Statewide Health Improvement Partnership
Healthy Neighborhoods Community Partner Award 2027
Information & Application

Healthy Neighborhoods Community Partner Award (CPA)

Dakota County Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) seeks to fund projects working to improve health equity in Dakota County. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention define health equity as "the state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health." Achieving this requires ongoing societal efforts to:

- Address historical and contemporary injustices;
- Overcome economic, social and other obstacles to health and health care; and
- Eliminate preventable health disparities.

The Healthy Neighborhoods CPA is open to community organizations for projects working towards advancing health equity and becoming self-sustaining.

Eligibility

Community organizations of all kinds are eligible to apply by Dec. 10, 2026. Eligible organizations include, but are not limited to:

- Childcare or early learning centers
- Healthy aging organizations
- Charter or private schools
- Community centers
- Nonprofits
- Food shelves
- Culturally centered organizations
- Small businesses
- Health care organizations
- Faith communities
- Youth programs
- Low-income housing
- Cities, governmental agencies or parks
- Workplaces
- Small grocers or corner stores
- Professional associations

Ineligible organizations include:

- Technical assistance providers currently contracted with Dakota County SHIP
- K-12 public school districts (Dakota County SHIP offers a separate funding opportunity for public schools, anticipated early 2027)

Funding Amounts

Dakota County SHIP will award a total of $100,000. Applicants may apply for projects with a maximum budget of $25,000.

Funding for this opportunity is supported by the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Partnership. Visit the Dakota County SHIP webpage for more information.

Eligible Projects

Focus Areas

Projects must focus on one or more of the following areas or settings:

- **Healthy Food Access:** Increasing access to culturally relevant, affordable, healthy food options or hydration. Increasing skills and knowledge related to food, cooking or nutrition.
- **Active Living:** Increasing access to physical activity and active transportation opportunities through policy, systems and infrastructure changes.
- **Commercial Tobacco-Free Living:** Decreasing exposure to commercial tobacco and secondhand smoke. Supporting evidence-based prevention and cessation initiatives.
- **Health Literacy:** Enabling individuals to find, understand and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.
- **Age-Friendly Communities & Brain Health:** Helping older adults, their families and their caregivers navigate and access services that benefit their health and well-being. Connecting older adults to others socially within their community.
- **Childcare Setting:** Training staff and building capacity around social emotional learning, healthy eating, physical activity or trauma-informed best practices in childcare facilities.
- **Charter and Private School Setting:** Training school staff and building capacity around social emotional learning, healthy eating, physical activity, commercial tobacco prevention, mental well-being, or wellness policy and committee development.

Policy, Systems, or Environmental (PSE) Change

Projects must support or move toward a sustainable PSE change to be considered. One-time events or community gatherings are not allowable, unless for professional development or training.

- **Policy**: Adoption of or changes to policies, ordinances or rules within organizations.
    - *Examples: creating or updating a commercial tobacco-free grounds policy to include vaping; drafting a healthy food policy for a faith community, childcare facility or worksite; updating a wellness policy for a charter or private school.*
- **Systems**: Changes to transform "the way things are typically done."
    - *Examples: supporting the startup of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) drop site or food pantry/shelf, providing staff training on health equity topics (e.g., evidence-based*

active transportation such as walking, biking and rolling education programs), establishing information sharing pathways for health literacy topics or health screenings.

- **Environmental**: Changes within social, economic or physical environments.
    - *Examples: launching a bike share available to the community, installing a water bottle filler to improve water access, creating a lactation space and other resources to promote breast/chest feeding in various settings or sites, starting a community garden, installing smoke-free grounds signage to promote policy compliance.*

Project Examples

This is not an exhaustive list of eligible projects. Please contact marguerite.zauner@co.dakota.mn.us with questions about project eligibility.

Healthy Food Access

- Create policies or guidelines to ensure culturally relevant, healthy foods are available at community events, corner stores, early care or community centers, etc.
- Update vending to ensure nutritious options are available at the same or lower cost as less nutritious options within a workplace, multi-unit housing building or community center
- Support the startup of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) drop site or food pantry/shelf
- Plan or launch Farm to Kids initiatives or systems changes for more local food procurement
- Improve water access (e.g., purchase a hydration station, create or update current policies)
- Establish a community garden in an underserved area
- Conduct a Community Food Assessment

Active Living

- Engage in city-level comprehensive planning to bring a healthy equity lens to the plan
- Create a library of shared fitness or physical activity equipment for an employee breakroom or communal space (e.g., resistance bands, small weights, yoga mats, fitness education posters, bike share equipment)
- Implement structured physical activity opportunities (e.g., walking clubs, youth activities, pedestrian and bicycle education programming)
- Purchase bike racks and/or Fix-It stations and pair with bicycle education programming
- Provide culturally specific physical activity opportunities that are linked to systems changes
- Implement more inclusive parks infrastructure or programming
- Create a storyboard path

Commercial Tobacco-Free Living

- Adopt or update a commercial tobacco-free or smoke-free policy to include vaping, cannabis and Minnesota Clean Indoor Air Act language
- Implement a smoke-free policy for outdoor events

- Post commercial tobacco-free signage after creating or updating a policy or procedures
- Provide commercial tobacco cessation resources and support
- Support youth-led efforts to prevent commercial tobacco use and vaping among young people

Health Literacy

- Implement culturally relevant programs and training focused on empowering individuals to make health-related decisions about brain health, mental health and well-being, care navigation, chronic disease prevention, etc.
- Train staff on trauma-responsive approaches, cultural and population specific topics, and screening approaches to increase comprehensive and equitable services

Age-Friendly Communities & Brain Health

- Plan culturally relevant dementia awareness, dementia prevention or brain health messaging
- Implement programs to combat sadness and isolation among older adults by connecting them to accessible opportunities that support their health and wellbeing and to others socially within their community
- Implement programs for diverse communities to initiate age- and dementia-friendly efforts
- Develop messaging, communication strategies or tools to increase the visibility of healthy aging programs and services
- Promote or expand opportunities for dementia and Alzheimer's screenings for at-risk groups

Childcare Setting

- Complete an assessment and attend suggested professional development on social emotional learning, healthy eating or physical activity best practices in childcare settings
- Train staff and implement curriculum focused on the above topic areas

Charter and Private School Setting

Physical Activity

- Develop a Safe Routes to School Comprehensive Plan
- Identify a Safe Routes to School program or strategy to implement (e.g., arrival and dismissal materials, bike parking, incentives for walk to school day, supplies for bike rodeo, signage or stickers for events)
- Create an outdoor classroom and review/update your school wellness policy to encourage sustainability (maximum of $2,000 for materials and equipment per site)
- Implement Walk! Bike! Fun! curriculum
- Implement a walking classroom
- Partner with Playworks to train recess supervisors and start a Junior Coach Leadership Program

Healthy Eating

- Purchase and implement second chance share tables or carts
- Promote healthy food learning opportunities

- Start a school garden
- Expand local food procurement, resources and communications for farm-to-school efforts
- Install a hydration station (one per site, up to $1500, cannot fund installation or services)
- Promote school personnel involvement and knowledge for a healthy nutrition environment

Commercial Tobacco Prevention

- Train staff on youth nicotine use data, emerging products and evidence-based prevention strategies
- Review current commercial tobacco prevention curricula and explore evidence-based options
- Review and update the Tobacco-Free Environment policy to include updated definitions and alternatives to suspension for student violations
- Implement an evidence-based intervention program for students who violate the Tobacco-Free Environment policy, such as INDEPTH or Healthy Futures
- Pack and distribute quit kits that contain cessation resources, fidgets and other trinkets to help students beat nicotine cravings and connect with quit programs
- Update commercial tobacco- and smoke-free signage to include e-cigarettes

Mental Well-being

- Implement staff trainings, student supports, or policies and procedures on suicide prevention (see Minnesota Suicide Prevention for Schools , Suicide Prevention Toolkit for High Schools and the Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention)
- Implement mental health literacy education focused on skills to maintain positive mental health, understanding common mental health disorders, how to seek and offer help, and stigma reduction strategies
- Integrate social emotional learning into everyday practices (see CASEL Program Guide & Minnesota SEL Implementation Guidance)
- Promote Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to enhance academic and social outcomes using data-based decision making
- Implement restorative practices or restorative circles
- Create a calm room or student de-escalation space with review/update of school wellness policy to encourage sustainability (maximum of $2000 for materials and supplies per site)

Wellness Policy and Committee Development

- Review and update your school wellness policy or action plan
- Develop a wellness committee structure, charter and schedule
- Secure wellness committee representation from all school buildings
- Disseminate wellness information to all staff or students

Scoring of Applications

Applications will be scored with the following criteria and point system, with a maximum score of 10.

Criteria	Maximum Score
The project goal fits with the stated purpose of the award. The goal is related to healthy food access, active living, commercial tobacco-free living, health literacy, age-friendly communities or brain health, childcare settings, or private or charter school settings.	2
The project approach and activities seem realistic and feasible to complete by May 2028.	1
The project will contribute to sustainable PSE change or the organization's long-term goals.	1.5
The project focuses on health equity and increasing opportunities that might not otherwise be available to the focus population. Project need and focus population are clear.	2
The budget is within the grant parameters and fundable. The budget does not include requests for one-time events, nor items that are single-use, consumable or disposable. All budget items are sustainable or lasting.	1.5
The application defines project success and includes a communication plan.	2
Maximum total score	**10**

Dakota County SHIP will evaluate the responses received from interested organizations and then determine whether it is prudent to proceed with the contracting process for these services. Responders may be contacted by County staff to request additional information or to meet with County staff for further discussion. Insurance information will be requested during the contract negotiation process if application is selected.

Instructions to Apply

Submission Instructions

Please complete the online Cognito application form by 5 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 10, 2026.

See pages 8-9 for the application questions and award expectations. Please contact marguerite.zauner@co.dakota.mn.us to request the application in an alternative format.

The application form allows applicants to save and return later to complete. The applicant will receive a link upon saving their work or may choose to have the link emailed. Be sure to click "Submit Project" when all sections of the application are complete.

Dakota County will not be liable for any expenses incurred by the potential provider in connection with the preparation or submittal of the application.

Important Dates

- Application opens: Nov. 9, 2026
- **Application due date: Dec. 10, 2026**
- Applicants notified: by Dec. 23, 2026
- Anticipated contract start date: Feb. 2027
- Contract end date: May 31, 2028

Questions

Questions should be directed to marguerite.zauner@co.dakota.mn.us. Initial responses will be provided to the inquirer as soon as they are available. All questions and written responses will be posted on the Dakota County Bids, Proposals and Solicitations webpage and may continue to be posted until the application is due.

Healthy Neighborhoods CPA 2027 Application Questions

The following is a list of application questions ***for reference only***. All application information must be submitted via the online Cognito form. Please contact marguerite.zauner@co.dakota.mn.us to request the application in an alternative format.

Organization Information

1. Organization name
2. Organization mailing address
3. Primary contact or project leader's name, email and phone
4. Individual who would sign the contract's name, email and phone
5. Provide a brief description of your organization's mission and work.

Project Information

1. Provide a description of the project and the focus population or community. Please include the goal, why the project is needed, and your proposed approach and activities to accomplish your goal. You may include steps and due dates. All projects must be completed by May 31, 2028.
2. Provide an estimated number of individuals or community members that would be impacted by this project.
3. How do you plan to continue, expand or sustain this effort after the initial funding? In other words, please tell us how this brief project is related to a policy, system, or environmental change or a longer-term goal your organization might be working towards.
4. List any other organization, partners or funders that might be involved and their role, if applicable.
5. How does this project focus on equity and/or increasing opportunities that would not otherwise be available or accessible to your focus population?
6. How will you know if this project is successful?
7. How will you communicate the success of this project with your partners and community?

Budget Information

Provide a proposed budget for your project up to $25,000. The online application will ask for estimated core budget items such as staff time, consultant or trainer fees, program supplies and materials, equipment, other direct costs, and in-kind contributions (i.e., staff time, services and administrative components that your organization will contribute). A 10% in-kind contribution is required.

Healthy Neighborhoods CPA funding cannot be used for one-time events that have no connection to an ongoing or longer-term initiative with PSE change goals. Additionally, CPA funding cannot be used for food (unless part of an assessment or evaluation), installation costs and labor, single-use items, capital improvements, clothing, lobbying, fitness center memberships, raffles, alcohol or controlled substances. Approval of items are determined by MDH SHIP Financial Guidance and Dakota County SHIP's discretion.

Award Expectations

By applying, you agree that the project will focus on community and residents living in Dakota County, and if selected, you will:

- Work with Dakota County to create a Contract for Services to complete the proposed project work. Please note all contracts are on a reimbursement basis, so funding is received *after* the work is completed and the county is invoiced.
- Provide project status updates to county staff, including (but not limited to) timelines, budget spent, and activities, as requested within 5-10 business days.
- Conduct evaluation activities and provide any data collected. Dakota County SHIP staff are available to assist with the evaluation process including development and data collection.
- Complete the project within the contract period.
- Participate in two, 30-minute check-in calls with Dakota County SHIP.
- Participate in a collaborative meeting with other recipients of this award and present the results of your project during a Dakota County Community Health Improvement Plan Advisory Committee meeting.
- Write a brief summary (one page or less) of the project implementation to be submitted at the end of the grant period. A template will be provided.