

# **CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: MCW-Led Momentum Grants**

**LETTER OF INTENT DUE: Oct. 27, 2025, by 5 p.m. CT**

**Support MCW-led collaborative teams to advance discoveries in health-focused research and health workforce development initiatives to address Wisconsin's leading health needs**



**AW** ADVANCING A HEALTHIER  
WISCONSIN ENDOWMENT

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# Overview

## Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment Overview

At the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment (AHW), we are driven by a vision for a healthier Wisconsin.

As Wisconsin’s largest health philanthropy, AHW seeks to propel the most promising work and ideas to improve health and advance health equity in Wisconsin today, and for generations to come. From urban centers to rural and agricultural communities and self-governed tribal nations, we are committed to maximizing the health of ALL Wisconsinites. We do that by providing funding and resources to researchers, organizations, and communities devoted to the health and well-being of the people they serve.

We accelerate innovation, collaboration, and impact by fueling research- and community-identified opportunities. Learn more about [our story](#) and AHW’s [areas of focus](#).

## Funding Summary

AHW’s MCW-Led Momentum Grants support eligible MCW collaborative teams to pursue new paths of research, develop innovative programs and resources to advance Wisconsin’s current or future health workforce, and conduct research to inform policy and practice to advance health and health equity in Wisconsin. Successful projects will engage a collaborative team of investigators to demonstrate impact on the identified health need during the project period. Applicants may request up to \$250,000 for a 24-month period, beginning July 1, 2026.

## Application Process Timeline

### Sept.-Oct. 2025

Consult with AHW to review proposed project scope and fit with the call for applications

### By Oct. 13, 2025

Share draft letter of intent (LOI) application with AHW for feedback

### Oct. 27, 2025 (required)

LOI due by 5 p.m. CT via the online application form

### Within three business days of email request for signatures (required)

Electronic signatures due from key personnel via an AHW-initiated DocuSign process

### Jan. 2026

Full proposal invitations sent to select applicants

### Feb. 23, 2026 (required)

Full proposal applications due (invited applicants only)

### May 2026

Notification of funding decisions and award initiation processes for projects approved for funding

### July 1, 2026

Project start date

## Application Components

Please see pages 7-9 below for more details on the following required application components:

### Letter of intent (LOI)

1. Online form
2. Narrative (attachment to online form)
3. Reviewer recommendations
4. Signatures (collected via DocuSign after the application is submitted)

# Funding Details

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## Description

AHW's MCW-Led Momentum Grants support eligible MCW-led collaborative teams to implement innovative research projects to advance health and health equity in Wisconsin. Applicants may request up to \$250,000 for a 24-month period, beginning July 1, 2026, to carry out efforts in alignment with AHW's areas of focus – health-focused research, and health workforce education and development.

The ***Health-Focused Research*** area of focus supports projects to conduct novel basic, clinical, and population health research and to pursue new paths of study addressing Wisconsin's leading health priorities. Successful applicants will conduct innovative research and discovery, strengthen academic research capacity, and increase translation and dissemination of new knowledge. Eligible ***Health-Focused Research*** proposals may include wide-ranging project ideas, such as but not limited to:

- Conducting novel basic, clinical, or translational research to build on promising preliminary data and produce key findings during the project period that advance the research field, contribute to academic dissemination and leveraging efforts, and inform future efforts to directly advance practice, policy, or treatment to improve health and/or health equity.
- Implementing population health interventions and programs to conduct population health research in collaboration with impacted populations resulting in direct impact during the project period on key health indicators, dissemination of project findings to the community, contribution to academic dissemination and leveraging efforts, and products to inform future efforts to advance practice and policy to improve health and health equity.

The ***Health Workforce Education and Development*** area of focus supports development, implementation, and evaluation of programs and resources to better recruit, retain, and advance MCW-based health workforces that are responsive to Wisconsin's health needs. Successful applicants will implement strategies to nurture a multifaceted health workforce, including healthcare professionals employed by MCW and its affiliates, the next generation of healthcare and health leaders trained by MCW, and community-based health workforces that directly work with MCW programs. Eligible ***Health Workforce Education and Development*** proposals may be focused on a variety of activities, such as but not limited to:

- Developing, adapting, and/or piloting workforce development resources to enhance the knowledge, capacity, and skill sets of MCW-based health workforces to address continually evolving health needs and prepare the next generation of health leaders.
- Applying evidence-based practices to maximize the purpose, resilience, and fulfillment of targeted or multidisciplinary health workforces, and gathering initial evaluation data to demonstrate the potential positive impact on health and health equity.
- Implementing innovative strategies to recruit, retain, and support continuous learning among Wisconsin's health workforces based at or engaged with MCW, and evaluating impact on the health workforce and key health indicators to inform future sustainability and expansion of promising strategies.

AHW is committed to supporting new and innovative ideas that advance health equity in Wisconsin. [Health equity \(CDC\)](#) is the state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health. Proposed projects through AHW's MCW-Led Momentum Grants should aim to [advance health equity](#).

Applicants will clearly identify a health research or workforce development need, an immediate gap in knowledge or practice, cited evidence of the health need among the target population, and proposed research methods to

address the gap and begin to impact key health indicators or milestones during the project period. Successful projects will demonstrate significant movement towards or direct impact on the identified health need or health workforce during the project period as well as the return on investment through extramural funding and dissemination of findings to inform future efforts. At the conclusion of the award, project teams will identify sustainable approaches to continue, scale, or replicate their research and promising practices for health improvement.

### Additional Proposal Considerations

- All applications must clearly demonstrate how the proposed project will positively affect health and/or health equity in Wisconsin in the long-term.
- All applications must be submitted by an eligible MCW Principal Investigator (PI) and at least one collaborating MCW Co-Investigator (Co-I).
- Project aims must be distinct from prior or existing funded projects.
- AHW funding is project-specific and not for general organizational support.
- It is not the intent of AHW funds to be used as bridge funding.
- All proposals must comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.

### Applicant Eligibility

AHW is committed to supporting collaborative efforts that bring together multiple individuals with the necessary expertise, experience, and influence to address Wisconsin's leading health challenges and together advance health and health equity for all Wisconsin residents. All applications must be submitted by collaborative teams committed to carrying out the proposed project together.

#### MCW Principal Investigator

All applications must be led by an eligible MCW Principal Investigator (PI). The PI must be a full-time or full professional effort MCW faculty member with the rank of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor, and is required to contribute a minimum of 5% FTE to the project for the full award period. The PI will be responsible for compliance with fiduciary and reporting requirements, maintaining regular communication with AHW, and ensuring that all project team members receive communications, notifications, and instructions from AHW.

#### MCW Co-Investigator

All applications must include at least one MCW Co-Investigator (Co-I) on the project team that is a full-time or full professional effort MCW faculty member and is required to contribute effort to the project for the full award period.

#### Additional Co-Is

All applicant teams are encouraged to take advantage of the collaborative intent of this mechanism by engaging additional Co-Is beyond the requirement. Additional Co-Is are optional and are not subject to the same eligibility requirements as the MCW Co-I. Additional Co-Is may be faculty at MCW or external institutions outside of MCW and are not held to minimum FTE requirements.

#### Collaborators

Collaborators are optional but encouraged and are not subject to the same eligibility requirements as the MCW PI or MCW Co-I. Collaborators may be MCW faculty, staff, students, or experts outside of MCW. Collaborators typically have a smaller role in the project than the PI and any Co-Is (e.g., technical expertise, provide clinical samples), and may or may not receive salary support through AHW funding. Any individual and/or organization

listed as a collaborator should be committed to the proposed project and ready to engage in the project based on their specified role, if funded.

## Budget Requirements

AHW's investment in this funding opportunity will total approximately \$4.5 million to support meritorious projects. The exact number of awards will depend on the merit of proposals received. Successful projects will demonstrate an appropriate budget and timeframe for their proposed scope of work. Project budget requests are limited to \$250,000 maximum, and project durations are limited to 24 months maximum.

Letter of intent (LOI) applicants will provide a requested budget amount without a corresponding budget justification. In the full proposal, invited applicants will be required to provide a detailed budget with justification for all personnel and direct project-specific expenses.

- Project personnel salaries supported by AHW awards are subject to the applicable [NIH salary cap](#) at the time of the project start date.
- A minimum of 5% FTE is required of the MCW PI for the full award period.
- The MCW Co-I is required to contribute effort to the project for the full award period.
- Award personnel may cost-share their effort with support from their departments or entities. Cost-sharing may support any or all salary put forth, so long as minimum effort requirements are met. AHW funds may not be used to cost-share effort on any other work.
- AHW awards should not fund relatives/significant others of the MCW PI unless the PI can provide a written justification for how the relative's scientific or technical expertise is required to complete the award/project's aims. It is the responsibility of the PI to disclose the relationships and provide written justification at the time of full proposal application and when requesting personnel changes and to indicate whether or not an evaluative relationship exists between the PI and relative. MCW PIs are encouraged to refer to [MCW Policy HR.EE.110](#) for further detail.
- All personnel support must be justified, and their specific project roles outlined in the budget justification included in the full proposal application. AHW funds cannot support general operational activities or replace funding already available for a position.

For information on financial compliance and reporting requirements for funded projects, please review the Funded Project Terms and Conditions for MCW-Led Momentum Grants on the [AHW website](#). By applying for an AHW award, applicants agree to these terms and conditions.

## Supplanting Criteria

AHW was established as the result of a generous financial gift made by Blue Cross & Blue Shield United of Wisconsin to the people of Wisconsin, giving AHW the extraordinary responsibility to steward this financial gift on behalf of Wisconsin residents. As such, AHW adheres to requirements as defined in a March 28, 2000, Order of the Commissioner of Insurance, which requires that AHW funds (the Funds) "may not be used to supplant funds or resources otherwise available." AHW, via MCW, must report annually on its determination that the Funds do not supplant other resources that may be available to accomplish the same purposes. A [supplanting guide](#) can be found on the AHW website.

Prior to final funding recommendations and approval, AHW and/or its oversight body, the AHW Research and Education Advisory Committee (REAC), will assess whether other financial resources exist or are available for the project, including an assessment of whether the applicants have other financial resources available for the

project. Applicants must certify that no financial resources will be supplanted and provide a complete listing of current funding sources for the project or similar other projects.

### Leveraging

All applicants are highly encouraged to leverage additional funding support for their work. Leveraging additional support not only demonstrates additional commitment to a project, but also increases sustainability of efforts and can provide resources for activities that AHW cannot fund.

Leveraging can include departmental funds, cost-sharing of salary support, matching funding from other funders, business partners, or government (city, county, state, or federal) funds, as well as in-kind support.

### Allowable Expenses and Funding Restrictions

Funds can only be used for direct project-specific expenses, including salary and benefits for personnel directly involved in the project and direct expenses such as supplies, travel, etc.

Funds may not be used for:

- Projects conducted outside of Wisconsin
- Indirect costs such as ongoing operating expenses for routine functions and principal programs
- Debt reduction
- Entertainment or alcoholic beverages
- Lobbying
- Reimbursement solely for patient care or clinical service delivery
- Publishing fees to benefit education or research in general
- Stipends and flat fees/rates
- Supplanting

View a complete list of [Allowable and Unallowable Costs](#) on the AHW website.

## Application and Review Process

AHW's MCW-Led Momentum Grants funding involves a two-stage application and multi-stage review process beginning with submission of a letter of intent (LOI), with selected applicants invited to submit a full proposal.

### Letter of Intent

Eligible applicant teams should submit an LOI via the online application form available on the [AHW website](#). Applications must be submitted via the online form by **5 p.m. CT on Oct. 27, 2025**. Late LOI applications will not be accepted.

Please use the following instructions to prepare and organize the LOI as a collaborative team for final submission via the online form by the deadline. Applicants must answer all required fields and follow the restrictions set within the online form. No paper or emailed applications will be considered, and no attachments beyond those specifically requested in the following instructions will be accepted.

When filling out the online form, you may save your progress and resume at a later time by checking "Save my progress and resume later" in the upper right-hand corner of the form. Please note that attachments will not save in the form and should be added at time of submission. If saving, please follow the system prompts to save and re-access the form. Only one applicant team member may begin and save the online form by creating a login (email address and password) that will allow that individual to return to saved work. We recommend you designate one individual to enter the completed application information online.

The LOI includes the following sections:

1. **Online Form**

The application form provides general project information and must be completed via the online form accessible on the [AHW website](#). The online form includes:

- Project title, goal statement, and project summary
- Requested award amount and project duration
- MCW PI contact information and optional demographic information
- MCW Co-I, optional additional Co-I, and optional collaborator information
- AHW alignment information
- External (non-MCW) reviewer recommendations

2. **Narrative** (attachment)

The narrative is the applicant team's opportunity to describe their project in detail. Project narratives must be uploaded as an attachment in the indicated location within the online form. Responses to all sections of the narrative are required, and the narrative is limited to a maximum of three (3) pages, not including citations, using 0.5" margins and 11-pt. font, single-spaced.

Organize the narrative in the order specified below. Start each section with the appropriate section heading (bolded below), address each sub-point in your narrative response for that section, and use lay-friendly language as much as possible. We encourage applicants to be clear and concise and to insert graphics, tables, and charts when applicable and within the allowable page limits.

- **Project Need and Significance**
  - Briefly describe the health need that the project aims to address and why the identified need is a priority to improve the health of the people of Wisconsin and/or advance health equity, including cited evidence of the health need for the target population.
  - Discuss previous work conducted by the project team or available in the literature, including preliminary data, that demonstrates why the proposed approach is the appropriate next step to contribute towards addressing the identified health need.
  - State the larger vision and impact on the health of Wisconsin's people and communities that this project will contribute towards achieving.
- **Project Aims and Approach**
  - State the project aims.
  - Describe the key activities and approaches to accomplish the project aims.
  - Describe the anticipated project outcomes and how they will be measured.
- **Project Team**
  - Describe the roles and responsibilities of each core project team member and their relevant experience/expertise that makes them best suited to carry out that role.
- **Citations** (not included in the page limit)
  - Include all references cited in the narrative.
  - Each reference should include the names of all authors, the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication.
  - Applicants should be especially careful to follow scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials used in the preparation of the application.



### 3. Signatures

Following successful submission of the completed LOI application through the online form and technical review, signatures will be required via an AHW-initiated DocuSign process from the following individuals to indicate their awareness and support of the submitted application:

- MCW PI and their respective MCW Department Chair or Center leadership
- Each Co-I included within the online form

Following submission and technical review, each of the individuals above will receive an email with instructions to complete and submit their electronic signature. **Required signatures must be submitted within three business days of receiving the signature request** to complete the submission and advance it for review. AHW will send DocuSign requests as soon as possible, but please note that it may not be sent immediately. Any delays in AHW initiating the DocuSign process will be accommodated for when considering signature deadlines.

### Full Proposal Application

Selected applicants will be sent instructions and application materials with their invitation to submit a full proposal. Full proposals must be submitted via the online AHW Grant Management System by 5 p.m. CT on Feb. 23, 2026. Late applications will not be accepted.

### LOI and Full Proposal Review

#### Technical Review

All submitted LOI and full proposal applications will undergo technical review by AHW staff to ensure that all requirements are met, including but not limited to eligibility criteria and adherence to the guidelines and restrictions. AHW will follow-up with all applicants as part of the technical review process. Applicant teams should be prepared to respond quickly to communications from AHW following the application deadline.

#### Merit Review

Reviews will be conducted for all applications that pass technical review by a review body consisting of MCW faculty as well as select faculty from external organizations for full proposal applications. The review process is competitive, with the LOI review anticipated to be the most selective. Applicants are encouraged to take the assembly of the collaborative team and writing of the application seriously.

#### Programmatic Review

Applications that pass technical review will be reviewed for alignment with the call for applications and AHW funding requirements to ensure that funded projects are set up for successful efforts.

#### REAC Review

The AHW Research and Education Advisory Committee (REAC) will review the recommendations from the reviewers and approve a slate of LOIs to invite to submit full proposals and a slate of full proposals to fund. AHW may request that applicants adjust their proposal based on the outcome of the review process. If necessary, these applicants will be notified and asked to resubmit their adjusted application materials for further review. No negotiations or appeals will be accommodated. Final funding decisions will be advanced to the MCW Board of Trustees for approval and must pass a supplanting review to be approved for funding.

#### Review Criteria

Applications will be reviewed using the following criteria:

## Impact

The proposed project:

- Demonstrates the potential to positively impact health and/or health equity in Wisconsin as a direct result of proposed research and project activities and over the long-term.
- Describes innovative research approaches and planned evaluation or assessment to demonstrate project success and directly inform future efforts to continue to advance health and/or health equity in the long-term.

## Feasibility

The proposed project:

- Is led by a collaborative research team who appear to bring the necessary experience and expertise to carry out the project.
- Demonstrates high-quality, rigorous, appropriate research methods that appear likely to achieve the stated aims.
- Describes a scope which appears feasible to complete within the requested project budget and duration.

## Alignment

The proposed project:

- Addresses a health-related issue in the field, explains why it is a priority, and includes cited evidence of the health need for the target population.
- Appears to be aligned with the intent of the call for applications and the selected AHW area of focus.

Reviewers will provide scores and written comments for each proposal. The scoring system uses a nine-point scale based on the rating scale used by the National Institutes of Health. The nine-point rating scale is anchored according to the following descriptions:

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| 1. Exceptional (exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses) | High   |
| 2. Outstanding (extremely strong with negligible weaknesses)         |        |
| 3. Excellent (very strong with only some minor weaknesses)           |        |
| 4. Very Good (strong but with numerous minor weaknesses)             | Medium |
| 5. Good (strong but with at least one moderate weakness)             |        |
| 6. Satisfactory (some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses)   |        |
| 7. Fair (some strengths but with at least one major weakness)        | Low    |
| 8. Marginal (a few strengths and a few major weaknesses)             |        |
| 9. Poor (very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses)           |        |

- Minor Weakness: An easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen impact
- Moderate Weakness: A weakness that lessens impact
- Major Weakness: A weakness that severely lessens impact

## Conflict of Interest

Each review process follows a conflict of interest policy. A conflict of interest is apparent whenever a reviewer's objectivity may be perceived as compromised by the nature of a personal or professional relationship or obligation to an applicant. Reviewers with a conflict of interest pertaining to a proposal's review and/or funding are self-identified and recused from review of that proposal.

## Award Determination

Following completion of the full proposal review process, notification of conditional award determination, pending supplanting review and completion of the award initiation requirements, is anticipated to be shared with the MCW PI in May 2026.

## Human and Animal Research Protection

According to the [MCW Office of Research's Standard Operating Procedure for the Definition And Determination Of Human Subjects Research](#), it is the responsibility of the MCW Institutional Review Board (IRB), staff, and committee members to ensure the proper application of the definition of human subjects research and to provide investigators with guidance regarding this definition. Federal regulations define research as a systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. It is the responsibility of PIs to ensure the proper application of this definition to their human subjects research projects and apply to the IRB for its review. Investigators must submit their proposed research projects to the IRB for review prior to initiating the research regardless of whether their activities involve human subjects. Investigators may not independently make the determination whether an activity involves research; the IRB will make the independent determination regarding human research subject involvement.

AHW funding will be contingent upon institutional approvals for the use of human subjects, laboratory animals, or biosafety materials for those projects determined to be research. Research projects funded by AHW must ensure that human and animal participants are protected during the collection of information from award participants and/or the publication or dissemination of award results.

The MCW PI of an AHW-funded award is expected to:

- Confirm with the appropriate regulatory approval offices if IRB, IACUC, or Biosafety regulatory approval is necessary for the proposed project prior to submitting a proposal to AHW.
- Ensure appropriate training and ongoing education necessary to protect the rights and welfare of human participants before and during the award, including maintaining compliance with all human subject policies, regulations, and reporting requirements.
- Obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval through a Human Research Protection Program at MCW, Froedtert Health, the Veterans Administration, or Children's Wisconsin or Reliance institutions prior to the award commencing. Each institution has an Institutional Review Board that evaluates awards for compliance with applicable human subject laws and regulations.
- Be accountable for conforming to the basic regulations and policies governing animals at MCW. Obtain approval through Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), if applicable, prior to the award commencing.
- Receive documentation of IRB, IACUC, and/or Safety Committee review and approval prior to the award commencing.

All applicable IRB, IACUC, and Safety Committee protocols must be linked to the funding proposal in the MCW eBridge system (eBridge), which allows MCW researchers to submit, track, report, and archive research activities involving human and animal research conducted at MCW, prior to the completion of account setup and the award number for the project being issued. AHW will initiate the eBridge funding protocol for all projects approved for funding.

## Non-Discrimination

The Medical College of Wisconsin offers all its educational programs and services, including admissions, and all employment opportunities, conditions and benefits, including recruitment, selection, promotion, pay, use of facilities, and retirement, without discrimination, as defined by applicable federal and state laws, executive regulations and orders. MCW is committed to the principle of equal opportunity in education and employment. MCW does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of age, race, creed, religion, color, disability, marital status, sex, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity, arrest record, conviction record, membership in the national guard, state defense force or any other reserve component of the military forces of the United States or the State of Wisconsin, or use or nonuse of lawful products off MCW's premises during nonworking hours in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, employment policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other MCW administered programs and activities, but may favor Wisconsin residents in admissions. Research and programs aimed at advancing health equity among specific groups must provide evidence of disparity with the general population. All communications and questions concerning this policy should be directed to the Vice President of Human Resources.

## Application Resources

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*Our goal is to support applicants through the application process to the best of our abilities, and we encourage applicants to contact AHW with questions throughout the application process.*

### AHW Online Resources

AHW's website provides information, application resources, and answers to frequently asked questions related to each application and the AHW funding process. Visit the AHW website at [www.ahwendowment.org](http://www.ahwendowment.org).

A fillable template of the online LOI application form is available for download via the AHW website. The template will not be accepted as a final submission but is designed to be used by the applicant team to prepare their collaborative responses prior to completing and submitting the online form by the application deadline.

### Pre-Application AHW Consultation

For an efficient application process, applicants are encouraged to connect with AHW to discuss their proposed project scope and ensure it is in alignment with the funding opportunity. Applicants are encouraged to connect as early in the development of their proposal as possible. Complete the consultation request form on the [AHW website](#) to set up a time to discuss your proposal idea.