



# Strategic Framework 2026-2028

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Strengthening Our Commitment to a  
Healthier, Stronger Northern Virginia

# Healthier. Stronger. Together.

## A Letter to Our Community

Since the Northern Virginia Health Foundation's inception in 2005, we have held to a clear mission: to improve the health and health care of residents of Northern Virginia, with a particular emphasis on the health needs of the uninsured.

For two decades, this mission has guided our investments, partnerships, and how we show up alongside our friends and neighbors working every day to improve conditions across the region.

We have invested in stabilizing and strengthening the region's health safety net, including the clinics and community organizations that provide essential care and support. We have also worked upstream to address the conditions that shape health outcomes, recognizing that health is influenced by more than medical care alone. And we have sought impact beyond grantmaking, using partnerships, learning and advocacy to help advance broader change across Northern Virginia.

However, in recent years, the environment in which our community partners operate has grown more complex and uncertain. We have heard from many partners that it has become harder to meet rising needs with limited resources and shifting funding priorities. Across Northern Virginia and the country, these organizations are providing vital services amid funding reductions, changes in policy and terminology, and heightened fear and instability. All of this is happening even as health disparities widen and affordability becomes more elusive for many of our friends and neighbors.

At the same time, research continues to reinforce that health is increasingly shaped by the conditions in which people live, the strength of their social connections, whether they feel safe and supported, and whether their basic needs are met. As our understanding of health and its drivers has evolved, so too has our approach to furthering health equity in Northern Virginia.

**Our approach builds on long-standing commitments and reflects what we are hearing from communities and partners about what is needed now. It includes:**

- **Grantmaking that centers community voice and lived experience**, with a newly expanded focus on capacity building;
- **Multi-year general operating grants** beginning in 2025, signaling our commitment to honoring the time, flexibility and stability our grantee partners need to create lasting impact; and
- **Continued investment in regional research and data** that illustrate the gaps in health outcomes we seek to close.

As we commemorate NVHF's 20th anniversary, we're recommitting to our mission and vision through a new strategic framework. Grounded in a set of values and pillars, this new framework will help us continue to advance health equity in our region.

The values and pillars that guide this framework did not emerge overnight. They were shaped through reviews of NVHF's work and extensive conversations with board and staff, grantee partners, community advocates, peer funders and other collaborators—and to you, we say thank you.

This framework is meant to guide our work, not prescribe it. It reflects what we know today and, importantly, it recognizes that advancing health equity is ongoing work. If you talk to any of us, we will be the first to let you know that we do not have all the answers to all of our region's toughest challenges. What we do have is a commitment to keep listening, to test and refine our approaches, and to adjust as we learn alongside you and the communities you serve.

As we move into this next chapter, we invite you to be part of that journey. Your insight, partnership and lived experience will continue to shape how this framework comes to life. This is not a one-time conversation. We will stay engaged, remain open to feedback, and keep learning because our region becomes healthier and stronger only when we move forward together.

In partnership,

**Courtney Rice**  
President & CEO

**Sonia Quiñónez**  
Board Chair

**Susie Lee**  
Vice Chair



## Our Values

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Our values guide how we make decisions, partner with communities, uphold accountability and invest in lasting changes that promote health equity across Northern Virginia.

### Stewardship

We are responsible and ethical stewards of resources, relationships and trust, ensuring that every effort maximizes impact for those we serve, while honoring our responsibility to community voice.

### Health Equity

We believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to attain their full health potential. We aspire to center equity in all aspects of our work and ensure that race, income or ZIP code never determine health outcomes.

### Organizational Effectiveness

We engage with our partners to inform strengthening capacity and resilience, for the field and ourselves, to optimize effectiveness and impact.

### Systems-Level Change

We fund and support community-driven solutions that address root causes and shift the landscape of systems shaping health outcomes.

### Information-Driven Decision Making

We make data-informed decisions rooted in qualitative and quantitative research, community insight, and evaluation. We believe data is a tool for accountability, equity and shared learning.

# Our Strategic Pillars

Over the next three years, our strategic pillars will guide how we use our resources to advance health equity in Northern Virginia.

Across all four pillars, we are committed to examining and evaluating our grantmaking to ensure our efforts align with our values and create meaningful opportunities to address disparities and systemic inequities. We are also being intentional about the partnerships we build, so that we can better engage with communities, collaborate across sectors and strengthen the collective impact of our strategies.

## Strengthening the Field



We foster collaboration and strengthen the collective ability of organizations, networks, and leaders across Northern Virginia to advance health equity. Through intentional convening, shared learning, and capacity-building investments, we create spaces for dialogue, partnership, and innovation.

## Systems-Level Change



Guided by Northern Virginia community voice and equity, we support partners with access to the tools, relationships and infrastructure needed to address root causes, influence systems and sustain lasting impact. We also support aligned efforts across Virginia that strengthen systems and advance equity at scale.

## Access to Health Care



We invest to ensure all people, regardless of race, income or ZIP code, can access high-quality, affordable and culturally responsive health care. By addressing barriers to care, strengthening the health care safety net, and advancing equitable policies, we strive to close gaps that prevent Northern Virginians from achieving their full health potential.

## Knowledge for Impact



We leverage data, research and community wisdom to drive meaningful and measurable change in health outcomes for Northern Virginians. We are committed to making data accessible to communities and partners and view it as a shared resource for learning, accountability and collaboration—ensuring that evidence and lived experience guide our strategies and investments for maximum impact.



## Cross-Cutting Commitments

### Lived Experience Partnerships:

We take steps to engage, listen and integrate the voices of those most affected by health inequities in all aspects of our work.

### Ecosystem Partnerships:

We build relationships with communities, organizations, public agencies and other funders to strengthen the impact of our efforts to advance health equity.

# Our Investment Strategies

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In partnership with our grantees, we target five main areas of investment to achieve our mission of improving the health of our Northern Virginia community. Our grant types include:

## Safety Net Providers and Programs

Funding provided to organizations that deliver affordable primary, oral, behavioral health and/or pharmacy services to low-income, underinsured or uninsured individuals. These investments are generally provided as operating support to help underwrite core operations, alignment, and relationship building.

## Special Projects/Programs

Funding provided in support of targeted initiatives, shorter-term efforts and one-time events.

## Strategic Partnerships

Strategic partnerships support our overall strategy to strengthen the field and reduce health disparities. These investments support organizations whose work has significant implications for health and well-being outcomes in Northern Virginia outside of direct service delivery. This includes engagement in local collaborative efforts, influence on local or regional policy, and contributions to systems-level change related to issues affecting community health.

## Upstream Interventions

Upstream interventions reflect our support for partnerships among government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and healthcare providers that lead to systems-level change. We seek to support partners with the tools, relationships, and infrastructure needed to address root causes, influence systems, and sustain lasting impact. These investments focus on organizations that address one or more issues affecting the health of predominantly low-income Northern Virginians and that deepen collaboration across sectors. Funds may support efforts to strengthen systems, advance policy change, or empower community-driven solutions.

## Capacity Building

Investments prioritize community-based and resident-led organizations that work to reduce health disparities. Support focuses on strengthening organizational effectiveness and sustainability by bolstering day-to-day operations, developing core competencies, and improving systems. Funding provided to support capacity building for organizations with deep community engagement and funding for organizations to support greater social connectedness, which leads to healthier communities.



### Note on General Operating Support

General operating support (GOS) is a key part in how we support our grantee partners. We provide this kind of funding because we know that too often clinics and community-based organizations cannot meet urgent and changing needs if support is tied too narrowly to a single program. GOS is also an important grantmaking tool, improving relationships and building trust within our grantee network.



## Our Commitment & Approach



Our work is grounded in a simple commitment: to be a consistent, reliable, and trusted partner to the communities we serve.”

In a time of ongoing uncertainty for the nonprofit sector, we recognize the importance of stability. We strive to be a steady presence for our grantee partners and the broader health ecosystem by offering not only funding, but also partnership, shared space, and support. Our goal is to ensure that organizations know we are here, that we are dependable, and that our commitment to improving health outcomes in Northern Virginia is long term.

We believe trust is built through consistency, transparency, and care. We are intentional about how we show up. We seek to **reduce burden, listen deeply**, and engage in ways that **strengthen relationships**. We aim to create environments where partners feel safe to share ideas, challenges, and opportunities, and where collaboration can lead to meaningful progress. By supporting the organizations at the heart of our region’s health infrastructure, we help build a more resilient and responsive field.

Improving health requires more than services alone. We are committed to advancing health equity by expanding access to care and addressing the underlying conditions that shape health. This includes supporting efforts that respond to immediate needs while also advancing long-term systems level change across our region.

We also see our role as a convener and connector. By creating space for partners across sectors to come together, we aim to support alignment, shared learning, and collaboration. Through this work, we seek to amplify what is working, surface emerging insights, and contribute to a stronger, more informed ecosystem.

Our approach brings together direct support, systems-level thinking, and shared learning to advance health and well-being across Northern Virginia.

We understand that leadership can take many forms. At times, it means helping to guide change; it also means providing stability. In all cases, we are committed to showing up with intention, integrity, and a deep respect for the communities we serve, and to advancing this work together.



## Conclusion

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Together, our values and strategic pillars reflect a renewed commitment to move with intention at a critical moment for our region and the organizations that serve it. They anchor how we will steward resources, pursue equity, strengthen systems and use knowledge to guide action in service of a healthier Northern Virginia. We remain steadfast in our support of the organizations and individuals working every day to meet urgent needs and build long-term solutions, and we recognize that progress requires effort at both the macro and micro levels—from policy and systems change to activating and bolstering community voice.

We are confident that this framework positions us to move forward with clarity, accountability and purpose. Advancing health equity is work that none of us can do alone, and we are grateful for the partners who walk alongside us in this journey. We look ahead with resolve and optimism as we put this framework into action, building a healthier, stronger community for us all.



Northern Virginia Health Foundation is dedicated to building the capacity of Northern Virginia communities to be and stay healthy. We support nonprofit partners and invest in community-driven solutions that strengthen the health safety net and close health disparities, especially for low-income, uninsured, and underinsured residents across Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William counties and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, and Manassas Park.

