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The St. Louis Regional Health Commission and Deaconess Foundation Launch Grant Fund for Organizations Serving Seniors in Eastern Missouri and Southern Illinois

The Fund's community advisory board is now accepting funding proposals for organizations addressing transportation, safety, and health navigation support for seniors in the region

ST. LOUIS, MO (October 9, 2023) – [The St. Louis Regional Health Commission](#) (the RHC), in partnership with [Deaconess Foundation](#), today launched a \$350,000 Seniors Community Revitalization & Development Fund (Seniors Community Fund) to support services for seniors in the region. The Seniors Community Fund aims to improve the public health system infrastructure to better serve residents 55 years of age and older and promote transparency and accountability. The Fund's community-led Senior Advisory Board, comprised of residents aged 55 and older, is now accepting funding proposals for up to \$30,000 from organizations/projects/initiatives addressing three priority areas: transportation, safety, and health navigation support for seniors in the Greater St. Louis region and nearby counties in Illinois.

"To realize our vision of achieving zero health disparities in our region, our approach must include the senior community voice," said Angela Brown, CEO of the RHC. "Seniors deserve to live in safe, accessible neighborhoods and receive the support they need to navigate crucial health and social services. We're proud to partner with Deaconess Foundation and the Senior Advisory Board to ensure local organizations receive funds to help close gaps that particularly impact seniors in Black and Brown communities."

Through an extensive community feedback process, including in-person focus groups, listening sessions, and surveys, seniors shared ideas that have shaped the Fund's three priority areas. While some respondents involved in the process felt their health and social needs were met within their communities, others expressed that local public transportation systems could be improved and their neighborhoods could be made safer with additional lighting, cameras, and police presence. Some seniors also expressed that they'd like assistance with understanding often complex legal programs and health and social services.

"As a longtime healthcare advocate and lifelong St. Louis resident, I've seen firsthand how the challenges seniors face can often go unseen and unheard," said Rosetta Keeton, Patient Advisory Consultant at the RHC. "Seniors have important concerns, hopes, and aspirations for their community's future. Having the Senior Advisory Board provides those who are impacted with the power to utilize their expertise and experiences to allocate funding for needed services. I look forward to seeing how the Board leverages funds."

The Senior Advisory Board is comprised of seniors, leaders of organizations serving seniors and families, and community leaders in St. Louis City and County, St. Charles, Jefferson, Warren, and Franklin Counties in Missouri and Madison, St. Clair, and Monroe Counties in Illinois, who share decision-making power in order to advocate for and invest in the needed services.

“We are called to listen with intention and respond to our elders, our most experienced and often sidelined community members. When we facilitate an inclusive and accessible community for seniors, we are one step closer to achieving liberation for all that expands across seven generations,” said Rev. Bethany Johnson-Javois, president and CEO of Deaconess Foundation. “The Seniors Community Fund embodies a ‘by us, for us’ approach that centers community voices and paves the way for necessary, generational systems change for elders in our region.”

The application period for the Fund is now open and will close on October 31, 2023, at 11:59 pm. Organizations/projects/initiatives that serve senior men are strongly encouraged to apply.

Questions regarding the Seniors Community Revitalization and Development Fund can be emailed to Blessing Kuebee, the RHC Strategic Initiatives Director at bkuebee@stlrhc.org.

Questions regarding application technical assistance can be emailed to Deleshā George, Deaconess Foundation Program Manager at deleshag@deaconess.org.

Interested organizations may learn more about the Fund on Wednesday, October 18th during a virtual drop-in session for questions and answers from 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm. Learn more about the information session and apply for the Fund [here](#).

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About Regional Health Commission

The merged organization of the [St. Louis Regional Health Commission](#) (the RHC) and [Alive and Well Communities](#) (AWC) is a collaborative effort of cross-sector stakeholders and community members to advance health equity across the State of Missouri and beyond. We envision the state of Missouri committed to achieving zero health disparities through a community driven approach that yields health equity in all policy and outcomes. The RHC will serve as a regional model for bi-directional relationship building and shared decision making that powers the connection of community and systems to co-create innovative solutions that yield health equity in all policy and outcomes.

Since its formation in 2001, The RHC has addressed crises in access to care and advanced health justice through its successful implementation of the Gateway to Better Health program, as well as incubation of several initiatives that now exist as separate organizations. These include the [St. Louis Integrated Health Network](#), the [Behavioral Health Network of Greater St. Louis](#), [Health Literacy Media](#) and AWC. Since its formation in 2017, AWC has advanced initiatives to disrupt trauma and toxic stress across the state and in bordering regions.

Today, RHC and AWC work in partnership with communities in St. Louis, Kansas City and Southeast Missouri (“the Bootheel”). For more information, visit stlrhc.org. Follow the Regional Health Commission on Twitter and Instagram @stlrhc and on Facebook at facebook.com/STLRHC/.

About Deaconess Foundation

Deaconess Foundation envisions a community that values the health and well-being of all and gives priority attention to the most invisibilized. Deaconess seeks to create conditions where liberation is the

lived reality within seven generations. A ministry of the United Church of Christ, Deaconess has invested more than \$96 million to improve the health of the St. Louis community since 1998. Our grants and cultivated relationships support the accelerated change in conditions through policy, advocacy, and/or organizing efforts building and wielding power to transform systems to respond to the will of the people.

The Foundation's advocacy and grantmaking footprint includes St. Louis City, St. Louis, Jefferson, St. Charles and Franklin Counties in Missouri and Madison, St. Clair and Monroe Counties in Illinois. For more information, visit deaconess.org. Follow the Foundation on Twitter and Instagram @deaconessfound and on Facebook at facebook.com/deaconessfoundation.