

**Office of Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell**



**Request for Proposal (RFP)**

**FY2024-FY2026 Maternal Health Equity  
Grant Program**

*Release Date: April 13, 2023*

*Response Due Date: May 26, 2023*

*Project Start Date August 2023*

*Project End Date: August 2025*

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With the objective of reducing maternal health disparities and unnecessary health care spending in Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office (AGO) is pleased to announce the Maternal Health Equity Grant Program.

This program will fund successful applicants who directly provide culturally competent maternal health support services aimed at reducing maternal health disparities and unnecessary health care spending. Maternal health support services are defined as:

- (1) Pregnancy support services, such as group prenatal care;
- (2) Childbirth support services, such as doula access or doula workforce development;
- (3) Postpartum support services, such as breastfeeding support or postpartum behavioral health support; and
- (4) Patient and family education.

“Support services” include health care services and other services designed to meet an individual's holistic needs.

The examples listed above (such as group prenatal or doula access) are intended to be illustrative. Any services falling in the categories of pregnancy support, childbirth support, postpartum support, or patient and family education are eligible for funding through this grant program.

A “culturally competent” service is a service that reflects the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes. The grant program will be funded with up to \$1.5 million from HCD cy pres settlement funds.

## **Background**

The maternal mortality rate in the United States is the highest of any developed nation.<sup>1</sup> Black women are over three times more likely than white women to die from pregnancy-related causes.<sup>2</sup> In Massachusetts, Black Non-Hispanic women are 1.9 times more likely to die during pregnancy or within one year postpartum than white Non-Hispanic women.<sup>3</sup> Researchers have

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<sup>1</sup> The White House published, “White House Blueprint for Addressing the Maternal Health Crisis,” identifying five goals to address the maternal health crisis in the United States. In its report, the White House shares this statistic to put the issue in context. See <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Maternal-Health-Blueprint.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/features/maternal-mortality/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> The Special Legislative Commission of Racial Inequities in Maternal Health provided Massachusetts-specific maternal health data. See <https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/bitstream/handle/2452/859167/on1322121286.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

identified structural racism, implicit bias, and lack of access to culturally competent care as primary drivers of maternal health disparities.<sup>4</sup>

During the pandemic, maternal deaths increased across racial categories, but white, Hispanic, and Black women did not suffer equally. White women experienced a rate of 26.1 deaths for every 100,000 births; Hispanic women, 27.5 deaths, and Black women, 68.9 deaths.<sup>5</sup> Maternal health disparities do not stop at the mother, but also affect the baby. Rates of infant mortality, preterm birth, and low birth weight are highest among Black babies.<sup>6</sup> The effects of maternal health disparities on individuals and families cascade into detrimental outcomes for entire communities.

Through this grant, the AGO will invest in culturally competent maternal health support services designed to reduce maternal health disparities and unnecessary health care spending. The design of this grant program was informed by recommendations from the Massachusetts Special Legislative Commission on Racial Inequities in Maternal Health.<sup>7</sup> This Commission released a report in 2022 advocating for more access to culturally competent maternal health care, education, and postpartum support groups for Black/POC mothers and their partners.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, there is significant evidence that investing in pregnancy-related supports can reduce unnecessary health care spending. For example, investing in doula care saves medical costs by reducing the need for cesarean deliveries. Cesarean deliveries are not only three times more likely to result in life-threatening complications, they also cost 50% more than vaginal births.<sup>9</sup>

### **Eligibility**

Nonprofit organizations providing (or seeking to provide) maternal health support services (pregnancy support, childbirth support, postpartum support, and/or patient and family education) at Massachusetts-based locations, or through programming which serves Massachusetts residents, are eligible to apply.

Nonprofit organizations must be in full compliance with all annual reporting requirements of both the AGO and the Internal Revenue Service, as applicable, in order to be eligible for funding.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/racial-disparities-in-maternal-and-infant-health-current-status-and-efforts-to-address-them/>

<sup>5</sup> Id.

<sup>6</sup> Id.

<sup>7</sup> Established under law by Governor Baker, the Commission was created to explore ways to reduce or eliminate inequities in maternal mortality and investigate barriers to accessing care. See <https://www.masslive.com/politics/2021/01/health-commission-created-in-massachusetts-to-address-racial-inequities-in-maternal-mortality-rates.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/bitstream/handle/2452/859167/on1322121286.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

<sup>9</sup> Alexis Robles-Fradet & Mara Greenwald, *Doula Care Improves Health Outcomes, Reduces Racial Disparities and Cuts Cost*, National Health Law Program (Aug. 8, 2022), <https://healthlaw.org/doula-care-improves-health-outcomes-reduces-racial-disparities-and-cuts-cost/>.

### **Funding, Duration, and Anticipated Timeline**

Grant awards will be issued in varying amounts up to \$150,000. Applicant budgets may or may not be funded in their entirety, or at all. All funding decisions will be at the discretion of the AGO. Proposals to provide evidence-based services (meaning services based upon a model that is supported by evidence of its effectiveness in reducing maternal health disparities and/or unnecessary spending) may be prioritized for funding. The AGO in its sole discretion may also prioritize proposals from Community Health Centers, which are defined as community-based and patient-directed organizations that serve populations with limited access to health care.

Grant funds will be awarded with an anticipated start date of August 2023. The maximum grant period will be 2 years. The AGO will not allow program extensions except for good cause shown. The AGO may deny program extension requests at its sole discretion.

### **Cash Flow and Disbursement Grant Funds**

Grant disbursement(s) will be sent to successful applicants by Electronic Funds Transfer, provided that all necessary contract and periodic reporting documents are received by the established deadline. A disbursement schedule will be determined by the AGO after the selection of successful applications.

### **Submission Instructions**

- Grant applications with accompanying proposals must be delivered electronically through the AGO's online grant application website by 5:00 p.m. on May 26, 2023.
- Interested applicants may access the application here: [Grant Application Portal](#).
- New applicants will be asked to create a free online account. Any applicant that has applied for any AGO grant using the online grant application website may log into its existing account. All applicants should confirm their contact information is current on their applicant profiles.
- Confirmation of Receipt: Applicants typically receive an email confirmation within 48 business hours; if one is not received, please call the AGO Grants Team at 617-963-2150 for assistance.

### **Evaluations**

Program proposals and application components will be evaluated on criteria that includes the following:

- Demographics and geographic location of the population(s) served by applicant
- Applicant's commitment to health equity and access for underserved communities and vulnerable populations
- Applicant's past success or future potential in providing maternal health support services, including the availability of any past data reporting or analyses concerning the applicant's impact on maternal health
- Applicant's efforts to provide culturally and linguistically competent care and strategy to expand or build on such services
- Applicant's proposal/vision for continued development and implementation of culturally competent maternal health support services
- Applicant's description of any existing partnerships and/or referral programs with Massachusetts hospitals that have furthered the applicant's maternal health efforts

- Applicant’s plan and ability to measure the impact of grant-supported programming on reduction of maternal health disparities and unnecessary health care spending
- Current funding sources will be considered

### **Questions**

Questions regarding this RFP may be submitted to [AGOgrants@mass.gov](mailto:AGOgrants@mass.gov), only until 5:00 p.m. on April 28, 2023. When submitting your question(s), please include “Maternal Health Equity Grant” in the email subject line. Questions received and answers provided regarding this RFP will be posted on the AGO’s online grant application website: [Grant Application Portal](#).

### **Reasonable Accommodation**

Applicants with disabilities may seek reasonable accommodation, including receipt of the RFP in an alternative format, by writing to [AGOgrants@mass.gov](mailto:AGOgrants@mass.gov) no later than April 28, 2023.

### **Expectations and Requirements for Successful Applicants**

- Award is contingent upon the applicant satisfactorily completing all necessary documents (see below) by the deadlines established during the contract period.
- Any changes to a grant program or budget, at any time during the grant period, must be requested in writing by the successful applicant and must be approved, in advance, by the AGO.
- All funds must be used in a manner consistent with the applicant’s grant application and accompanying proposal which shall both become part of the Scope of Services Agreement.

### **Required Commonwealth Contract Documents**

The following documents will be required as part of the *application submission*:

- Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification (W-9)
- Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Form\*<sup>10</sup>
- Nonprofits must submit one of the following unless they are exempt from filing with the AGO’s Non-Profit Organizations/Public Charities Division (NPCD):
  - Their most recent filing package submitted to NPCD;<sup>11</sup>
  - A current Certificate of Solicitation issued by NPCD; or
  - A current Letter of Good Standing issued by NPCD.

The following documents will be required upon any notification of a grant award at a deadline established by the AGO and *should not be submitted with the grant application*:

- Standard Contract Form
- Scope and Services Agreement
- Contractor Authorized Signatory Listing

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<sup>10</sup> It is the responsibility of the applicant/award recipient to ensure that an electronic transfer of funds may be received by the award recipient. No paper checks will be issued.

<sup>11</sup> The package should include its Form PC, IRS Form 990/990-EZ/990-PF and, as applicable, a CPA’s review report or an audited financial statement.

Links to blank W-9 and EFT forms will be provided in the online application form. No grant funds will be disbursed unless the necessary documents are submitted by the deadlines established by the AGO.

**Public Records**

All submitted responses and information are subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law, M.G.L. c. 66, § 10, and M.G.L. c. 4, § 7, cl. 26. Applicants should not submit any personal, medical, or other sensitive information.

**Updates to this RFP**

Any changes/corrections to any part of this RFP will be posted on <https://www.mass.gov/grant-opportunities>. It is the applicant's responsibility to check this web page frequently for any updates.