



— Massachusetts —
COMMUNITY HEALTH AND
HEALTHY AGING FUNDS

Tips for Submitting a Strong Application

2026 Funding Cycle Information Session

February 4, 2026



Webinar Logistics

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Introductions



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Program Officer



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Program Officer



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Program Officer



Learning Objectives:

1. Get tips for navigating the application process
2. Explore recent evaluation data to better understand awardee activities and breadth of their work.
3. Understand the distinction between the different funding streams available.
4. Understand how the narrative, work plan, and budget align to form a cohesive proposal.
5. Clarify the difference between full implementation and planning grants.



MA CHHA Funds Mission & Vision



Mission

Engage and convene awardees and community stakeholders through equitable grantmaking and evaluation practices to challenge unjust systems and strengthen capacity to advance health equity.



Vision

Through contributions to equitable systems across sectors and the explicit prioritization of people of color and older adults, Massachusetts communities are transformed so that all residents have an equitable opportunity to the highest quality of life possible.



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What Are Our Current Awardees Doing?



Evaluation Data from Cohorts 1 and 2

In April 2025, we implemented the Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Approaches Report & Inventory (PSE-ARI).

This evaluation provided quantitative data from the first two MA CHHAF cohorts, in either their fifth or third year of the award.

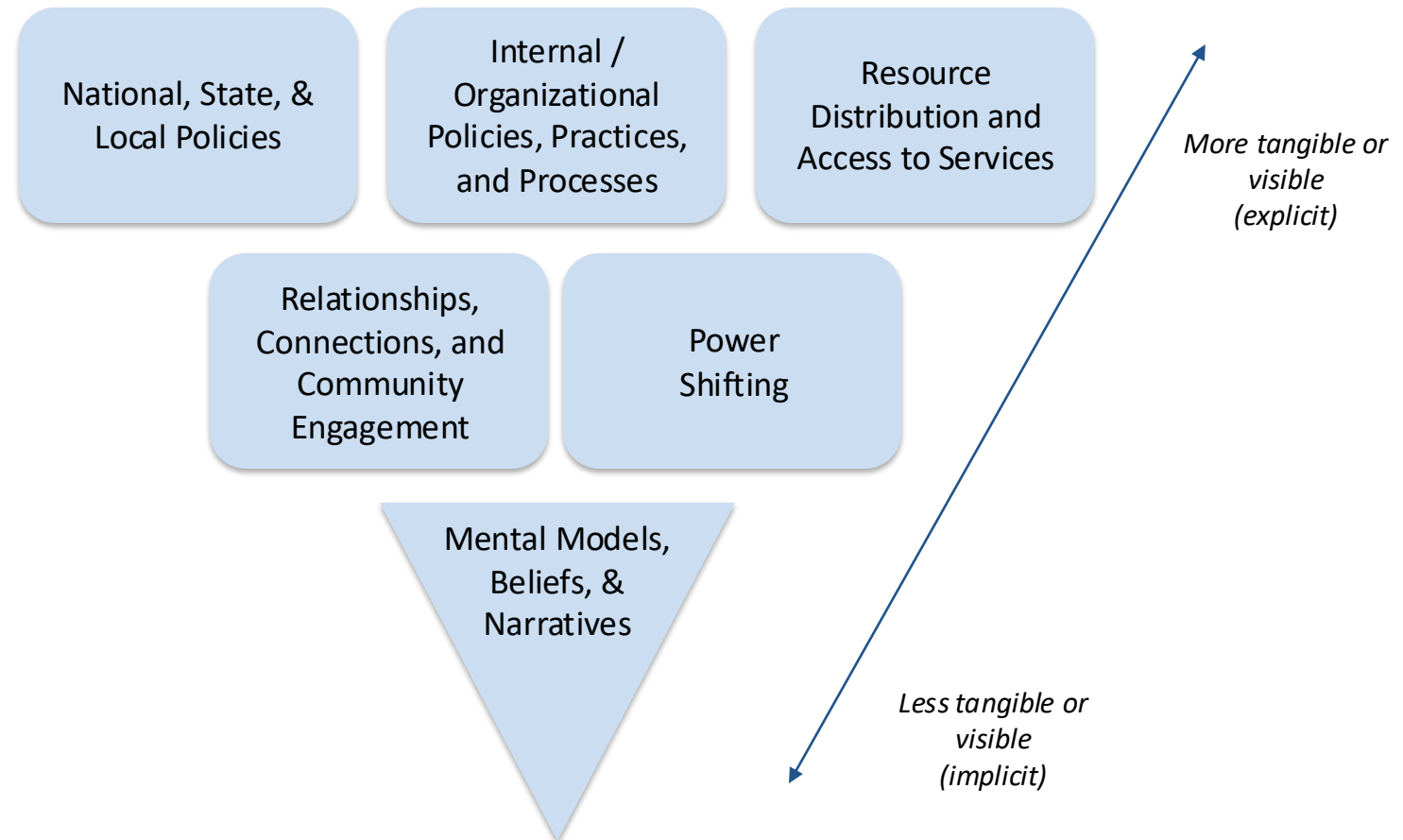
Please keep in mind: This is preliminary evaluation data meant to illustrate the kind of work awardees do. The application does not require evaluation data or metrics.

Evaluation Framework: Water of Systems Change

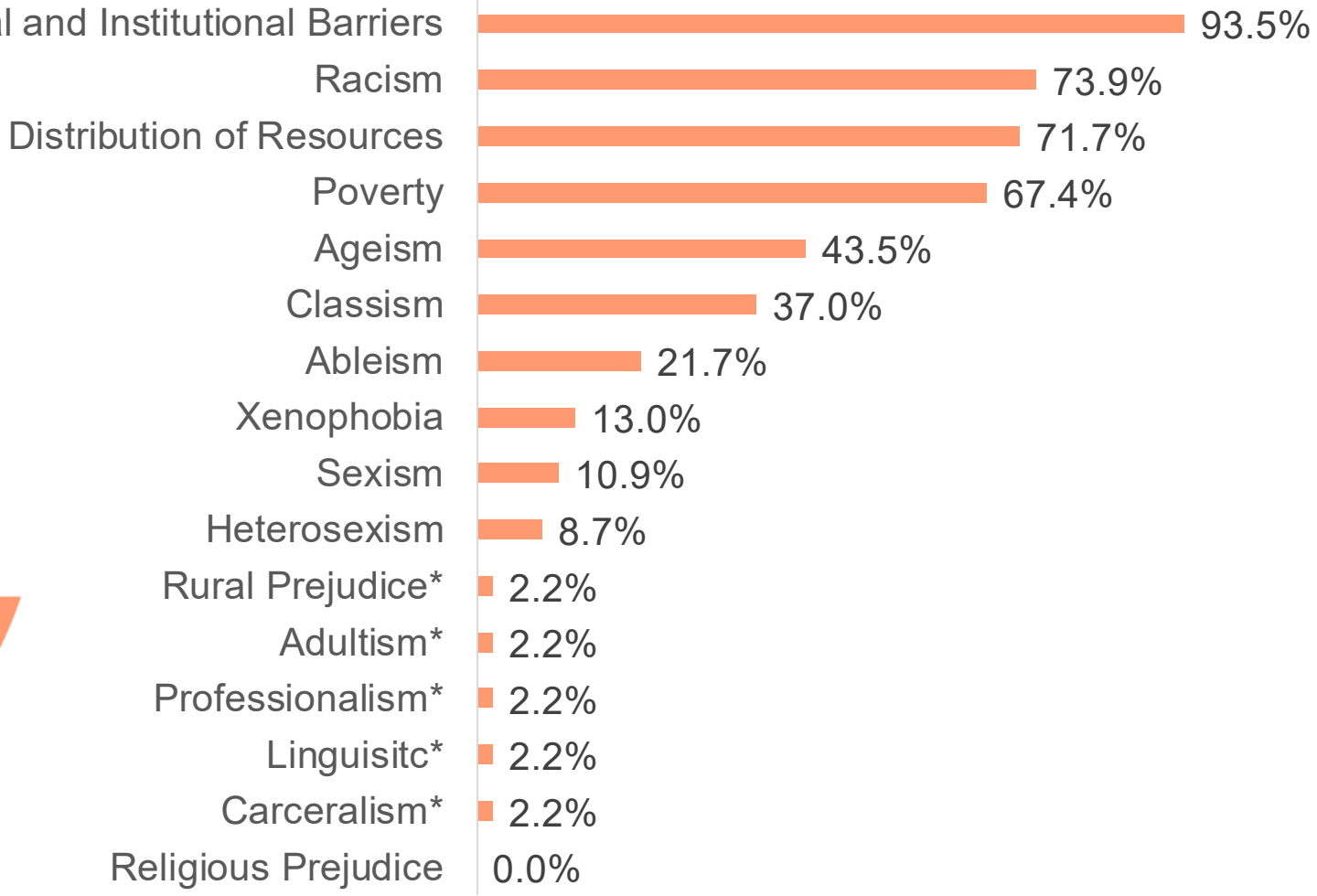
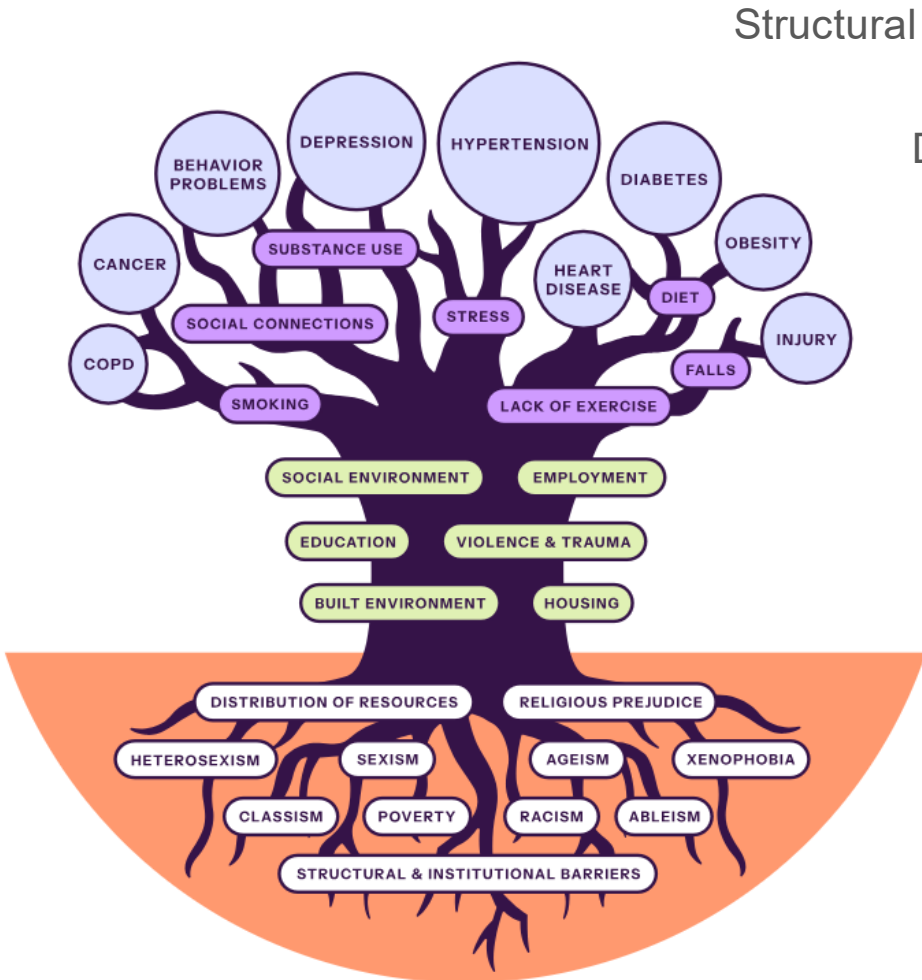
Six interdependent conditions that hold a social or environmental problem in place

- They are intertwined, and **can interact to perpetuate inequalities**
- Each have **varying degrees of visibility** to players in the system, largely due to how explicit, or tangible, they are to most people

The **MA CHHAF Evaluation Workgroup** led the process of adapting the original framework



Awardees focus on addressing root causes of health

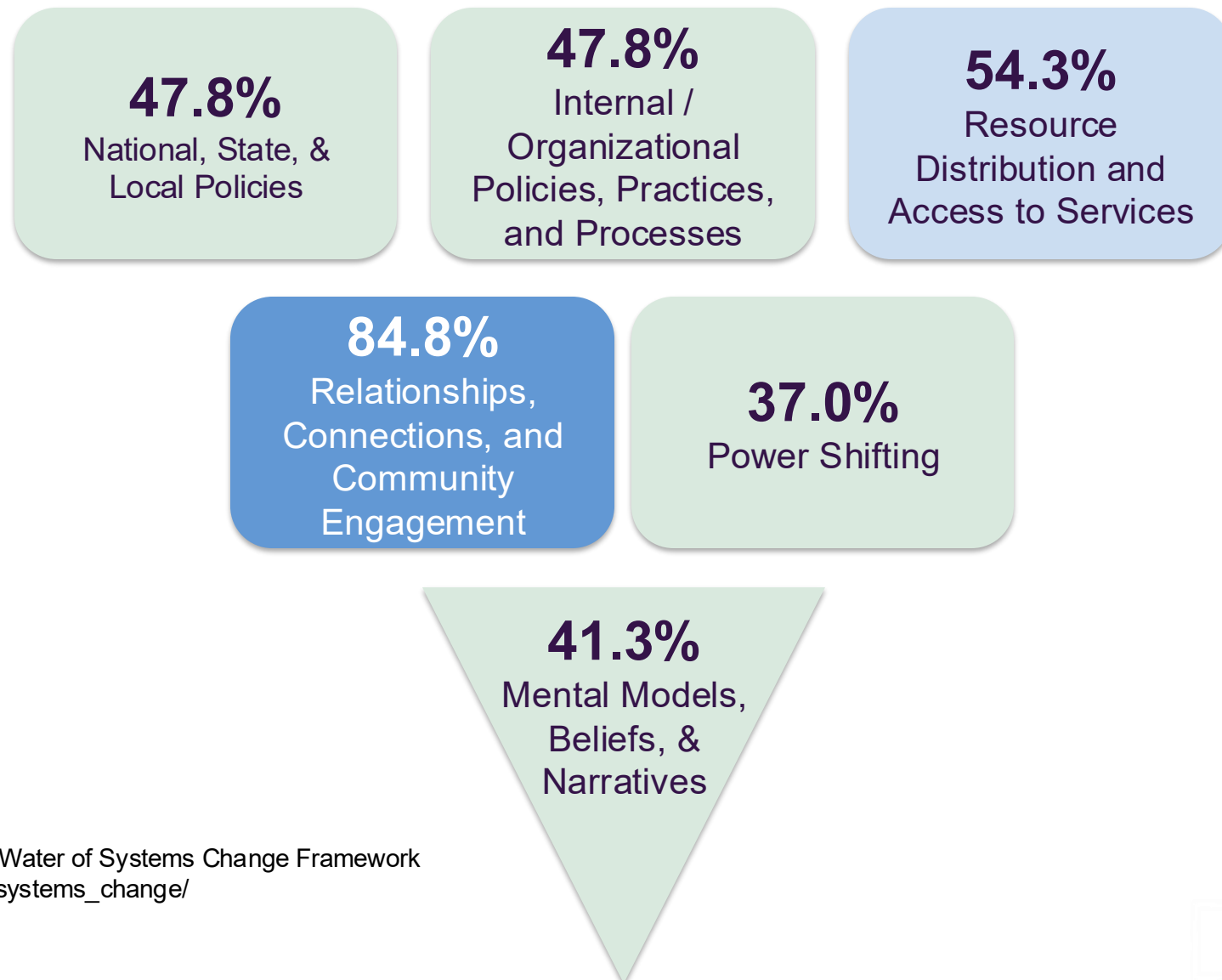


*indicates an area of work added by an awardee when selecting "other"

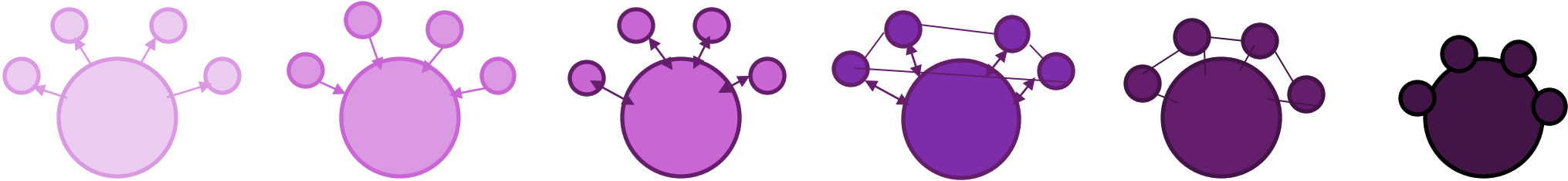


Awardees are working across the model

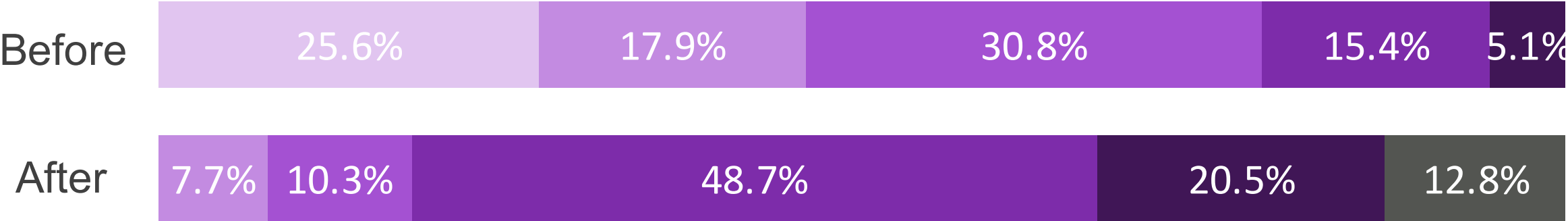
Across the six areas of systems change, a large majority (85%) of awardees reported working on relationships, connections, and community engagement as part of their PSE change initiatives.



Awardees are increasing their level of community engagement



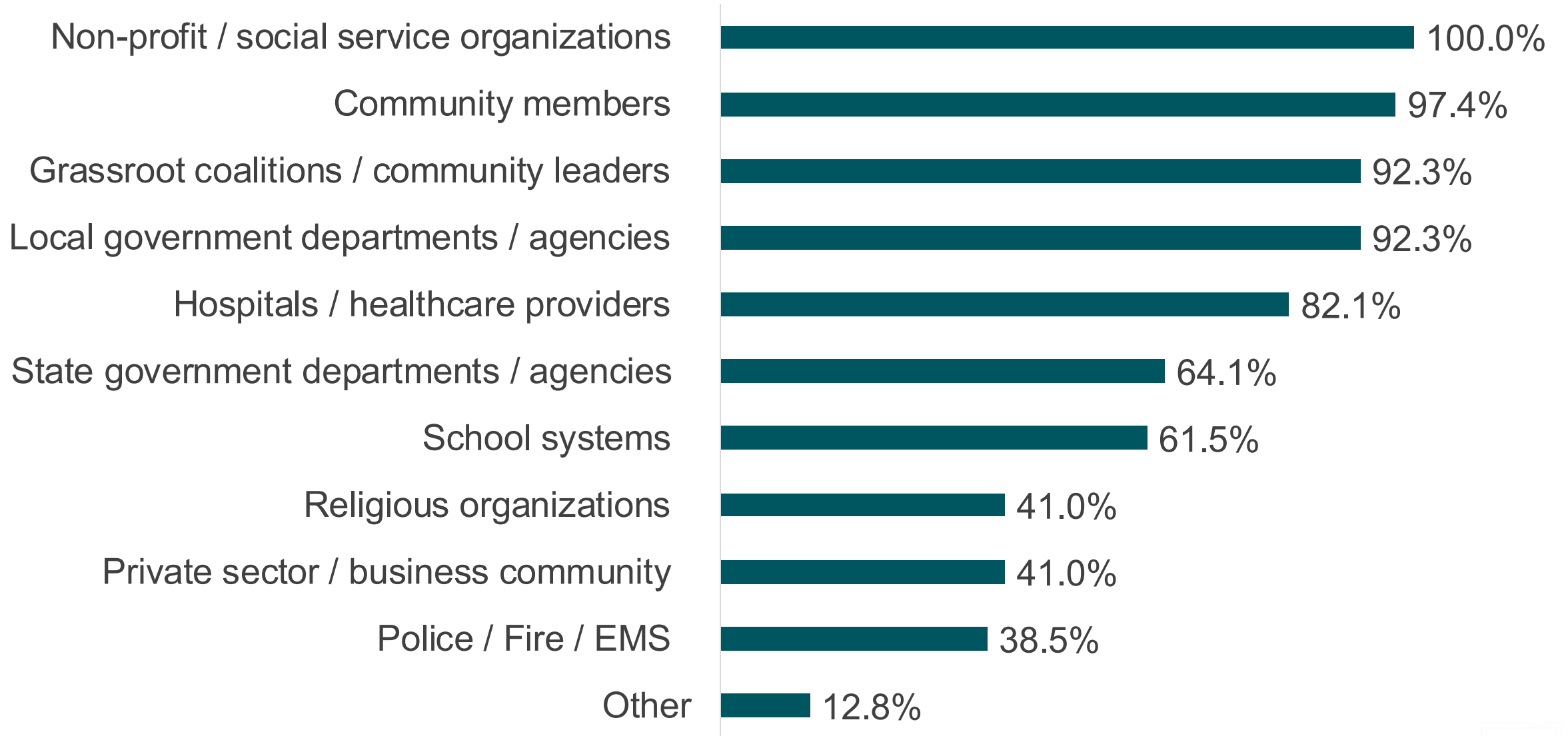
■ Inform ■ Consult ■ Involve ■ Collaborate ■ Empower ■ Community led



With MA CHAAF funding, a larger proportion of awardees reported deeper levels of community engagement compared to prior to this additional funding.

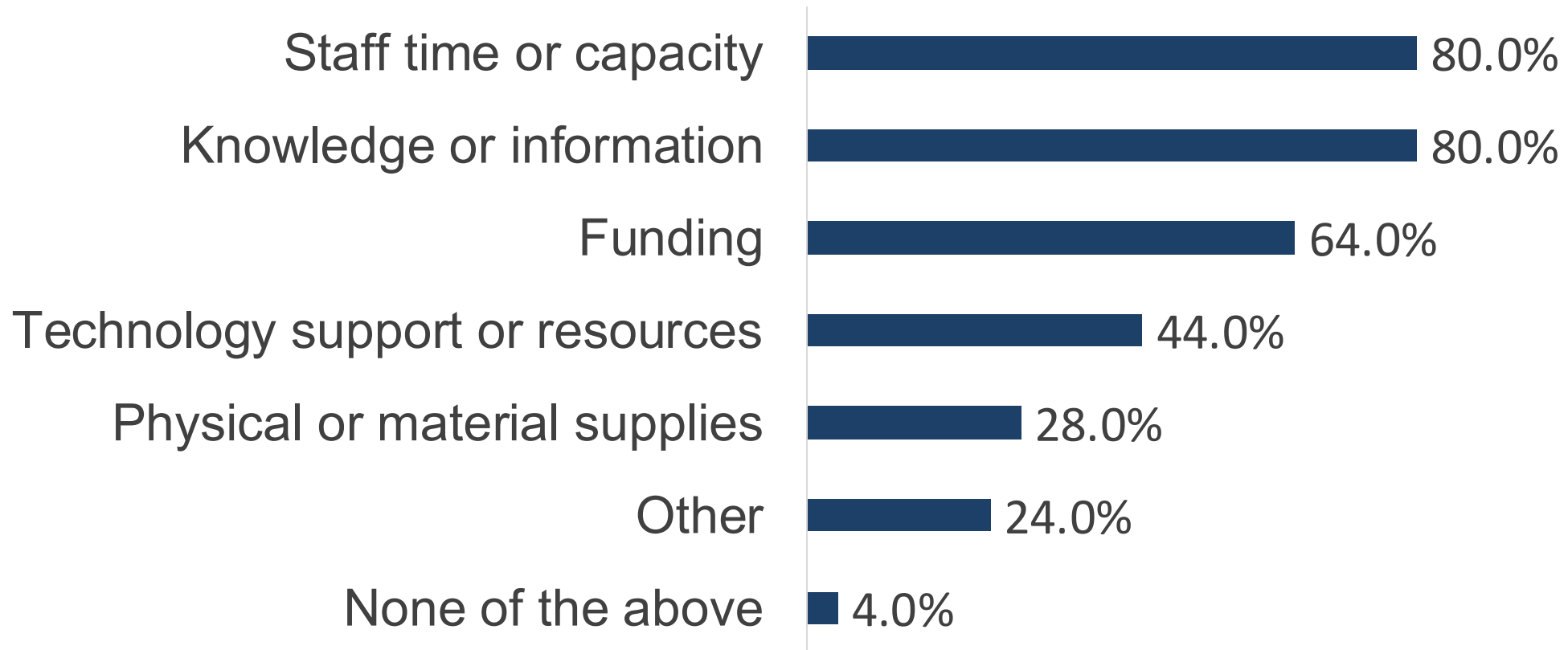


Awardees build cross-sector, community partnerships



Awardees are redistributing resources and access to services

Includes how money, people, services, resources, and information are allocated, distributed, and accessed.



Tips for Getting Started



Before you begin...

Are you eligible?

- Based in Massachusetts. National organizations with MA offices may apply.
- A 501(c)(3) nonprofit (or have a c3 fiscal sponsor), municipality, or quasi-governmental agency.

Does your work align with a funding stream?

- Policy, Systems, and Environmental change
- Healthy Aging
- CHIP (Community Health Improvement Planning)

Are you seeking a Planning Grant or a Full Grant?



Planning or Full Grant?

Planning Grant

- 1-2 Years
- Moving from downstream to upstream approaches
- Need for capacity building or technical assistance
- Focus on 2-3 key activities
- Current/former awardees are not eligible for planning grants

Full Grant

- 3-5 Years
- Implementing an upstream approach
- Expectation of 3-5 key activities
- Recipients of planning grants are welcome to apply for a full grant in the next funding cycle, however, funding is not automatically guaranteed for planning grant awardees.

Are you ready?

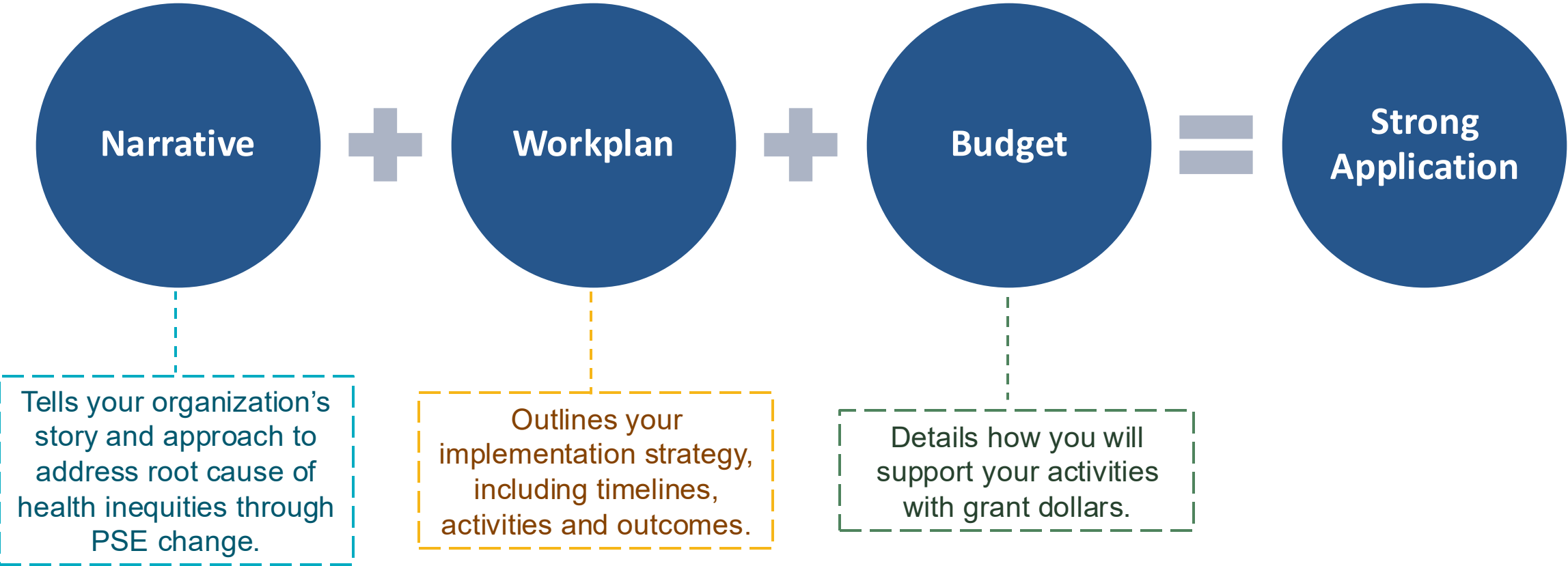
- Is this the right opportunity for your organization?
 - Use the self-assessment
- Carefully read all the grant materials
 - RFP
 - Application questions for your funding stream (Application Overview)
 - Budget and Workplan templates
 - SmartSimple instructions
 - No need to include anything we haven't asked for
- Get an early start, setup your SmartSimple account
- Review resources and technical assistance in the Applicant Hub



Submitting a Strong Application



What makes a strong application?



What grant reviewers look for

1

Eligibility

Is your organization MA-based and a 501(c)(3) organization (or have a 501(c)(3) sponsor), quasi-governmental organization, or municipality?

2

Alignment with Purpose

Does your work align with the funding stream you are applying for, use a PSE approach, emphasize health and racial equity, and is community-centered?

3

Alignment with Priorities

Is your work based in communities that have not benefitted from DoN funding, experience health inequities, and led by people with lived experience?

4

Strength of Proposal

Are the components of the proposal (narrative, work plan, budget) compelling, clear, and aligned with the Funds' purpose?

Three Funding Streams

PSE Change

Planning: Up to \$50K/yr, 1-2 yrs
Full: Up to \$200K/yr, 3-5 yrs



Invest in community-centered approaches that are intentional in addressing the root causes of inequitable health outcomes through policy, systems, and/or environmental change

HEALTHY AGING

Planning: Up to \$50K/yr, 1-2 yrs
Full: Up to \$100K/yr, 3-5 yrs



In alignment with ReiMAging Aging 2030 and eight multi-sector domains of livability for age-friendly communities, invests in strategies that tackle root causes of health inequities through PSE changes focused on social determinants of health.

CHIP

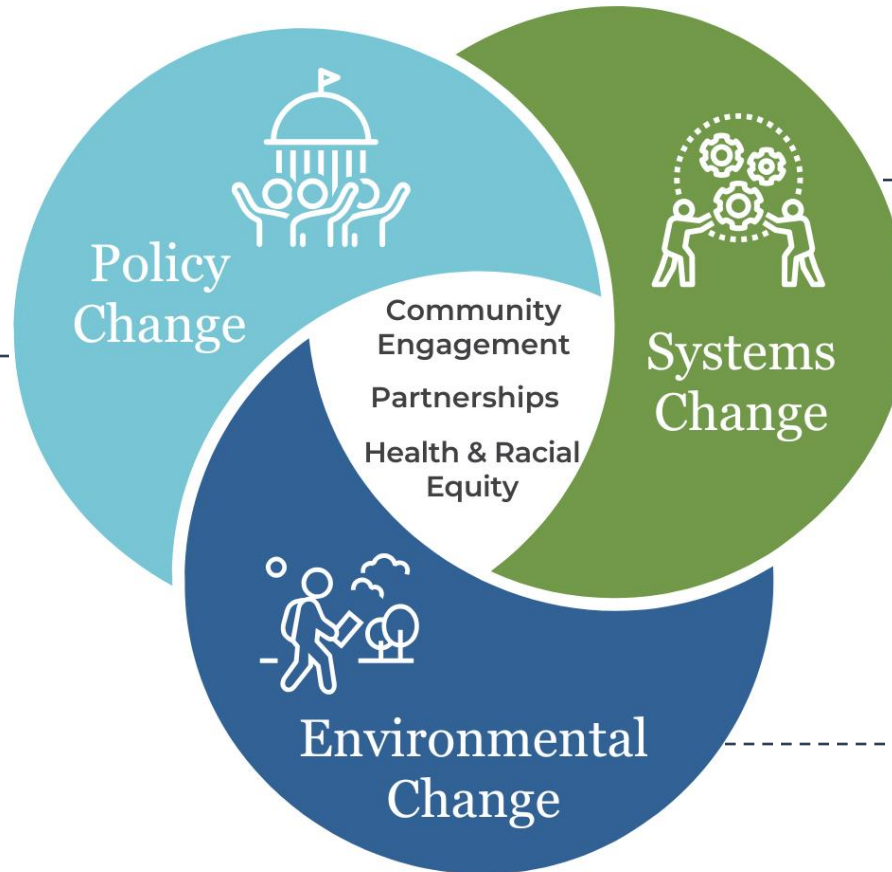
Planning: Up to \$50K/yr, 1-2 yrs
Full: Up to \$375K total, 3-5yrs



Invest in the development of local and/or regional CHIPs that advance PSE change through assessment, planning, and implementation phases of a community health improvement process.

Policy, Systems, & Environmental (PSE) Change Approaches

- **Creating, revising, or advancing policies that promote health and racial equity, including advocacy and education efforts to raise awareness.**
- *Ex: Advocating for affordable housing policies*



- **Transforming organizational, institutional, or cross-sector processes and structures to be more equitable, effective, and responsive to community needs.**
- *Ex: Shifting organizational or decision-making structures*

- **Improving the conditions where people live, work, and play to support healthier and more equitable communities.**
- *Ex: Improving food access by helping launch a grocery store through a community process*

Policy, Systems, & Environmental (PSE) Change Approaches

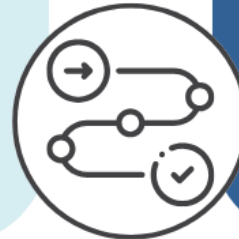
Characteristics of Programs vs. PSE Change Approaches

Programs & Events

One time, short-term

Individual level, additive:
May result in only short-term behavior change

Not part of an ongoing plan, non-sustaining



PSE Change Approaches

Ongoing, long-term

Community & population level, foundational:
produces changes in behavior over time

Part of an ongoing plan, sustaining

Review Criteria

Criteria	What Reviewers Look For
Alignment with Funding Purpose	Clear strategies to address structural barriers to health using upstream, community-centered PSE approaches; strong connection to the vision of the Funds.
Alignment with Funding Priorities	Focus on communities/populations with high inequities and limited historical access to DoN resources.
Collaboration & Partnerships	Evidence of cross-sector collaboration and intentional sharing of power and decision-making among partners.
Community Engagement	Meaningful involvement of community members—especially those with lived experience—in leadership, design, implementation, and evaluation.
Feasibility	Budget that is realistic, aligned with activities, and demonstrates a feasible plan.

Application Considerations

NARRATIVE

- Clearly describe how your project addresses root causes, SDOH, and advances PSE change.
- Demonstrate your commitment to meaningful community engagement and elevating lived experience in decision-making.
- Outline concrete strategies that will create impactful change for communities most affected by inequities.

WORKPLAN

- Clearly describe the concrete steps you will take to expand current or start new efforts the proposed efforts.
- Demonstrate how each step incorporates meaningful community engagement and advances health equity.
- For **planning grants**, map out a clear 1-2 year pathway showing how you will define and reach success.

BUDGET

- Ensure adequate staffing resources to coordinate, implement, and sustain activities.
- Include costs that strengthen community engagement, including stipends, training, and capacity-building supports.
- Align with your workplan and scope of work.

Examples

Partnering with public agencies, housing and healthcare groups, and community members to improve housing quality with a focus on lead paint and poor indoor air quality (**environmental change**).

Addressing food insecurity through (1) establishing a Food Policy Council, (2) developing and enacting a comprehensive urban agriculture policy; and (3) transitioning a farm from a farm-to-pantry model to a farm-to-retail model (**policy change & system change**).

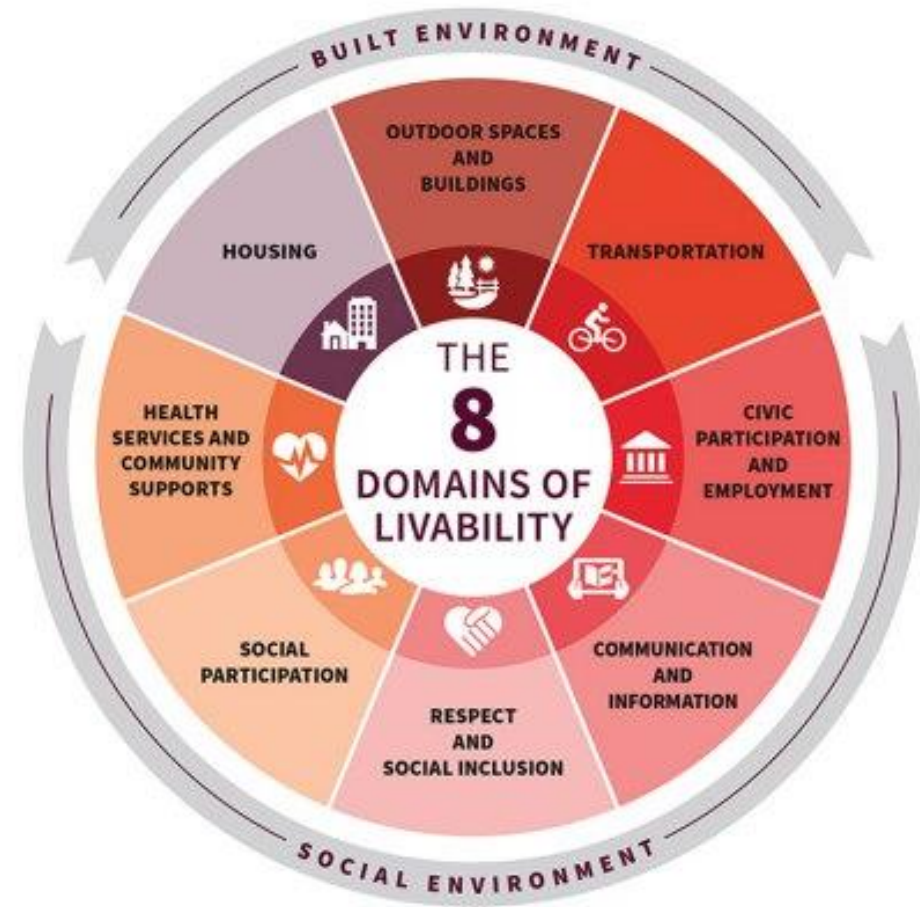
Piloting a model for workforce development and economic empowerment with guidance and participation from survivors of violence and experts in the field to replicate at other agencies (**systems change**).

Healthy Aging

The Healthy Aging funding stream will invest in strategies that focus on the eight domains of livability defined by AARP. Healthy Aging projects should emphasize the social determinants of health, and policy, systems, and environmental change approaches.

8 Domains of Livability framework is used by many of the towns, cities, counties and states enrolled in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities to organize and prioritize their work to become more livable for both older residents and people of all ages.

*For this funding cycle, preference will be given to approaches focused on the areas of **housing** and **transportation**, but applicants can address any 1 or several of the domains.



ReiMAging Aging 2030: The Massachusetts Plan



ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY & SECURITY

Every older individual across Massachusetts can meet their basic financial needs



PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

Older adults and families are empowered decision makers with meaningful connections to their communities



PLACES & SPACES

Natural and built environments enhance older adults' mobility and livability



HEALTH & WELLNESS

Older adults have optimal health for a high quality of life



AGING IN ALL POLICIES

All local, regional, and statewide policies consider the implications for older adults



INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION & FRAMING

Information is broadly accessible and reframes aging to value older adults

ReiMAging Aging 2030: The Massachusetts Plan This plan is a five-year roadmap to improve aging in the Commonwealth. Developed with input, from residents and community partners across the state, it aligns partners around a shared vision and outlines six key goals with strategies and actions for state agencies, local communities, organizations, and the private sector to help older adults thrive in Massachusetts.

Review Criteria

Criteria	What Reviewers Look For
Alignment with Funding Purpose	Clear strategies to address structural barriers to health using upstream, community-centered PSE approaches; strong connection to the vision of the Funds.
Alignment with Funding Stream	Focuses on ReIMAgine Aging 2030: The Massachusetts Plan and eight multi-sector domains of livability for age-friendly communities.
Collaboration & Partnerships	Evidence of cross-sector collaboration and intentional sharing of power and decision-making among partners.
Community Engagement	Meaningful involvement of community members—especially those with lived experience—in leadership, design, implementation, and evaluation.
Feasibility	Budget that is realistic, aligned with activities, and demonstrates a feasible plan.

Application Considerations

NARRATIVE

- Identifies PSE strategies that align with the Reimagine Aging 2030: The Massachusetts Plan and advance the objectives of the Plan
- Clearly describe how proposed activities align with the domain(s) of Age-Friendly Communities.
- Demonstrate how funding will support sustainability and accountability.

WORK PLAN

- Highlight the core activities you will implement and how they align with the Healthy Aging process.
- For **planning grants**, map out a clear 1-2 year pathway showing how you will define and reach success.

BUDGET

- Ensure adequate staffing resources to coordinate, implement, and sustain activities.
- Include costs that strengthen community engagement, including stipends, training, and capacity-building supports.
- Align with your work plan and scope of work.

Healthy Aging Planning Grant

If you are just getting started with PSE change approach to create a more Age Friendly Community here are some **feasible, short-term goals to accomplish with a Planning Grant**:

- Establish and strengthen organizational capacity.
- Build and strengthen a cross-sector partnership or coalition.
- Engage older adults and community members with lived experience.
- Develop a plan to transition from short-term projects to long-term sustainable PSE approach.

Examples

Conducting a health impact assessment (HIA) on policy and practice proposals that affect the ability of people with a criminal record (as shown through a Criminal Offender Record Information [CORI] check) to secure housing (**policy change**).

Creating and disseminating a guide that promotes inclusive age- and dementia-friendly practices with an overarching goal to encourage culture change that leads to communities more thoroughly considering the preferences, needs, and experiences of all people (**systems change**).

Addressing barriers to safe walkability in the region through policy advocacy, education, and environmental changes identified in walk audits (**environmental change**).

Community Health Improvement Processes (CHIP) Approaches

- A CHIP uses Community Health Assessment (CHA) data to identify priority issues, develop and implement strategies for action, and establish accountability to ensure measurable health improvement.
- A community health improvement process looks outside of the performance of an individual organization serving a specific segment of a community to the way in which the activities of many organizations contribute to community health improvement.



Review Criteria

Criteria	What Reviewers Look For
Alignment with Funding Purpose	Clear strategies to address structural barriers to health using upstream, community-centered PSE approaches; strong connection to the vision of the Funds.
Alignment with Funding Stream	Focuses on CHIP funding priorities by connecting proposed activities to relevant phases and demonstrating how funds will support equitable, sustainable community health improvement.
Collaboration & Partnerships	Evidence of cross-sector collaboration and intentional sharing of power and decision-making among partners.
Community Engagement	Meaningful involvement of community members—especially those with lived experience—in leadership, design, implementation, and evaluation.
Feasibility	Budget that is realistic, aligned with activities, and demonstrates a feasible plan.

Application Considerations

NARRATIVE

- Outline CHIP goals and responsiveness to community-identified priorities.
- Clearly describe how proposed strategies align with CHIP phases (assessment, planning, implementation).
- Demonstrate how funding will support sustainability and accountability across the CHIP process.

WORKPLAN

- Highlight the core activities you will implement and how they align with the CHIP process.
- For **planning grants**, map out a clear 1-2 year pathway showing how you will define and reach success.

BUDGET

- Ensure adequate staffing resources to coordinate, implement, and sustain activities.
- Support evaluation to track and measure progress.
- Include community engagement stipends for data collection, leadership, working groups, and capacity-building.
- Align with your workplan and scope of work.

CHIP Planning Grants

If you are just getting started with a CHIP here are some **feasible, short-term goals to accomplish with a Planning Grant:**

- Identify key partners and build meaningful relationships.
- Establish a leadership team.
- Clarify the purpose and scope of your CHIP.
- Create a plan for ongoing community engagement and accountability.

Examples

Implementing a Community Wellness Plan (CWP) through sustained coordination, capacity building and training, inclusive and representative leadership and participation, fundraising, and progress tracking/ evaluation.

City health department building a diverse and equitable collaborative with the purpose of closely examining the city's Community Health Improvement Plan to ensure all populations are represented in an equitable manner.

City currently completing the final year of its first CHIP and developing its second CHIP. Through this grant, will further strengthen community engagement; data development, collection, and analysis; and evaluation during the lifecycle of the CHIP, with an emphasis on racial equity indicators.

Required Materials

All applicants must submit the following items through our SmartSimple portal:

- Responses to application questions (eligibility, organization details, contact information)
- Proposal Narrative: written (4-6 pages) or presentation slides (20-24 slides) – PDF
- Workplan using provided template – PDF
- Budget using provided template – XLS or XLSX
- Proof of tax-exempt status and W-9 – PDF



Reminders

- Review, review, review!
- Have someone else review the narrative with “fresh eyes,” including internal and external colleagues.
- Ensure that you followed the page count and other required formats.
- Ensure that you are using *this application's* budget template and work plan template.
- Conduct a final checklist review on templates, attachments, etc.
- Don't wait until the last minute.
- Letters of references and staff resumes are **NOT REQUIRED**.



Technical Assistance & Resources



Upcoming Live Sessions

- Feb 25, 2026
- March 26, 2026



New Application Hub



Apply

We are excited to announce that the 2026 Funding Cycle is now open for applications!

This page is your central hub for the application process and includes everything you need to prepare and submit a strong application, including eligibility guidance, required materials, recorded webinars, and other technical assistance resources.

Need more help? For application portal assistance, please email grants@hria.org. For application questions, email MACHHAFunds@hria.org.

Applications are due on March 31, 2026, at 5:00 PM EST

<p>1</p> <p>Understand the Funding Opportunity</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Application Overview</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Submit a Strong Application</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Build Your Budget & Workplan</p>
<p>5</p> <p>Understand the Review Process</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Watch Learning Sessions</p>	<p>7</p> <p>FAQ</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Apply Now</p>



Capacity Building



PSE Approach

Learn to use a policy, systems, and environmental change framework



Equity Approach

How to center health and racial equity in your work



Community Engagement

How to put community voices in the driver's seat



CHIP

Get application instructions and grant writing tips



Healthy Aging

How to center health and racial equity in your work



Data & Dashboards

How to put community voices in the driver's seat



Glossary

Learn to use a policy, systems, and environmental change framework



Contact Information

- Website: <https://mahealthfunds.org/>
- Questions: MACHHAFunds@hria.org
- For technical support with the SmartSimple portal, email grants@hria.org and use “MACHHAF” in the subject line.



Questions



Questions Received

