

Request for Applications

RFA Number 1207271020

**New York State Department of Health
Office of Health Systems Management
Division of Health Facility Planning
Charles D. Cook Office of Rural Health**

Rural Health Network Development Program

Questions and Answers

1. Is a municipality eligible to apply?

Yes, municipalities are eligible to apply.

2. Is one of the requirements to form and operate a Rural Health Network?

Yes, per the minimum eligibility requirements listed under II. Who May Apply, A. Minimum Eligibility Requirements, “applicants must either be a rural health network, be a member of a rural health network or be planning to form a rural health network during the contract period...”

Additionally, III. Project Narrative/Work Plan Outcomes, A. Expectations of Project states that “consideration will be given to planning, development and organizational applications from networks to the extent that they are proposing to establish a network that has formal agreements among its members, an organizational structures and processes.”

3. Regarding the Preferred Eligibility. What constitutes a “formal agreement” among Network Members? Would a Board Member Contract that details the agency’s responsibilities to its members and its members’ responsibilities to the organization suffice?

Yes, a Board Member Contract as described in the question is sufficient provided that is it signed by all Board Members.

4. Preferred Eligibility Requirements. Our network may propose project based “consolidation or integration of services” for several initiatives in the application. Are project specific consolidation/integration activities sufficient to meet this requirement? This question assumes the expansion and enhancement of any consolidation and integration projects included in the application, consistent with application guidance.

No. The intent of this Preferred Eligibility Requirement is to show the commitment of network members to the goals and objectives of the network. Each network should be comprised of members who are committed to the mission of the network, not just to specific projects.

5. Preferred Eligibility #1 requires formal agreements among network members. Can this be a single document signed and agreed to by our member agencies or do we need a separate document from each of our member agencies?

Each network member should sign a separate formal agreement.

6. What constitutes a member agreement? Does it have to be a formal MOU or BAA or can it simply be a statement indicating the members' intent to be part of the Network signed by each member?

Please see Question #3.

7. On page 3, under preferred eligibility requirements, the application states, "Applicants should provide copies of the agreements that members sign when joining the network." On page 14, under network organization, the application states, "Include, as an attachment, a participant list with names, titles, and affiliations." Can you describe the difference between "members" and "participants"? Is it that members are organizations and participants are individuals? Does it relate to governance of the organization?

For the purposes of this Request for Application, members and participants are used interchangeably. A network member can be an organization or a participant.

8. Should Attachment 4, the application signature page, include every agency we work with or just our member agencies?

The signature page should include member agencies or individuals.

9. Section IV, Paragraph H, I, & K. If a County is the applying entity is a Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire and proof of Workers Comp required?

Municipalities are not required to submit a Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire or proof of Workers Compensation coverage.

10. Is there a maximum amount or percentage of the award that can be applied to administrative costs?

No, there is not a maximum amount or percentage that may be applied to administrative costs. However, only administrative costs directly related to the project activities will be considered and a clear and appropriate justification must be provided for each line item.

11. How does the applicant show in-kind revenue on the Budget Form A, or should it only be noted on the Budget Justification form?

In-kind revenue is not required and is not a consideration in funding decisions.

12. Should an applicant include Retirement Benefits (IRA, 401K, etc.) as a separate line in the budget or should it be included under Personnel as Fringe?

Yes. These items should be listed as fringe benefits under Personnel.

13. What date range should Budget Forms A & B reflect? April 1, 2012 through March 31, 2013, or all five years?

Per the budget instructions, requests should be one year only. It is intended that contracts resulting from this RFA will cover the time period from April 1, 2013 through March 31, 2018. Contracts will cover a one year period with the possibility of renewal for 4 additional years.

14. The overall contract is for 5 years. However, the RFA requests a budget and work plan for April 1, 2012 through March 31, 2013. Do we also describe our work plan narrative, along with its objectives/activities and process/outcome measures within this one year time period? Do we need to describe our overall 5-year plan anywhere?

The work plan narrative should support the work plan form and cover the April 1, 2013 through March 31, 2014 period. Applicants should also use this section to briefly describe the network's 5 year plan and how the one year work plan relates to the 5 year plan.

15. Should the work plan narrative and forms be completed for year one (anticipated as April 1, 2013 through March 31, 2014 only)? Or should the work plan narrative and forms be completed for year one to year five?

Please see question #14.

16. Do the two forms comprise the 4-page limit for the Budget or is there additional material we are supposed to provide?

The Budget section should include Budget Form 1 and Budget Form 2. Budget Form 2 may be modified to meet the page limit and must describe each requested item, how the amount was determined, and why it is integral to the network objectives.

17. The budget is for one year. Do we submit a budget for additional years?

No.

18. Is the reference to “up to five years” how long the Program will be funded at the state level or how long a project period an applicant may propose, or both?

Applicants that are successful through this procurement will be eligible for project renewal for four years following the first contract period. Project renewal is dependent upon achieving outcomes and the availability of funding.

19. Is the \$300,000 an annual budget cap for a project or total multi-year budget cap per project?

\$300,000 is the maximum amount that may be requested per year.

20. If we are proposing a three-year project, should we submit three separate Budget Forms 1 and 2, one for each year, or just for Year 1, April 1, 2013 – March 31, 2014.

No. A one year budget covering April 1, 2013 through March 31, 2014 should be submitted.

21. As we do not yet have a formal RHN organization, who would submit the letter of interest on our behalf?

Applicants may be any member of the network as long as they meet the Minimum Eligibility Requirements as listed in the RFA. If awarded funding, the applicant will become the contractor and will be responsible for all financial and programmatic requirements as listed in the NYS Standard Grant Contract that is included in Attachment 1.

22. How many grants do you plan on awarding during the next funding round, and if available, how many applications your office received in the last round of funding, and of those, how many were awarded?

We do not know how many applications we will receive. A total of 40 applications were received during the last procurement and 35 received funding.

23. Should only current staff be included in the Project Management section? Or is it appropriate to use that section to describe a potential new staff position related to the management of the Network’s activities?

All staff should be included in the Project Management section. Potential new staff should be described by title and anticipated responsibilities.

24. How should an activity be listed in the budget, budget justification, and workplan if it is not an annual activity (ex: a bi-annual event, or conducting a survey)?

The activity should be listed under the objective that it is completing. Activities are not limited to annual activities.

25. Section II, paragraph B (3) calls for the consolidation and integration of services. Is it the expectation that networks will have shared goals with neighboring networks?

No, it is not the expectation that networks have shared goals with neighboring networks. However, if neighboring networks do have shared goals, then they should work together to achieve cost savings.

Networks serving the exact same service area are encouraged to consolidate under one administrative unit.

26. Process Measures and Outcome Measures are terms used by people in many different ways. Could you make up a simple example?

Objective: Develop an Accountable Care Organization

Process Measures: steps taken to develop the ACO. Were they completed on time? What were the corrections if not?

Outcome Measure: ACO serving 5,000 people with 50 providers

27. Should process and outcome measures be included in the Evaluation section?

Process and outcome measures should be discussed in the Work Plan Narrative but may also be described in the Evaluation section.

28. Attachment #1 includes the “appendices that will be incorporated into any contract(s) resulting from the RFA.” Do these documents need to be completed and included with the submitted final application? Or are they included as appendices for reference only? The note on page 13 only specifically states not to include the “Worker’s Compensation and Disability Benefits forms” with the application but doesn’t refer specifically to the other appendices.

Appendices in Attachment #1 are for reference only.

29. On page 17, under the budget/use of grant funds section, the RFA states, “These funds may not be used to supplant funds for currently existing network member activities.” Does this mean that no activities that are included in our work plan in this year (February 1, 2012 through March 31, 2013) will be supported with these grant dollars? For example, our Network supported professional development for hospital staff in our work plan this year. Given that this is a current work plan activity, are we unable to include professional development for hospital staff in our application? Can you clarify what “expanding existing network activities” means? Does this mean expanding the budget or the work associated with the activities? Or both?

The intent of this statement is that funding may not be used to support member activities that are currently funded by the individual member. Networks may not provide funds to member agencies for that organization's existing activities.

Applicants may request funds to continue existing network activities if they continue to support the goals of the network and are consistent with other provision in the Request for Applications. Currently funded Rural Health Network applicants are encouraged to build upon activities funded in previous contracts rather than continuing to fund the same activities year after year. It is not intended that the Rural Health Network Development Program will fund continuing services or activities indefinitely.

30. Attachment #4 provides a sample signature page; it is referred to on page 18. There is not an area on the sample page for signatures; it just list participant name, title, and contact information. Are signatures required? If signatures are required, can organizations (i.e., CEOs, Executive Directors, etc.) sign on behalf of their employees who participate with the Network? For example, we have various hospital employees that hold seats on our various Committees, should we enter information for (and possibility get a signature for) each individual Committee member or can the hospital CEO be entered or sign on behalf of all of the Committee members who participate with our Network?

The form in Attachment #4 is a sample signature page. Applicants may re-create it to include a signature line. Network members need only to be listed once and the person at the head of the organization should be the signatory.

31. Should we include only those participating organizations, facilities, and individuals that will be included as part of funded activities if awarded? Or should all organizations, facilities, and individuals that participate with the network, regardless of Rural Health Network Development Program funding, be included?

All network members should sign the Cover Sheet. The intention of this form is to ensure that all members understand the application and funding request.

32. If signatures are required, does the original copy of the application require original signatures on the signature page or are copies of signatures acceptable?

Copies of signatures are acceptable.

33. What is the page limit? There is conflicting information in the Application Content and Review Process sections.

The page limit is 17 pages as described below.

Project Summary: 1 page
Service Area Description: 2 pages

Network Organization: 2 pages
Work Plan Narrative: 4 pages
Project Management: 1 page
Project Continuation: 1 page
Budget: 4 pages
Evaluation: 2 pages

Preferred Eligibility Points must be requested on the Cover Page. Supporting documentation must be included as an attachment and will not count towards the page limit.

34. Is the State Health Improvement Plan one of the initiatives with which Network Plan objectives must be consistent, the other 3 being the Triple Aim Initiative, the MRT Waiver, and the Affordable Care Act?

Yes, networks are expected to include objectives that include the State Health Improvement Plan, the Triple Aim, the MRT Waiver Amendment, and/or the Affordable Care Act. Objectives that are not consistent with those initiatives will not be considered.

35. Clarify public health innovation.

Public Health Innovation is a section of the New York State Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT) Waiver Amendment and may be found at:

http://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/redesign/docs/2012-08-06_waiver_amendment_request.pdf

36. We are an existing rural health network that provides the full continuum of health care. Our proposal seeks to develop an intersecting rural network via MOU and/or contract to support development of a Medicaid Health Home for a four-county rural region. The new network would be comprised of the existing rural network of health care providers plus the four county mental health and health departments, local and regional not for profit behavioral health and other appropriate providers necessary to operate a successful MHH.

Does the network for the Medicaid Health Home services need to be separately, legally incorporated or will contractual agreements suffice, since this structure is permitted under the MHH Program guidelines?

Contractual agreements are sufficient.

37. Will this arrangement qualify us for the priority “given to successful and experienced networks proposing operational projects” as stated in Section III. A. on page 3?

That is a possibility but is dependent on the application.

38. May funds be used to make minor renovations on the Other line?

All budgeted items must relate directly to network objectives and activities. Minor renovations will only be allowed if there is a clear connection between the expense and the approved objectives of the network. Expenses on the Other line must be clearly identified.

Allowable expenses include appropriate staff, equipment, travel, supplies, telephone/internet, printing, postage, consultant, accounting and legal fees.

Ineligible expenses include:

- Budget items related to the direct provision of services.
- Mini-grants, or other funds, to network members for activities that are not related to network objectives.
- Mini-grants, or other funds, to network members or other organizations for said organizations existing activities.
- Budget items that are not related to the network's specific objectives.
- Food and beverages.
- Miscellaneous items.

39. Page 4. III. B. State and Federal Health Care Reform: We are challenged to develop a work plan and corresponding budget for our network's role in emerging state and federal health care reform. Examples include: Regional Health Planning and supporting our rural constituents who are without health insurance in accessing and understanding the Health Insurance Exchange process. While we can do our best to craft a strategy for our one organization, is there anything being initiated or supported through the Office of Rural Health that would help to systemically define additional roles and/or additional resources for Rural Health Networks in emerging state and federal health care reform? We don't want to request Rural Health Network Development Program funding for health care reform related services that could be funded through other sources.

At this time, it is not anticipated that there will be additional funding available through the Charles D. Cook Office of Rural Health for health care reform related activities.

40. Page 16. V.A.7. Budget/Use of Grant Funds: We will be asking for funding necessary to support an expanded work plan. Should we be awarded a grant, but at a funding level less than requested, how will the work plan be revised? Is it permissible to clearly prioritize work plan elements in the application so that in the event full funding is not awarded it is clear which work plan activities move forward and which do not.

Successful applicants will enter a negotiation process with the Charles D. Cook Office of Rural Health to review the ineligible budget items and work plan activities that should, or should not, be pursued. Applicants may prioritize their work plans in the application if they choose but this is not required.

Applicants are reminded to submit **one complete original and signed application, along with four hard copies of the application and one copy on a separate flash drive** readable in Adobe pdf format.

Applications will not be accepted via fax or e-mail.