



Building Workforce Capacity of Rural and Frontier Local Health Departments to Respond to COVID-19

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is the voice of the nearly 3,000 local health departments (LHDs) across the country. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments work to protect and improve the health of all people and all communities. NACCHO provides capacity-building resources that support LHD leaders in developing and implementing public health policies and practices to ensure communities have access to the vital programs and services that protect them from disease and disaster. Additionally, NACCHO engages with federal policymakers on behalf of LHDs to ensure adequate resources, appropriate public health legislation, and sensible policies are in place to address the myriad of public health challenges facing communities.

With support from the Center for State, Tribal, Local and Territorial Support (CSTLTS) within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is pleased to offer a funding opportunity to provide training and technical assistance (TTA) support to build workforce capacity in rural and frontier local health departments in response to COVID-19. The purpose of these awards is to increase the capacity of LHDs that serve rural and frontier jurisdictions to effectively respond to, recover from, and build community resiliency related to the COVID pandemic and future public health emergencies. NACCHO will achieve this goal by providing support to build LHD workforce capacity and strengthen partnerships focused on COVID testing, contact tracing, and vaccine administration. NACCHO will also identify, develop, support, assess, and disseminating best, promising, and innovative practices as well as implementation resources in support of COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, and vaccine administration in rural and frontier communities.

Awards of **up to \$35,000 each** will be provided to approximately 35 LHDs to build local workforce capacity through activities that will meet and demonstrate specific need(s) and goal(s) to advance their public health system readiness related to COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, and vaccine administration. Only one award will be made per site. Opportunities for peer networking will also be provided by NACCHO.

Selections will be made in December 2020 and the project period will run from January 1, 2021, pending contract execution, through November 12, 2021. An LHD may be a part of one submitted application only, whether they are the application lead or a support agency included in the application. Completed applications must be submitted/uploaded online **by 11:59 PM ET on Monday, December 7, 2020.**

NACCHO and CDC will host an informational web conference on November 10, 2020, at 1:00pm ET to provide an overview of the RFA and application, and answer questions. Applicants need not wait for this optional call to begin or submit applications. The call will be recorded and posted to NACCHO's website, along with a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document.

All necessary information regarding the project and application process may be found in this RFA and accompanying [Application Document](#). If you have outstanding questions after reading these documents in detail, please e-mail preparedness@naccho.org.

FUNDING OVERVIEW AND TIMELINE

NACCHO will issue awards in the form of fixed priced contracts for up to \$35,000 each to selected LHD demonstration sites that agree to complete required activities. Applications must be submitted by **11:59 pm EST, Monday, November 30, 2020**, and selections will occur on or around December 18, 2020. The project period will begin on January 1, 2021 and shall terminate on November 12, 2021.

ELIGIBILITY AND CONTRACT TERMS

This RFA is open to governmental LHDs whose main, administrative office is located in rural or frontier/remote areas.

Definitions

- **Rural:** For this project, rural will be defined by [Rural Urban Commuting Area \(RUCA\)](#) codes to determine the degree of urbanization of a community. RUCA codes 4-10 are for jurisdictions that are considered rural.
- **Frontier:** For this project, frontier will be defined by RUCA code 10 to indicate areas with very small population density.

You may check the RUCA code for your LHD ZIP code by downloading the "Rural-Urban Commuting Area Codes, ZIP code file" spreadsheet on [Rural-Urban Commuting area codes](#) and looking up the RUCA code for each of your ZIP codes. You may also visit [RHIhub](#) and enter your ZIP code into the search bar, and find the "Rural Urban Commuting Areas (RUCAs) by census tract." Both resources will provide you with the same RUCA code for your office's ZIP code.

Agreement with NACCHO's standard contract terms and conditions is a requirement. **No modifications to the terms or contract language will be made. Contractors that cannot agree to NACCHO's contract language should not apply for this initiative.** See [Attachment A: NACCHO Standard Contract Language](#) for more information. As part of the application, the contractor/organization will be asked to verify that they have read NACCHO's standard contract language and have provided a copy to the individual with signing authority at your organization for advanced consideration. It is the responsibility of the selected site to return a signed copy of the contract within 30 calendar days of receipt.

Note: NACCHO has a specific contract template as approved by the State’s General Counsel for applicants from State of FL and TX. Please email us for a copy should you need it.

Selected LHDs will enter into a contract with NACCHO to complete the deliverable(s) specified in the application. NACCHO will issue awards in the form of Fixed Price Contract and pay each awarded Applicants payment in exchange for completion of the assigned scope of work and accepted deliverables. Deliverables will be priced as a percentage of the total award amount. NACCHO will provide a payment schedule in accordance with the assigned completion percentage (estimated three (3) payments). Please note: NACCHO reserves the right to make changes to the project timeline and payment schedule if necessary.

KEY APPLICATION DATES

Event	Date
Release of Rural and Frontier Workforce site project RFA	November 2, 2020
Optional informational webinar for potential applicants	November 10, 2020 @ 1:00pm ET
Application period closes	November 30, 2020 @ 11:59pm ET
Anticipated notice of award	Approximately December 18, 2020

PROJECT EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

This project seeks to enhance workforce capacity of LHDs in rural and frontier settings to prevent and respond to COVID-19 by supporting COVID vaccine administration, and contact tracing and testing.

Each selected site will work with NACCHO to explore gaps within their Emergency Operations Plan and identify areas for capacity building assistance. Taking a systems approach, sites will consider workforce capacity and capability needs related to vaccine planning and contact tracing and testing and may include how to acquire, leverage, and/or share resources with community partners. Applicants are to select one or both categories of work and to indicate which training and technical assistance (TTA) topic areas would be most helpful to build the applicant LHD’s contact tracing and testing and/or vaccination administration workforce capacity within the 11-month period of performance. Each site, in coordination with their partners, will develop an action plan for the period of performance that will guide TTA activities, as well as a sustainability plan to support efforts afterwards.

Note that all awardees will be also required to engage in a post-award TTA assessment near the beginning of the period of performance to inform NACCHO’s role supporting site workforce efforts, project action and sustainability planning activities, as well as participate in the project’s process and outcome assessments.

SUMMARY OF REQUIRED GRANT ACTIVITIES TO BE COVERED BY AWARD

1. Participate in a virtual kick-off call
2. Participate in a post-award TTA assessment

3. Participate in approximately four (4) virtual peer learning sessions
4. Participate in bi-monthly individual or sub-cohort (TBD) TA sessions
5. Submit a draft and final project action and sustainability plans
6. Submit an interim and final project progress reports
7. Participate in a virtual project wrap-up web call
8. Participate in evaluation activities

CATEGORIES OF WORK

The development of the action plan will focus around two COVID-19 response priority areas*:

- Category 1: Contact Tracing and Testing
- Category 2: Vaccination Administration

**Given the nature of the pandemic, NACCHO and CDC recognize the possibility of new priorities emerging that may require a revision to the action plan and a shift in project focus. NACCHO will work with selected sites to implement any needed changes.*

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AREAS

Applicants will be asked to **select up to 3 training and technical assistance areas** they feel would best support their workforce capacity-building efforts related to contact tracing and testing, and /or vaccination administration, depending upon which categories of work selected. These areas will assist NACCHO in providing TTA and inform the development and implementation of site action plans and activities in the selected category(ies) of work.

- **Technical training:** Knowledge and skill development in technical areas related to contact tracing and testing and vaccine administration that will assist frontline staff to implement these activities.
- **Health Equity:** An increased understanding of health equity principles and how they relate to and can be incorporated into emergency preparedness activities.
- **Public communications:** A focus on engaging with the community in a meaningful way that builds trust and understanding of COVID-19 response activities.
- **Public health authorities:** Insights on how to utilize authorities available to public health during emergencies that expedite administrative processes and procedures, streamline procurement and personnel actions, and support the implementation of protective health measures.
- **Emergency procurement:** Understand how to recognize procurement capacity and capability to become better able to efficiently respond to public health emergencies.
- **Emergency reporting practices:** Determine how to streamline policies and procedures focused on public health data reporting processes.
- **Other:** other COVID workforce topics not listed above (indicated by applicant).

Period of Performance and Deliverables

Applicants will be required to describe the COVID-19 workforce development **activities** they propose to undertake in order to accomplish those deliverables, the corresponding **timeframes**, and **expected outcomes**. The applicant will also be required to provide a **budget for accomplishing deliverables**, which will be used as a basis for the award amount. For guidance on allowable expenses see the budget section in the Application Document.

The demonstration site period of performance is January through November 2021. The following general timeline and activities are subject to change.

Date	Activities/Deliverables
Dec-20	Execution of contract
January 2021	Start period of performance
	Attendance at virtual awardee kick-off web call (all sites)
	Submission of site training and TA (TTA) needs assessment
Feb-21	Participation in initial individual/subcohort TA session
Mar-21	Participation in virtual peer learning session #1 (all sites)
	Submission of initial project action plan due
April 2021	Participation in Individual/subcohort TA session
May 14, 2021	Interim progress report due
May 2021	Virtual peer learning session #2 (all sites)
Jun-21	Participation in Individual/subcohort TA session
Jul-21	Virtual peer learning session #3 (all sites)
Aug-21	Participation in Individual/subcohort TA session
Sep-21	Virtual peer learning session #4 (all sites)
Oct-21	Draft project sustainability plan due
	Participation in Individual/subcohort TA session
Nov-21	Participation in project wrap-up web call (all sites)
	Participation in process and outcome assessment activities
Nov.12, 2021	Submission of final action plan, sustainability plan, and progress report
	End of period of performance

Invoicing Schedule

Applicants will be required to submit three (3) invoices during the period of performance for activities accomplished and deliverables accomplished according the following schedule:

Invoice Period & Max. Amount	Activities/Deliverables	Payment %
<u>Invoice #1:</u> December 2020 to	Attendance at virtual awardee kick-off web call (all sites)	5%
	Submission of site training and TA (TTA) needs assessment	35%

Applications due by 11:59 PM ET on Monday, 12/7/20

February 2021: 50% maximum	Participation in initial individual/subcohort TA session	10%
Invoice #2: March to June 2021: 25% maximum	Submission of initial project action plan	5%
	Interim progress report due	10%
	Participation in both (2) all-site peer and both (2) individual/subcohort TA sessions	10%
Invoice #3: July to Nov. 2021: 25% maximum	Participation in both (2) all-site peer learning sessions, at least one (1) individual/subcohort TA session, and the project wrap-up call	10%
	Submission of draft project sustainability plan; participation in process and outcome assessment activities	5%
	Submission of final action plan, sustainability plan, and progress report	10%

APPLICATION PROCESS

- 1) Review the requirements and expectations outlined in this RFA and in the [Application Document](#).
- 2) Applicants are urged to carefully consider the categories and deliverable(s) that will be both meaningful and feasible to accomplish during the project timeframe, as described earlier.
- 3) Read [NACCHO's Standard Contract Language \(Attachment A\)](#) and provide a copy to the individual with signing authority for the LHD (or entity that would be contracting with NACCHO, e.g., city government), including any relevant financial or legal offices for advanced consideration. Selected LHDs must agree to the contract language and be able to sign and return a contract to NACCHO within approximately 30 days of receiving it. **No modifications will be allowed.**
- 4) Complete the [Application Document](#) with your responses and save a copy for your records.
- 5) Complete a proposed project budget, using the [provided template](#), and budget narrative.
- 6) Complete the [online submission form](#) and email the required attachments by **11:59 PM ET on Monday, November 30, 2020**. No applications will be accepted by fax, e-mail, or postal mail. Please note:
 - **Applicants will complete the Application Document into the online submission form. We encourage you to download the Application Document in word format and complete it in its entirety prior to entering answers into the online form. Online form will close at 12:00 AM ET on Tuesday, December 1, 2020.**
 - **Project budgets should be emailed separately to preparedness@naccho.org using the subject line "rural/frontier COVID workforce TTA grant - <name of LHD>"**
 - **Each LHD may submit one application only.**

SELECTION PROCESS

Eligible applicants for this project will be evaluated by NACCHO and scored based on the following criteria:

- **Recent/current COVID-19 Workforce Activities (10%):** Applicant describes recent/current COVID-19 contact tracing and testing and vaccine administration activities. In addition, applicant provides a description of efforts ensuring adequate staffing and workforce training to engage in COVID-19 contact tracing and testing and vaccine administration activities. Description should include information on workforce structure, hiring processes, and all virtual and in-person training activities.
- **Recent/current COVID-19 Workforce Challenges (30%):** Submission includes an account of challenges that have been encountered during applicant's COVID-19 response which have affected workforce capacity and the ability to implement COVID-19 programs and initiatives.
- **Technical Assistance Needs (30%):** Applicant provides descriptions of up to three priority training and technical assistance needs based on available training and technical assistance areas offered by this funding opportunity. Narrative should include details regarding workforce needs, capacity, and capabilities, which may include staffing, training, and retention.
- **Proposed Project Activities (25%):** Applications will include a high-level description of proposed project activities as envisioned by sites at the time of submission (As previously noted, activities may be subject to change following receipt of award). This narrative should include:
 - **Description of Activities:** Applicant describes proposed project activities under the project award.
 - **Utilization of Funding:** Description of how project funding would be spent if applicant's submission is successful.
 - **Sustainability:** Applicant explains how to sustain workforce capacity gains realized through project activities.
 - **Health Equity:** Clearly conveyed presence of health equity principles within identified project activities.
 - **People at Increased Risk and Other People Who Need to Take Extra Precautions:** Considerations for addressing people at increased risk of and others who need to take extra precautions due to COVID-19, as described by CDC.¹
- **Proposed Budget and Budget Narrative (5%):** Provide a detailed fixed price per deliverable budget, including detailed projected costs for the completion of the project. Maximum award is up to \$35,000 each. **Attachment B (Contractor Budget Template)** outlines the general format in which the budget should be presented. A budget narrative must also accompany the budget and indicate the costs associated with each proposed activity.
 - **Allowable Expenses:** Funds may not be used for equipment purchases. Per HHS requirements, funds awarded under this RFP are prohibited from being used to pay the direct salary of an individual at a rate in excess of the federal Executive Schedule Level II (currently \$197,300).

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html>).

It is NACCHO's desire to have a diverse pool of communities in this cohort. Reviewers will consider geographic distribution, jurisdictional characteristics, and population size served to ensure diversity in local health departments selected.

ATTACHMENTS

The following are links to additional information, forms, and resources needed for this application submission:

- A) [NACCHO Standard Contract Language](#)
- B) [Budget template](#).