



Request for Proposals: Healing Illinois

RFP Release Date: September 1, 2026

Application deadline is September 28, 2026 at 5:00 PM

- Information Session | Tuesday, September 8, 2026 at 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM
Register at <https://bit.ly/HILInfoSession1>
- General Office Hours | Thursday, September 10, 2026 at 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM
Register at <https://bit.ly/4wCl6qr>
- Information Session | Tuesday, September 15, 2026 at 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM
Register at <https://bit.ly/HILInfoSession2>
- General Office Hours | Thursday, September 17, 2026 at 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM
Register at <https://bit.ly/4cTE1pD>
- General Office Hours | Monday, September 21, 2026 at 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Register at <https://bit.ly/3S7ueW6>

OVERVIEW

Healing Illinois is a statewide initiative of the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), managed in partnership with the Field Foundation. Now in its fifth cycle, the program distributes more than \$4.3 million annually to organizations supporting racial healing, community connection, and civic renewal across Illinois

In 2026, Healing Illinois is deepening its investment in bringing people together across race, culture, generation, and geography—to recognize our shared humanity, learn from the past, and build relationships that honor every person’s dignity and story. Central to this initiative is the belief that healing is not separate from civic life. It is foundational to it. When residents find common ground by sharing stories and listening to one another, communities become stronger, and our democracy becomes healthier.

GOALS

Healing Illinois funding is intended for projects that are ready to implement quickly or projects that seek additional resources to expand ongoing programs. Projects must be completed within the grant period, with funds fully expended by June 30, 2027.

Funded projects should aim to advance racial and community healing by:

- Bringing people together across differences—race, culture, generation, and geography—to build trusted relationships, foster understanding, and strengthen communities .

- Holding space for community reflection and shared belonging—where stories are told, histories are honored, and people feel seen, heard, and connected to one another and to the communities they share.
- Building communities where people show up for each other, and in doing so, renew the democratic bonds that hold us together.

REGIONAL APPROACH

Healing Illinois uses a regional approach to ensure that resources, relationships and opportunities for racial and community healing reach every corner of Illinois—urban, suburban, and rural. Funding flows through trusted regional intermediary partners who know their communities, bring strong grantmaking experience, and have established relationships with local organizations, including small, grassroots, and culturally specific groups.

All applicants—regardless of region—follow the same application timeline, review schedule, and grant period. Organizations whose projects serve participants or communities in two or more regions should select “Multi-region” when applying.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

This cycle we are placing explicit emphasis on projects that bring people together across differences—not just within a community, but between communities. If your project creates authentic spaces for people who wouldn’t otherwise meet to sit together, talk, and build relationships, that is work we want to support.

Choose one of three funding priority areas that best fits your project. Each priority has a distinct focus but all three share a common goal: bring people together to build connections and advance racial and community healing.

Note: Each organization may submit only one application. Organizations serving as a fiscal sponsor may submit an additional application that is separate from who they are sponsoring.

1. Healing Through Narrative

Narrative projects help us see one another more fully. We seek projects that lift up stories that have been untold, excluded, or misunderstood—and projects that create opportunities for those stories to travel across communities.

Funded projects include, but are not limited to: oral history projects, community storytelling circles, performing and visual arts, documentary and digital media, intergenerational story exchanges, and creative projects that document lived experience and connect the past to the present. We are also open to creative interpretations of this category.

The question every narrative proposal needs to answer: Whose story is being told, and who is hearing it?

2. Healing Through Dialogue

Dialogue projects create the conditions for people to find their shared humanity, build trust and develop a sense of shared purpose. Healing happens when neighbors who might not otherwise meet have an opportunity to sit together — when people see each other not as strangers or opponents, but as people with a shared stake in the future of their community.

Funded projects include, but are not limited to: healing circles, facilitated conversation series, intergenerational dialogues, cross-community exchanges, cultural celebrations that create space for connection, and gatherings centered on shared experience and mutual understanding. We are also open to creative interpretations of this category.

The question every dialogue proposal needs to answer: What understanding becomes possible here that couldn't happen anywhere else?

3. Healing Through Place

Place projects use community spaces – parks, libraries, cultural sites, public art, and neighborhoods – as sites for healing, remembrance, and belonging.

Funded projects include, but are not limited to: community murals and public art, walking tours of historically significant sites, healing circles at places of community meaning, neighborhood activation projects, and the creation or restoration of shared spaces as ongoing gathering places for connection and reflection. We are also open to creative interpretations of this category.

The question every place proposal needs to answer: What does this place become and who keeps coming back?

MULTI-REGIONAL PROJECT CRITERIA

Healing Illinois will fund a select number of projects that connect people, stories and learning across multiple regions of Illinois—extending the reach of the program beyond local projects and contributing to a shared multi-region narrative of racial and community healing.

Multi-regional projects should be networked in scope: linking communities, stories, and shared learning across Illinois. They are designed for coalitions, networks, or cultural institutions that already operate beyond a single region and have the capacity to manage multi-regional coordination.

Multi-regional projects must demonstrate:

Geographic Reach	Engaging two or more regions through at least one Healing Illinois funding priority
Organizational Capacity	One primary organization with demonstrated ability to administer a project at this scale.

Connection	A clear explanation of how the project links communities across geography
Alignment	Clear alignment with at least one Healing Illinois funding priority
Experience	Prior experience managing multi-regional efforts, including coordination, outreach, and implementation

AWARD AMOUNTS

Total Funding Pool	\$4.3M +
Regional Award	Up to \$30,000
Multi-region	Up to \$50,000
Grant Period	November 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027

WHO MAY APPLY

To be eligible for Healing Illinois funding, organizations must meet ONE of the following criteria:

A	501(c)(3) Organizations 501(c)(3) public charity nonprofit organization in good standing with the Illinois Secretary of State and GATA compliant at the time of application.
B	Organization with a Fiscal Sponsor The organization applies in partnership with a GATA-compliant 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor who will serve as the legal recipient and financial manager of the award. The fiscal sponsor must execute the grant agreement with the Field Foundation or one of the intermediaries and be responsible for all financial reporting and compliance obligations. The applying organization is responsible for program delivery. A signed MOU between the applying organization and the fiscal sponsor must be submitted with the application.

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE

1	Applying organizations must be based in and serve Illinois residents.
2	Organizations headquartered outside Illinois may apply only if the organization has an office in Illinois, and the proposed project directly serves Illinois communities.

COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

All applicants or their fiscal sponsors must meet the following requirements before an award can be made:

SAM.gov Registration	
GATA Compliance	
Illinois Secretary of State Standing	
Not on Stop Payment or Debarment Lists	

APPLICATION STRUCTURE

The Healing Illinois application is organized in eight sections. All sections must be completed in full. Reviewers score only what is in the application. If you skip a question or provide an incomplete answer, you will lose points you could have earned.

- Section 1: Organization Information
- Section 2: Organization Contact Information
- Section 3: Eligibility and Readiness
- Section 4: Project Summary
- Section 5: Fiscal Sponsor (If Applicable)
- Section 6: Media
- Section 7: Application Agreement and Signature

HOW TO APPLY

All applicants must submit a complete proposal through the Field Foundation's application portal. Based on your organization's county or funding category, your proposal will automatically be routed to the appropriate intermediary partner for review. All funding recommendations are reviewed and approved by the Field Foundation.

Steps to Apply

1	Visit healing.illinois.gov to download and review the RFP.
2	Login to the application portal and sign in to your account or create a new one (if you are not currently a Field Foundation grant recipient).
3	Click on the Healing Illinois open funding opportunity.
4	Complete the application, ensure all required fields and attachments are included.
5	Submit your application by the deadline of September 28, 2026 at 5:00 PM

Application deadline is September 28, 2026 at 5:00 PM. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

All proposals will be reviewed by members of the Healing Illinois team, intermediaries, and community reviewers using a consistent rubric. The review process is designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and equitable representation across all regions of Illinois. Proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria:

1. **Alignment with Healing Illinois Priorities (25%):** Proposals are reviewed for the strength and clarity of their connection to one of the three Healing Illinois funding priorities – Narrative, Dialogue, or Place. Reviewers look for a racial and/or community healing connection that is explicit, specific, and central to the project.
2. **Cross-community Connection and Bridging (20%):** Proposals are reviewed for evidence that the project brings people together across differences – race, culture, geography, or generation. Reviewers look for proposals that name who is coming together, what ordinarily divides them, and what the project creates that bridges that divide.
3. **Community Rootedness and Organizational Fit (15%):** Proposals are reviewed for evidence that the applying organization has existing relationships and trusted presence in the community it proposes to serve.
4. **Impact, Feasibility, and Readiness (25%):** Proposals are reviewed for whether the project is realistic and achievable within the grant period - November 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027. Reviewers will look for a general timeline, named staff with relevant experience, a budget that watches the activities described and evidence that the organization has the systems and capacity to manage grant compliance and reporting.
5. **The applicant demonstrates sufficient capacity, experience, and partnerships to carry out the proposed project within a 7-8 month funding window.** The scope and budget are realistic and achievable. The timeline reflects readiness to begin promptly after the award is granted. Key staff, facilitators, or partners are identified.
6. **Evaluation and Learning (15%):** Proposals are reviewed for a practical plan for knowing whether the project worked. Reviewers look for specific methods - what will be tracked, collected, or documented - and a clear connection between the change described in the project design and the evidence that will capture it. A formal evaluation is not required but specificity is.

Reviewers will consider proposals within the context of organizational size and experience. Smaller or emerging organizations will not be penalized for limited prior funding history, provided they demonstrate readiness and strong community connections.

The Healing Illinois review process includes three steps:

1. Eligibility and due diligence review by the Field Foundation.
2. Regional intermediaries review using the criteria above to score proposals.
3. Final award recommendation reviewed and approved by the Field Foundation in alignment with IDHS guidelines.

REPORTING

- Financial Reports: Healing Illinois sub-grant recipients will be required to **submit bi-monthly financial reports to ensure organizations are on track to spend the funds**. A detailed schedule will be provided during the onboarding phase.
- Site Visits/Virtual Check-ins: Grantees will be required to attend scheduled site visits or check-ins to ensure organizations are on track to implement their projects.

TIMELINE

- September 1 | Application opens | Visit healing.illinois.gov for more details.
- September 8 | Info Session | 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM | [Click here to register](#).
- September 10 | Office Hours | 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM | [Click here to register](#).
- September 15 | Info Session | 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM | [Click here to register](#).
- September 17 | Office Hours | 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM | [Click here to register](#).
- September 21 | Office Hours | 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM | [Click here to register](#).
- September 28 | Deadline at 5:00 PM
- Early-October | Application Review
- Mid-Late October | Applicant Notification

CONTACT INFORMATION

Email healingillinois@fieldfoundation.org with any questions. Visit healing.illinois.gov for more information and resources.

ABOUT THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) is one of Illinois' largest agencies, with more than 14,000 employees. Illinois created IDHS in 1997 to provide our state's residents with streamlined access to integrated services, especially those who are striving to move for economic independence, and others who face multiple challenges to self-sufficiency. For more information, visit www.dhs.state.il.us.

ABOUT THE FIELD FOUNDATION

The Field Foundation is a private, independent foundation that supports community power building in Chicago by funding arts and culture, community investments, journalism and storytelling, and local leaders. Through its grantmaking, the foundation collaborates with funding partners to distribute more than \$11 million annually to organizations and leaders with a focus on the city's South and West Sides. Learn more at fieldfoundation.org

