



— NATIONAL —  
**MINORITY QUALITY**  
— F O R U M —

# PROPOSAL



Advancing Inflammatory Bowel Disease Awareness & Education  
in Underserved Communities

1201 NW 15th Street, Suite 340

Washington, DC 20005

<http://www.nmqf.org>



# NATIONAL MINORITY QUALITY FORUM

## Proposal

### Organizational Background

The **National Minority Quality Forum, Inc.** (NMQF) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit research and advocacy organization based in Washington, DC. NMQF was founded in 1998 to address the critical need for strengthening national and local efforts to use evidence-based, data-driven initiatives to guide programs to eliminate the disproportionate burden of premature death and preventable illness for racial and ethnic minorities and other special populations. With a mission to reduce patient risk by assuring optimal care for all, NMQF's aim is to use data and research to support and mobilize healthcare organizations, leaders, policymakers, and patients in advocating for optimal care for every individual, especially those in minoritized communities.

### Executive Summary

NMQF is seeking funding to implement the Flint IBD Equity Collaborative, along with a suite of programs designed to address health disparities and improve healthcare outcomes in underserved communities. This initiative will focus on reducing inequities in inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) through targeted education, patient engagement, and clinician training. NMQF will expand its efforts to train healthcare providers in quality improvement practices, ensuring that clinicians are equipped to deliver culturally competent care that meets the unique needs of minoritized populations. Additionally, the Flint Cancer Equity Collaborative will bring together local organizations, researchers, and community leaders to enhance cancer screening, facilitate clinical trial education, and improve early detection and treatment efforts. These efforts will be supported by NMQF Connect, a patient navigation outreach initiative that brings vital healthcare services directly to hard-to-reach communities through mobile mini-clinics, patient education events, and grassroots engagement.

To further advance health equity, NMQF will leverage trusted community networks through its Faith Health Alliance and Health Champions initiatives, which engage faith leaders, barbers, stylists, and other influential community members to promote health awareness and preventive care. These programs will be complemented by the FORWARD Scholarship Program, which aims to support early-career scientists from diverse backgrounds with research funding and specialized mentorship opportunities in oncology and health equity research. By investing in patient education, community partnerships, clinician training, and workforce development, NMQF seeks to build sustainable, community-driven healthcare solutions that enhance access to quality care, increase early diagnosis rates, and ultimately improve health outcomes for historically marginalized populations.

### Needs Statement

The need for targeted strategies to address disparities in IBD among Flint and Genesee County residents is critical, as evidence suggests that IBD is underreported in minoritized communities

and that clinicians often overlook symptoms in patients of color. In this region, where a significant portion of the population faces systemic healthcare barriers, the long-standing misconception that IBD primarily affects white individuals has contributed to delayed diagnoses and misdiagnoses among Black and Hispanic residents. Disparities in access to specialty care, socioeconomic challenges, and limited community awareness further exacerbate delays in diagnosis and treatment, leading to prolonged inflammation, increased symptom severity, and higher risks of complications. Additionally, Black patients in Genesee County are less likely to receive advanced IBD therapies, reflecting broader racial disparities in treatment access. Addressing these gaps requires a concerted effort to expand culturally competent healthcare, increase provider education on IBD in diverse populations, and strengthen community engagement to ensure that all residents—regardless of race or socioeconomic status—receive timely, effective, and equitable care. Improving local research representation and participation in clinical trials will also be essential to advancing health equity and optimizing outcomes for Flint and Genesee County residents living with IBD.<sup>1</sup>

## Project Description

NMQF proposes to implement a comprehensive IBD education and awareness project in Genesee County. The proposed project unfolds across several key components:

**1) The Flint Cancer Equity Collaborative** will combine the collective leadership of Flint community-based organizations, researchers, clinicians, and community leaders to advance cancer equity in Flint. The coalition will aim to reduce mortality and late-stage detection, diagnosis and treatment of cancer via the following:

- Increasing cancer screening and clinical trial education in hard to reach communities via workshops and/or mini-clinics
- Patient listening sessions to educate and facilitate community-based participatory research regarding cancer clusters and cancer research in community.
- Virtual and in-person convening cancer researchers and community leaders to educate and promote awareness of cancer treatments, screening and clinical trial opportunities.
- Sharing insights from NMQF Cancer Index 2.0 with community and training community research scientists
- Building a sustainable model of collaboration between health leaders and community
- Mobilizing local resources to address the social determinants of health

**2) Patient Navigation Outreach via NMQF Connect.** NMQF Connect is an inclusive, energetic dissemination strategy to foster health in underserved communities by going hyper-local and bringing resources, services and health education to hard-to-reach populations via events which will include:

- **Mini-Clinics:** Traveling Mini Clinic patient education events designed to “meet patients where they are”. Whereas many patient navigation programs are aimed at assisting at-risk patients within a particular hospital system, NMQF Connect Traveling Mini Clinic allows NMQF to help

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<sup>1</sup> Borum M. L. (2023). Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Inflammatory Bowel Disease. *Gastroenterology & hepatology*, 19(5), 281–283.

reduce patient risk for a minoritized, medically underserved, hard-to-reach population through targeted patient engagement. Mini clinic community events play a crucial role in patient navigation and education by providing accessible healthcare services, targeted patient education addressing specific needs and interactive engagement. These events serve as valuable platforms for disseminating health information, promoting healthy behaviors, and connecting individuals with healthcare resources. These events are typically held in community centers, schools, or local businesses, making healthcare more convenient and less intimidating for individuals.

- **Training Patient Navigators** Patient Navigators help patients navigate a complex health system to necessary clinical care and resources.
  - Qualifications: Culturally competent, knowledgeable about cancer screening, and familiar with local healthcare resources.
  - Training Topics: Communication skills, cultural sensitivity, information on cancer screening procedures, and handling patient inquiries.
  - Potential Activities to Address Unmet Needs:
    - Transportation: Coordinate or provide transportation for patients who face mobility or geographic barriers.
    - Language and Literacy: Provide materials in multiple languages and offer interpreters where needed.
    - Insurance and Financial Guidance: Assist with understanding insurance coverage and potential financial support for screening costs.
    - Follow-Up and Support:
    - Ensure continuity of care by helping patients with referrals and appointment reminders.
    - Address any concerns and support patients emotionally and practically throughout the screening process.

**3) DRIVE QIE Program and Health Champions Outreach:** Quality improvement (QI) for clinicians is crucial in driving health equity and better outcomes for patients of color. By focusing on improving clinical practices, processes, and patient care delivery, our QI initiatives help minoritized patients receive timely, appropriate, and culturally competent care.

A DRIVE QIE toolkit and training resources will be collaboratively designed with community and expert input, modeled after successful programs, and made freely accessible on the SHC website. They will serve as foundational materials for live programs, disseminated widely through a network of engaged advisors and partners. Emphasis will be placed on engaging and educating the healthcare community, including support staff, healthcare providers, and addressing points of access for care after diagnosis.

*About DRIVE (Demonstrating Real Improvement in Value and Equity):* The DRIVE program, led by NMQF's SHC, focuses on promoting health equity. Launched in the 2017-18 flu season and implemented in various health system settings, DRIVE utilizes an evidence-based approach, incorporating system leadership engagement, system-based changes, community outreach, team-based immunization approaches, and data feedback reports. The program aims to increase community voices supporting health education and strengthen partnerships between healthcare

providers and community organizations. Today, DRIVE has successfully cultivated partnerships in 22 states, 12 health systems, 148 FQHCs and free clinics, over 100 programs in communities, more than 50 pharmacy ambassadors, and countless health champions.

**4) Faith Health Alliance Educational and Outreach** The Faith Health Alliance, composed of trusted community leaders, will organize large-scale educational events focusing on IBD education, early detection and prevention within congregations and communities. Their work is guided by a deep understanding of the communities they serve and their ability to foster trust and engagement. The model's effectiveness is exemplified by the Alliance's previous achievements, such as a 15% increase in flu vaccination rates during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. This success led to the expansion of the Alliance in 2021, expanding their impact to over 45 Churches nationwide and regional networks in Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Alabama, addressing various health concerns and organizing community events.

**5) Health Champions.** NMQF SHC's Health Champions, which includes barbers and stylists through the HAIR Wellness Warriors program, have pioneered the "care behind the chair" model, educating salon and barber shop clients on IBD. Their unique approach continues to leverage the trusted relationship between clients and stylists, making health education more accessible. Other Health Champions include local, community-based partners that also lend a trusted voice to their communities. Health Champions utilize evidence-based approaches to enhance community health through various platforms, reaching 4.8 million individuals through webinars, and maintaining a nationwide presence with a dedicated toolkit for virtual and in-person outreach.

**6) FORWARD Scholarship Program.** NMQF's CSSI team has noticed the lack of culturally representative scientists in the local community. Experts in oncology research, health equity research and clinical medicine who share the lived experiences of the Flint community are rare. The Flint Oncology Researchers Advancing Research Development (FORWARD) , a scholarship program uniquely tailored for early career scientists from diverse backgrounds. This program will seek to attract early career scientists from diverse backgrounds to study in Flint and to receive specialized oncology mentorship and research funding. The aim is to support early career scientists and their research projects by improving the quality of their scientific research, deepening scientific cooperation in the oncology field and engaging in academic activities. The duration of their project must be at least two years. The funding requested for one project should not exceed \$35,000 per year. The proposed grant program will help support a college scholarship for young scientists, expenses for research activities, and overhead costs.

## **Goal, Objectives, & Potential Outcomes**

**Goal:** NMQF aims to enhance health education, awareness, and access within underserved communities, particularly among minoritized populations, by implementing targeted initiatives to reduce health disparities related to IBD, empower affected individuals with resources and education, and foster collaborative efforts in community-driven health improvement.

**Expected Outcomes / Impact:** The proposed project envisions a range of positive outcomes, including heightened awareness and understanding of IBD among at-risk populations in Genesee County. Through community listening sessions and targeted educational efforts, the project aims to

facilitate early detection and diagnosis, leading to improved healthcare utilization and proactive health management. NMQF Lift Every Voice Patient Network and NMQF Connect events will educate patients, recruit patient ambassadors, foster community engagement and patient empowerment, while the IBD DRIVE QIE Toolkit and Health Champions Communication Toolkit will enhance education and support for healthcare professionals and community leaders. The creation of the Community-Led Coalition for IBD will establish a supportive network, and initiatives in barbershops and salons will promote health literacy in trusted community spaces. Ultimately, the project aspires to reduce health disparities, create region-wide impact, and ensure the sustainability and expansion of successful initiatives, contributing to a well-informed and empowered community addressing the challenges of living with IBD.

## Evaluation

Evaluation metrics will include increased IBD awareness in target communities, improved patient-provider communication, enhanced healthcare community engagement, and a decrease in time to diagnosis and treatment.

## Program SOW

Program Component	Description	Total Requested
Flint Cancer Equity Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing cancer screening and clinical trial education in hard to reach communities via workshops and/or mini-clinics</li> <li>Patient listening sessions to educate and facilitate community-based participatory research regarding cancer clusters and cancer research in the community.</li> <li>Virtual and in-person convening cancer researchers and community leaders to educate and promote awareness of cancer treatments, screening and clinical trial opportunities.</li> <li>Sharing insights from NMQF Cancer Index 2.0 with community and training community research scientists</li> <li>Building a sustainable model of collaboration between health leaders and community</li> <li>Mobilizing local resources to address the social determinants of health</li> </ul>	\$60,000.00
Patient Navigator Training Program	Activating health workers, community and faith leaders to disseminate information about IBD resources and assist with patient navigation	\$12,000.00



Faith Health Alliance	Update materials for Church leaders to educate their congregations and communities as needed; SHC staff support	\$28,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$100,000.00</b>
<b>OPTIONAL ADD ON</b>		
QI Project	Quality Improvement program working with health systems in Flint to improve patient experience	\$50,000.00
The Flint Oncology Researchers Advancing Research Development (FORWARD) - Grant for Early Career Scientists of Color	This grant will seek to attract early career scientists of color to study in Flint and to receive specialized oncology mentorship and research funding. The aim is to support early career scientists of color and their research projects by improving the quality of their scientific research, deepening scientific cooperation in the oncology field and engaging in academic activities. The duration of their project must be at least two years. The funding requested for one project should not exceed \$35,000 per year. The proposed grant program will help support a college scholarship for young scientists, expenses for research activities, and overhead costs.	\$50,000.00
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>\$200,000.00</b>