



Request for Proposals Social Drivers of Health

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), the Physicians Foundation is seeking 3 to 5 medical associations to develop capacity, resources, and data-collection to support physicians in their understanding of social drivers of health (SDOH) and their integration of SDOH into their medical practices, as part of their regular patient care. This is a new, one-year long grant program for up to \$75,000 per grant.

Background/Overview

Physicians have long experienced the impact of the SDOH. They recognize that the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age have a major influence on patient health¹ and the cost of health care in America. SDOH includes factors like food insecurity, housing instability, transportation problems, utilities difficulties, and interpersonal safety.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, these factors, such as access to healthy food, safe housing, and other SDOH, [drove 80% of health outcomes](#).² Now, patients, who are returning to physicians' offices and hospitals for routine visits, deferred elective procedures, prescription refills and more, are presenting with conditions made worse by lost jobs and the struggle to afford food, transportation, or rent.

Physicians know that improving health, reducing total cost of care, and achieving health equity are only achievable by addressing SDOH. Despite the well-documented impact of SDOH on health outcomes and costs of care, our current health care system does not operate in a way that includes addressing them.

Therefore, to assess how SDOH affect physicians and their patients, The Physicians Foundation determined to conduct the first part of its *2022 Survey of America's Physicians* on this topic.

Eight in 10 physicians (80%) believe that the United States cannot improve health outcomes or reduce health care costs without addressing SDOH.³

The top five strategies physicians reported important to support them and other physicians in addressing patients' SDOH are:⁴

- Investing in community capacity to address patients' SDOH
- Investing in the technological and human capacity to connect patients with community resources they need to be healthy
- Screening patients to identify social needs
- Significantly reducing existing payer reporting requirements and other administrative burdens to provide the necessary time to address SDOH
- Creating financial incentives for physician-directed efforts to address SDOH

¹ "Healthy People 2020: Social Determinants of Health," Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health>.

² Vinita Magoon, DO, JD, MBA, MPH, CMQ, "Screening for Social Determinants of Health in Daily Practice," *Family Practice Management* (Mar/Apr 2022).

³ The Physicians Foundation, *2022 Survey of America's Physicians, Part One of Three: Examining How the Social Drivers of Health Affect the Nation's Physicians and their Patients*, March 2022. <https://physiciansfoundation.org/physician-and-patient-surveys/the-physicians-foundation-2022-physician-survey-part-1/>

⁴ The Physicians Foundation, *2022 Survey of America's Physicians, Part One of Three*, March 2022.

Purpose

The overall purpose of this new grant program is to spread awareness and knowledge around best strategies for physicians who care for patients with SDOH. Medical associations have a keen sense of what is going on with physicians and their patients in their geographies and bring important knowledge that can customize SDOH screening and resource navigation implementation with medical practices, including meeting the unique needs of small practices. Medical associations will also be asked to identify existing lists of community resources for physicians to use for referring their patients with SDOH needs.

This RFP is meant to identify and provide financial support to the foundations of state and county medical associations:

- who have the interest in and capacity to engage in the year-long activities of this grant program,
- whose state's/region's landscape is primed for or at a critical point related to addressing SDOH,
- who could recruit a group of physicians who are willing and eager to integrate or enhance SDOH screenings and SDOH-related resource navigation into their medical practices and to provide feedback and data related to that SDOH integration process.

In addition to recruiting a cohort of medical practices, grantees (state and county medical association foundations) will be asked to identify and compile a guide of existing resource lists of social service organizations whose work addresses one or more of the above listed factors, such as food insecurity (*See Background/ Overview section above*). As many communities and national organizations may already have clearinghouses for community resources - sometimes available through municipal offices or a nonprofit collaborative – associations should compile a list of existing databases of community resources. One such resource database has been developed by the [American Academy of Family Physicians](#).⁵ Associations should feel free to use this tool or any other similar databases as the resource list it provides to practices to then share with patients who screen positive for one or more SDOH.

Activities and Outcomes

The broad expectation is that the RFP will support on-the-ground initiatives that empower physicians to optimize integration of SDOH into their practices in a way that enhances patient health and increases value. No standard SDOH screening tool is required for participation in this grant program. The focus is on enhanced education for associations to help physicians with screening and resource connection -- addressing two of the above top five strategies physicians reported important to support them and other physicians in addressing patients' SDOH. The hope is that information gathered and learned over the course of the grant program can bolster each association's future policy efforts related to the other top strategies identified, including community capacity, administrative burden, and creating financial incentives.

Offered over the course of one-year, grantees will have the opportunity to participate in Physicians Foundation-sponsored regular virtual grantee cohort check-ins as well as educational sessions. Subject matter experts will provide an initial SDOH-related educational session, open to all participants, followed by several grantee cohort gatherings. These subsequent gatherings will be an opportunity for facilitated check-ins among the medical societies' staff to provide peer support, share updates, discuss

⁵ "The EveryONE Project: Neighborhood Navigator," American Academy of Family Physicians, <https://www.aafp.org/family-physician/patient-care/the-everyone-project/neighborhood-navigator.html>



successes and challenges, and help each other troubleshoot. Based on challenges that arise during these cohort check-ins, other technical assistance will likely be coordinated to meet the cohort's expressed needs.

Over the course of the grant period, participating medical associations will also be asked to collect insights and monitor practices' progress to help inform state and national policy efforts. Participating organizations will be provided support with the above-described activities through regular meetings with other grantees in the cohort to discuss challenges and share strategies and lessons learned.

Proposal Review and Timetable

A proposal should include a description of how your project addresses the purpose described in this RFP, a proposed plan and activities, a budget, and a brief bio-sketch of the key staff members. Requests should be for up to \$75,000 for a one-year project period.

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| RFP Release Date: | Tuesday, August 9, 2022 |
| Informational Webinar: | Friday, August 12, 2022 |
| Proposals Due: | Monday, September 12, 2022 |
| Funding Decisions: | Monday, October 17, 2022 |
| Project Start Date: | Monday, January 2, 2023 |

The Foundation will select 3 to 5 organizations to receive grant support under this RFP. Proposals will be reviewed based on the following criteria:

- **Field focused:** The organization is rooted in physician needs with clear potential to advance the field and address key challenges around SDOH screening and resource navigation.
- **Urgency:** The Foundation will favor projects that are timely given the practice environment in their geographies and that will likely serve as a catalyst for future advances around supporting physicians with SDOH integration, including meeting the unique needs of small practices.
- **Strategic impact:** The Foundation will consider the state/region's current landscape as well as the medical association's commitment to further this work to ensure the grant support will provide the greatest impact from the practice level to the policy level.

The proposal should include details on some or all of the following factors if/when applicable:

- Past experience supporting physicians with implementing practice-level changes
- The medical association's current research, resources, and tools related to SDOH
- The state's current environment around SDOH on both the practice and policy level
- Organizational capacity to commit time and staff to supporting both a cohort of at least 5 practices (with a focus on the smaller practice community) and resource list compilation.

Eligibility and How to Apply

To apply for a grant, register and login to the Foundation's [online application system](#). Proposals must be completed and submitted with all required responses and attachments in order to be considered for funding in this grant cycle. Please use the access code "SDOH22" to access the application.

Charitable arms of both county and state medical associations are welcome to apply, though state associations will be given priority in the review process because of their broader reach.

For this RFP the Foundation is waiving its policy that limits an organization from having only one grant at a time. As such, organizations who have a current active grant with the Foundation are eligible to apply.



If you have questions regarding the application, please contact the Foundation's Senior Program Officer, Danielle Belanger at 617-391-3073 or dbelanger@gmafounds.com.

About The Physicians Foundation

The Physicians Foundation is a nonprofit seeking to advance the work of practicing physicians and help them facilitate the delivery of high-quality health care to patients. As the health care system in America continues to evolve, The Physicians Foundation is steadfast in its determination to strengthen the physician-patient relationship and assist physicians in sustaining their medical practices in today's practice environment. It pursues its mission through a variety of activities including grant-making, research, white papers and policy studies. Since 2005, the Foundation has awarded numerous multi-year grants totaling more than \$50 million. In addition, the Foundation focuses on the following core areas: physician leadership, physician wellness, physician practice trends, social drivers of health and the impact of health care reform on physicians and patients. For more information, visit www.physiciansfoundation.org.