



Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota Caring Foundation Rural Health Grants

Funding Period (January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026)

Introduction

Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota (BCBSND) Caring Foundation, in partnership with the Center for Rural Health (CRH) at the University of North Dakota (UND) School of Medicine & Health Sciences, is pleased to announce the Rural Health Grants (RHG) for 2026 with a focus on developing solutions to addressing social drivers of health (SDOH) at the local, community level. The goal of these grants is to build a future of opportunity, access, and full potential for health and well-being for all.

Vision of Seeking Shared Solutions

In partnership with local providers and community-based organizations, BCBSND Caring Foundation and CRH seek to build relationships and work collaboratively to understand, identify, and address the SDOH needs affecting the health and well-being of North Dakota communities. A provider is defined as a healthcare entity that provides services to patients (ex. hospitals, clinics, nursing facilities, public health units, mental health facilities, dental clinics, tribal health facilities, home health agencies, pharmacies, emergency medical services units, and other related health organizations) – and their communities by offering grants that stimulate new thinking around healthcare providers championing SDOH components. Financial support, based on established criteria, will be awarded to those applicants whose proposals benefit rural North Dakotans, and their communities, by embracing SDOH solutions.

Attributes of the BCBSND Caring Foundation Rural Health Grants

SDOH are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.

SDOH can be grouped into five domains: economic stability, education access and quality, healthcare access and quality, neighborhood and built environment, and social and community context.

SDOH have a major impact on people's health, well-being, and quality of life. Examples of SDOH include:

- Safe housing, transportation, and neighborhoods
- Behavioral and mental health services and supports
- Safety, conflict, and violence
- Education, job opportunities, and income
- Access to nutritious foods and physical activity opportunities
- Language and literacy skills

Each provider awarded a grant for an activity or program will receive recognition and publicity as a co-sponsor, with the BCBSND Caring Foundation RHG brand. Specific expectations will be distributed to successful grant recipients once the awards are determined.

Financial Award

BCBSND Caring Foundation will make funds available in the total amount of \$40,000 for this grant. Individual awards will be made on a competitive basis to successful applicant(s). It is anticipated that 6-8 grants will be awarded in the amounts of \$5,000 to \$7,500. Strongest consideration will be given to applicants who demonstrate strong and cross-sector community collaborations and sustainability. Additionally, applicants may request funds as part of one grant request for more than one activity/project, as long as all align with the Rural Health Grants vision. Funds will be awarded to grantees on a cost reimbursement basis.

Application Process

BCBSND Caring Foundation RHG will partner with CRH at the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences to provide administration of the program.

Applicants must submit a grant proposal **via the online system** no later than **5:00 pm Central on November 14, 2025 (no exceptions will be made)**. *You must have submitted the proposal by that time, if you still have the proposal submission form open it will not be accepted after 5:00 pm Central.* When you have successfully submitted the proposal online you will receive a message saying that your proposal has been received. If you do not see this message on your screen it likely did not get submitted; **contact Holly Long, project coordinator at holly.long@und.edu or (701) 213-9985.**

Submit your grant proposal, or copy and paste the following link into your browser:

<https://tinyurl.com/RURALGRANT21>

The proposals will be reviewed by a BCBSND Caring Foundation and CRH review panel, and successful applicants will be notified by CRH no later than December 12, 2025. Grantees will be selected according to criteria specified by the BCBSND Caring Foundation. Notification to applicants and any correspondence will occur via email through Holly Long (holly.long@und.edu).

Complete grant guidance, required templates, and examples are included online at <https://ruralhealth.und.edu/projects/bcbs-grant-program>.

Conclusion

Thank you for your interest in BCBSND Caring Foundation and UND CRH Rural Health Grants. These grants are designed to assist providers to identify solutions, develop strong collaboratives, and champion health and well-being in our communities.

Please direct any grant questions to Holly Long, project coordinator, at holly.long@und.edu or (701) 213-9985.



Program Guidance

Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota Caring Foundation

Rural Health Grants

Funding Period (January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026)

(Deadline: Submitted via the online system no later than 5:00 pm Central, November 14, 2025)

Program Purpose

The purpose of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota (BCBSND) Caring Foundation Rural Health Grants is to focus on transforming the health and well-being of rural North Dakotans and address the social drivers of health (SDOH) needs affecting its communities so we can build a better future of opportunity, access, and full potential for all.

For the purposes of this grant, Rural is defined as:

- Non-metropolitan counties
- Outlying metropolitan counties with no population from an urban area of 50,000 or more people
- Census tracts with RUCA codes 4-10 in metropolitan counties
- Census tracts of at least 400 square miles in area with population density of 35 or fewer people per square mile with RUCA codes 2-3 in metropolitan counties
- Census tracts with RRS 5 and RUCA codes 2-3 that are at least 20 square miles in area in metropolitan counties

The program targets the following primary focus area(s):

- Economic stability
- Education access and quality
- Healthcare access and quality
- Neighborhood and built environment
- Social and community context

Applicants must identify one or more SDOH areas in their proposal; and **may include more than one activity or program, as long as it meets the overall criteria.**

Proposal Requirements

Eligibility

- A. For purposes of implementing the activities described in the proposal, single healthcare entities or a network (informal/formal) can involve a variety of organizations, but not necessarily limited to, the following: hospitals, clinics, nursing facilities, public health units, mental health

facilities, dental clinics, tribal health facilities, home health agencies, pharmacies, emergency medical service units and other appropriate health organizations.

- B. The lead applicant on the proposal **MUST be a healthcare provider** (a provider is defined as a healthcare facility – hospital, clinic, public health unit, etc.). An individual person or non-healthcare entity may not be the lead applicant, it must be a healthcare business.
- C. Both established and/or new partnerships/networks are strongly encouraged to apply. If the applicant has had prior working relationships with the identified partner(s), this needs to be described in the grant application.
- D. The applicant may form a network with organizations that are public or private, for-profit or non-profit.
- E. Preference will be given to rural areas in North Dakota. The vast majority of the grant funds must be expended either in a rural area or in a manner that has direct impact on the rural service area.
- F. Grant awards will be made to one organization (the applicant). The applicant represents either itself in a solo proposal or an entire partnership under a network proposal. That organization must be capable of receiving and administering grant funds. If the proposal involves a network, the applicant is responsible for distributing any funds to the partners listed for their areas of responsibility.

Program Funds

- A. The BCBSND Caring Foundation is investing a total of \$40,000 in this rural-centered grant program. Grants will average between \$5,000 and \$7,500 per award. The committee will consider awarding larger amounts if an applicant is applying on behalf of a network of healthcare facilities.
- B. The time frame for implementing the individual grants will be 12 months, with a funding period of January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026.
- C. A direct financial match on behalf of the applicant is not required. However, cost participation (e.g. in-kind, physical space, etc.) is strongly encouraged. Please provide details.
- D. Grant funds are intended to support achievement of program goals and objectives. Therefore, funds cannot be used for independent projects sponsored by individual members. The proposal must demonstrate how all activities interrelate for the general and specific benefit of the identified service area and target population.

Scope of Activity

- A. The proposal must identify at least one SDOH area to be addressed (economic stability, education access and quality, healthcare access and quality, neighborhood and built environment, social and community context) and indicate the amount requested; between \$5,000 to \$7,500.
- B. Proposal Sections

1) Need Statement (5 points)

- a. Describe why this type of project is needed. Be sure to include sources backing up your statements.

2) Project Description (45 points)

- a. Describe, in appropriate detail, the project, initiative, event, or program.
- b. Using the Work Plan Template provided on the website, fill out the document to include the goals, key objectives, activities, anticipated outcome, measures, timeline, and person(s) responsible.
- c. Describe the target population and target service area of the proposal.
- d. Describe the measures of success, i.e., what factors/measurements are the triggers of a successful event, initiative, or program.
- e. Explain the role and responsibility of the network members (if applicable) in accomplishing the goals and objectives. Describe how members will collaborate to implement the project.
- f. Describe the role of the community members and/or the community organizations in the project. How will the community learn about this event, project, or program?

3) Project Management and Partner Responsibility (10 points)

- a. Explain the applicant's experience and ability to manage the grant funds (e.g. previous grant project management).
- b. Describe the current resources, skills, and staffing expertise for the project.

4) Project Sustainability (5 points)

- a. Describe specifically how the proposed program, event initiative, or project will continue once the grant funding period ends.

5) Evaluation (10 points)

- a. Describe the method and process measures for assuring that the proposed goals and objectives are achieved by the proposed timeline.
- b. Describe how you will measure the impact of the proposed project, and what measures of success will be used to evaluate effectiveness.

6) Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) (required for network-based proposals) (5 points)

- a. Provide a MOA stating the role and responsibility of each partner. If resources (in-kind or financial) are provided, describe that contribution. You may have each partner organization sign one group MOA or the lead organization may have an individual MOA with each of the partners. This is intended to help both the grant reviewers and the applicant understand that all partners are committed to the project and are aware of their role and responsibility on the proposed project. There is no required template that must be used for the

MOAs, but, if any entity other than the lead applicant is mentioned as playing a role in the proposal there **MUST** be signed MOAs submitted with the application for all entities other than the lead applicant.

If you have multiple MOAs, please scan and combine into one document to upload and submit. All signed MOAs are **required** at the time the grant proposal is submitted.

7) Line Item Budget Worksheet AND Budget Narrative (20 points)

a. The budget is divided into two parts:

- line-item budget worksheet
- budget narrative

The line item budget worksheet lists costs associated with the proposed budget. The required Budget Template is provided on the website. The worksheet lists costs, from the grant and in-kind, associated with the budget.

The budget narrative describes in detail how the funds requested for each line item will be spent and how the amount was determined. Use your best judgement when projecting expenses.

Key Components of Proposal to Prepare to Submit Through the Online System

You will not be able to reenter and edit the information you enter via the online portal once you exit, so have all of your information prepared in advance.

Checklist of items needed for grant submission:

- ☐ Project name, project focus, and contact information (applicant organization, lead contact person/title, address, city, county, state, ZIP, phone, email).
- ☐ Project abstract information
 - Provide a brief description of the program, project, event, or initiative.
 - Provide a brief description of the plan to implement the program, project, event, or initiative.
 - Provide a brief description of what you plan to measure, how you plan to measure it, and the proposed outcome or impact.
 - State the **total dollar amount** being requested.
- ☐ Proposal
 - Need statement
 - Project description
 - Project management and partner relationship
 - Project sustainability

- Evaluation
- ☐ Work plan – must use the Work Plan Template available on <https://ruralhealth.und.edu/projects/bcbs-grant-program> – this will need to be uploaded with the proposal submission online.
- ☐ Budget
 - Line-item budget worksheet – must use the Budget Template available on <https://ruralhealth.und.edu/projects/bcbs-grant-program> – this will need to be uploaded with the proposal submission online.
 - Budget narrative
- ☐ Signed Memorandum of Agreement(s) between all partners indicated in proposal – these will need to be uploaded with the proposal submission online. If there are multiple documents, please upload them as one document.
- ☐ Letters of support (maximum of two; not required)
- ☐ Appendices – if there is any additional information that you would like to provide as an appendix, you will need to submit them as an attached PDF.

If you have ANY questions on these items or have trouble uploading them, please contact Holly Long at holly.long@und.edu or (701) 213-9985.

Submission of Grant

All proposals must be submitted through the online system no later than 5:00 pm Central on November 14, 2025 (no exceptions will be made).

Complete and submit your grant proposal, or copy and paste the following link into your browser: <https://tinyurl.com/RURALGRANT21>. This link is also available on the from the grant website <https://ruralhealth.und.edu/projects/bcbs-grant-program>.

If you have any questions, contact Holly Long at holly.long@und.edu or (701) 213-9985.

Faxed, emailed, and/or mail submitted applications **will not** be accepted.

UND accepts no responsibility for non-receipt and delays in receipt caused by technological error/malfunction.

Acceptance or non-acceptance of an application: The review panel reserves the right to accept or not accept any or all applications or parts of the application, and to waive formalities.

Reporting Requirements: An interim and a final online program report will be **required from all grantees**. Follow-up beyond the actual event or program is expected.

IMPORTANT DATES

November 14, 2025	Proposals must be <u>submitted via the online submission</u> by 5:00 pm Central. <u>Complete and submit</u> your grant proposal, or copy and paste the following link into your browser: <u>https://tinyurl.com/RURALGRANT21</u> .
December 12, 2025	Notification of awards
January 1, 2026	Funding period begins
June 1, 2026	Interim report due
December 31, 2026	Project must be <u>completed</u> and funds expended
December 31, 2026	Final report and invoice must be submitted

For information on the grant or its application, please contact:

Holly Long, Project Coordinator
Center for Rural Health, UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences
(701) 213-9985
holly.long@und.edu