



2026 Large Grants Program Grant Opportunity Overview & Request for Applications

- Attainable Housing
- Healthy Eating Active Living
- Mental Health & Substance Use

Release Date: April 1, 2026

Letters of Intent Due: April 30, 2026, 11:59 PM CT

For more information:

hflaporte.org

contact@hflaporte.org

219.326.2471

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Background.....	3
Program Overview	4
Key Features & Components	4
Focus Area Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	5
Attainable Housing.....	5
Healthy Eating Active Living	5
Mental Health & Substance Use.....	6
Cross-Cutting Strategies	6
Anticipated Grant Awards	7
Eligibility Criteria	7
Application Process & Requirements	7
Step 1: Letter of Intent (LOI).....	7
Step 2: Full Application (Invitation Only).....	8
LOI Review & Selection Process	8
Timeline	10
Questions	10
Appendix A: HFL’s Strategic Grantmaking Framework.....	11
Appendix B: Key Definitions	15
Appendix C: Organizational Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT)	16
Appendix D: Frequently Asked Questions	21

Introduction

Health Foundation of La Porte (HFL) is pleased to announce the release of this Grant Opportunity Overview & Request for Applications for the **2026 Large Grants Program**. This funding opportunity invites organizations doing impactful work in the areas of **Attainable Housing (AH)**, **Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL)**, and **Mental Health and Substance Use (MHSU)** in La Porte County to submit applications that demonstrate how they will contribute to achieving one or more objectives in a HFL focus area. Organizations must demonstrate commitment to community engagement, learning, and measurable results to improve people's lives in La Porte County. Applications involving more than one organization are welcome, although one organization will need to serve as the grant recipient.

Background

HFL is a private health foundation committed to our mission that La Porte County residents are healthy and well. We advance our mission by investing in the community through:

- **Grantmaking:** We make strategic investments in the community through grants
- **Convening:** We bring together leaders and organizations to tackle challenges and develop strategies that improve the health and wellness of the community
- **Capacity building:** We support nonprofit organizations to grow, improve, and become more effective in advancing their missions through educational opportunities and capacity building grants.

Fundamental to the foundation's work are three core values:

- **Collaboration:** We work together with our partners in the spirit of community.
- **Clarity:** We seek to understand our community and partners and prioritize clear communication about our intentions.
- **Effectiveness:** We are focused on processes and strategies to achieve a healthier community.

In 2024-2025, HFL engaged in a facilitated strategic planning process that included HFL's Board, staff, and community stakeholders to understand the most critical health needs of the community, evaluate the foundation's strengths, and identify the values and philanthropic approach driving the foundation. The three priorities of **Attainable Housing (AH)**, **Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL)**, and **Mental Health & Substance Use (MHSU)** emerged from the planning process, along with HFL's desire to deepen our impact and focus our grantmaking.

HFL's 2026-2029 strategic plan concentrates the foundation's community investments in the three focus areas of AH, HEAL, and MHSU to improve people's lives in La Porte County.

To inform HFL's funding priorities and strategic direction within each focus area, HFL partnered with the Fairbanks School of Public Health at Indiana University Indianapolis and the consulting firm Urban Habitat Initiatives to conduct comprehensive landscape scans. The landscape scans assessed community needs and assets related to the focus areas, identified barriers and facilitators that influence progress across focus areas, and ensured that local voices were heard to inform decision-making. Landscape scan reports are available on HFL's website in [Media & Reports](#) and are linked below:

- [*Healthy Eating Active Living and Mental Health & Substance Use Landscape Scan Final Report*](#)
- [*Attainable Housing Landscape Scan Final Report*](#)

Using the findings of the landscape scans, HFL created the foundation's Strategic Grantmaking Framework (see Appendix A). This framework outlines the foundation's objectives for each focus area, the potential

strategies to achieve these objectives, and the measures that HFL will use to monitor and report on progress. HFL's 2026 Large Grants Program is rooted in HFL's Strategic Grantmaking Framework.

Program Overview

HFL's 2026 Large Grants Program aims to advance the foundation's community investment goal to embrace collaboration and be informed by the community to change lives in La Porte County through AH, HEAL, and MHSU prevention and treatment.

HFL requests applications from organizations working in the areas of AH, HEAL, and MHSU in La Porte County that demonstrate how they will contribute to achieving one or both objectives in a HFL focus area using one or more potential strategies or another evidence-based or promising practice. Additionally, HFL is interested in strategies that cut across focus areas (see Cross-Cutting Strategies, page 6 and Appendix A). HFL aims to collaborate with up to five partners in each focus area.

Key Features & Components

Key features of the program include:

- **Strategic and focused approach to achieve lasting change:** HFL and partners will use and refine as needed the objectives, strategies, and performance measures outlined in HFL's Strategic Grantmaking Framework to guide our work. Each partner will utilize one or more of the identified potential strategies or another evidence-based or promising practice to contribute to achieving one or both focus area objectives. HFL and partners will prioritize strategies that address barriers across focus areas (see Cross-Cutting Strategies, page 6 and Appendix A).
- **Deep collaboration among partners and HFL:** HFL and partners will center relationships and equitable partnerships and embrace participatory approaches throughout the application process and grant period.
- **Emphasis on learning:** HFL and partners are committed to learning as individual organizations and as a collaborative and to sharing learnings with others. HFL and partners will dedicate the time needed to reflect and adjust as individuals and a collective.
- **Commitment to evaluation and measurable results:** HFL and partners will dedicate resources to support evaluation in the focus areas and are committed to shared performance measures.

These features are reflected in the core program components:

- **Planning grants to support full application development and planning activities:** Organizations that are invited to submit a full application will receive a \$5,000 planning grant. HFL recognizes the value of the time, expertise, and effort invested by potential partners in preparing and presenting applications for this grant opportunity. We believe a planning grant acknowledges and respects the contributions of all participants in the selection process and helps ensure equitable access to funding opportunities. Please note that organizations do not need to complete a separate grant application to receive the planning grant, but they will sign a grant agreement outlining the terms and conditions prior to HFL disbursing planning grant funds.
- **Multi-year funding:** HFL will award three-year grants to partners, which will be paid in installments aligned with implementation plans and grant agreement terms and conditions. Multi-year funding recognizes that complex issues are not solvable in one-year periods, provides stability for partners, and provides for deeper collaboration and evaluation.
- **Learning Circles:** Learning Circles are small, supportive groups of partners who meet regularly to learn from each other, reflect on their work, and talk openly about what they are seeing in the community. Each Circle will focus on one of HFL's three focus areas and provides a space where

partners can think together, share experiences, and explore what is helping people thrive in La Porte County. The emphasis is not on evaluation or compliance but on learning and connection. Learning Circles make room for honest conversations, practical insights, and the wisdom that comes from lived experience and daily practice. Large Grant partners are expected to participate.

- **Technical Assistance:** HFL will provide technical assistance to applicants and partners to support planning; monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL); and other areas as needed. Examples include the planning workshop focused on MEL in June; individual check-in meetings during the application process; and technical assistance to support the development and implementation of partners' MEL plans for projects.

Focus Area Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

HFL's Strategic Grantmaking Framework outlines the goals, objectives, potential strategies, and performance measures for HFL's three focus areas. An abbreviated version is presented below. The full framework is available in Appendix A.

Attainable Housing

Goal: People in La Porte County reside in safe, stable, quality housing that meets their needs and is affordable for their household.

Objective 1: Build coordination, organizational capacity and individual capacity to strengthen and sustain the affordable housing system in La Porte County

Potential Strategies

1. Provide opportunities for stakeholders to convene, share knowledge, align priorities, and advocate policy and system conditions that support affordable housing
2. Catalyze neighborhood-based development entities to plan, coordinate, and implement housing and revitalization efforts (i.e., rehabilitation and infill housing) in hyper-localized neighborhoods
3. Provide education, training and technical skill-building targeting low-income renters and buyers, trades professionals, small developers, and nonprofit organizations

Objective 2: Increase the supply, quality, and long-term affordability of housing for low-income households in La Porte County

Potential strategies

1. Expand housing repair, rehabilitation, and weatherization programs for housing (owner-occupied or rented) serving low-income households
2. Develop new affordable housing through adaptive reuse, single-family and small multifamily infill, and larger scale multifamily development
3. Provide affordability tools, financing mechanisms, and other gap-closing supports that incentivize small developers and reduce cost burden for low-income households

Healthy Eating Active Living

Goal: People in La Porte County eat healthy foods and are physically active.

Objective 1: Strengthen and expand local food access systems to increase availability, affordability, and convenience of healthy foods.

Potential strategies

1. Improve food quality, quantity, and availability, increase fresh produce, and extend hours
2. Expand mobile food distribution, pop-up markets, and farmers markets in underserved or rural areas

3. Implement healthy food initiatives such as budget-friendly nutrition and cooking programs, community gardens, and health-focused student-led cafes

Objective 2: Expand safe, affordable, and accessible opportunities for physical activity across La Porte County.

Potential strategies

1. Provide affordable indoor and outdoor spaces for physical activity through shared use with schools, faith-based buildings, and other community hubs, or through the construction of new facilities
2. Provide financial assistance or passes for fitness facilities for low-income individuals and households
3. Develop and sustain community movement programs such as walking clubs or other neighborhood fitness meetups that reflect local preferences and mobility levels

Mental Health & Substance Use

Goal: People in La Porte County enjoy positive mental health and are free from substance use disorder.

Objective 1: Strengthen and improve centralized and accessible hubs for mental health and substance use services for vulnerable populations in La Porte County

Potential Strategies:

1. Provide full-spectrum MHSU treatment services through centralized centers including therapy, peer support, case management, or insurance enrollment assistance
2. Provide 24/7 crisis response services that strengthen timely stabilization, mobile response, and referrals to long-term recovery services
3. Offer multilingual services and extended hours to improve equity and accessibility for vulnerable populations

Objective 2: Strengthen and support mental health and substance use prevention, education, and peer support or recovery programs for vulnerable populations in La Porte County

Potential Strategies:

1. Expand peer recovery cafes and peer recovery services to strengthen access to ongoing support and social connections
2. Strengthen multi-tiered systems of support in schools with youth-informed prevention education; programs co-led by peers or near-age mentors; and provision of intensive services for youth with significant needs
3. Strengthen coordination among families, schools, youth-serving organizations, and faith-based organizations to identify at-risk youth and provide early intervention services

Cross-Cutting Strategies

Cross-cutting strategies are strategies that align with all focus area goals and objectives. HFL is interested in projects that meaningfully include one or more of the following cross-cutting strategies in their design:

1. Launch awareness and education campaigns to increase knowledge of local services, opportunities and programs in the focus areas across the county
2. Improve transportation access through vouchers, ride-share partnerships, or volunteer driver programs that connect residents to focus-area services, facilities, and events
3. Strengthen referral pathways and navigation supports across all focus areas

Anticipated Grant Awards

HFL anticipates awarding up to five grants per focus area. We envision deep collaboration with partners over a three-year period and anticipate that most grant awards will range between \$300,000 to \$900,000 over the three-year term.

Eligibility Criteria

Nonprofit organizations that are exempt under Section 501c(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and governmental entities, including schools, that provide services and/or programs benefiting residents of La Porte County are eligible for grants from HFL. Faith-based organizations are also eligible so long as the grant funds are used for projects or programs that are offered to individuals regardless of their religion affiliation, including community members that are not members of the faith-based organization. Applications involving more than one organization are eligible and welcome; however, only one organization will be the recipient of the grant and must meet the eligibility criteria.

Please note that HFL will **not** fund:

- Organizations that discriminate in any way based on participation or membership in a specific religious faith, race, gender, citizenship status, sexual orientation, age, or disability
- Requests from individuals
- Associations of property owners, homeowners, condominiums, etc.
- Underwriting for an organization's annual appeals/solicitations, special events, or general fundraising
- Endowments
- Lobbying or the support of any political candidate, political party, or political activity

Application Process & Requirements

HFL uses a two-step application process designed to ensure strong alignment with focus area objectives, support applicant readiness, and promote high-quality project design. Applicants must first submit a letter of intent (LOI). Selected organizations will then be invited to submit a full application with additional support provided throughout the process. **All LOIs and applications must be submitted through HFL's online grant portal.**

Step 1: Letter of Intent (LOI)

All prospective applicants must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) as a first step. The LOI provides a high-level overview of the proposed project and organizational capacity. LOIs require the following attachments:

- Documentation of key partnerships, if applicable (informal documentation such as an email is acceptable)
- Most recent IRS Form 990 (if applicable)
- Most recent audited or reviewed financial statements (internal financials are acceptable if audited or reviewed are not available)

LOIs must be submitted through HFL's grant portal by April 30, 2026, to be considered. Please contact us if you need assistance with the grant portal or if you need help creating an account in the portal.

- **HFL Grant Portal:** grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=laporte

Step 2: Full Application (Invitation Only)

Organizations whose LOIs demonstrate strong alignment with the evaluation criteria (see LOI Review & Selection Process) will be invited to submit a full application. Notifications of LOI decision will be sent by email and the full application will be assigned in the grant portal.

The full application process is designed to support applicants in strengthening their project design; monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) capacity; and alignment with focus area objectives and strategies. The full application includes four key components.

- **Planning Workshop:** All invited applicants must attend a one-day planning workshop focused on MEL and strengthening project design. The workshop is on June 3, 2026. Two people from each applicant organization will be invited to attend.
- **Individual Check-In Meeting:** Applicants will participate in a one-on-one meeting with HFL staff to answer questions, clarify expectations, and refine key components of their project design. Applicants must complete the Organizational Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT) prior to the check-in meeting (see Appendix C).
- **Submission of Full Application:** Applicants will submit their full application and all required supporting documentation in the grant portal.
- **Presentation to HFL:** Applicants will be invited to deliver a 15-minute presentation to HFL followed by 15 minutes of questions and answers.
 - **Attainable Housing:** Wednesday, August 19, 2026; 1 – 4 pm
 - **Healthy Eating Active Living:** Wednesday, August 12, 2026; 10 am – 1 pm
 - **Mental Health & Substance Use:** Monday, August 31, 2026; 9:30 am – 12:30 pm

LOI Review & Selection Process

LOIs and supporting documents will be reviewed by HFL staff for completeness, clarity, and to ensure organizations meet eligibility requirements. LOIs and supporting documents will then be reviewed by focus area subcommittees and will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Alignment With Focus Area Objectives & Strategies (25%)

Rating	Description
Excellent (4)	Strong alignment with one or both focus area objectives; uses framework strategies or a well-justified innovative strategy.
Good (3)	Clear alignment with one focus area objective; uses a framework strategy or rationale mostly sound on an alternative strategy.
Adequate (2)	Minimal alignment; connection underdeveloped.
Weak (1)	Unclear or unsupported alignment.

2. Project Design & Feasibility (25%)

Rating	Description
Excellent (4)	Activities feasible, aligned with framework strategies and performance measures; strong community engagement in project design and delivery.
Good (3)	Feasible design with minor gaps in alignment with framework strategies and performance measures; some community engagement in project design and delivery.
Adequate (2)	Vague design or limited feasibility.
Weak (1)	Unrealistic or unclear project design.

3. Organizational Capacity (20%)

Rating	Description
Excellent (4)	Strong focus area experience, partnerships, grant management, and community engagement capacity.
Good (3)	Adequate experience and capacity; some partnerships.
Adequate (2)	Limited experience or partnerships; modest capacity.
Weak (1)	Insufficient organizational capacity.

4. Return on Investment & Long-Term Impact (20%)

Rating	Description
Excellent (4)	Strong expected outcomes relative to grant amount; clear long-term potential.
Good (3)	Meaningful outcomes; some long-term potential.
Adequate (2)	Value proposition modest or unclear.
Weak (1)	Poor value relative to funding.

5. Cross-Cutting Strategies (10%)

Rating	Description
Excellent (4)	Includes more than one strategy meaningfully with performance measure alignment.
Good (3)	Addresses one strategy clearly.
Adequate (2)	Superficial mention of a strategy or strategies.
Weak (1)	Does not address strategies.

Please note: HFL may contact applicants during the LOI review process to request more information. Emails are sent through our grant portal and will come from a system-generated email address that does not include our foundation's name. To ensure applicants receive requests for more information, notifications of decisions, and other communications related to grant requests, we recommend applicants add the sending address (administrator@grantinterface.com) to their contacts or safe-sender list. If applicants find a message in their Junk or Spam folder, please mark it as "Not Junk" to prevent future emails from being filtered. If HFL cannot reach an applicant within a reasonable amount of time, HFL may mark the request as abandoned or may decline the request.

Timeline

Activity	Date
Request for Applications (RFA) Released and Grant Portal Opens	April 1, 2026
Grants Office Hours Dedicated to Large Grants RFA Questions (Optional)	April 7, 2026
Letter of Intent (LOI) Due	April 30, 2026
Notification of LOI Decision	May 22, 2026
Planning Workshop	June 3, 2026
Application Development Individual Check-In Meetings – AH	June 15-18
Application Development Individual Check-In Meetings – HEAL	June 22-25
Application Development Individual Check-In Meetings – MHSU	June 29-30
Full Application Due	July 31, 2026
Applicant Presentations to HFL - HEAL	August 12, 2026
Applicant Presentations to HFL - AH	August 19, 2026
Applicant Presentations to HFL - MHSU	August 31, 2026
Award Notification	October 1, 2026
Project Planning & MEL Planning with HFL Support	October-Dec. 2026
Grant Term Begins	November 1, 2026

Questions

HFL is here to be a resource throughout the application process. For questions, grant portal support, or to talk through a project concept, applicants may contact us by email at contact@hflaporte.org or phone at [219.326.2471](tel:219.326.2471). Applicants can also visit us at our Grants Office Hours.

HFL hosts Grants Office Hours on the second and fourth Mondays of the month from 3-4 pm CT. Grants Office Hours are informal opportunities for applicants and partners to meet with HFL's community investment staff to ask questions and receive support on our grant portal, an application form, a project concept, or a report. Organizations are welcome to visit us in person at our offices at 140 E Shore Parkway in La Porte, or to attend virtually, which requires registration on HFL's website.

HFL will host an additional Grants Office Hour dedicated to questions on the Large Grants RFA on April 7 from 2-3 pm CT. This session will be by Zoom only. Please register on our website to receive the meeting link. To register, you will need to include your name and email, and we request that you share any questions you have so that we can be best prepared to assist you.

Grants Office Hours Dates for April 2026:

Date	Time	Notes
April 7, 2026	2-3 pm CT	Special VIRTUAL only session dedicated to Large Grants RFA questions
April 13, 2026	3-4 pm CT	Virtual and in person at 140 E Shore Parkway, La Porte
April 27, 2026	3-4 pm CT	Virtual and in person at 140 E Shore Parkway, La Porte

Grants Office Hours Registration Link: hflaporte.org/grants-office-hours/

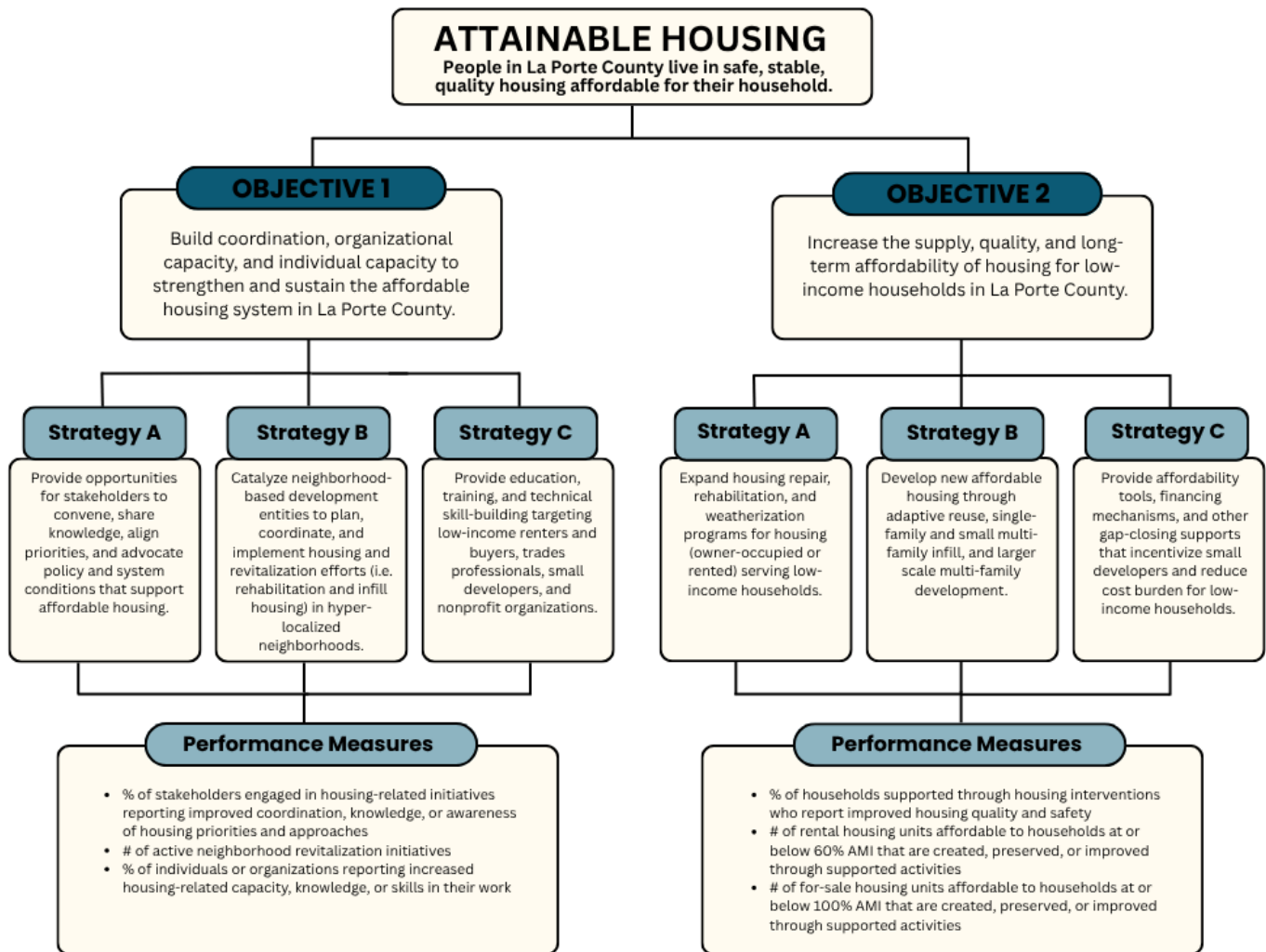
You may also direct questions and requests for support directly to HFL's community investment staff:

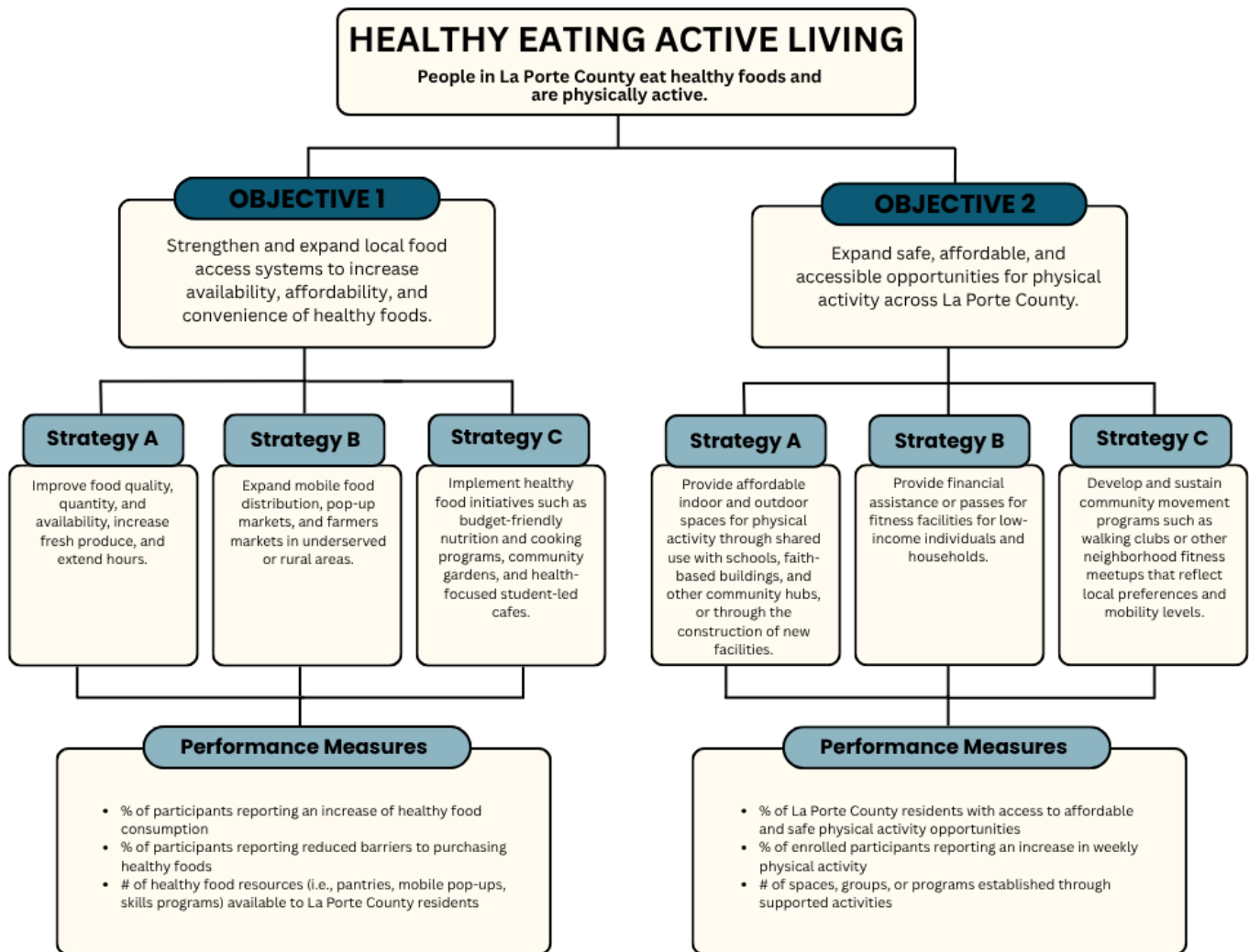
Jessica Mace, Vice President, jmace@hflaporte.org

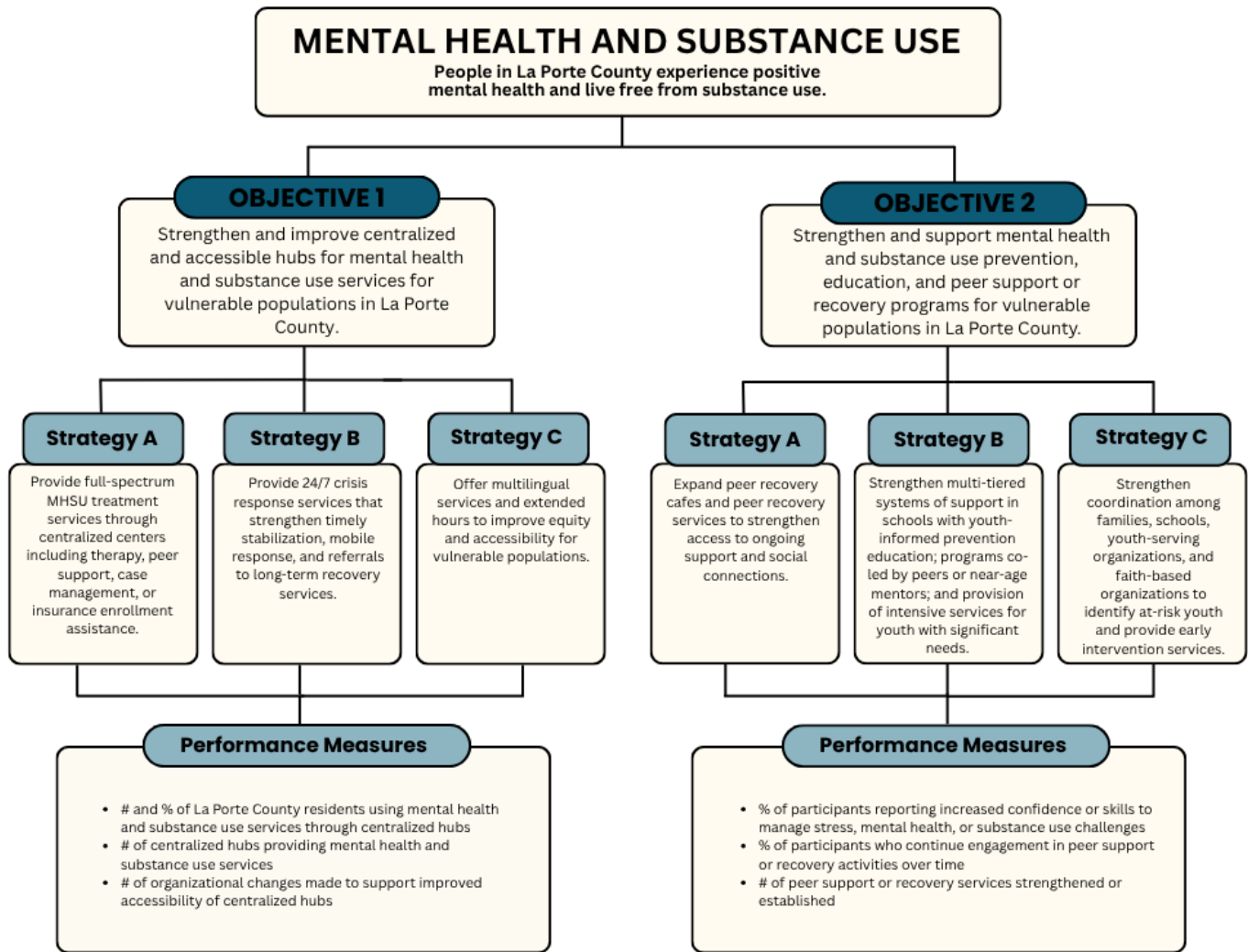
Liz Schlundt, Grants Manager, eschlundt@hflaporte.org

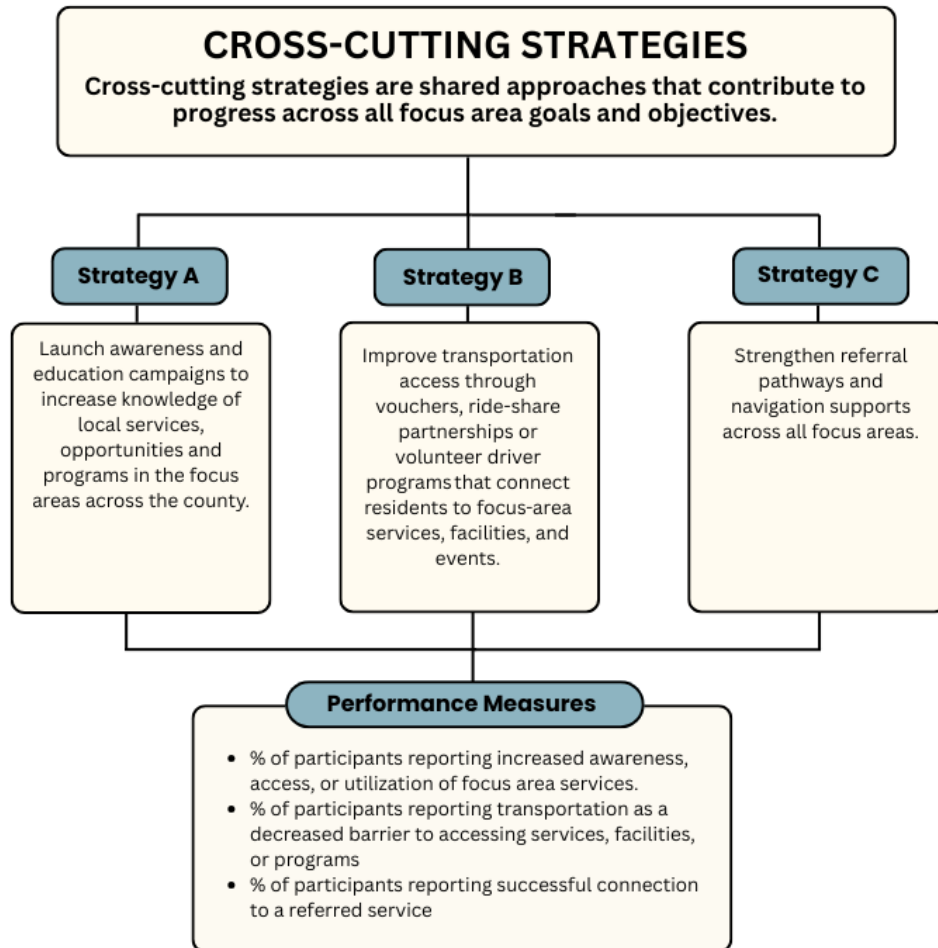
Nora Zina, Learning & Evaluation Manager, nzina@hflaporte.org

Appendix A: HFL’s Strategic Grantmaking Frameworks and Cross-Cutting Strategies









Appendix B: Key Definitions

Access is the person's ability to reach, afford, understand, and comfortably use available services and resources. Access includes physical accessibility (distance and transportation), financial affordability, availability at convenient times, clear information and navigation support, and culturally welcoming environments.

Safe refers to physical environments and conditions that enable residents to participate in physical activity without undue risk or deterrence. This includes spaces that are appropriately maintained, accessible for different mobility levels, reasonably protected from hazards, and perceived by community members as usable for routine activity.

HFL programs refer to **substance use** as the *harmful* consumption of alcohol, prescription medications, or other psychoactive substances. It is noted that other contexts use the term regardless of frequency, quantity, or purpose.

Substance misuse is the use of a substance in a way that increases the risk of harm, including use that is not aligned with medical guidance, legal standards, or safety norms.

Substance Use Disorder is a clinically diagnosable medical condition characterized by a problematic pattern of substance use leading to significant impairment or distress, as defined by diagnostic criteria.

A **vulnerable population** is people facing the greatest barriers who encounter persistent economic, geographic, physical, or systemic obstacles that limit their ability to access essential services and resources. Some examples include low-income households, rural households, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Priority population are groups of residents who are prioritized for focused investment and support due to their vulnerability.

Appendix C: MEL Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool



MONITORING, EVALUATION & LEARNING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT TOOL

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This Organizational Capacity Assessment tool (OCAT) is designed to help partners reflect on their current capacity in Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL). It aims to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement in how your organization collects, analyzes, and uses data to inform decision-making and improve programs.

The tool uses a self-assessment approach, meaning staff members provide their own perception of the organization's capacity across several areas. The results can guide internal planning, training, and resource allocation. It can also support conversations about quality improvement and accountability to stakeholders, funders, and the communities served.

By completing this assessment, HFL and partners will be able to:

- Understand current MEL strengths and gaps
- Identify training or resource needs that HFL can provide or source
- Build a culture of learning and evidence-based decision-making
- Assess progress made over time

ASSESSMENT TOOL

Enabling Environment- Leadership, policies, and resources that support MEL

Respond to each statement by selecting one of the following options:

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neither Agree nor Disagree 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree

- 1** My organization actively supports and participates in monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities.
1 2 3 4 5
- 2** There are internal champions who advocate for the value of monitoring, evaluation, and learning within the organization.
1 2 3 4 5
- 3** My organization provides adequate financial and non-financial resources (software, equipment, workspace, staff time) to support evaluation and learning activities.
1 2 3 4 5
- 4** The organization routinely reviews and updates its monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan to align with strategic goals.
1 2 3 4 5
- 5** The organization has a process to recognize and strengthen strong monitoring, evaluation, and learning performance.
1 2 3 4 5

Technical Capacity- Staff knowledge and skills to design, collect, and analyze data

Respond to each statement by selecting one of the following options:

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neither Agree nor Disagree 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree

- 6** Staff responsible for monitoring, evaluation, and learning possess the technical competencies needed for data collection, analysis, and reporting.
1 2 3 4 5
- 7** Staff responsible for monitoring, evaluation, and learning have training and experience in both quantitative (numbers-based) and qualitative (story-based or descriptive) methods.
1 2 3 4 5
- 8** The organization has staff that can assess and ensure data quality (completeness, timeliness accuracy, and reliability).
1 2 3 4 5
- 9** The organization has staff who can package and communicate findings and learnings to support decision-making.
1 2 3 4 5
- 10** The organization can independently design, manage, and analyze its monitoring, evaluation, and learning processes without relying heavily on external technical support.
1 2 3 4 5

Systems and Tools- Availability and functionality of data systems, plans, and tools

Respond to each statement by selecting one of the following options:

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neither Agree nor Disagree 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree

- 11** The organization has an overall monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan or framework with defined indicators, responsible parties, and timeline.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 12** Essential tools and equipment for data collection and management (e.g., databases, templates, data entry systems) are available and functional.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 13** The database or data system captures all essential data required for performance monitoring.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 14** There are clear mechanisms for communicating monitoring and evaluation findings to the beneficiaries and to the funder.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 15** The organization disseminates data and findings to stakeholders in a timely manner.
- 1 2 3 4 5

Learning Culture- Values placed on learning, reflection, and innovation

Respond to each statement by selecting one of the following options:

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neither Agree nor Disagree 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree

- 16** The organization is encouraged to reflect on lessons learned and openly discuss challenges, mistakes, or failures to improve performance.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 17** Leaders support and promote professional learning opportunities.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 18** The organization has a defined learning agenda aligned with its strategic priorities.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 19** Regular forums or meetings are held to share learning across teams and stakeholders.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 20** Staff are rewarded or recognized for innovation in creative thinking and making improvements based on learning.
- 1 2 3 4 5

Use of Evidence- Use of data to guide decisions and improve practice

Respond to each statement by selecting one of the following options:

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neither Agree nor Disagree 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree

- 21** Monitoring data are regularly used to inform strategic and operational decisions.
- 1 2 3 4 5

22 The organization’s information products (e.g., reports) have influenced internal practices or external partners.
 1 2 3 4 5

23 The organization has a formal data use plan to guide how evidence informs programming and resource allocation.
 1 2 3 4 5

24 Evaluation and research findings are systematically reviewed and integrated into program design or advocacy efforts
 1 2 3 4 5

25 Staff at different levels have access to and are encouraged to engage with evidence to support continuous learning and improvement
 1 2 3 4 5

Open-Ended Questions

For deeper reflection and discussion for improvement and growth, respond to the following prompts.

26 What current systems and tools does your organization have that support MEL activities?

27 What do you see as the organization’s greatest strengths in MEL?

28 What are the most significant challenges you face around collecting and using data?

29 What additional skills, resources, or support would help your organization’s staff improve monitoring, evaluation, and learning functions?

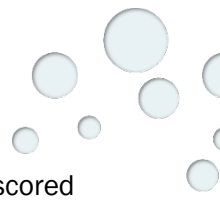
30 How does your organization currently ensure that lessons learned lead to program improvement?

ANALYSIS

Scoring

Use the scoring table below to understand what your self-assessment results mean and how to use the information constructively

Domain	Total Score <i>Add up the scores for each statement within a domain for the total score</i>	Average <i>Divide by the number of statements (5) in that domain to find an average score between 1-5</i>	Capacity Level <i>Use rating scale below to gauge current capacity</i>
Enabling Environment			
Technical Capacity			
Systems and Tools			
Learning Culture			
Use of Evidence			



Interpretation

Use the rating scale to gauge capacity. Reflect on what domains scored highest and why? Which domains scored lowest and what underlying factors contributed? Review the lowest scoring or most critical domains and choose 2-3 priorities to address with the support of HFL within the next 6-12 months.

Average Score	Capacity Level	What it Means
4.1-5.0	Strong	-Clear leadership support, structured systems and consistent learning use. Focus on refinement and peer mentoring
3.1-4.0	Moderate	-Most elements are in place but not fully institutionalized. Strengthen consistency, documentation, and staff coverage
2.1-3.0	Developing	-Early-stage capacity. Several gaps in tools, skills, or processes. Prioritize 1-2 domains for the next 6-12 months
1.0-2.0	Emerging	-MEL largely ad hoc. Start by clarifying roles, developing a simple plan, and assigning accountability

Appendix D: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When will the Large Grants Program open?

HFL will release a Request for Application (RFA) on April 1, 2026, and will begin accepting letters of intent (LOI) on this date through HFL's online grant portal. LOIs must be submitted by April 30, 2026.

Please note: The Large Grants Program will use a two-step application process. Applicants must first submit a LOI, and selected organizations will then be invited to submit a full application.

Q: Who can apply for the Large Grants Program?

The 2026 Large Grants Program invites organizations doing impactful work in the areas of **Attainable Housing (AH)**, **Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL)**, and **Mental Health and Substance Use (MHSU)** in La Porte County to submit applications that demonstrate how they will contribute to achieving one or more objectives in a HFL focus area.

Nonprofit organizations that are exempt under Section 501c(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and governmental entities, including schools, that provide services and/or programs benefiting residents of La Porte County are eligible to apply. Faith-based organizations are also eligible so long as grant funds are used for projects or programs that are offered to individuals regardless of their religion affiliation, including community members that are not members of the faith-based organization. Applications involving more than one organization are welcome, although one organization will need to serve as the grant recipient.

Q: What are the anticipated grant awards in the 2026 Large Grants Program?

HFL anticipates awarding up to five grants per focus area (Attainable Housing, Healthy Eating Active Living, and Mental Health and Substance Use), for a total of up to 15 grant awards. We anticipate that most grant awards will range between \$300,000 to \$900,000 over a three-year grant term.

Q: Can I apply for a Large Grant next year?

At this time, we anticipate awarding large grants for a three-year period through the 2026 Large Grants Program as described in the Program Overview and Request for Application (RFA) published April 1, 2026. We do not anticipate issuing a RFA for Large Grants next year. If you are interested in applying to the 2026 Large Grants Program, you must follow the timeline laid out in the RFA and submit your LOI by April 30, 2026.

Q: Can I apply for a Large Grant to address more than one focus area?

No. Applicants must select one focus area as their primary focus and align their application with one or both of that focus area's objectives.

Refer to the Request for Application (RFA) published on April 1, 2026, for details.

Q: Can I apply for a Large Grant to focus on cross-cutting strategies across all focus areas instead of selecting one of HFL's focus areas?

No. Applicants must select one focus area (Attainable Housing, Healthy Eating Active Living, or Mental Health and Substance Use) and explain in their application how they will address one or both focus area objectives. Applicants are encouraged to include one or more cross-cutting strategies in their proposed work, but applicants may not apply for support only to implement programs addressing cross-cutting strategies.

Q: Can I submit more than one LOI/application under the 2026 Large Grants Program?

While it is unlikely that HFL will award more than one large grant per organization, the maximum number of LOIs/applications per organization is two, and they must be in separate focus areas.

Q: Am I eligible to apply for the 2026 Large Grants Program if I have applied for/received a grant from the Healthy Community Fund this year?

Yes. Organizations may apply for a large grant even if they have applied for or received a grant from the Healthy Community Fund.

Q: How do I get more information about the 2026 Large Grants Program?

HFL is here to be a resource throughout the application process. Applicants may contact us by email at contact@hflaporte.org or phone at [219.326.2471](tel:219.326.2471). Applicants can also visit us at our Grants Office Hours.

HFL hosts Grants Office Hours on the second and fourth Mondays of the month from 3-4 pm CT. Organizations are welcome to visit us in person at our offices at 140 E Shore Parkway in La Porte, or to attend virtually, which requires registration on HFL's website.

HFL will host an additional Grants Office Hour dedicated to questions on the Large Grants RFA on April 7 from 2-3 pm CT. This session will be by Zoom only. Please register on our website at hflaporte.org/grants-office-hours to receive the meeting link. To register, you will need to include your name and email, and we request that you share any questions you have so that we can be best prepared to assist you.

Q: How will 2026 Large Grants Program letters of intent (LOIs) be evaluated?

Letters of intent (LOIs) and supporting documents will be reviewed by HFL staff for completeness, clarity, and to ensure organizations meet eligibility requirements. LOIs and supporting documents will then be reviewed by focus area subcommittees and will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Alignment with focus area objectives and strategies
- Project design and feasibility
- Organizational capacity
- Return on investment and long-term impact

- Cross-cutting strategies

Please refer to the Request for Application (RFA) for a detailed guide to how LOIs will be evaluated. The RFA includes the scoring tool that will be used to evaluate all LOIs.

Q: What does the full application for a 2026 Large Grant include?

Organizations whose LOIs demonstrate strong alignment with evaluation criteria (see previous FAQ regarding evaluation of LOIs) will be invited to submit a full application. The full application process is designed to support applicants in strengthening their project design; monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) capacity; and alignment with focus area objectives and strategies.

The full application includes four key components:

- **Planning Workshop:** All invited applicants must attend a one-day planning workshop on June 3, 2026, focused on MEL and strengthening project design.
- **Individual Check-In Meeting:** Each applicant will participate in a one-on-one meeting with HFL staff to answer questions, clarify expectations, and refine key components of their project design. Applicants must complete the Organizational Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT) prior to the check-in meeting (see Appendix C in the RFA). Check-in meetings will occur in June.
- **Submission of Full Application:** Applicants will submit their full application and all required supporting documentation in the grant portal by July 31, 2026.
- **Presentation to HFL:** Applicants will be invited to deliver a 15-minute presentation to HFL followed by 15 minutes of questions and answers.
 - **Attainable Housing:** Wednesday, August 19, 2026; 1 – 4 pm
 - **Healthy Eating Active Living:** Wednesday, August 12, 2026; 10 am – 1 pm
 - **Mental Health & Substance Use:** Monday, August 31, 2026; 9:30 am – 12:30 pm

Q: What is required of organizations that receive a 2026 Large Grant?

Large grant partners can anticipate deep collaboration with HFL and other large grant partners in the focus area throughout the three-year grant period. This includes the development and implementation of a detailed monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plan with HFL support as needed; participation in the focus area learning circle; engaging with HFL as needed to support learning and continuous improvement; meeting regular monitoring requirements; and submission of yearly reports.

Please note: All large grants will include evaluation and learning.

Q: How does the planning grant for the Large Grants Program work?

Organizations do not need to complete a separate grant application to receive the planning grant, but they will sign a grant agreement outlining the terms and conditions prior to HFL disbursing planning grant funds. Organizations that are invited to submit a full application will receive a \$5,000 planning grant. Organizations will receive email notifications about the planning grant and grant agreement.

Q: What additional support will HFL provide to Large Grants Program applicants?

- Planning grants to support full application development and planning activities
- Multi-year funding
- Learning Circles
- Technical Assistance

Q: How will the 2026 Large Grants Program grants be paid?

HFL will award three-year grants to partners, which will be paid in installments aligned with implementation plans and grant agreement terms and conditions. Multi-year funding recognizes that complex issues are not solvable in one-year periods, provides stability for partners, and provides for deeper collaboration and evaluation.

Q: What is a Learning Circle?

Learning Circles are small, supportive groups of partners who meet regularly to learn from each other, reflect on their work, and talk openly about what they are seeing in the community. Each Circle will focus on one of HFL's three focus areas (Attainable Housing, Healthy Eating Active Living, and Mental Health and Substance Use).

Learning Circles will provide a space where partners can think together, share experiences, and explore what is helping people thrive in La Porte County. The emphasis is not on evaluation or compliance but on learning and connection. Learning Circles make room for honest conversations, practical insights, and the wisdom that comes from lived experience and daily practice. Large Grant partners are expected to participate.

Q: What technical assistance will be provided to partners within the Large Grants Program?

HFL will provide technical assistance to applicants and partners to support planning; monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL); and other areas as needed. Examples include the planning workshop focused on MEL in June; individual check-in meetings during the application process; and technical assistance to support the development and implementation of partners' MEL plans for projects.

Q: What are Cross-Cutting Strategies?

Cross-cutting strategies are strategies that contribute to the success of all focus area goals and objectives. These strategies came out of common themes that were identified in the landscape scan process across focus areas. HFL is interested in projects that meaningfully include one or more of the following cross-cutting strategies in their design:

1. Launch awareness and education campaigns to increase knowledge of local services, opportunities and programs in the focus areas across the county.

2. Improve transportation access through vouchers, ride-share partnerships or volunteer driver programs that connect residents to focus-area services, facilities, and events.
3. Strengthen referral pathways and navigation supports across all focus areas.