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**Group Health Cooperative of Eau Claire Announces New Grant Program  
Designed to Improve Healthcare in Western Wisconsin**

***Group Health to Award up to \$500,000 in Grants via  
Inspiring Healthcare Innovation Grant Program***

**Eau Claire, Wis. (April 3, 2006)** – Group Health Cooperative of Eau Claire today announced the creation of the Inspiring Healthcare Innovation Grant program, a new grant opportunity designed to improve healthcare efficiency and effectiveness in Western Wisconsin. As part of this year’s inaugural program, Group Health, with the assistance of the National Institute of Health Policy (NIHP), will award up to \$500,000 in project support grants to providers and organizations that participate in Group Health’s network.

The Inspiring Healthcare Innovation Grant will support projects aimed at improving the quality and cost of healthcare delivery. Through the NIHP, Group Health Cooperative has assembled a panel of independent experts to evaluate each application and determine which will receive grants.

“As the Institute of Medicine has noted, the cause of many healthcare related problems is not individual failures, but system failures,” said Group Health General Manager Peter Farrow. “Our vision is that this grant will inspire innovation among providers and organizations as they work to develop new ideas on how to improve healthcare quality and cost. Our challenge is to create a process that complements current improvement programs instead of adding more friction to the process.”

“The NIHP is pleased to work with Group Health Cooperative of Eau Claire in evaluating and rewarding deserving improvement projects that will undoubtedly become

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building blocks for widespread healthcare solutions in Western Wisconsin,” said David Durenberger, NIHP chair and former U.S. Senator. “We commend Group Health for its commitment to improving healthcare.”

Providers and organizations interested in applying for grants will have the opportunity to learn more at a luncheon and conference beginning at noon on April 24 at the Holiday Inn Campus in Eau Claire. Officials from both NIHP and Group Health, including Senator Durenberger, Peter Farrow and former NIHP Executive Director Dan McLaughlin, will address attendees.

Applicants will have until June 5 to submit their grant proposals, and grant announcements are scheduled for late June.

The National Institute of Health Policy (NIHP), established in 1998, is a program of the University of St. Thomas’ College of Business. Founded by former Senator David Durenberger, the not-for-profit organization currently has 37 members representing diverse healthcare stakeholders from throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana. Through leadership and vision, the NIHP provides a neutral forum for multi-stakeholder collaboration on complex healthcare policy issues.

Founded more than 30 years ago in Wisconsin’s Chippewa Valley, Group Health Cooperative of Eau Claire is a nationally recognized, non-profit cooperative now serving 55,000 members in 26 counties in Western Wisconsin. Its mission is to optimize the healthcare of its members through its pooling of health-related resources. Group Health has more than 1,400 primary care physicians and more than 2,500 specialists in its network. In four of the last five years, Group Health has ranked as Wisconsin’s top health plan in terms of overall member satisfaction, according to data gathered via Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) surveys by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). The third-party CAHPS surveys are designed to offer an indication of how well health plans are meeting their members’ expectations. For more information, please visit the cooperative’s Web site at [www.group-health.com](http://www.group-health.com).

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