiative, challenges entrenched norms and power dynamics that have historically marginalized communities of color among funders and service providers across the city.
- ▶ In collaboration with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Association and the City of Worcester, the coalition led Complete Streets meetings focused on pedestrian safety, accessibility, and multimodal transportation infrastructure.

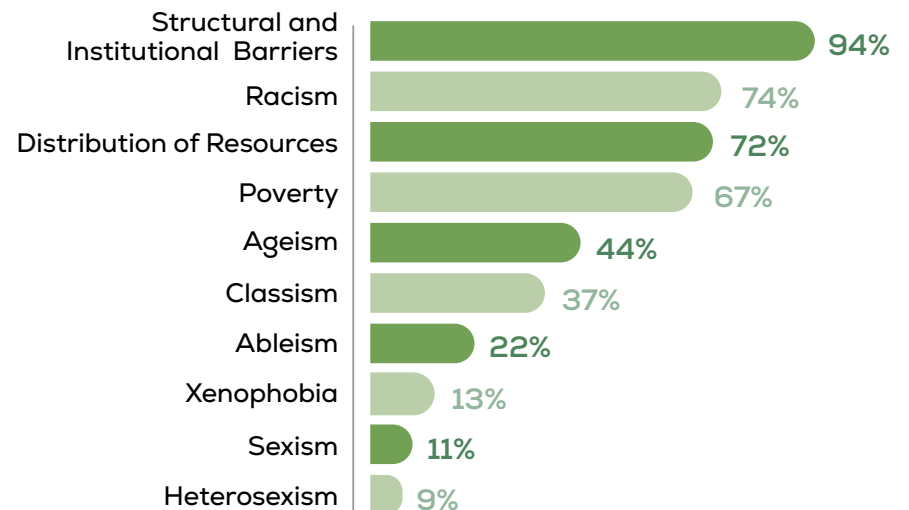
Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change

Awardees in this funding stream focus their work on specific social determinants of health, rather than a broader set of issues as might be identified in a CHIP. PSE awardees engage their community—which may be geographically or population-based, or among people with shared identity, affinity, or affiliation—to change conditions

around housing, food systems, violence and trauma, and aspects of the social and built environment that impact health. Most projects span five years, yet the work will need to continue beyond the grant period to achieve the transformative outcomes the awardees envision.



PERCENTAGE OF AWARDEES ADDRESSING EACH ROOT CAUSE OF HEALTH INEQUITIES*



*Adultism, carceralism, linguistic discrimination, professionalism, and religious prejudice were also listed as root causes.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the root causes of health.

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission – PSE Awardee

Gray to Green, a project of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, was launched in response to data revealing a 12-year gap in life expectancy between Pittsfield’s Morningside and Westside neighborhoods and other areas. Historically, racially discriminatory housing policies and urban planning decisions isolated these communities from green spaces and essential amenities.

To address these inequities, Gray to Green built strong relationships with the City of Pittsfield and community members to drive policy change, shift systems, and create environments that better reflect residents’ needs.

On the policy front, Gray to Green spent two years advocating for the removal of a local housing authority’s restriction that banned community gardens and disrupted programming for children and families at a specific property. They also revised Berkshire Regional Planning Commission policies to include accessibility consultants in municipal partnerships.

To challenge existing systems, Gray to Green trained residents to document street conditions, identify safety concerns, and highlight barriers to walking. Volunteers, ranging in age from 14 to over 80, conducted more than 140 neighborhood audits.



HIGHLIGHTS

As a result of these efforts, Gray to Green has:

- Installed benches and shade structures at a low-income housing complex
- Designed a new recreation area for another public housing community
- Resurfaced and added fencing to a basketball court
- Advocated for community gardens

These physical improvements are helping to foster a higher quality of life and better health outcomes for residents.

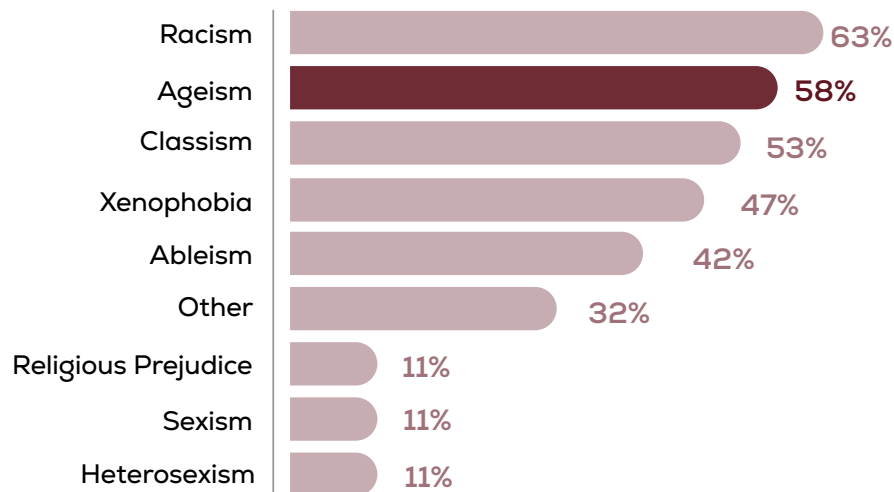
Funding Stream 3

Healthy Aging

The Healthy Aging funding stream supports prevention efforts so that all older adults stay active, independent, safe, and involved in their community. While supporting older adults across all abilities, races, sexual orientations, religions, and economic backgrounds, this funding stream also drives systemic changes. The goal of these

awardees is to create conditions that allow older adults to remain in their communities and achieve the highest possible quality of life. The Massachusetts Executive Office of Aging & Independence provides guidance and expertise and helps make decisions regarding the Healthy Aging Funds.

PERCENTAGE OF AWARDEES WORKING TO SHIFT EACH UNDERLYING NARRATIVE



“The funding supported efforts to challenge and reshape community assumptions, beliefs, and narratives surrounding public transportation. Many seniors initially faced uncertainty and hesitation when it came to navigating the system... Hands-on guidance empowered seniors to overcome their fears and build the skills needed to navigate public transportation independently. As a result, there was a noticeable increase in senior ridership, demonstrating that targeted education and support can successfully break down barriers to access.”

- Cape Ann, Mass in Motion

Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired – *Healthy Aging Awardee*

The Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (MABVI) has supported adults and seniors since 1903 through vision rehabilitation and related services. As people age, they are more likely to experience vision loss, which can significantly affect their health and quality of life. In addition to unmet needs for rehabilitation, older adults with vision loss face barriers to accessing printed and digital information—such as housing forms—and often experience social isolation.

MABVI's Healthy Aging work focuses on raising awareness and building more accessible, Age-Friendly communities. Through statewide and city-level partnerships, MABVI has advocated for prioritizing the inclusion of people with visual disabilities in planning.

MABVI has trained staff at community, municipal, and state organizations on best practices in blindness, accessibility of facilities and technology, assistive technology, and inclusive community reviews such as walkability assessments. In the past five years, MABVI has expanded services in Boston, New Bedford, Salem, and Springfield.

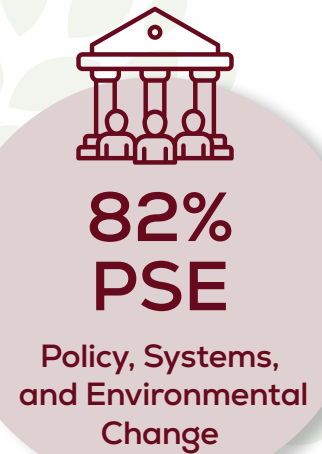
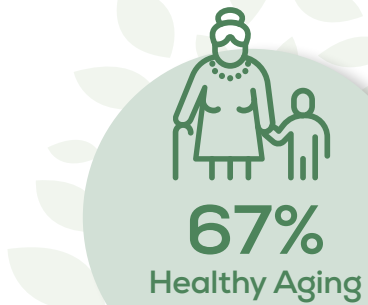


HIGHLIGHTS

- MABVI provided input on the Governor's "ReiMagine Aging 2030" plan to better meet the unique needs of older adults who are blind or low vision.
- MABVI hired a Statewide Community Outreach Coordinator to engage Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) older adults and those whose first language is not English.
- There is greater access to training on assistive technology on the South Coast due to MABVI's partnership with Coastline Elderly Services.

Takeaways

Percentage of awardees with an approach that centers relationships, connections, and community engagement:





Understanding the Social Determinants of Health

Social Determinants of Health: Framing and Overview

Picture a tree. Think about the colors and shapes of the leaves. These represent our individual physical or mental health outcomes. The branches are habits and lifestyle factors that affect our health. The trunk of the tree holds up the branches and leaves, just like social determinants of health—such as housing, jobs, and education—are the foundation for our ability to pursue healthy lives. Like a real tree, what you can't see matters too. The roots represent deeper issues like racism and poverty, and the soil stands for the culture and stories that shape how systems work. When the soil is healthy and the roots are strong, the whole tree can thrive, and so can our communities.

The Funds helps awardees integrate policy, systems, and environmental change strategies into their efforts to address the social determinants of health. The priority social determinants for The Funds are **education, employment, housing, violence, built environment, and social environment.**



Measuring Impact

Awardees work across each of these priority social determinants (SDoH) in different ways. They focus on policy changes to shift systems and resource distribution to meet needs. They organize residents and lead statewide campaigns to advocate for collective action. The impacts accumulate through the multiplicity of approaches and stretch across the state.

While awardees work across multiple SDoH, a majority of them work in the built and social environments—or the physical conditions and the social connections in a given place—in the PSE (60%) and the Healthy Aging (70%) funding streams.

As you read through this section of the report, you will notice the diversity in approach, impact, and intention and note that social determinant can be approached in multiple ways.



Percentage of Awardees Working on Core Social Determinants of Health	PSE	Healthy Aging	Total
➤ Social Environment	29%	45%	37%
➤ Built Environment	31%	25%	28%
➤ Housing	24%	15%	20%
➤ Education, Employment, and Access to Health Services	16%	15%	15%

Housing

Housing plays a vital role in health and well-being. Safe, affordable homes give families stability, reduce stress, and prevent illness, but access is a concern across communities in Massachusetts. Housing impacts nearly every health outcome.

Several awardees work on various aspects of housing, creating policy wins at the state and local level, while also changing relationships between tenants and landlords, residents and decision-makers, and between neighbors.

“*There is a lot of prejudice baked into anti-housing sentiments. For example, fear of crime, lower property values, lower school quality, and more. All of these are rooted in classism and racism. Educating people about what affordable housing really is, who it's for, and how it serves the community as a whole, helps to break through some of these prejudices.*”

*- Citizens' Housing and Planning Association -
PSE Awardee*





Photo Caption: Life Path

Housing is a multi-faceted issue, and awardees are tackling it from many angles. Their work includes:

- Changing zoning laws to support more housing options and more affordable housing, such as the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) Communities Act or local adoption of the Community Preservation Act.
- Equipping tenants with know-your-rights training, legal advocacy, and culturally informed supportive services.
- Educating landlords about compliance with state standards and programs that make improving the safety and quality of rentals more accessible.
- Changing approaches to supportive housing for people at risk for or experiencing homelessness.

Advocacy and Organizing in Action with Local Housing Coalitions: Citizens' Housing and Planning Association and Community Development Partnership (PSE Awardees)

The Municipal Engagement Initiative at Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) supports communities to build coalitions and advance policies that increase the production and diversity of affordable housing options. The initiative develops educational materials, holds trainings, and connects coalitions with topic experts to provide guidance. Some of the most critical work the initiative does is changing attitudes and empowering housing advocates.

Opposition to affordable housing policies often stems from fear of crime, lower property values, lower school quality, and more. These are rooted in classism and racism, including a legacy of segregation and redlining. By making space to unpack these tensions and bringing in more diverse voices—such as renters, non-English speakers, and people of color—the Municipal Engagement Initiative helps communities have more productive conversations that lead to affordable housing wins.

HIGHLIGHT FROM CHAPA COALITIONS

- Affordable Housing Trusts were passed in places like Hull and Revere, allowing those communities to tap into funds and move faster toward affordable housing goals.
- A pro-housing mayor was elected after the Lynn Housing Coalition created a nonpartisan candidate questionnaire—with translations in Spanish, Khmer, and Haitian Creole—to help voters understand where candidates stood on housing issues.
- In Newburyport, the City Council passed a tax exemption for affordable housing developers, and a developer was chosen to create 29 units of housing for seniors earning less than 60% of the area's median income using a former school.



Community-led housing coalitions are making gains on the Cape too. Through community organizing, Project 365, an initiative of Community Development Partnership (CDP), has established advocacy groups in Truro, Eastham, Orleans, and Harwich to pursue policies that lessen housing instability and wealth inequality.

The Lower and Outer Cape, while popular with tourists, remain rural areas that retain their unique character and sense of place. CDP staff leverage their networks to recruit, build trust, and establish an ongoing dialogue with members who are passionate about improving housing and economic stability on the Lower and Outer Cape.

HIGHLIGHT FROM CDP COALITIONS

- Eastham 365 participated in a public comment campaign to encourage their Select Board to approve a Residential Tax Exemption (RTE) that shifts the tax burden from working class, year-round residents to second or third homeowners.
- Truro 365 group text banked, flyered, had one-on-one conversations, and coordinated a Letter to the Editor campaign to pass a plan to develop affordable housing on Town-owned land.



Photo caption: Franklin Regional County of Governments

Built Environment

Having access to quality, affordable, and stable housing is critical to healthy and thriving communities. What lies beyond the front door also impacts quality of life. Communities with robust built environments, and therefore more resources and services, have better health outcomes. The built environment encompasses the physical parts of where we live, work, travel, and play, like transportation, buildings, streets, and open spaces. It is a complex system made up of “hard” infrastructure, such as houses, parks, and transportation systems, and “soft” infrastructure, such as walkability and air quality.



GreenRoots (Healthy Aging Awardee)

GreenRoots, a resident-led grassroots organization, works with communities in Chelsea and East Boston to achieve environmental justice and better quality of life through action-oriented strategies. GreenRoots engages and empowers multilingual seniors to ensure their voices shape transit-related decisions. Through collaborative advocacy, they promote equitable transit systems that foster healthy living and support aging with dignity.

GreenRoots mobilizes Community Health Ambassadors and Transit Justice Organizers for outreach through door knocking, flyering, and one-on-one engagements. They also hold focus groups and surveys to understand the needs of seniors and others in the community.

Seniors were vocal advocates for expanding transit equity across lifetimes by organizing for the Low-Income Eligible Fare program, which reduced Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) fares by 50% for riders ages 18-64 enrolled in certain state assistance programs. GreenRoots partnered with seniors, the MBTA, and other partners to ensure a smooth, multilingual rollout with a community toolkit to promote the new reduced fare.



HIGHLIGHT FROM GREENROOTS

- > Fare-Free Bus Pilot (H.3623/S.2397) proposes a one-year MBTA pilot program making rides free on 10 priority bus routes and 10 high-ridership routes.
- > FY26 Transportation Funding Request advocates are asking for a \$687 million transfer to the MBTA to support discounted fares for low-income riders, ferry services, and training programs for MBTA workers. The proposal awaits state approval.
- > Freedom to Move Act (S.2246/H.3726) would require MassDOT to reduce traffic and align transportation projects with the state's climate goals.

“ Building relationships and engaging seniors extends beyond transit work. Getting to know the people, that's genuine. Relationship building helps inform everything else.”

- GreenRoots

Food Systems

Food systems dictate and confine the kinds of health behaviors many folks can make. Awardees working within food systems or food justice prove that centering the voices of people of color or with lived experience of food scarcity is central to achieving lasting shifts in food access. Nearly two thirds of awardees did work that focused on resource distribution and food systems.

“

Because the predominant population that we serve are Black and Brown people, it's important to us to highlight and make space for current leaders—incorporate their voices into food justice and they also become ambassadors. We're being intentional and not just having their name on things, but giving them a voice and decision-making power.”

- Springfield EATS



Springfield EATS (PSE Awardee)

Springfield EATS centers resident engagement as a driving force in developing inclusive, sustainable strategies that promote equitable action. As a partnership among neighbors, educators, farmers, and caregivers, the initiative was born during a time of crisis. In response, Springfield EATS delivered fresh, culturally meaningful food directly to families' doors, helped people access benefits like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and advocated for strategic food systems and policies.



HIGHLIGHTS

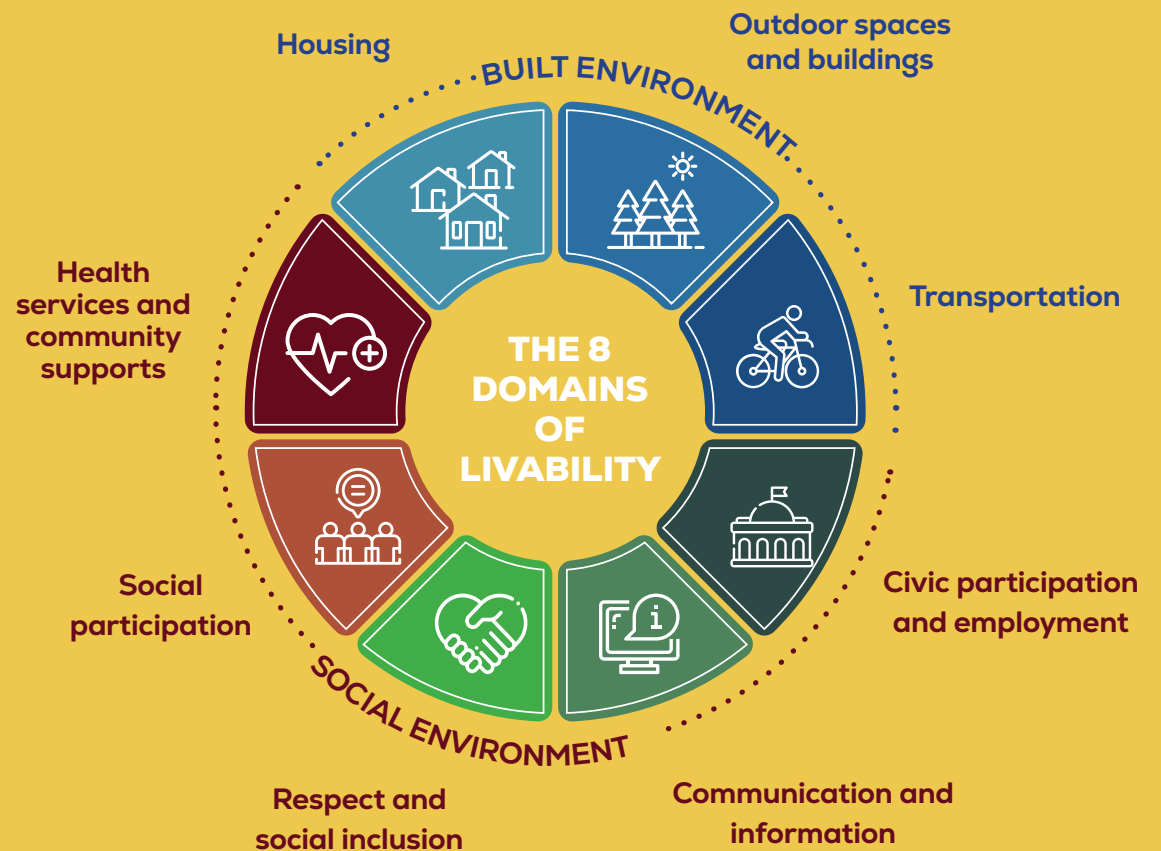
- Springfield EATS advocates for the expansion of the Healthy Incentive Program through the Springfield Food Policy Council, which allows SNAP recipients to have an additional allowance to purchase locally grown produce.
- Springfield EATS distributed high-quality local produce and protein to 350 families a year for four years, building lasting partnerships among institutions and individuals, and nourishing economically marginalized residents.
- In January 2024, youth leaders traveled to Washington, D.C. to advocate alongside the Rural Coalition for racial equity in food programs, amplifying their experiences and messages widely through social media.

While food is the entry point, the support extends further by connecting people to vital resources. Springfield EATS also created jobs and leadership opportunities for residents, trained youth policy advocates and storytellers, and strengthened local small farms.

Age-Friendly Communities

The Age-Friendly Communities framework—originally developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and adapted by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)—outlines eight interconnected domains that help identify and address barriers to the well-being and participation of older adults in building age-friendly communities. Communities across the country use these Eight Domains of Livability to guide and prioritize efforts that create more supportive environments for people of all ages. The Healthy Aging awardees focused their work on one or more of the Eight Domains, with Housing, Transportation, and Respect and Social Inclusion being the primary Domains of Livability that awardees work on.

In the first three years of their Funds-supported project, LifePath enrolled 19 towns in Franklin County and the North Quabbin region into the AARP's age-friendly communities. The MA Healthy Aging Collaborative, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, Valley Neighbors, and VietAID coordinated resources for seniors in their communities over the course of 1-2 years, which eventually led The Funds to increase the duration of awards in this funding stream to promote more sustainable change.



Social Environment

Environments transcend physical spaces, and awardees work across every kind of environment to address the root causes of health inequities. Social environments are the relationships, groups, and networks within a community. Strong social connections improve health outcomes.



PERCENTAGE OF AWARDEES WORKING ON DIFFERENT TYPES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

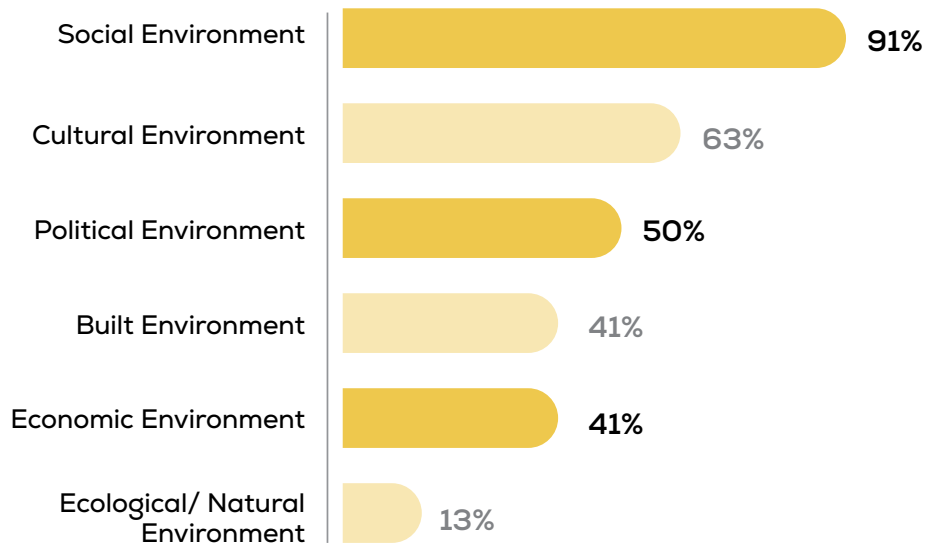


Photo caption: Family Nurturing Center

Franklin County Community Development Corporation (PSE Awardee)

The Franklin County Community Development Corporation (CDC) expands economic opportunities for Western Massachusetts residents. Working with their partners including Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Greenfield Community College, and the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, they aim to dismantle white supremacy systems, beliefs, and cultures in Franklin County's business community.

The Racial Justice Director coaches businesses and organizations in analyzing their policies, compliance frameworks, and operational norms. They support staff in identifying how bias – even unintentional – shows up in programs and decisions. Industry-specific workshops, such as *Racism in the Financial Industry*, *Cancel Culture in Higher Education*, and *Bias in Nonprofits and Boards* have improved internal staff and external leaders' capacity to speak about racial justice, equity, and policy.

Local leaders can engage with the Welcoming and Belonging Group, which meets monthly and features facilitated discussions, case studies, and guest speaker sessions. The Racial Justice Self-Reflection Journey tool on the Franklin County CDC's website also helps self-identify areas for improvement.

Franklin County CDC's efforts have focused on embedding racial justice into everyday operations, instead of treating it as a separate initiative. They use a language analysis tool to review and neutralize bias in internal documents, job postings, and policies.

Collaboration with HR leadership has successfully influenced more inclusive hiring and communication practices, and equity is embedded in the employee handbook. By reducing workplace bias and transforming organizational culture, they are changing systems and the social environment.



Photo caption: Franklin Regional Council of Governments CHIP

Violence and Trauma

Justice system involvement, experiences of violence, and trauma have significant impacts on health. Whether a person is a victim or perpetrator of violence, is personally incarcerated or has an incarcerated family member, or is navigating the transitional justice system, their health is negatively impacted. This social determinant includes a wide range of life experiences and potential health impacts. Several awardees balance the need to support individuals while advancing changes to the justice system.

“CHIP partners in the Violence and Injury Prevention Community Team rallied to change the culture of violence for youth in Springfield and Holyoke by planning a Youth Violence Prevention Summit, designed for and by middle school youth.”

- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission



UTEC (PSE Awardee)

UTEC advances equity and opportunity for young adults impacted by the criminal legal system and advocates for policies that offer a clean slate for those with past records, fair resource distribution, and pathways from incarceration to stable employment. UTEC builds community organizing and leadership skills that empower young adults with lived experience to be at the table and speak to the issues that disenfranchise them.

UTEC helped pass the No Cost Calls legislation, which makes phone calls from all correctional facilities free to the caller and the receiver. Now, UTEC is focused on *Raise the Age* (S.1061/H.1923) to expand juvenile court to include 18–20-year-olds, providing access to education and record expungement. Research shows that adolescents are less likely to reoffend when they go through the juvenile system instead of the adult system.

HIGHLIGHTS

- *End Lifetime Parole* (S.1087/H.2051): Ends lifetime parole for youth after three years, helping them reenter the community and reduce repeat offenses.
- *Expungement of Records* (S.1058/H.1657): Makes it easier for young people to clear their juvenile records, improving access to jobs, housing, and opportunities.
- *Fresh Start Act* (S.1058/H.1657): Allows individuals to request removal or updates to online stories about past criminal offenses.



UTEC is developing a statewide Youth Coalition with other Massachusetts groups, giving young people a space to share experiences and take action on issues they face.

“When youth are meaningfully engaged and empowered to share their narratives, they help to reshape the systems that have historically marginalized them.”

- UTEC

Rural Communities

One of the most significant aspects of The Funds is the shift of DoN resources to areas outside of the Boston Metro Area, which has historically received most of this type of funding. The Funds intentionally supports organizations and coalitions doing work across the entire Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As a result, many awardees develop and implement solutions to the unique and complex challenges that rural communities face, particularly challenges related to transportation and housing.

Awardees in rural areas report that solutions and approaches to inequities developed and tested in urban communities are often ineffective in less populous regions. By centering voices and expertise of people within their communities, they develop new, local ways to transform systems.

“*Upon completing nine rural community walking maps, we began to realize how rural communities could benefit from the MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program.*”

Hilltown CDC – Healthy Aging Awardee



Franklin Regional Council of Governments (CHIP and PSE Awardee)

Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) serves the most rural region in Massachusetts as the state-designated regional planning agency and coordinates shared municipal services. In the first five years of The Funds, FRCOG's community health and planning departments partnered with local organizations to develop a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) for the 30-town Franklin County/North Quabbin region and led two policy, systems, and environmental change projects.

With Funds support, the Franklin County CHIP Network grew from 100 to over 300 members, implemented its 2021–2023 CHIP, and engaged community partners in selecting health priorities for 2024–2028. Working groups aligned with CHIP priorities—Healthy Eating and Active Living; Mental Wellness and Resilience;

and Community Supports for Young People—brought policymakers, service providers, and residents with lived experience together to address pressing health needs.

The Improving Housing to Improve Health project (a PSE awardee) was a multisector effort that achieved municipal policy changes, including easing zoning restrictions on duplexes and manufactured homes to expand housing options. FRCOG also partnered with the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association on a myth-busting education series to reduce stigma and inform residents about affordable housing. At the state level, FRCOG successfully advocated for changes to municipal housing grant programs, including the Housing Choice Program.

The Communities that Care Coalition (another PSE awardee), which FRCOG has sponsored for 23 years, focuses on youth health and wellness. Its current project works to improve school climate and culture, reduce disparities, and increase belonging through restorative justice practices—helping students feel connected and supporting long-term health outcomes. The coalition uses local data to guide strategies and collaborates closely with schools and districts to implement evidence-based approaches.

Franklin County faces persistent challenges—aging housing, low incomes, and transportation barriers—but FRCOG's leadership and partnerships have driven measurable progress toward healthier, more equitable communities.



Photo caption: Communities that Care Coalition

Takeaways



28%
of awardees
work on the built
environment



37%
of awardees work on
social environment



15%
of awardees work
on education,
employment, or
access to health
services



20%
of awardees work
on housing



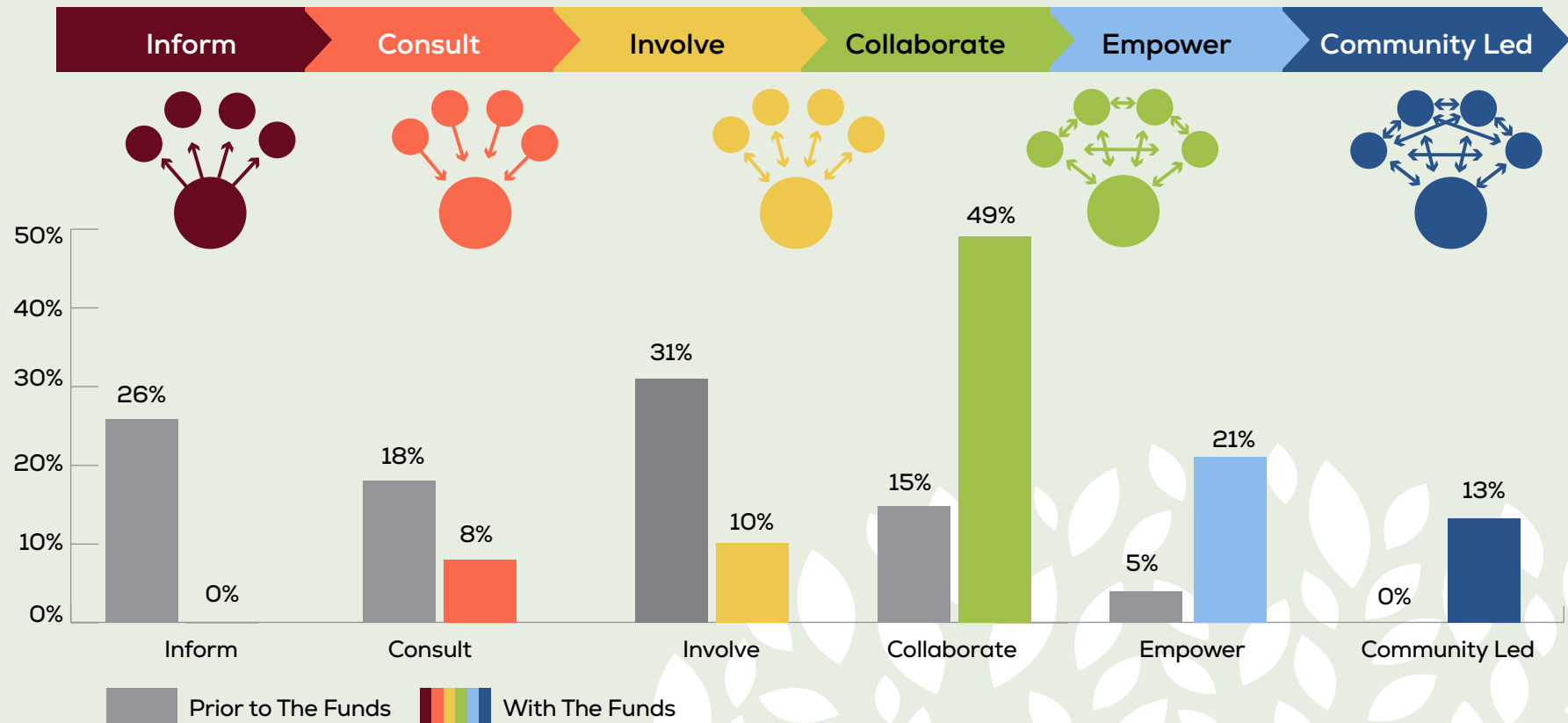
Strategies For Change

Strategies for Change

The Funds works in multiple different funding streams and seeks to address multiple social determinants of health. The remaining question is how awardees implement and adapt their work to meet community needs. By leading with a focus on community engagement and relationships, Funds' awardees test strategies with residents most vulnerable to and impacted by inequitable systems. They close those disparities using multiple approaches.

In this section, key strategies Funds' awardees use are discussed. Those strategies for change include advocacy and organizing, storytelling, partnerships, shifting power, and changing internal policies and practices.

The depth of community engagement and centering of community voices in practices and decision-making increased during the award period. Awardees reported moving from less integrated forms of community input (informing, consulting, or involving) to deeply cooperative approaches of collaborative, empowered, and community-led processes.



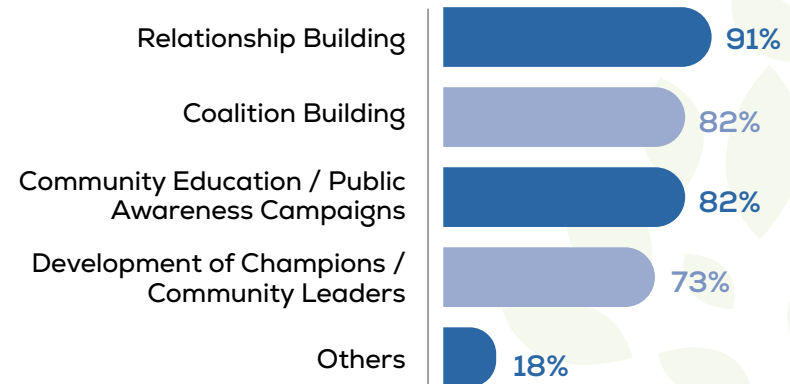
Advocacy and Organizing

Almost half of The Funds' awardees are working on national, state, or local policy changes. A variety of strategies are utilized including community organizing, policy development, education, advocacy, and implementing and enforcing policies. However, for many awardees, community organizing remains at the heart of their work. They launch initiatives by bringing together diverse coalitions of residents, supporting their leadership, and partnering to build collective power to advocate for healthier communities.

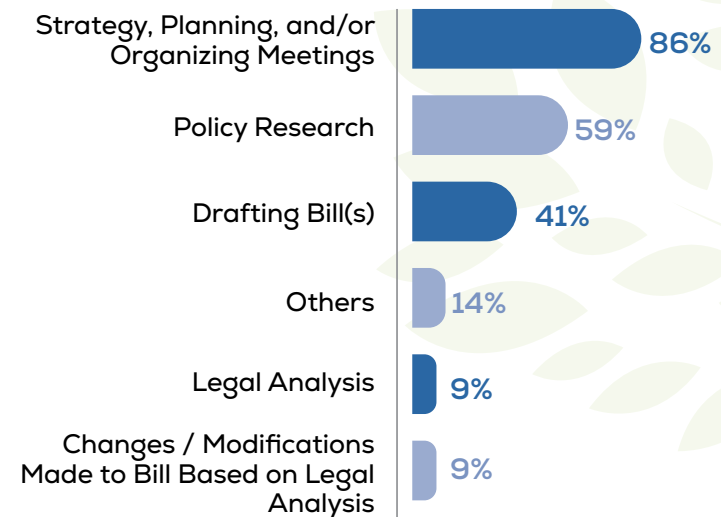
“*One of our main goals was to shift the decision-making power back to the community. We consistently recruited and trained impacted community members to take on the following leadership roles: head housing committees, lead issue-based canvassing shifts, co-lead housing imagination sessions with the broader community, lead stakeholder meetings, speak with the press, emcee and speak at rallies, and testify at state house hearings and legislator meetings... With the help of the Neighbor to Neighbor (N2N) Action Fund, our 501c4 arm, three N2N members also ran for Springfield City Council (one ran a successful campaign), and one N2N member ran a successful campaign for State Senate.”*

Neighbor to Neighbor – PSE Awardee

PERCENTAGE OF AWARDEES USING COMMUNITY ORGANIZING ACTIVITIES TO ADVANCE POLICY CHANGE



PERCENTAGE OF AWARDEES WORKING AT EACH LEVEL OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT





PERCENTAGE OF AWARDEES USING POLICY ADVOCACY AND ADOPTION ACTIVITIES

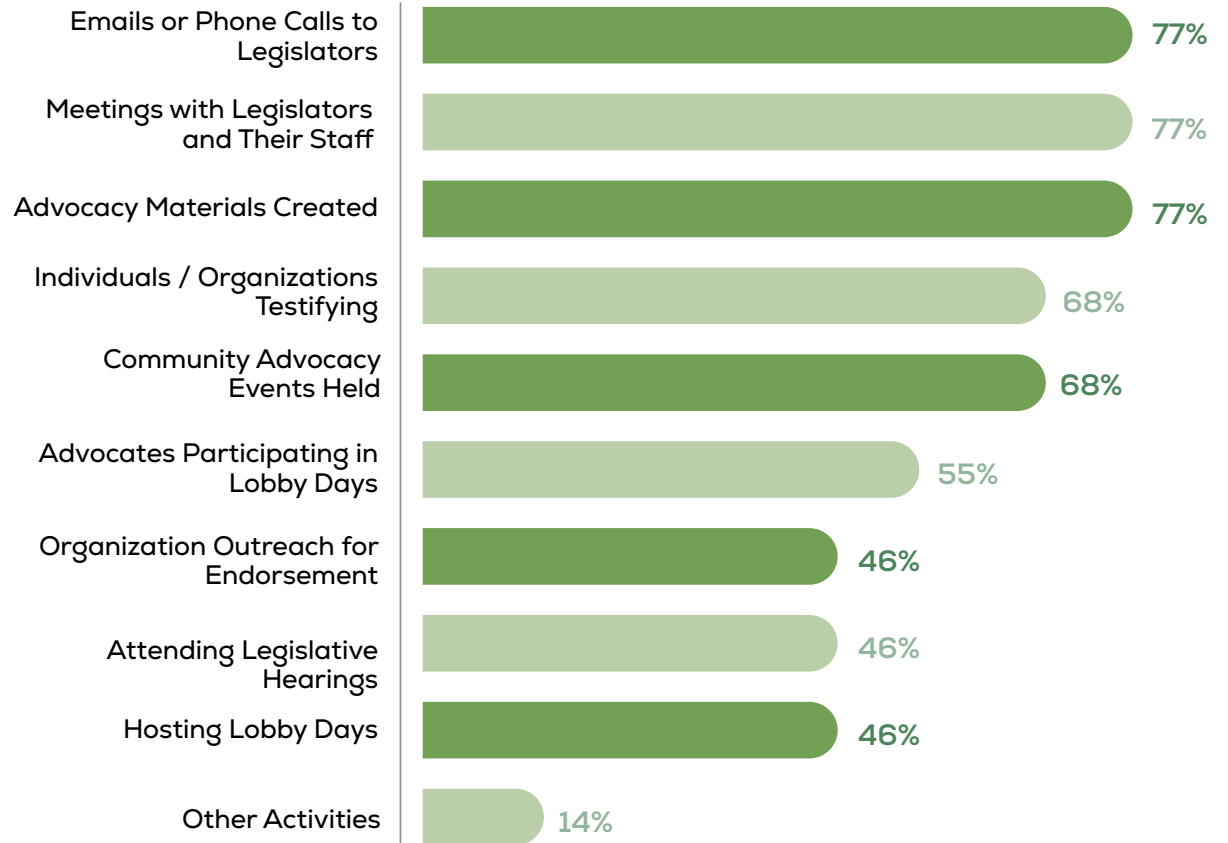


Photo caption: Massachusetts Association of the Blind and Visually Impaired

Storytelling

Stories shape the way all of us think about and understand the world around us. To build a more equitable world, sometimes the best place to start is with the stories we tell ourselves and each other about the communities we live in. Storytelling can be an effective strategy to change the way people think about issues that don't affect them, and being a storyteller empowers those sharing their experiences.

“*Storytelling has proven to be an essential tool in transforming beliefs and assumptions... These personal narratives challenge the stigma and stereotypes often associated with marginalized groups.*”

Town of Ware



Photo caption: Harborlight Homes

Partnerships

Cross-sector collaborations are a component of many initiatives and The Funds encourages partnership and coalition building. Awardees reported partnering with a variety of groups, institutions, and leaders.

“ We use a lot of storytelling...to help mobilize and galvanize against the system and to build self-confidence so that people can take their stories out there. For that, we partner with other organizations with bigger platforms, like UTEC. We’re all fighting the same battles and we have different abilities and resources. So why not team up?”

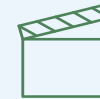
- PSE Awardee Partner

STAGES OF RELATIONSHIP BUILDING



PLANNING

(Awardee has not started this but plans to)



IMPLEMENTING

(Awardee has started doing this)



COMPLETED

(Awardee has done this)

Identified key partners that represent and serve community members that are central to our work.

0.0%

5.1%

94.4%

Developed collaborative relationships with partners.

0.0%

5.1%

94.4%

Developed authentic and trusting relationships with partners.

0.0%

12.8%

87.2%

Developed shared goals with partners.

7.7%

20.5%

71.8%

Developed strong relationships with a diverse range of partners.

0.0%

12.8%

87.2%

Developed strong relationships with those with lived experiences who are directly impacted by the initiative.

2.6%

10.3%

87.2%

Shifting Power

Many systems change efforts focused on shifting power to communities that have historically been left out of decision-making. Centering the voices of people with lived experience, advocating for changes to policies and practices, and ensuring more equitable access to resources were the most common strategies for shifting power.

Power shifting and sharing is a theme across awardees but was particularly emphasized among those working with youth. Decision-making processes, local organizing efforts, policy priorities, and many other initiatives often overlook youth perspectives. The best way to address this power imbalance is to include youth in making decisions. Many awardees say it is important to not only include youth in conversations about their needs, but to let them lead in the creation of solutions.

“The reason that we created the community mini-grant program was to change who has the power to move forward with these health and wellness goals. It is piloting power sharing with community-based organizations by giving them the funding and the trust that they know best how to support the health and wellness of the residents they serve.”

Town of Randolph



Photo caption: Town of Randolph

Changing Internal Policies and Practices

While many strategies push for change external to an organization, awardees recognize the need to shift their internal policies and practices to pull their organizations into better alignment with their communities. By changing internal systems, organizations can become more efficient, equitable, and responsive. Organizational change activities take many forms, but all revolve around taking the time to be self-reflective and evaluate an organization's internal alignment.

Most common organizational change activities undertaken by grantees:

- Community engagement processes
- Providing translation and language services
- Improving accessibility processes
- Onboarding and staff training processes
- Updating hiring processes and policies

Redesigning Power Structures at Collaborative for Educational Services (CES) – PSE Awardee

Redesigning Power Structures, an initiative of CES, implemented sociocratic structure and governance processes—which distribute power evenly and use consent-based decision-making—within the Hampshire Food Policy Council. Policies and practices included guidelines for how to administer stipends, transportation, childcare, and technological support for community leaders, a language access plan, and reflections on the implementation of equitable hiring practices.



Photo caption: Boys & Girls Club of Metro North



Conclusions

Challenges

Implementing an initiative like The Funds, with a strong equity-focused mission, brings challenges. Prioritizing policy, systems, and environmental change over short-term programming requires time, partnership-building, community engagement, and technical capacity. The emphasis on reaching communities that have historically been excluded from decision-making requires an understanding of grassroots efforts that build resident buy-in to the processes and achieve outcomes they want. Additionally, addressing root causes like structural racism, poverty, and ageism demands coordination across sectors.

These principles can be difficult to maintain in resource-constrained local environments. To face these challenges, HRiA recognized that awardees need support to deepen their PSE work. Through capacity-building and technical assistance programming, awardees are provided with an engaging and purposeful space to learn from and build connections with each other, The Funds staff, and a wide network of partners.

In this section, we explore challenges and solutions encountered in The Funds. We faced each challenge with strong PSE proposals and approaches, equitable support to under-resourced awardees, and authentic and additive evaluation approaches. HRiA continues to provide technical assistance and capacity-building using an equity framework across its grantmaking and evaluation processes. We work with applicants, awardees, and the Advisory Committee to strengthen our approaches, using surveys and other feedback opportunities to guide ongoing improvements.

Five years of grantmaking through The Funds taught us each of the lessons you will read below. While we refer to the challenges and the solutions we have faced in the past tense, this learning is ongoing.



Challenge #1: Histories of inequity impeding successful applications

The inequities many groups and communities have historically faced when interacting with grantmaking and philanthropy create barriers that influence which organizations apply for The Funds and their ability to craft successful proposals.

Opaque and lengthy application processes are especially difficult to navigate for groups that are already under-resourced. When decisions about which applications to fund are made by people without lived experience or connection to communities and the issues they identify, funding inequities become entrenched.



Solutions:

HRiA embeds equitable grantmaking practices built on social justice principles in work with partners and clients. Equitable grantmaking aims to streamline application processes, broaden who receives funding, and ensure awardees can make and demonstrate community impact in meaningful and wide-reaching ways.

- **The Idea Phase** gives potential applicants the opportunity to review eligibility requirements and get feedback on their proposed project before the grantmaking cycle begins without needing to commit to a full RFP.
- **An accessible and transparent application process** gives applicants a three-month window to submit a proposal in the format that works best for them, whether a written narrative, presentation, or another format. The scoring criteria are included in application materials to promote transparency.
- **Capacity-building support** is available throughout the grantmaking cycle, including office hours, question and answer sessions, trainings, and technical assistance. Many of the resources offered remain on The Funds' website after decisions are made to help future applicants prepare.
- **The decision process** includes recruiting reviewers with lived experience, gathering applicant feedback through a survey, and, when possible, offering declined applicants an opportunity to receive feedback on their submissions.

Challenge #2: A funding landscape prioritizing the short-term over PSE change

Awardees face funding paradigms and community needs oriented toward service delivery and short-term programming, conflicting with long-term PSE changes The Funds focuses on.

In Grantee Reflection and Connection sessions, awardees identified a lack of funding for PSE change approaches, making staffing difficult. This often coincides with urgent community needs, which have only intensified since the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff turnover due to inconsistent external funding, skill gaps, and competing priorities contributed to this challenge.



Photo caption: The Funds Regional Meeting

Solutions:

Capacity-building activities help awardees develop and enhance skills needed for PSE change approaches. Technical assistance and support from The Funds staff and their peers offer opportunities to strengthen their projects.

Many awardees need to build their PSE approach capacity and create collaborative oversight structures to keep their work focused on longer-term community-wide change.

- **Facilitated Peer Learning Communities** provided a space for awardees to discuss relevant topics like movement building, community engagement, equity, and narrative change.
- **Funding stream office hours** offered awardees the opportunity to troubleshoot project challenges with The Funds staff.
- **Evaluation technical assistance** helped awardees develop strong logic models and evaluation plans to measure progress toward PSE outcomes.

Challenge #3: Awardees representing under-resourced communities lack access, capacity, and connections

Awardees reflecting historically marginalized and under-resourced communities often lack the access and capacity that more established or well-connected entities have.

The Funds has made sizeable investments in organizations, coalitions, and municipalities that are either new (defined as being established within five years of applying for the award), have small annual budgets (less than \$500,000), or are located in communities that are consistently underfunded and overlooked, including rural and BIPOC communities. In the first years of The Funds, the team recognized that several awardees needed support to effectively leverage their awards for maximum impact.



Photo caption: The Funds Regional Meeting

Solutions:

One-on-one support from The Funds team and tailored interventions ensured awardees were able to make progress during their award cycle.

- **Quarterly Program Officer check-ins** between awardees and staff provided space to discuss funding-related challenges, workplan progress, budget concerns, and technical assistance needs.
- **Lunch & Learn sessions** for awardees focused on topics essential to project success and organizational growth. Some of the topics discussed were DIY marketing, fundraising, and sustainability planning.
- **Annual convenings** offered awardees opportunities to build connections with each other and with larger networks of advisory committee members, DPH, and AGE.

Challenge #4: Difficulty of innovating new grantmaking approaches when awardees are used to traditional methods

Traditional evaluation processes conflict with The Funds' equitable grantmaking approach. These processes are often extractive, reductive, and misaligned with the true impact of investments.

Awardees shared that their experiences with other evaluation and data collection efforts felt like tedious box-checking or flattening metric-taking, generally missing what awardees do daily and achieve over years. PSE change is difficult to track qualitatively, and it can be even harder to capture quantitative measures that have true meaning; the number of participants at an event or policies passed only scratches the surface. These experiences with evaluation eroded trust awardees had in funders and evaluators.



Photo caption: The Funds Regional Meeting

Solutions:

The Funds team engaged awardees throughout the entire engagement process—from conception of tools to interpretation of results—in developing equitable methods with meaningful findings.

- **An Evaluation Work Group** included awardee voices to steer evaluation activities and ensure they matched the work and the realities of the staff and community members.
- **Clear expectations and instructions with reasonable timelines** provided awardees with ample time and guidance to complete evaluation activities that engaged their staff and honored their expertise instead of last-minute or generic reports.
- **Sharing findings with awardees as the first partners in the process** led to deeper understanding of the results and insights to share with external stakeholders. Timely sharing of data also led to increased trust with awardees.

Lessons for Grantmaking

HRiA, the managing entity for The Funds, is a public health institute that centers equity in all aspects of its work. Its grantmaking emphasizes equitable practices that acknowledge historic and systemic inequities faced by many organizations and communities.

HIGHLIGHTS

Equitable grantmaking practices at HRiA include:

- **Prioritizing Impacted Communities:** Focus on those most affected by inequities, especially groups historically excluded from funding, and involve them throughout the grantmaking process.
- **Ensuring Equitable Access:** Make funding opportunities accessible by offering capacity-building support, increasing transparency in decision-making, and providing meaningful feedback.
- **Removing Structural Barriers:** Simplify applications, reduce burdensome requirements, and accept diverse formats to accommodate different communication styles and capacities.

Photo caption: Boys & Girls Club of Metro North



The importance and impact of these grantmaking practices were discussed by grantees in Grantee Connection and Reflection Sessions held in 2024.

Key features of The Funds raised by awardees during the Grantee Connection and Reflection sessions:

1

Long-Term Funding Enables Strategic Growth

Awardees consistently valued The Funds' five-year grant terms for Full PSE, Healthy Aging, and CHIP funding opportunities because they enabling stability and strategic decisionmaking.

- Long-term funding allowed for hiring and planning beyond annual cycles.
- Awardees could pursue deeper, more sustainable initiatives.

“The five-year terms of the grants have been profound.”

- Healthy Aging Awardee in Lowell

2

Flexible Funding Supports Responsive Programming

Awardees valued the non-prescriptive nature of the funding, which allowed them to adapt to community needs and external changes.

- Flexibility enabled program pivots and collaboration.
- Awardees felt trusted and empowered to lead.

“We've been enjoying the amount of agency and independence we have been able to have with this funding source.”

- PSE Awardee in Lowell

3

Community Engagement is Central and Supported

The Funds' emphasis on community engagement—especially through compensated leadership roles—was seen as a major strength.

- Funding supported youth and resident leadership.
- Awardees appreciated autonomy in designing engagement strategies.

“The Funds' staff recognize people should be compensated for their time.”

- Funds Awardee

In the Grantee Connection and Reflection Sessions, awardees also shared broader learnings for funders:

1

Sustainability Requires More Than Innovation

Awardees expressed frustration with the philanthropic focus on novelty over sustaining proven work.

- Constant reinvention to meet funder expectations undermines stability.
- Existing community-driven work often goes underfunded.

“Build the strength of good organizations...not always requiring them to re-invent themselves.”

- Funds Awardee

2

Embrace Flexibility and Realism

Awardees want funders to support adaptive strategies and realistic expectations.

- Prescriptive funding models hinder innovation.
- Awardees prefer to define their own paths to impact.

“Let us draw the map and not be prescriptive on how to get there.”

- PSE Awardee in Wakefield

3

Funders as Conveners and Advocates

Awardees see value in funders playing broader roles in field-building and advocacy.

- Hosting organizations at convenings fosters collaboration.
- Funders can amplify systems-change efforts.

“Funders have a platform... to help organize advocacy for systems change.”

- PSE Awardee in Greenfield

Conclusion

The first five years of the Massachusetts Community Health and Healthy Aging Funds have had a profound impact on communities and organizations working to advance health equity in communities that have not historically benefitted from community health funds. As we continue to refine this work, we are guided by our values and the feedback from awardees, community members, and partners. If there is one overarching theme, it is the importance and necessity of community-centered approaches.

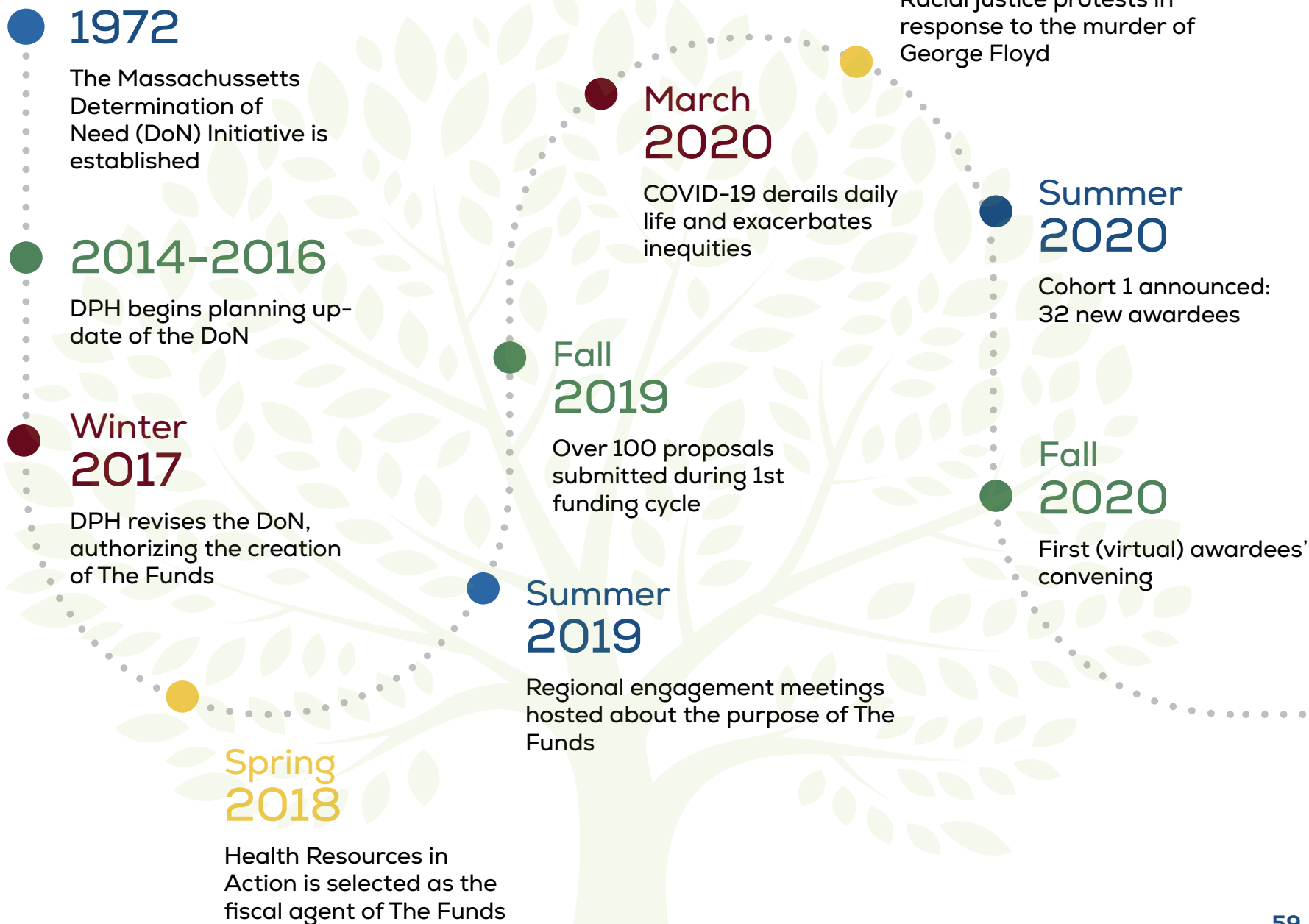
Find more information

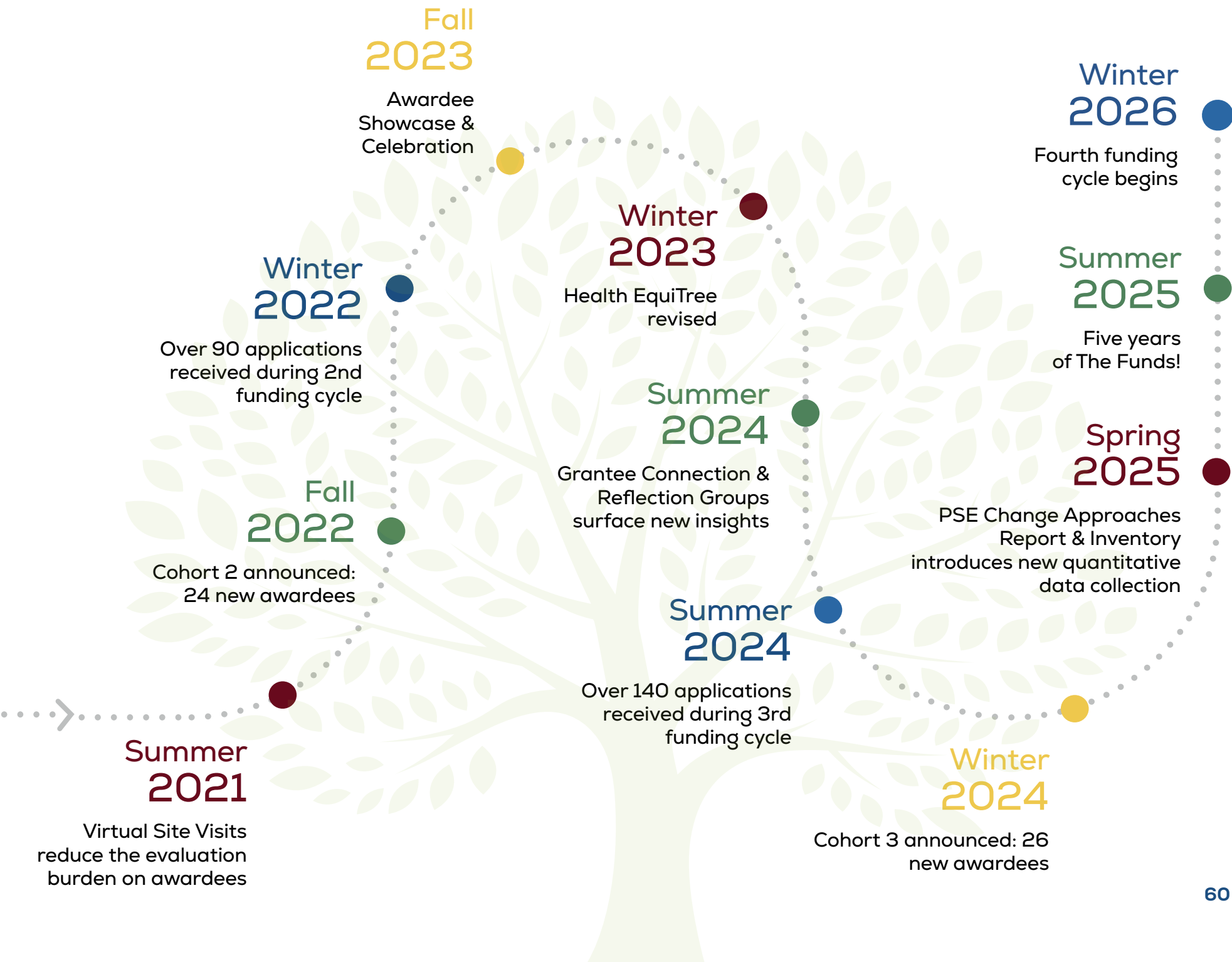
Find more information about The Funds, including descriptions of awardees, resources about policy, systems, and environmental change approaches, and Frequently Asked Questions, at mahealthfunds.org.



Photo caption: The Marion Institute

Timeline of The Funds' Development





Fall
2023

Awardee
Showcase &
Celebration

Winter
2026

Fourth funding
cycle begins

Winter
2023

Health EquiTree
revised

Summer
2025

Five years
of The Funds!

Winter
2022

Over 90 applications
received during 2nd
funding cycle

Summer
2024

Grantee Connection &
Reflection Groups
surface new insights

Spring
2025

PSE Change Approaches
Report & Inventory
introduces new quantitative
data collection

Fall
2022

Cohort 2 announced:
24 new awardees

Summer
2024

Over 140 applications
received during 3rd
funding cycle

Summer
2021

Virtual Site Visits
reduce the evaluation
burden on awardees

Winter
2024

Cohort 3 announced: 26
new awardees

Appendix

List of awardees by funding stream, cohort

Community Health Improvement Planning

Cohort 1

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission - CHIP
Cambridge Public Health Department
City of New Bedford Health Department
Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester
Community Health Network for North Central Mass (CHNA 9)
Franklin Regional Council of Governments - CHIP
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Town of Randolph
Town of Ware

Cohort 2

African Cultural Services
Breaktime
City of Lawrence & The Mayor's Health Task Force
Family Nurturing Center of Massachusetts

Cohort 3

Berkshire Resources for Integration of Diverse Groups and Education (BRIDGE)
Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG)
North Shore Community Health, Inc.
Outer Cape Community Solutions

Policy, Systems, Environmental Change

Cohort 1

All Farmers
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission - PSE
Citizens' Housing and Planning Association
Collaborative for Educational Services
Communities that Care Coalition
Everett Community Growers
Franklin County CDC
Franklin Regional Council of Governments - PSE
Harborlight Community Partners
Health Care For All
Lawrence CommunityWorks
Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance (MHSA)
Men of Color Health Awareness (MOCHA)
Neighbor to Neighbor and MPHA

Cohort 2

Asian Women for Health
Boys & Girls Club of Stoneham
Centro de Ayuda y Esperanza Latina
Community Development Partnership
FoodCorps
HEAL Coalition
Health Imperatives
Housing Navigator

Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Old Colony YMCA
Springfield EATS
The Center for Hope and Healing
UTEC
Winthrop Public Health & Clinical Services

Cohort 3

Behavioral Health Partners of MetroWest, LLC
Codman Square Health Center
Community Builders
Community Economic Development Center
Sahiyo
Herring Pong Wampanoag
Homes for All Massachusetts
Lawyers for Civil Rights
Massachusetts Immigrant Refugee Advocacy
Massachusetts National Org for Women Foundation Inc. (Mass NOW)
Mujeres Victoriosas (Victorious Women)
Public Health Institute of Western MA (PHIWM)
Springfield WORKS Western Massachusetts
The Marion Institute
To the Moon and Back
United Way of Massachusetts Bay

Healthy Aging

Cohort 1

Cape Ann Mass in Motion
Hilltown CDC
LifePath
MA Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative
Montachusett Regional Planning Commission
Public Health Institute of Western MA
Valley Neighbors
Vietnamese American Initiative for Development

Cohort 2

Community Teamwork
Dominican Development Center
GreenRoots
Southeast Asian Coalition of Central Massachusetts
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Cohort 3

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission
DEAF, Inc
LifePath
Massachusetts Association for Mental Health
Massachusetts Senior Action Council
OutstandingLife

Data and Methodology

The Funds' equitable evaluation approach is guided by an Evaluation Workgroup comprised of grantees, DPH and EOAI representatives, Advisory Committee members, and community members (at grantee discretion).

Virtual Site Visits



Focus: Systematic collection of individual grantee reflections

Topics-Data Collected: Successes, challenges, stories, impact of The Funds, sustainability

Grantee Reflection and Connection Sessions



Focus: Movement-building; Field and environment for PSE change

Topics-Data Collected: Includes SDoH, community engagement, and focus on rural communities

Geographies and Populations Survey



Focus: Quantification of geographies and populations served by each grant project

Topics-Data Collected: Specific geography of funded project work; specific population groups of focus

PSE Change Approaches Report Inventory (PSE-ARI)



Focus: Quantifying collective PSE change activities and strategies, with supporting examples

Topics-Data Collected: Policy, systems, and environmental change activities

Determination of Need Background

The Massachusetts Determination of Need (DoN) regulation underwent a major revision in 2017 to better align hospital investments with public health priorities. This revision catalyzed the creation of The Funds and a more equitable distribution of DoN Community Health Initiative (CHI) dollars with a stronger emphasis on equity, community engagement, and systems change.

Originally established by the Legislature in 1972, DoN regulation sought to ensure adequate health care services were made available to all citizens of the Commonwealth at the lowest reasonable cost. The DoN regulation still requires hospitals and long-term

care facilities to seek approval from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) for projects that would improve or expand care, such as building an ambulatory wing, buying MRI equipment, or expanding a facility for additional beds. This mandate included a broad range of health concerns, including accessibility of services, public accountability, resource allocation, and cost containment.

In 2014, the Commissioner of DPH supported a health impact assessment project at Cooley Dickinson Hospital to examine the CHI program. This marked a turning point, as internal conversations at DPH began to center racial justice—sparked by national events like the murder of Michael Brown.

DPH staff and partners engaged in deep introspective work, laying the foundation for a racial equity lens in public health. These efforts coincided with growing dissatisfaction around the inequitable distribution of DoN CHI funds. Up until 2017, the DoN regulation was written to distribute CHI funding only in the geographic communities where large healthcare facilities were found, even though those facilities drew patients from across the state.



Photo caption: Lawyers for Civil Rights

Regulatory Revision and Strategic Realignment

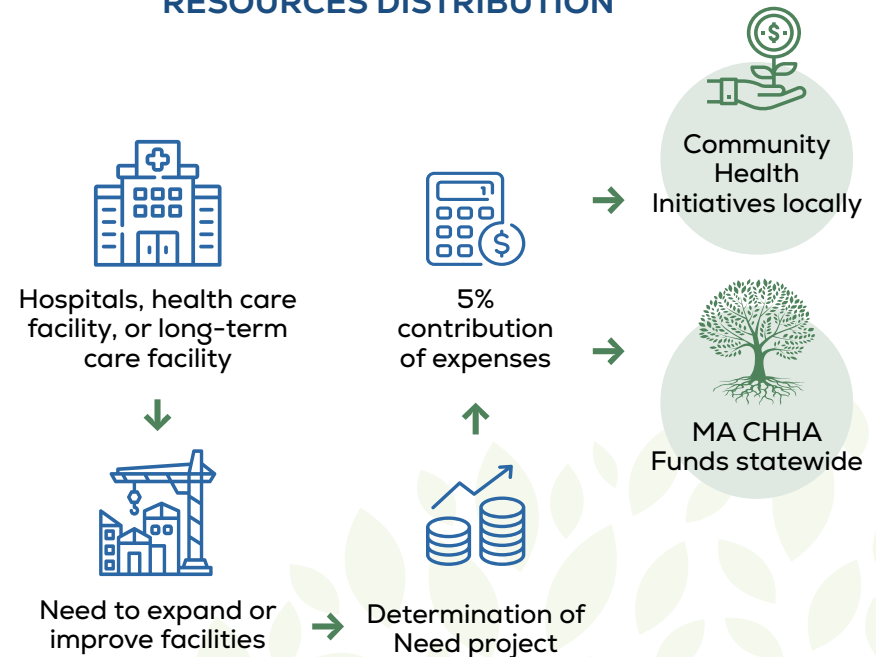
In January 2017, DPH revised the DoN regulation to distribute Community Health Initiative funds more equitably across the state. The updated DoN regulation required projects to demonstrate alignment with local health priorities, especially social determinants of health and racial and health equity frameworks. It also introduced community engagement standards, emphasizing transparency in decision-making and power sharing with community partners. These principles were codified in the Community Engagement Standards for Community Health Planning Guidelines, which defined engagement as a continuum, from informing to empowering.

As DPH shifted internally, hospital community benefits, federally mandated and overseen by the Attorney General's Office, underwent their own transformation. In January 2018, new voluntary guidelines were released following a collaborative process involving both community and hospital leadership. They recommended planning processes that centered community engagement and encouraged regional collaboration. The DoN revisions became one part of a broader shift toward uplifting and following community priorities.

Two advisory committees were formed to provide recommendations on the strategic direction of The Funds: the Healthy Aging Committee, guided by American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and World Health Organization frameworks, and the statewide Advisory Committee, focused on structural racism and equity.

Through a competitive bidding process, HRiA was selected as the fiscal agent of The Funds. HRiA drew on its experience in grantmaking and consulted with funders and social determinants of health experts. This informed The Funds' design and reinforced the importance of community-driven processes.

DETERMINATION OF NEED (DoN) RESOURCES DISTRIBUTION

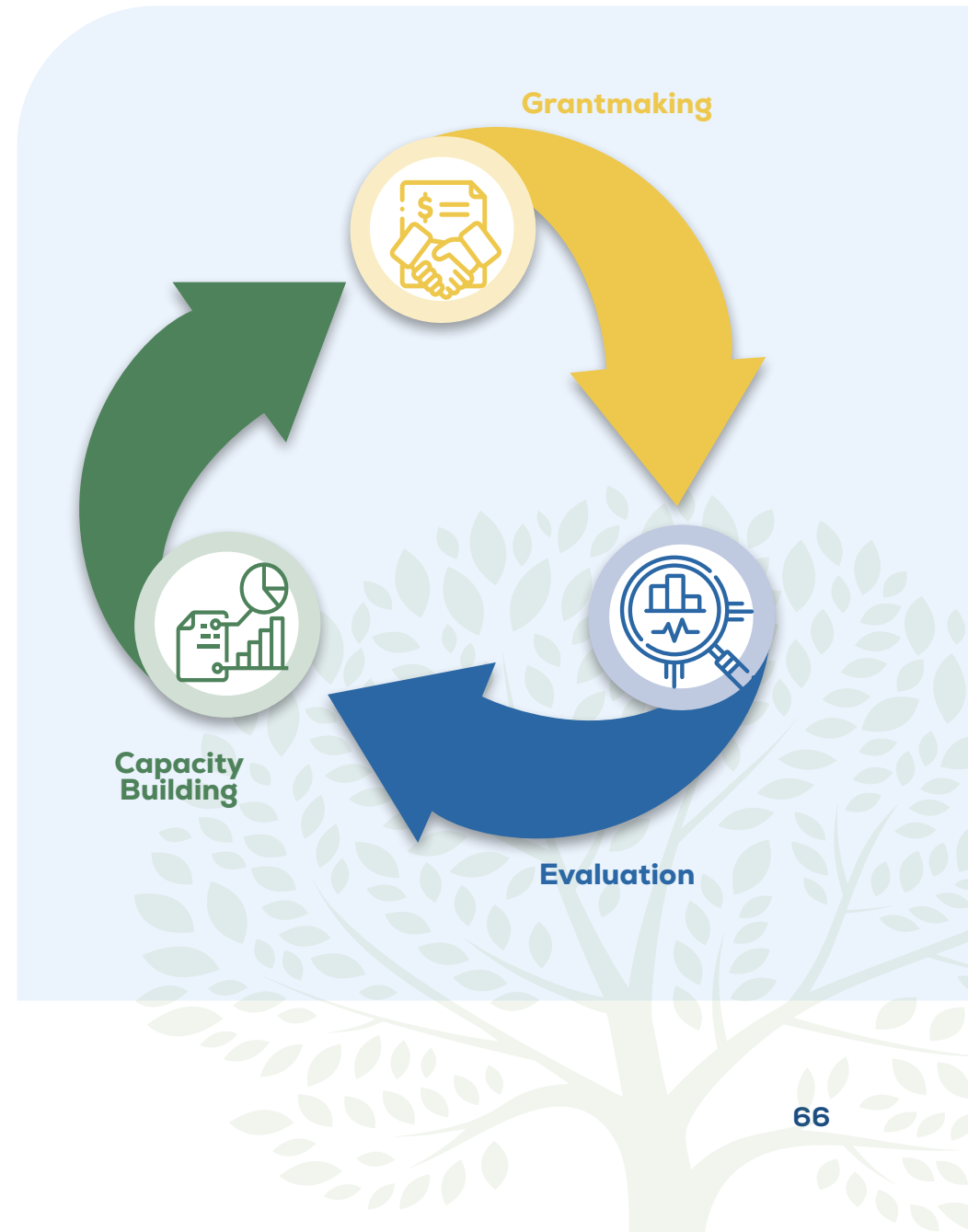


Community Engagement in Action

In 2019, HRiA and DPH hosted five regional engagement sessions to introduce The Funds' equity lens and focus on social determinants of health. Attendees shared about barriers to accessing DPH funding, including a lack of grant-writing capacity of some community-based organizations. These conversations shaped an accessible, inclusive application process. The sessions also exemplified the "Collaborate" and "Empower" levels of engagement, as defined in the guidelines. They laid the groundwork for the Inquiry of Ideas phase, which invited concept papers from community organizations.

In 2020, the application and review process launched, shaped by lessons learned from prior engagements. The Review Committee prioritized risk-taking in funding decisions, capacity-building support, and minimizing burdens in evaluation.

The Funds was well-equipped to meet the unexpected challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and calls for racial justice in the wake of George Floyd's murder. Shaped by community voices and committed to health and racial equity and the principles of trust-based philanthropy, The Funds awarded the inaugural cohort of 32 grantees over \$14 million in July 2020.



Advisory Committee Members

Current Members

Name	Organization
Allie Cataldo	Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association
Blessed Ovie	The Advocates
Calpurnyia Roberts	Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance
Gouri Banerjee	Senior Mentor and Fundraise
Lisa Ranghelli	Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts
Lois Smith	Nonprofit Consultant
Lynne Feldman	LifePath
Oami Amarasingham	Massachusetts Public Health Association
Shaundell Diaz	Three County Continuum of Care/Community Action Pioneer Valley

Inaugural Committee

Community Health Funds' Advisory Committee Members and Organizations

Original Member	Organization
Casey Burns	Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester
Peter Doliber*	The Alliance of Massachusetts YMCAs
Cheryl L. Dukes	UMass Amherst College of Nursing
Geoff Foster	UTEC
Elmer Freeman	Center for Community Health Education, Research and Service
Rachel Heller	Citizens' Housing and Planning Association
Kim Hollon	Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association**
Joe Kriesberg	Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations
Erin Liang	Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association**
Tricia Pistone*	Montachusett Opportunity Council
Maddie Ribble	Massachusetts Public Health Association**
Cheryl Sbarra	Coalition for Local Public Health**
Al Vega	Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health
Phoebe Walker	Franklin Regional Council of Governments

NOTE: Asterisk (*) indicates co-chair; double asterisk (**) indicates organizational seat; during Year 1, Elana Brochin took over representation of MACDC in place of Joe Kriesberg.

Advisory Committee Members

Inaugural Committee

Healthy Aging Funds' Advisory Committee Members and Organizations

Original Member	Organization
Kathy Burnes	Jewish Family and Children's Services
Elizabeth Dugan	UMass Boston
Susan Gittelman	B'nai B'rith Housing
Phillip Gonzalez*	Tufts Health Plan Foundation
Laura Kittross*	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Wendy Landman	WalkBoston
Paddy Moore	Healthy Aging Martha's Vineyard
Maura Moxley	Alzheimer's Association
Adriane Queiroz	City of Framingham
Leah Serafin	Old Colony YMCA
Emily Shea	Commission on Affairs of the Elderly, City of Boston
David Stevens	Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging
Dillon Sussman	Sussman Dodson and Flinker
Martha Velez	Lawrence Council on Aging

NOTE: Asterisk (*) indicates co-chair; during Year 1, Maura Moxley transitioned out of their position at Alzheimer's Association



— Massachusetts —
COMMUNITY HEALTH AND
HEALTHY AGING FUNDS



HEALTH
RESOURCES
IN ACTION

