



Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation

Strategic Framework and Grant Guidelines

Updated January 2026





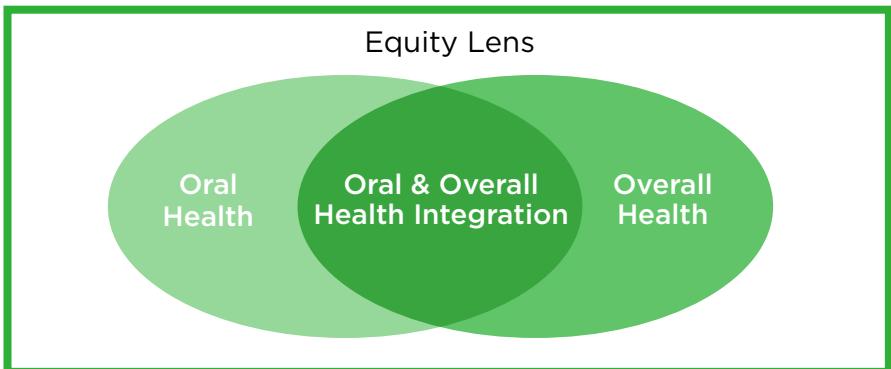
MISSION:

Strengthen and transform the health and smiles of all Iowans.

STRATEGIC VISION:

Robust community systems and partnerships empower and engage all Iowans to have optimal dental, vision and overall health.

DEFINING OUR WORK THROUGH AN EQUITY LENS:



+ Oral Health

Activities that promote healthy smiles from all Iowans

+ Oral and Overall Health

Activities that strengthen connections between dental, physical, and emotional health

+ Overall Health

Wellness, vision, and related activities that enable Iowans to live healthy and active lives



OUR APPROACH

The Foundation adopts a system change approach to its work. The Foundation will pursue this mission through investments in oral health, oral health and overall health integration, and overall health, all through an equity lens. We also understand the best outcomes result through the connection of oral health and overall health. The Foundation will direct funding through three strategic focus areas: education and advocacy, access and prevention, and policy and research.

VALUES

Our values will guide our actions, thinking, and funding:

ALL IOWANS

All Iowans deserve to be healthy. We address barriers within health care systems and strive for statewide reach with an equity lens.



SYSTEMS CHANGE

We focus on strengthening and transforming systems. We pursue our mission to shift conditions to improve health.



PARTNERSHIPS

We recognize that our grantees' and partners' success IS our success, and we are committed to engaging with partners in a spirit of transparency and goodwill.



LEADERSHIP

We are a leader in the sector. We aim to be a catalyst for change, a builder and an innovator. We actively engage partners in the philanthropic, public, and private sectors to advance our mission.



HEALTH EQUITY STATEMENT

The Foundation envisions a world where health equity is a reality. Health equity is achieved when every person has the opportunity to attain their full health potential.

Oral Health, Vision Care, Veterans Oral Health, Mental Health, Dental and Vision Providers' Mental Health, and Dental and Vision Workforce

Funding requests must address one of the priorities above and align with one of the three focus areas outlined below:

EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

Goal: An educated population that is actively engaged in achieving positive oral and overall health outcomes.

- ▶ Identify and build awareness of vision public health challenges and enhance system infrastructure.
- ▶ Reduce mental health stigma by fostering awareness and implementing community-led outreach efforts that engage and support Iowans with a priority on dental and vision providers.
- ▶ Support initiatives that create pathways to careers in dentistry and optometry.
- ▶ Strengthen and maintain existing dental and vision workforce through innovative education initiatives.

Examples: Coalitions, Convenings, Programs

ACCESS & PREVENTION

Goal: All Iowans can access oral and vision care.

- ▶ Support oral health initiatives for Iowans experiencing barriers to care.
- ▶ Reduce vision health disparities through systemic and/or innovative solutions, ultimately striving for all Iowans to have access to comprehensive vision care.
- ▶ Increase veteran access to oral health care.
- ▶ Advance mental health access and preventive care for dental and vision providers.

Examples: Community Interventions and Projects, Capacity Building

POLICY & RESEARCH

Goal: A stronger connection between oral and overall health within public policy and health care practice

- ▶ Strengthen and facilitate policy initiatives that build and support oral and vision health for Iowans.
- ▶ Support population based vision health data collection systems and dashboards.

Examples: Data and Research, Pilot Projects, Systems Change Efforts

GRANT GUIDELINES

Based on the Foundation Values the following key criteria will be applied in determining funding:



Geography: Focus on the oral and overall health of Iowans. At times, an investment in a national learning collaborative or project may have an impact on Iowans, so this funding may be considered.



Equity Focus: With a focus on marginalized Iowans, describe in detail what conditions exist impacting equity and provide data that supports the identified area of need.



Systems Approach: Impact the oral and/or overall health system and shift the conditions that currently exist at the local and/or statewide level. Projects will identify how lessons learned can impact the oral and/or overall health system.



Leadership: Be a catalyst for change, a builder and an innovator.



Partners (Shared Approach): Engage with other partners and organizations to achieve identified goals. Adopt a shared approach to success.



Success: Measure success and impact while aligning with the Foundation dashboard and goals.



Policy: Identify and address opportunities for policy analysis and public education.



In general, the Foundation does not fund:

- + Direct dental services
- + Grants to individuals
- + Projects that do not have a direct or indirect impact on health and smiles of Iowans
- + Political campaigns and lobbying
- + Religious purposes
- + Sponsorships
- + Ongoing or emergency food assistance requests
- + Toothbrush donation requests without strong oral health education component

Funds will be distributed through the grant programs outlined below.

RETHINK YOUR DRINK:

Application deadline is March 10

This program aims to get more Iowans drinking water throughout the day to support their oral and overall health by providing outdoor water bottle filling stations in accessible, outdoor public and community spaces such as at parks and trailheads.

SMILE GRANTS:

\$10,000 or less, to support projects that are primarily educational in nature such as providing educational materials or supplies related to our core initiatives. Applications open in January and are accepted on an ongoing basis until all funds are allocated.

COMMUNITY OF HEALTH GRANTS:

\$10,001 - \$100,000

Spring Cycle: letter of interest (LOI) due Feb. 17, if invited to continue applications due March 10

Fall Cycle: letter of interest (LOI) due Sept. 2, if invited to continue applications due Sept. 24

Partnering with others who share our mission and values is necessary to strengthen and transform the health and smiles of all Iowans. The Foundation will make investments in projects that advance our core initiatives, align within the three strategic areas of focus.

SYSTEM AND CAPACITY BUILDING GRANTS:

Over \$25,000

Spring Cycle: letter of interest (LOI) due Feb. 17, if invited to continue applications due March 10

Fall Cycle: letter of interest (LOI) due Sept. 2, if invited to continue applications due Sept. 24

Large grants to support infrastructure, equipment and major system change efforts related to the Foundation's core initiatives. Following a review by a grant committee, proposals over \$100,000 that are approved to move forward will be invited to present to the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation board.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation team to learn more prior to applying at IA_Foundation@deltadentalia.com.





How to Apply for Funding

To apply for funding or for more information on a specific program, visit deltadentalia.com/foundation or contact the Foundation at IA_Foundation@deltadentalia.com.

Foundation Team



Suzanne Heckenlaible
Executive Director



Beth Jones
Director of
Community Impact



Maren Lenhart
Community Impact
Analyst



Anna Nalean
Community Impact
Coordinator



Megan Navara
Executive Assistant,
Public Affairs



Jaci Miller
Community Impact
Coordinator