2027 – 2028 Champions for Vibrant Health Leadership Network
Request for Applications (RFA)

A two-year leadership development program for an Emerging and Executive Leader from 20 nonprofit organizations to build the critical leadership and advocacy skills necessary to navigate H.R.1, Medi-Cal, and CalFresh changes and lead systems-level improvements that protect and advance the health of Inland Empire communities. To apply, click here.

Overview

IEHP Foundation (IEHPF) recognizes the critical role nonprofit organizations (NPOs) play in supporting Inland Empire communities, particularly those most affected by economic instability, limited access to care and systemic barriers to health. As the region prepares for significant changes to Medi-Cal and CalFresh under H.R.1 in 2027, NPOs will face growing demands to help community members navigate new coverage requirements, benefit modifications, and potential disruptions in services. These shifts will have profound implications for children, youth and families across Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.

The **2027 -2028 Champions for Vibrant Health Leadership Network ("Leadership Network")** is a two-year leadership development program grounded in policy education, advocacy capacity-building and systems-change learning. This initiative is designed to equip nonprofit leaders with the knowledge, skills, and relationships needed to mitigate the negative impacts of H.R.1, protect Medi-Cal members from coverage loss, and advance equitable health outcomes across the Inland Empire. This cohort will also build upon the lessons learned from the first iteration of the Leadership Network in 2025-2026.

A total of 20 organizations will be selected to participate in this opportunity. Each organization will identify two leaders, one Executive Leader and one Emerging Leader, to join the Leadership Network. Over the course of January 2027 through December 2028, leaders will engage in a structured series of convenings, advocacy experiences, intersession learning, and collaborative activities designed to strengthen their ability to lead through policy change, drive organizational resilience and align with regional efforts to support Medi-Cal communities.

In addition to the learning experience, each participating organization will receive $50,000 per year for two years ($100,000 total) to strengthen internal capacity, enhance systems and processes and implement lessons learned through the program.

Training Goals & Objectives

The overall goal of the **Leadership Network** is to develop a highly skilled, connected, and advocacy-ready cohort of nonprofit leaders who are prepared to navigate the impacts of HR1 and upcoming Medi-Cal and CalFresh changes. Over two years, Executive and Emerging Leaders will:

1. **Strengthen leadership capacity** by building skills in critical thinking, change management, resiliency, team culture, and succession planning to support long-term organizational sustainability.

2. **Develop a collective policy and advocacy agenda** that unifies regional leaders around collective priorities related to HR1, Medi-Cal, CalFresh impacts and other shared issues.
3. **Enhance cross-sector connections** among organizations addressing social drivers of health to improve coordinated support for Medi-Cal communities.
4. **Improve organizations' roles as trusted messengers** by equipping leaders to communicate policy changes clearly and connect community members with essential resources and services.
5. **Advance regional outcomes** by increasing organizational capacity, strengthening collective advocacy, expanding public and private funding, and promoting health equity across the Inland Empire.

Participant Expectations

Each Executive Leader and Emerging Leader from selected organizations is expected to meaningfully engage in all program activities over the two-year period (January 2027 – December 2028). Consistent participation is essential to ensuring leaders build the skills, relationships, and regional alignment necessary to support Medi-Cal members during upcoming system changes.

Executive Leader: Preferably the highest-level staff member in the organization—typically an Executive Director, President, CEO, COO, or Vice President—who has the authority to make strategic decisions on behalf of the organization and influence organizational direction. Must have worked with the organization for no less than 2 years.

Emerging Leader: A mid-level staff member—often a director, manager, or vice-president—who demonstrates the potential to grow into future executive leadership and plays a meaningful role in program, operational, or community impact areas. Must have worked with the organization for no less than 2 years.

Both leaders must be able to commit to attending six annual gatherings each year:

- 4 in-person local full day convenings
- 1 in-person advocacy trip to Sacramento (2 days, 1 night)
- 1 in-person leadership retreat (up to 3 days, 2 nights)

In addition, leaders are expected to:

- Complete a pre-survey, a Year 1 Impact Report, and a Year 2 Impact Report in a timely manner
- Engage in intersession, ad-hoc activities, such as educational webinars, peer learning opportunities, and in-district legislative visits.

For planning purposes, the Leadership Network is expected to require an estimated 8–15 hours per month. Below are Year 1 session dates. Year 2 session dates will be shared out with selected participants later in 2027.

- **Session 1:** January 26, 2026 (9am – 4pm) at IEHP Center for Learning & Innovation, Rancho Cucamonga
- **Session 2:** Early March 2026, Advocacy Trip to Sacramento (TBD - exact dates & location)
- **Session 3:** May 13, 2026 (9am – 4pm) at IEHP Center for Learning & Innovation, Rancho Cucamonga
- **Session 4:** July 15, 2026 (9am – 4pm) at IEHP Center for Learning & Innovation, Rancho Cucamonga
- **Session 5:** Late September 2026, Leadership Summit (TBD - exact dates & location)
- **Session 6:** November 4 (9am – 4pm) at IEHP Center for Learning & Innovation, Rancho Cucamonga
- **Year 1 Progress & Impact Report:** October 2027 (Exact date TBD)

*Dates subject to change with advance notice.

Direct Funding

Each organization selected for the Leadership Network will receive **$50,000 per year for two years ($100,000 total)** to strengthen internal capacity and support organizational readiness for upcoming H.R.1, Medi-Cal, and CalFresh changes. Funding may be used to enhance systems, processes, staffing, data infrastructure, or other capacity-building priorities identified by the organization.

To ensure leaders are able to implement best practices, tools and lessons learned throughout the program, $10,000 of the annual allocation must be reserved as flexible funding. This flexible funding is intended to give Executive and Emerging Leaders the ability to quickly apply new strategies, adopt effective practices, and respond to emerging organizational needs surfaced during Leadership Network sessions.

Eligibility Criteria

Organizations eligible to apply for the Leadership Network must meet the following criteria. Exceptions may be made in *very rare and unique* circumstances.

1. **Nonprofit Status & Budget**
   Nonprofit, public benefit organizations with evidence of tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and:
   a. Have been operating for no less than 3 years (2024 – present).
   b. Have had an annual operating budget over $400,000 for the past 3 years (2024 – present).
   c. Are headquartered and/or have a significant presence in Riverside and/or San Bernardino County

2. **Medi-Cal Member Support**
   Organizations that are strategically positioned to support Medi-Cal members and help communities navigate the upcoming changes resulting from HR1, expected to impact California residents in 2027. Eligible organizations demonstrate strong community trust, operational readiness, and a direct role in serving or supporting individuals who may be affected by new coverage requirements, benefit changes, or service delivery shifts. Examples of eligible organizations include:
   - Nonprofits providing job training, workforce development, or job placement services that help Medi-Cal members meet new work-related requirements.
   - Healthcare providers serving uninsured or underinsured residents, including clinics that act as safety-net providers.
   - Organizations contracted to deliver Medi-Cal services such as Community Health Workers (CHWs), community supports providers, and enhanced care management entities.
   - Case management, basic needs, and social service organizations supporting individuals at risk of losing Medi-Cal coverage.
   - Trusted messengers or community-based organizations that provide culturally informed outreach, health navigation, and benefits education.
   - Coalitions or collaboratives focused on analyzing, responding to, and coordinating efforts related to HR1 changes and their impact on Medi-Cal and CalFresh beneficiaries.

3. **Updated Candid GuideStar Status**
   Have a 2026 Candid GuideStar Seal of Transparency rating of either gold or platinum. Click here to learn more about how to obtain this status.

4. **Alignment with IEHPF Priority Populations**
   Have programs/services that primarily serve Inland Empire children, youth or families from the Medi-Cal community and from one or more of the following IEHPF priority populations:
   a. Low-income households and/or those living in poverty
   b. Rural and remote communities
   c. Communities with a Healthy Places Index Score of 25 or lower

5. **Alignment with IEHPF Vital Condition Action Areas**
   Provide direct services, lead collective action and/or engage in advocacy efforts focused on at least one of the following:
   - Basic Needs for Health & Safety
     - Access to healthy food and nutrition services
     - Reducing unhealthy behaviors and addictions
     - Access to physical health services
     - Access to mental health services
   - Meaningful Work & Wealth

- Access to education programs/ career pathways for healthcare and social service workforce
- Access to education programs and job placement for community members who are under-insured, not insured or on Medi-Cal.
- Access to education programs/career pathways to upskill community members to high-wage and living wage careers

○ Humane Housing
- Access to safe living conditions for unhoused families
- Access to affordable housing

6. **Executive and Emerging Leaders**
Identify an Executive and Emerging Leader who can commit to meaningfully engage in session and intersession activities throughout the two years of the Leadership Network. Additionally, each leader identified should:
   - Have worked with the organization for no less than 2 years
   - Demonstrate leadership both within the organization and within the Inland Empire region
   - Have job responsibilities focused on Riverside and San Bernardino Counties
   - Be familiar with how changes to Medi-Cal and CalFresh may impact the community members your organization serves

Organizations that are **not** eligible to apply include:

- Fiscally sponsored organizations
- Private foundations
- 501(c)(4) organizations
- Organizations who participated in the 2025-2026 Champions for Vibrant Health Leadership Network

Please note that you will be required to complete a brief eligibility quiz to confirm eligibility prior to submitting your application on the Grants Management Portal.

Evaluation of Applications

A total of 20 organizations will be selected to participate in the cohort. Applications will be reviewed by IEHP Foundation staff and volunteers, with evaluation criteria aligned with IEHP Foundation's mission, values and priority populations.

In particular, special consideration will be given to how applicants demonstrate how participation in this grant program will help expand the **ARCH** of their organizational strength. ARCH includes:

- **Accountability** to funders and community by being operationally efficient through healthy finances and strong leadership.

- **Results-oriented** by striving to achieve results that are identifiable, measurable, demonstrate progress and provide opportunities for learning and improvement.
- **Connectedness** to community and partnership networks, coalitions and collaborations.
- **Health Outcomes** by improving organization's position to be a trusted messenger of health to IEHPF's priority populations through improving health outcomes related to IEHPF's priority Vital Condition action areas.

A full evaluation matrix is available for viewing here.

Key Grant Dates and Deadlines

Application:

- **October 20, 2026:** Application Opens
- **October 27, 2026:** Virtual Information Session, live, from 1pm –2pm PT. Click here to register.
- **October 29, 2026:** Recording of Virtual Information Session available on IEHPF website at https://iehpfoundation.org/grants/.
- **November 20, 2026:** Applications due by 5:00pm PT
- **Mid December 2026**: Applicants notified of final selection status via email
- **Early January 2027**: Year 1 grant payments & travel stipends remitted

How To Apply

Applications must be submitted in IEHP Foundation's grant management system **no later than Friday, November 20, by 5:00 pm PT**. To access the grant management system, click here.

To preview the full grant application, click here. Late applications will not be considered.

Communications

Email communications regarding the status of your application will come from IEHP Foundation Grants <administrator@grantinterface.com> or grants@iehpfoundation.org. Make sure both these email addresses are marked safe on your server to avoid communications being blocked or sent to a SPAM folder.

Additional Questions

For any additional questions, comments or accommodation needs, please email grants@iehpfoundation.org. Please allow 3 - 5 business days for a response.