



## Wisconsin Healthy Communities Designation Program Guide - November 2019

The **Wisconsin Healthy Communities Designation** recognizes and encourages achievements in health improvement in Wisconsin communities, and promotes cooperation across multiple sectors. The designation program is offered by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute's Mobilizing Toward Community Health (MATCH) Group in collaboration with diverse statewide groups.

**Ensuring that everyone in our communities has a fair opportunity to be healthy** reaches well beyond the traditional work of health care providers and public health departments. When communities invest time, effort, and other resources into community conditions that support health, they are also investing in their economic vitality. But being a healthy community means more than healthy eating and active living. It also means having high quality education and jobs that provide adequate income, affordable and safe housing and transit options, and clean air and water. Communities that pay attention to the many factors that influence health have a better chance of improving health

Communities that apply for and receive the **Healthy Communities Designation** will have a concrete way to demonstrate the quality of life in their community. The application process is designed to boost existing health improvement efforts by providing guidance on the types of strategies and initiatives that have been shown to work, as well as by encouraging applicants to increase the degree of collaboration among diverse stakeholder groups in their communities.

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

Wisconsin Healthy Communities Designation website: [www.wihealthycommunities.org](http://www.wihealthycommunities.org)

Contact program staff: [wihealthycommunities@wisc.edu](mailto:wihealthycommunities@wisc.edu)

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## 2019 – 2020 APPLICATION TIMELINE

- Letters of Interest: Due on January 17, 2020
  - Full Application Phase: February 14 - April 17, 2020
  - Review Period: May - July 2020
  - Communities Notified: Late Summer 2020
  - Recognition Event: September 9 - 11, 2020 (in conjunction with the [2020 Healthiest State Summit](#))
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## ELIGIBILITY

Any self-defined, local, place-based community in Wisconsin is eligible to apply. This includes neighborhoods, municipalities, counties, regions\*, Federally recognized tribes or state-designated Indian reservations.

*\* Regions are defined as a geographically contiguous municipalities, counties, and/or reservations. **If you have questions about the eligibility of a regional application, please contact the Healthy Communities Designation program staff:***  
[wihealthycommunities@wisc.edu](mailto:wihealthycommunities@wisc.edu).

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## APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Applications must be submitted on behalf of the **entire community through a collaborative process**. Applications may not be submitted by single individuals or single organizations.

While one organization should serve as the lead applicant\*, multiple organizations are expected to collaborate on the application. Collaborating organizations must provide Letters of Support during the full application phase.



*\*If a community coalition serves as the lead applicant, they must have a co-applicant that is a governing organization with a permanent mailing address.*

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## DESIGNATION CRITERIA

In order to earn a designation, communities must demonstrate that they are following the **guiding principles** below. The guiding principles reflect the criteria from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Prize and have been modified for this designation program. While the two programs are unrelated, it is our hope that the *Wisconsin Healthy Communities Designation* offers an additional way for communities to be recognized for progress on their local efforts.

1. **Defining health broadly** to engage in efforts to address locally identified health needs (ideally those identified in community health needs assessments conducted by the local health department and/or local hospitals). This includes the following:
  1. Identifying needs/initiatives in more than one of the following health categories: *health behaviors, clinical care, social & economic factors, and physical environment.*
  2. Considering the potential reach and impact of initiatives (e.g., initiatives can be either targeted to specific subgroups or the entire population). More targeted initiatives should be expected to achieve greater health improvements).
2. **Committing to sustainable and comprehensive long-term solutions.** This includes implementing initiatives from the program's curated checklist of evidence-based approaches to enhancing health that works towards sustainable and long-term solutions.
3. **Creating conditions that give everyone a fair and just opportunity to reach their best possible health.** Applicants should demonstrate their commitment to advancing health equity by creating conditions where all residents have the opportunity to be healthy.
4. **Harnessing the collective power of leaders, partners, and community members.** Applicants should be able to demonstrate how residents, government, business, and non-profit organizations are working together to improve health.
5. **Securing and making the most of available resources including dollars, people, power, etc.**
6. **Measuring and sharing progress and results.**

Each tier of designation (gold, silver, bronze) has different requirements in terms of what communities must demonstrate about each of the guiding principles. **Communities should**



carefully review the [program criteria](#) to determine which tier or level (gold, silver, bronze) is most appropriate based on where they are in their health improvement efforts.

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## LETTERS OF INTEREST

The first step in the application process is to submit a Letter of Interest (LOI). Program staff and advisors will use LOIs to assess community eligibility, determine if any follow-up is needed prior to the full application phase, and to help connect neighboring and/or overlapping communities who are working in similar geographic areas but may not be aware of each other's efforts.

**Letters of Interest are due on January 17, 2020.**

During this phase, communities should connect with partners and identify collaborating organizations who will be named on the application and who will provide Letters of Support.

Letters of Interest are submitted electronically and include the following information:

- Community Name
  - Community Type (e.g. neighborhood, municipality, county, region)
  - Lead Applicant Organization
  - Primary Contact
  - Community Description (200 words)
  - Information about why your community is applying (200 words)
  - What level (gold, silver, bronze) you intend to apply for
  - Why your community meets this designation level (300 words)
  - Self-assessment checklist related to program criteria
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## FULL APPLICATION

After the Letter of Interest phase, eligible communities will receive detailed instructions and a link to the online application form on February 14, 2020.

### Application Contents

While the application will differ by tier (gold, silver, bronze), it will include the following sections:

- **Community information**



- In this section, you will be asked to briefly describe your community and how you have assessed your community's needs and resources.
- **Community accomplishments/initiatives**
  - The number of initiatives you include will depend on the tier (gold: 7-9, silver: 5-7, bronze: 3-5). It is encouraged to include initiatives that are especially focused on the social determinants of health.
  - **What Works for Health strategy & evidence rating**
    - For each initiative, indicate whether it is included in the [What Works for Health Wisconsin database](#) or whether it is an alternative Community Innovation submission (an approach implemented in your community that does not appear on the strategy list or has an evidence rating of 'insufficient evidence' or 'mixed evidence'). If it is in What Works for Health, list the strategy name, evidence rating, and relevant health factor area from What Works for Health (Health Behaviors, Clinical Care, Social & Economic Factors, Physical Environment).
    - Find instructions for navigating the What Works for Health Wisconsin database [here](#).
  - **Description**
  - **Reach/Target audience**
    - \*Reach\* refers to the amount of community members and the areas of the community that are affected by this initiative.
  - **Goals/objectives**
  - **Implementation rationale**
    - Why was this initiative started? How did it come about?
  - **Stakeholder involvement & collaborators**
    - Please address the following: persons and organizations involved, timeline, description of implementation efforts, and plans for the initiative's sustainability.
  - **Data collection & dissemination**
    - How are you tracking success, outcomes, and other measures for this initiative?
  - **Sustainability**
    - How will this initiative be sustained? How are you leveraging resources to ensure its sustainability?
  - **Health equity**
    - Does this initiative advance health equity? If so, how?
- **Commitment and action to equitable and fair opportunity to health (health equity efforts)**



- We consider health equity efforts to mean actions towards supporting fair and just opportunities for health for all members of your community.
- Gold/Silver: Has your community developed or implemented a plan to support such efforts?
- Bronze: How has your community expressed a commitment to addressing health equity?
- **Sustainable & long-term solutions**
  - How is your community building capacity to work on policy, systems and environment change?
- **Sustainable leadership capacity**
  - How is your community planning to build sustainable leadership capacity?

## Application Platform

The Wisconsin Healthy Communities Designation uses Award Force, an online award platform, for managing applications. Your community's lead applicant will receive an invitation to apply with a link to the online application. The lead applicant, co-applicant (if applicable) and collaborators are all welcome to create Award Force accounts to help ensure easy collaboration among multiple partners. A printable application will also be made available.

## Application Guidance

The application will include word counts for each section, in addition to hints and resources. You should discuss early on with collaborators what you would like to highlight under each section. Reviewers are looking for evidence-based programs that have been effective in your community in improving health and health equity. Each tier of the designation has different requirements in terms of what communities must demonstrate about the quantity and quality of an initiative's *results* (in other words, the change produced because of the effort). Communities striving to earn the highest level of designation will need to demonstrate more robust, substantial health effects resulting from their implemented initiatives. They will also need to provide the data they gathered to support the claim that their initiatives had such an effect. Consult the [program criteria](#) to see expectations for each tier. Sample applications are provided on the Wisconsin Healthy Communities Designation website as examples of what types of questions could be asked of you.

You are required to reference the most relevant What Works for Health strategy and evidence rating for each community accomplishment/initiative highlighted in your application. It is expected that your initiatives are evidence-based. However, reviewers will accept a 'Community Innovation Submission', defined as an approach implemented in your community that does not appear on the What Works for Health strategy list or has an evidence rating of 'insufficient



evidence' or 'mixed evidence.' Find instructions for navigating the What Works for Health database [here](#).

Your community can submit additional documents relating to your initiatives or other community-wide work. However, your application must stand alone separate from those materials.

Each collaborating organization is required to submit a Letter of Support for the application. Letters of Support can be attached to your application as a PDF in Award Force.

We recommend that communities carefully review the program criteria and aim for the tier that seems the most appropriate. However, if reviewers determine that your application doesn't meet the requirements for the tier you applied for, they may recommend a designation at a lower level.

### **Focus on Health Equity**

The Wisconsin Healthy Communities Designation has a unique focus on health equity. The program relies on the following definition of health equity: "Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthy. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care." ([Braveman, Arkin, Orleans, Proctor, Plough, 2017](#)). We anticipate every community to be at different levels in their journey to advance health equity. Prior to completing your application, it applicants are encouraged to view the [Health Equity Training Modules](#), created by MATCH and the Wisconsin Center for Public Health (WiCPHET).

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## **FAQs**

### **Why should communities apply?**

Ensuring that everyone in our communities has a fair opportunity to be healthy reaches well beyond the traditional work of health care providers and public health departments. When communities invest time, effort, and other resources into community conditions that support health, they are also investing in their economic vitality. But being a healthy community means more than healthy eating and active living. It also means having high quality education and jobs that provide adequate income, affordable and safe housing and transit options, and clean air and water. Communities that pay attention to the many factors that influence health, including the social determinants of health, have a greater chance of creating conditions where all residents have the opportunity to be healthy.



Communities that apply for and receive the **Healthy Communities Designation** will have a way to demonstrate the quality of life in their community. The application process is designed to boost existing health improvement efforts by providing guidance on the types of strategies and initiatives that have been shown to work, as well as by encouraging applicants to increase the degree of collaboration among diverse stakeholder groups in their communities.

### **What makes a community *healthy*?**

While there is no simple equation that can differentiate a healthy community from an unhealthy one, a **healthy community is one that broadly assesses its needs and subsequently examines and addresses the *multiple factors* that determine health:**

- **Health Behaviors** – including diet and exercise, alcohol and drug use, tobacco use, and sexual activity;
- **Clinical Care** – including access to care and quality of care;
- **Social & Economic Factors** – including education, employment, income, family and social support, and community safety; and
- **Physical Environment** – including air and water quality, housing, and transit.

**The Wisconsin Healthy Communities Designation recognizes and encourages local efforts to improve the overall health of the community.** Designation-worthy efforts are those that display the community's broad vision of health and that are *sustainable* in nature. In other words, the changes that result from community efforts aren't one-time occurrences; instead, effects are likely ongoing because efforts target policy, systems, or environmental changes.

Each community is its own "expert," knowing more about its strengths, weaknesses, resources, and needs than anyone else. With that in mind, there isn't a cut-and-dried recipe for community health. The Designation is designed to recognize local community success and to serve as a *guide* that communities can use to expand and enhance their health improvement efforts. As part of the application process, communities use the [Works for Health Wisconsin database](#) to highlight their evidence-based initiatives for local health improvement. They are also encouraged to use it as part of their ongoing community health improvement processes to identify fitting new initiatives based on their assessed needs and resources.

### **Doesn't a program like this already exist?**

There are several programs that recognize and encourage community health, but they each tend to focus on a limited area of well-being. What sets the Wisconsin Healthy Communities Designation apart is its decision to incentivize and recognize communities that are working to advance a broad view of health. This broader perspective acknowledges the reality that factors such as individual behavior, education and employment opportunities, transportation, and air and water quality all influence health as much or more than more traditional areas of focus (such as access to health care and improved health behaviors). ***Recognizing this broader picture of health is what sets us apart.***





### **How many communities can “win”?**

This is a *designation* program rather than a prize program, which means each applicant that meets the program’s criteria will earn a healthy community designation. **There is no maximum number of communities that can earn this designation.**

### **We have existing information about our work. Is it OK to attach these materials to the application?**

Communities are encouraged to upload existing documents and insert website links that they believe are relevant and useful for their application’s review. Communities may also submit material relevant for each initiative they include. **However, the written application must be able to stand alone** and provide the review committee with a thorough description of the initiative. Additional documents and links are intended only for supplemental and validation purposes.

### **What are the reviewers looking for?**

The Healthy Communities Designation reviewers will determine whether your community earns designation. This tiered approach allows the acknowledgement of communities’ early, limited efforts (bronze status) while providing more distinguished recognition for more comprehensive, long-lasting efforts (silver or gold status).

Each tier of designation has different requirements in terms of what communities must demonstrate about the quantity and quality of an initiative’s *results* (in other words, the change produced because of the effort). Communities striving to earn the highest level of designation will need to demonstrate more robust, substantial health effects resulting from their implemented initiatives. They will also need to provide the data they gathered to support the claim that their initiatives had such an effect.

The program’s application process is designed to be a beneficial experience for all communities, regardless of the designation status obtained. Filling out the application requires community members— from prominent local figures, to community organizers, to other passionate residents—to join together to identify and review the health improvement initiatives implemented that address the community’s identified health needs. Ideally, this process will prompt investigation by these invested community members into the degree of change resulting from their implemented initiatives; potential avenues for further growth; and new opportunities for targeted efforts.

Communities should refer to the [full program criteria grid](#) and [application guidance](#) for complete information.

### **What happens if the reviewers determine that our community doesn’t meet the criteria for the tier we applied for? Are we considered for a lower tier?**



We recommend that communities carefully review the program criteria and aim for the tier that seems the most appropriate. However, if reviewers determine that your application doesn't meet the requirements for the tier you applied for, they may recommend a designation at a lower level.

### **What happens if my community earns a designation?**

- Communities that earn a Healthy Communities Designation (at any tier) will receive:
  - A graphic/logo with the year of the community's receipt, to be used on community produced materials;
  - One road sign or banner (community's choice) to display in the community, with the option to purchase additional products;
  - A communication toolkit with sample press releases and other material to share your community's news;
  - An invitation to attend a recognition event, at which community members will be honored for their health efforts alongside other communities earning designation; and
  - Access to and participation in a network of other Healthy Community designees, through which communities can collaborate, encourage one other, and share successes (and stumbling blocks) experienced during their health improvement efforts.

Each community's designation status will be valid for three years. Designated communities will have the opportunity to re-apply to maintain their status or apply for a higher status before their three-year designation expires.

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The Wisconsin Healthy Communities Designation is a program of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute's Mobilizing Action Toward Community Health (MATCH) Group. The Wisconsin Healthy Communities Designation program is funded by the Wisconsin Partnership Program at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health.

For additional information, please visit [wihealthycommunities@wisc.edu](mailto:wihealthycommunities@wisc.edu) or contact [www.wihealthycommunities.org](http://www.wihealthycommunities.org).