



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Trustees

**FROM:** Rob Poirier, Program Committee Chair **BOARD ACTION REQUIRED**

**DATE:** October 11, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Allocate up to \$500,000 to fund planning grants for the Behavioral Health Systems Change Initiative (formerly the Essential Services Fund)

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### BACKGROUND

#### Support for Essential Services

At the January 2024 Board Retreat, Trustees approved five changes to MHB's Allocation Process in an effort to improve access to behavioral health services by individuals, families, and communities that have traditionally been underserved. Changes included adjusting the timing of the existing competitive grant cycle and launching a new Essential Services Fund. The purpose of the Essential Services Fund is to sustain and improve critical infrastructure for an equitable behavioral health service delivery system. Important features of the Essential Services Fund include a five-year funding commitment, a focus on measuring and monitoring key performance indicators, and leveraging MHB's investment with other funding streams.

MHB staff began meeting with key stakeholders to receive feedback about our Essential Services strategy that helped us refine our approach and sharpen our language. We dropped the Essential Services title after receiving feedback that it might be perceived as placing less value on our partners funded through our competitive cycle. We temporarily adopted the label Behavioral Health Safety Net and conducted focus groups with our funded partners and agencies that do not receive funding from MHB to determine if the title and intent of the fund were clear. The overwhelming feedback that we received was not about the name itself, but about the strategy. Our community partners challenged us to think about critical services not just as a single activity of a single service provider, but as a network of services and supports that are needed to effectively address critical needs. With this feedback, we refocused our strategy on building infrastructure as a key element in meeting unmet gaps in behavioral healthcare.

#### MHB Theory of Change

Since 2008, the City of St. Louis' population has experienced improvements in factors of economic and community well-being (such as median household incomes, unemployment, violent crime, and most behavioral health emergency room visits). However, other key factors, like that of housing instability and homelessness, poverty rates and behavioral health hospital utilization have persisted or grown, with the data continuing to highlight the racial disparities in our region stemming from structurally and historically inequitable policies and biases. The MHB competitive grant cycle has been an important instrument to fund high quality behavioral health care for city residents. However, in order to change the conditions that contribute to poor mental health outcomes, MHB must invest in a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes. The Behavioral Health Systems Change Initiative aims to accomplish this by bringing together service-providers, systems,

government, and institutional partners to address gaps and unmet needs in the behavioral health system. By addressing systemic barriers to behavioral health care city residents will see greater access to high quality behavioral health care and improved outcomes for participants.

## **ALLOCATION REQUEST**

### **Behavioral Health Systems Change Initiative Planning Grant**

The Behavioral Health Systems Change Initiative will increase access to high-quality behavioral health services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for St. Louis City residents who are underserved by the behavioral healthcare system. The collaboration planning grant is designed to support a 12-month planning phase (July 2025 – June 2026) to begin the process of building the partnerships, relationships, and infrastructure necessary to improve behavioral health outcomes for vulnerable populations. MHB will select up to five collaborations to receive a planning grant award of up to \$100,000. A collaboration will consist of an intermediary that serves as the lead applicant and two or more collaboration partners. At the completion of the planning process, a successful collaboration team will have produced a multi-year Behavioral Health Systems Change approach and sustainability plan addressing gaps in care for an identified population of focus that is eligible for \$1 million - \$2.5 million annually in funding from MHB and other funding partners. MHB will continue to prioritize planning efforts that are responsive to the high-impact strategies from the [University of Pennsylvania: The Center for High Impact Philanthropy Health in Mind Framework](#). MHB uses this framework as the foundation for our Theory of Change.

## **PROGRAM COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

The Program Committee met on October 7, 2024, to discuss several items including the Behavioral Health Systems Change Initiative planning grant. Having thoroughly vetted the staff's recommendation, the Program Committee recommends allocating up to \$500,000 (up to \$200,000 from CCSF (including Early Childhood) and up to \$300,000 from CMFH) from MHB reserves to award up to five planning grants in FY26. Intermediary organizations will lead collaborations to engage in a 12-month planning process resulting in the creation of a multi-year Behavioral Health Systems Change implementation plan to address gaps in care for an identified population of focus. Staff will seek external funding commitments to support the planning grants which may reduce the total amount of funding required to be allocated from MHB reserves.

**CITY OF ST. LOUIS MENTAL HEALTH BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**ALLOCATE FUNDING FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEMS CHANGE INITIATIVE PLANNING GRANT**

**RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS**, the City of St. Louis, Missouri has levied taxes pursuant to the laws of the State of Missouri Sections 205.975 – 205.990 RSMo. to fund the Community Mental Health Fund and Sections 210.860 – 210.861 RSMo. (2005 and 2020) to fund the Community Children’s Services Fund (CCSF); and

**WHEREAS**, the Board desires to increase access to critical behavioral health services for city residents who are underserved by the behavioral health service delivery system; and

**WHEREAS**, the Trustees approved changes to the Allocation Process in January 2024 to establish a new fund that would provide multi-year funding to organizations working to increase access to behavioral healthcare; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board desires to support a planning process that would help intermediaries and direct service providers build an implementation strategy that strengthens behavioral health infrastructure to improve participant outcomes;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:**

The Board of Trustees approves an allocation of up to \$500,000 from MHB reserves (up to \$200,000 from CCSF and up to \$300,000 from CMHF) to support planning grant awards for the FY 2026 planning period from July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026.

**APPROVED THIS 17<sup>th</sup> DAY OF OCTOBER 2024:**

Board Chair/Officer Name (printed):	Signature:
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**ATTEST:**

Board Officer Name (printed):	Signature:
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