



Rural Changemaker Request for Proposal (RFP)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Background

Interact for Health works to ensure that people in our region have a just opportunity to live their healthiest lives, regardless of who they are or where they live. We advance health justice through grantmaking, collaboration, learning, convening, and engagement. Interact for Health is an independent foundation in 20 counties across Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. In 2024, Interact for Health launched its Rural Investment Strategy, which included an initial \$1M investment in strategic grantmaking, community engagement, and event sponsorship. Over time, we have committed over \$ 2M in grants and sponsorships to our 14 rural counties. Interact for Health is reaffirming its investment in its Rural Strategy through the Rural Changemaker Grant outlined below. Our goal with this funding effort is to support a shared sense of belonging in our rural communities, in which everyone has a say in shaping their future on their own terms.

RFP Goal

To promote health and well-being in the rural regions in Interact for Health's service area by providing funding to address grassroots work in Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky related to the [vital conditions for health and well-being](#) – the resources we all need to thrive, and to promote a shared sense of community belonging.

RFP Overview

The communities served by Interact for Health have distinct strengths and attributes that make residents proud to call this area “home.” Yet in many communities, underlying problems also pose significant barriers to health and well-being. As a result, many in our region do not have access to the vital conditions for good health in the places where they live, learn, work, and play.

For example, some rural areas have access to affordable, nutritious food—a vital condition for good health. Others seem to be cut off from the supply of affordable produce, which increases the risk for developing a condition like heart disease, the leading cause of death in our region. Place affects diet, which affects health.

Other aspects of the places where people live matter, too. The vital conditions for health and well-being are the building blocks all people and communities need to thrive and experience well-being.



They include:

- Belonging and Civic Muscle (e.g., connections with neighbors, volunteering)
- Thriving Natural World (e.g., public green spaces, clean water)
- Basic Needs for Health and Safety (e.g., preventative care, violence prevention)
- Humane Housing (e.g., affordable housing, resources to prevent housing crisis)
- Meaningful Work and Wealth (e.g., labor representation, equitable wages for workers)
- Lifelong Learning (e.g., outside classroom engagement, nontraditional learning models)
- Reliable Transportation (e.g., community rideshare, public transit)

Rural communities already demonstrate the vital conditions for health through innovative, community-driven efforts every day: communities mobilize for change by informing their neighbors on electoral policies that impact them and their families; labor leaders organize and advocate for fair and equal treatment in the workplace; green third spaces are created and maintained by everyday citizens through development efforts. Yet despite these examples and others like them, there are also instances in which the vital conditions for health are not fully, fairly, or consistently available.

Lack of access to vital conditions for health is not the fault of local communities or the people who live there, but is the result of collective decisions, both public and private, that have historically denied rural communities access to resources and undermined rural residents' power to pursue relevant and effective solutions.

This funding effort aims to support grassroots, locally-led efforts to build, amplify, or strengthen one or more of the vital conditions for health. Ultimately, the goal of the RFP is to help support rural communities by fostering a shared sense of belonging in which everyone has a stake in shaping the future. Our population of focus with this grant is rural communities, but Interact for Health's other priority populations (Black, Hispanic, LGBTQ+, and children in low-income families) must also be meaningfully engaged through outreach, support, and representation.

Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must:

- Be a public nonprofit or governmental organization.
- Provide services in at least one of Interact for Health's [rural counties](#) in Ohio, Indiana, or Kentucky (see "Definitions" below).



Organizations that are not public nonprofits or governmental entities may still seek funding through fiscal sponsorship. A fiscal sponsorship is a relationship between a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization (the sponsor organization) and a charitable project or program that does not have a tax-exempt status (the sponsored organization).

This is a rolling opportunity that is offered multiple times per calendar year. A single organization may only apply once per calendar year. Current Rural Changemaker Grantees are not eligible to apply. Past grantees may resubmit applications upon completion of their grant.

Grantee Requirements

Depending on the request, awarded grantees may be expected to:

- Participate in grantee meetings to share their work and learning with other grantees and Interact for Health.
- Participate in [evaluation and learning activities](#) for the grant and for the overall initiative.

Funding Details

- **Type of Grants:** Grants may be awarded for project-based or general operating support, depending on the proposed efforts and the grantee's needs and desires.
- **Size of Grants:** Grant size and length will vary based on the scope of the effort. We anticipate they will range from \$10,000 - \$70,000 over 12 - 18 months.
- **Other Support:** These grants are intended to allow us to learn alongside partners and continue to inform our Rural Investment Strategy. Opportunities for technical assistance and additional support to partners will be implemented on an as-needed basis by grantees, based on topics that arise during the learning sessions. Additional support may include, but is not limited to, hiring consultants, one-on-one grantee support, and group training sessions.

Proposal Selection Criteria

Proposals for the Rural Changemaker Grant should:

- Serve **at least one of Interact for Health's rural counties.**
- Address at least one challenge or underlying inequity identified by the community related to the vital conditions for health.



- Plan, develop, implement, and/or sustain a solution that engages community members in the effort, including leadership and decision-making power.
- Meaningfully engage with Interact for Health’s priority populations (i.e., directly serve our priority populations, have a project that is particularly relevant to our priority populations, have materials that are culturally relevant to our priority populations, or otherwise promote a shared sense of belonging and community)
- Be submitted by an organization that has not previously applied in the calendar year.

Rural Community Council

Interact for Health’s rural region (Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky) has a dedicated advisory council composed of community members. Each member either lives or works locally in one of our rural counties and is interested in the long-term health of their community. This council acts as a review and scoring body for Rural Changemaker grantmaking, advising on projects and their potential impact on rural communities.

Timeline

RFP Release	July 7, 2026
Virtual Office Hours	August 6, 2026, 2 – 4 p.m. (register) August 27, 2026, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. (register)
Proposal Due	September 8, 2026, 5 p.m.
Rural Community Council Review Complete	September 25, 2026
Site Visits	October 14 – October 28, 2026
Notification of Grant Award	November, 2026
New Grantee Orientation	December 3, 2026
Interact for Health Annual Rural Cohort Meeting	March 2027

Proposal Webinar

A proposal webinar is available on our website to answer questions about the RFP concept and application process. Reviewing it is optional and not required to submit a proposal. The recording is posted on our [Open Funding](#) page.



Virtual Office Hours

Program staff will be available online via Zoom on August 8 from 2 – 4 p.m. and on August 27 from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. to answer any questions about the RFP or your proposed ideas. Please register at the links above or on our [Upcoming Events](#) page.

Proposal Submissions

Applications must be submitted for this round by September 8th at 5 pm via Interact for Health's online [grants portal](#). To begin the application process or to access a PDF of the required application questions, please visit the [Open Funding](#) page of our website. If you have an open grant or have received a grant from Interact for Health in the past two years, your email address may already be registered in the system. For assistance with the application process, contact Interact for Health Director of Grants Management, Kristine Niergarth, at kniergarth@interactforhealth.org.

Site Visits

Before making final selections for funding, Interact for Health staff will conduct a site visit, either virtual or in person, with the potential grantee. Representatives from collaborating organizations are required to attend the site visit. This meeting allows Interact for Health staff to hear more about the proposed project and ask any clarifying questions. Site visits for this round will be conducted in October, following the review and selection process. Applicants will indicate their preferred timeslot during the application process.

Site visit topics will include:

- General discussion of your proposed project and budget
- The population of focus for the project
- Any disparities that exist and how this project plans to address them
- Community engagement tactics
- Collaborating partners and organizations or those you intend to engage
- Your organization's journey around justice, diversity, equity and inclusion
- What “success” for this project will look like



Questions

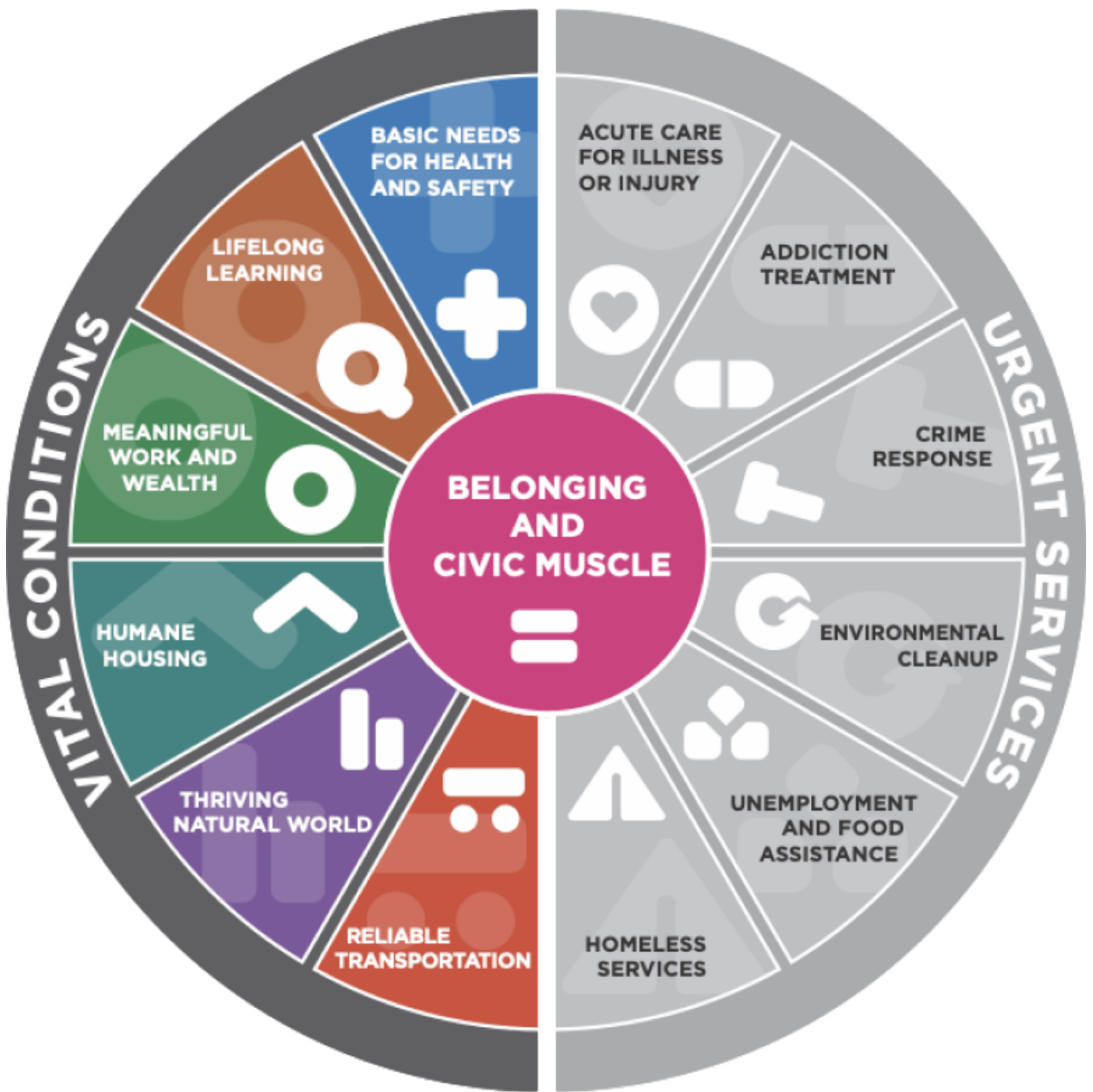
For any questions, please contact Senior Program Manager of Community Engagement (Rural), Caitlin Bentley-Thayer, at cbentley@interactforhealth.org or 606-226-0025.

Definitions

- **Community Power:** The ability of communities most impacted by inequity to act together to voice their needs and hopes for the future and to collectively drive structural change, hold decision-makers accountable, and advance health equity.
- **Grassroots efforts:** Local, regional, national, or international efforts led by everyday people who are closest to an issue. Grassroots organizations take a “bottom-up” approach and begin with community-based initiatives that grow outward to include other strategic partners.
- **Health Justice** means that everyone has a full and fair opportunity for good health, community conditions and institutions promote good health, and no group is exposed to environments that undermine health and well-being.
- **Mental Health** is your emotional, psychological, and social well-being, affecting how you think, feel, handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Good mental health is a platform for a full, healthy, productive life – and it matters at every stage of life.
- **Movement Building** is the process of mobilizing individuals, organizations, and communities to create a collective force to address systemic health and social inequalities and promote equitable outcomes for all. It involves coordinating education, policy, and community engagement to build support and initiate the necessary changes to achieve outcomes that benefit the community.
- **Policy Change:** A policy change attempts to change public laws, regulations, rules, mandates (public policy) , or budgets/funding.
- **Rural:** Interact for Health defines “rural communities” for our grantmaking purposes by utilizing intersectional criteria focused on population density and a historic deficit in resources.
 - Lower population density compared to other areas.
 - Historically under-resource compared to other areas.
 - Federal and state dollars are lower.
 - Local city/ township investment and tax base are lower.
 - County tax base is lower compared to other areas.
 - Fewer local resources than in other areas.
 - Fewer local nonprofits.



- Few medical facilities.
 - Fewer emergency responder resources.
 - Fewer public school systems and districts.
- **Rural Regions:** Interact for Health defines the following counties in these states as our rural regions:
 - Indiana Region
 - Dearborn County
 - Franklin County
 - Ripley County
 - Ohio County
 - Switzerland County
 - Kentucky Region
 - Bracken County
 - Gallatin County
 - Grant County
 - Pendleton County
 - Ohio Region
 - Adams County
 - Brown County
 - Clermont County
 - Clinton County
 - Highland County
 - **Systems Change:** A system change attempts to shift the way broader systems (e.g., health, public safety, local government) make decisions about policies, programs, and the allocation or use of resources.
 - **Urgent Services** are the services that anyone under adversity would need to temporarily regain or restore their health and well-being. While they are necessary, historical ways of thinking about overall health and well-being have led to an over-investment in urgent services and an under-investment in vital conditions.
 - **Vital Conditions for Health and Well-Being** are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live and age, and the wider set of forces and systems that shape our daily lives. The seven vital conditions, listed below, are required for people and communities to reach their full potential and to create an equitable, thriving future for ourselves and generations to come.
 - Belonging and Civic Muscle
 - Thriving Natural World
 - Basic Needs for Health and Safety
 - Humane Housing
 - Meaningful Work and Wealth
 - Lifelong Learning
 - Reliable Transportation



Vital Conditions vs. Urgent Services – additional information and context can be found here:

<https://rippel.org/vital-conditions/>