

**NACCHO**

National Association of County & City Health Officials

*The National Connection for Local Public Health*



# Project Public Health Ready (PPHR) Process Guide

**(Updated 2019)**

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## Introduction

### Overview

Project Public Health Ready (PPHR) is a competency-based training and recognition program that assesses preparedness and assists local health departments (LHDs), or groups of LHDs collaborating as a region, to respond to emergencies. The PPHR criteria are nationally recognized standards for local public health preparedness. The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) regularly updates the criteria to align with recent federal initiatives, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Public Health Emergency Preparedness (CDC PHEP) capabilities and Public Health Accreditation Board's (PHAB) Standards and Measures. PPHR has three (3) project goals:

PPHR criteria are composed of three goals:

- **Goal I:** All-hazards Preparedness Planning
- **Goal II:** Workforce Capacity Development
- **Goal III:** Demonstration of Readiness through Exercise or Real Event

More information about PPHR is available at <http://www.naccho.org/pphr>

### Vision

LHDs will be fully integrated into the response community and prepared to respond to any emergency.

### Mission

To protect the public's health and increase the public health infrastructure by building LHD preparedness capacity and capability with assistance from state health departments using sustainable tools to plan, train, and exercise a continuous improvement model.

## Background

### History

PPHR was established in 2002 with funding from a cooperative agreement from the CDC. PPHR first began as a workforce development project, but it later emerged as a bioterrorism planning project, eventually becoming the all-hazards public health preparedness planning and assessment program that it is today. The program is currently funded through the CDC Division of State and Local Readiness and was previously funded through the Coordinating Office of Terrorism Preparedness and Emergency Response.

### Structure and Oversight

An external advisory committee composed of LHD staff from across the country oversee the program's development and direction. Over the years, this workgroup has spearheaded the development and revision of PPHR standards and procedures, guided evaluations and assessments of the application process, and provided feedback on related programs, such as the CDC's public health preparedness

capabilities and the Public Health Accreditation Board's national accreditation. NACCHO also continuously incorporates its own evaluation data into review process, including recommendations by external consultants engaged and feedback gathered from applicants and reviewers after each review cycle.

### Benefits of Participating in PPHR

- Demonstrate your agency's commitment to preparedness.
- Create distinction among other health departments and agencies.
- Drive internal continuous quality improvement and build a culture of collaboration among LHD staff.
- Strengthen community and other stakeholder partnerships and increase confidence in your agency's preparedness capability.
- Local health departments that have successfully achieved Project Public Health Ready (PPHR) recognition (or re-recognition) status will qualify for exemption from the planning elements of the ORR process. Successful and active PPHR recognition will fulfill the local ORR planning requirements for the duration of the five-year recognition period.
- Demonstrate your agency's alignment with federal initiatives including CDC's public health preparedness capabilities, National Incident Management System (NIMS), the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP), and the National Health Security Strategy's Biennial Implementation Plan.
- Strengthen working relationships and improve integration within the preparedness community by working with response partners to develop and enhance plans and processes
- Drive plan updates and allow department staff to become more familiar with emergency preparedness plans.
- Grants LHDs credibility and visibility through national recognition endorsed by the CDC and NACCHO.
- Grants access to knowledgeable peers for review and comment on performance.
- Showcase your organization competitiveness for recruitment of high-level staff.
- Prepares LHDs for other recognition programs (i.e. PHAB, CDC's ORR).

### PPHR Application Overview

#### PPHR Criteria

PPHR applications must include evidence for each of the three goals of the PPHR criteria, including the following documents:

#### Goal I

- All-hazards preparedness plan (or emergency operations plan)
- Supporting documents or annexes to the all-hazards preparedness plan

#### Goal II

- Training needs assessment
- Training plan
- Supporting documents

### Goal III

- Evidence of an exercise including a comprehensive after-action report (AAR) and improvement plan; *or*
- Evidence of a response to a real event including an incident action plan (if more than one incident action plan is created, then all incident action plans should be submitted), an AAR, and an improvement plan.
- Future Exercise Plan

### Re-Recognition

Agencies with current PPHR recognition status that wish to maintain that status past its five-year expiration date have the option of using the PPHR re-recognition criteria. The PPHR re-recognition criteria are a revised set of standards that focus on demonstrating how quality improvement processes have been utilized to maintain levels of preparedness since the agency was previously granted PPHR recognition. They also assess agencies on new standards that have been added or updated since their previous recognition date.

To use the re-recognition criteria, agencies must have current PPHR recognition status at the time of their re-recognition application submission date. Applicants that are eligible to use the re-recognition criteria are not required to do so. Re-recognition applicants may decide for any reason to apply using the standard PPHR criteria, with the understanding that they will be assessed the full \$5,000 application fee associated with using those criteria.

### Content

A complete application includes the following items:

- An executive summary that provides background information on the applicant's agency and jurisdiction.
- Emergency operations plans, annexes, and supporting documentation that meet the PPHR criteria.
- A functional, hyperlinked PPHR criteria "crosswalk." Each criteria element should have at least one hyperlink to evidence in plans, annexes, or supporting documentation demonstrating that the applicants meets all of the element's requirements.

### Application Fee

The fee supports a designated point of contact to provide technical assistance on the application process, the interpretation of the PPHR criteria, the development of appropriate evidence, and the following services:

- Orientation and training for all national reviewers at the start of each review cycle;
- Travel and expenses for an in-person meeting for national reviewers to conduct application reviews;
- Associated IT costs, such as conference calls with national reviewers and software and server space used for application submission, review, and storage;

- A public recognition reception for PPHR-recognized agencies at the annual Preparedness Summit;
- Recognition materials, including plaques presented to recently PPHR-recognized agencies at the annual recognition reception;

The fee for applicants (without current PPHR recognition status) is \$5,000. The fee for applicants pursuing re-recognition using the re-recognition criteria is \$2,500. NACCHO collects half the fee (Part 1) when submitting the Intent to Apply Form. The Intent to Apply Form will be due the fall prior to the application submission date. The second half (Part 2) is due upon the submission of the PPHR application.

It should be noted that while the application fee can be considered high to incoming applicants, it is substantially less than many similar accreditation applications. PPHR applicants may take advantage of existing language included by the CDC in the 2012 PHEP Cooperative Agreement Funding Opportunity Announcement that designates PPHR as an allowable PHEP program cost, allowing use of PHEP funds to pay for the PPHR application fee.

## PPHR Eligibility Guidelines

### Overview

In order to apply for PPHR recognition, applicants must be both an eligible agency and participate with an approved cohort. An agency is eligible depending on whether the agency roles and responsibilities related to preparedness and response align with the intended audience of the PPHR criteria. Approved cohorts are generally through the state-supported model, however [see below](#) for other approved cohorts. All new applicants must belong to a cohort of applicants in order to apply to PPHR.

### Applicant Eligibility

The governmental entity that has the primary statutory or legal responsibility for public health in a Tribe or at the local level is eligible to apply for PPHR recognition. To be eligible, such entities must operate in a manner consistent with applicable federal, Tribal, state, territorial, and local statutes. A health department must meet one of the following definitions<sup>1</sup> to apply for PPHR recognition.

#### Local Health Department

An LHD is defined, for the purposes of PPHR recognition, as the governmental body serving a jurisdiction or group of jurisdictions geographically smaller than a state and recognized as having the primary statutory authority to promote and protect the public's health and prevent disease in humans. This authority is defined by the state's constitution, statute, or regulations or established by local ordinance or through formal local cooperative agreement or mutual aid. The entity may be a locally governed health department, a local entity of a centralized state health department, or a city, city-county, county, district, or regional health department.

#### Tribal Health Department

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Who is Eligible?* Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). [www.phaboard.org/accreditation-overview/who-is-eligible/](http://www.phaboard.org/accreditation-overview/who-is-eligible/).

A Tribal health department is defined, for the purposes of PPHR recognition, as a federally recognized Tribal government,<sup>2</sup> Tribal organization, or inter-Tribal consortium, as defined in the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, as amended. Such departments have jurisdictional authority to provide public health services, as evidenced by constitution, resolution, ordinance, executive order, or other legal means, intended to promote and protect the Tribe's overall health, wellness and safety; prevent disease; and respond to issues and events. Federally recognized Tribal governments may carry out the above public health functions in a cooperative manner through formal agreement, formal partnership, or formal collaboration.

## Regional Health Department

Any eligible local or Tribal health departments, as defined above, may apply jointly for PPHR recognition if certain essential services are provided by formally sharing resources, and the manner in which this occurs is clearly demonstrated. The formal resource-sharing must be centralized in a regional agency, and that agency must hold primary responsibility for public health response activities at the local level. Interested entities should refer to the *Regional Guidance Document* which can be found in NACCHO's [Virtual Communities](#) and contact NACCHO for further discussion and guidance regarding their eligibility.

## Cohort Eligibility

### State Supported Model

The majority of agencies seeking PPHR recognition apply through the state-supported model. The model requires that the PPHR application process for all LHDs within the state be coordinated by a state-level entity, such as a state health department or State Association of County and City Health Officials (SACCHO). This approach has many benefits to both applicants and their states, including the following:

- Encourages collaboration and coordination between state and local health departments for emergency preparedness planning, as well as between LHDs in the same state.
- Assists in identifying resources and resource gaps within the state.
- Provides a framework for the state to measure progress and ensure that local public health preparedness is meeting national standards.
- Aligns with federal plans and guidance.
- Demonstrates return on investment of federal and state funding.

The state-supported model requires that a state identify a minimum number of applicants, as determined by NACCHO, to submit PPHR applications. The coordinating state agency must also identify a state lead (or multiple individuals working together in the state lead role) to be a liaison between LHD applicants and NACCHO. An agency may begin the PPHR application process only after connecting with its state lead. (For more information on the roles and responsibilities of the state lead, please [see below](#)).

Certain aspects of the state-supported model may vary from state to state. Some states may require all or certain agencies in their state to apply to PPHR, while others may make the program voluntary. Some

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<sup>2</sup> As evidenced by inclusion on the list of recognized Tribes mandated under 25 U.S.C. § 479a-1. Publication of List of Recognized Tribes.

states may fund the program at the state level, while others may require applicants to cover some or all of the cost.

### **Other Cohort Models**

NACCHO recognizes that many of the benefits of the state-supported model could, under certain circumstances, also apply to other groups of LHDs applying as a cohort. Examples of cohorts that might benefit from collaborative planning through PPHR could include the following:

- Major cities located in different states wanting to collaborate on planning challenges unique to large urban areas;
- LHDs in different states that plan together as part of a single Cities Readiness Initiative area; or
- LHDs engaged in formal regional planning efforts in a state not participating in PPHR's state supported model.

For this reason, NACCHO will consider requests from cohorts of applicants that wish to submit PPHR applications outside the state-supported model. Exceptions will be granted on case-by-case basis to cohorts of applicants that meet the following minimum requirements:

- Are comprised of at least three LHDs;
- Already formally engage with each other on preparedness planning activities;
- Can demonstrate that a cohort approach to PPHR will benefit their preparedness planning efforts. NACCHO may also require that the cohort identify an application coordinator to take on what would typically be the role of a state lead. Interested entities should contact NACCHO to discuss implementation.

### **Re-Recognition Prior to State-Supported Model**

Agencies recognized before the implementation of the state-supported model are eligible to apply for re-recognition if their status has not expired. NACCHO will work directly with these applicants as a re-recognition cohort as they prepare PPHR applications for national review.

## **PPHR Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Applicant**

The applicant is the LHD or agency that is the leader for the jurisdiction in responding to an emergency. The applicant is responsible for becoming familiar with the criteria and organizing the application materials accordingly.

- Applicants are responsible for gathering all application materials and submitting the application on time.
- Applicants will coordinate with the state lead and NACCHO to clarify any questions.
- Applicants will have a designated period in November to submit additional evidence requested by reviewers.
- Applicants not initially recognized may choose to go through a resubmission process.

- Recognized agencies are honored at a PPHR recognition reception, which is held in conjunction with the annual Preparedness Summit.

## State Lead

A state lead is the contact at the state level that coordinates the implementation of PPHR and facilitates communications between applicants and NACCHO. The state lead plays a critical role as the primary contact point for both agencies applying for recognition and for NACCHO.

- State lead will contact NACCHO to describe the state’s interest in implementing PPHR.
- State lead will coordinate the state’s PPHR implementation process, including a timeline for applications from all interested agencies.
- State lead will coordinate with NACCHO to conduct an in-person PPHR orientation.
- State lead will ensure the timely submission of Intent to Apply Forms with applicable (Part 1) fees at least 10 months before the application submission date for all applying agencies.
- State lead will hold PPHR monthly planning calls or meetings for all applicants in the state and will invite NACCHO staff as needed, at least quarterly.
- State lead will work with NACCHO to provide additional ongoing technical assistance to applicants as needed and appropriate.
- State lead will coordinate in-state technical review of PPHR applications using state reviewers.
- State lead will ensure timely submission of final PPHR applications, accompanied by Final Review Forms and applicable (Part 2) fees, for each applicant by the last business day in August.

## NACCHO

NACCHO supports applicants and state leads through the process, makes any clarifications necessary, coordinates the national review process, and works with state leads and national reviewers during the application and review periods.

- NACCHO will manage the PPHR process, including appropriate revisions to the PPHR Criteria and Process Guide, Submission Guide, guidance, and related materials.
- NACCHO will provide technical assistance to PPHR applicants throughout the application preparation period, including providing an initial orientation, participating in periodic conference calls, and maintaining regular communication with the state lead.
- NACCHO will conduct the national review process, including the application submission process, recruiting and training national reviewers, planning and executing an in-person review meeting, compiling and coordinating reviewer feedback, and any necessary resubmission processes.
- NACCHO will coordinate the recognition process, including notification of recognition status, hosting an annual recognition reception, and providing ongoing opportunities to promote successful PPHR recognition status for recognized agencies.

## National Reviewers

National reviewers assess whether applications meet the PPHR criteria and provide robust feedback to applicants to further enhance preparedness planning and response. As subject matter experts in the field,

national reviewers ensure the integrity and fairness of the PPHR review process. Responsibilities of a national reviewer include the following:

- Volunteer approximately 50 hours of independent and team review over a three-month period, in addition to an in-person review meeting.
- Each member of a three-person team independently reviews assigned applications and coordinates with team members through team conference calls.
- Score the application against the PPHR criteria and provide robust feedback on the materials submitted by the applicant.
- Participate in an in-person review meeting in the fall to identify additional information needed from applicants and ensure consistency among review teams.
- Independently review any additional materials and conduct a final review call to determine recognition status.
- If necessary, national reviewers participate in the resubmission process in the spring.

## Application Timeline

### Overview

The PPHR application development process takes approximately one year and occurs on a fixed yearly cycle. Eligible potential applicants should express their interest early in PPHR to provide maximum flexibility regarding the application cycle in which they apply.

**Applicants should be aware that the PPHR process is a long and extensive commitment with over 300 required criteria elements. Agencies who choose to apply for PPHR recognition should evaluate their resources and internal and external obligations and be prepared to account for the additional amount of time expected to complete the PPHR application. NACCHO encourages applicants to prepare a succession plan in the event of leadership and/or personnel changes during the application process.**

### Pre-Application Steps

1. Review the PPHR [Applicant Eligibility Guidelines](#) to determine if your agency is eligible to participate.
2. [Contact NACCHO](#) to see whether your state already participates in PPHR. If your state currently participates NACCHO will share the name of your current state lead (go to step 4).
3. If your state is not currently participating in PPHR, please contact NACCHO at [pphr@naccho.org](mailto:pphr@naccho.org). PPHR currently uses a state-supported model in which all agencies intending to apply from within the same state must identify a common state lead to be a liaison between NACCHO and PPHR applicants. NACCHO works with eligible agencies and representatives to determine how they may implement PPHR, including identifying a state lead and a NACCHO point of contact.
4. The state lead coordinates with eligible agencies within that state to determine a timeline in completing applications. The state lead shares this information with NACCHO, updating projections as needed.
5. NACCHO provides the state lead with the appropriate application requirements and guidance, including an Intent to Apply Form, for the designated review cycle.

6. The state lead submits an Intent to Apply Form and Part 1 of the application fee<sup>3</sup> at least 10 months before the intended application submission date for each applicant in the state. PPHR reviews are conducted annually each fall.
7. NACCHO conducts an orientation by phone with the state lead and stakeholders from the eligible agencies within that state. This orientation is conducted when the first group of agencies within that state is ready to begin the application process.

### Sample Application Preparation Timeline

This timeline is for reference purposes and is subject to change. PPHR applicants should work with their state leads and NACCHO to modify this timeline as needed.

#### August 2019 - Interest and Research

Applicants who may be interested in applying for PPHR should visit the website <http://www.naccho.org/pphr> to review information about PPHR program and the application process.

#### September 2019 - Gap Analysis

Conduct a gap analysis to ensure that you have a training needs assessment and evidence for an exercise or real event that will meet the PPHR criteria. If LHDs do not already have these components, consult the state lead and NACCHO's point of contact to ensure that a plan is in place for completion as early as possible in the application preparation timeline. To facilitate this process, NACCHO has developed a **Gap Analysis Tool**, available on the [PPHR website](#). Applicants can use the Gap Analysis Tool to walk through each criteria element and assess whether (1) the agency's current documentation meets the criteria; and (2) if the documentation does not meet the criteria, which documents, and resources are needed to make the necessary updates.

#### October 2019—Forms and Fees

Submit the **Intent to Apply Form** and first payment to NACCHO by last business day in October. Forms can be scanned and emailed directly to [pphr@naccho.org](mailto:pphr@naccho.org). Payments are also accepted online via credit card, instructions can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

#### November 2019 – Orientation

Participate in an orientation with the state lead and all applicants from your state who will be submitting an application. Orientations are coordinated by the state lead, with a presentation from NACCHO.

#### November 2019 – March 2020 – Evidence Development

Work with staff, partners, stakeholders, and subject matter experts to address gaps or revise any plans based on the results of your gap analysis. Consult the PPHR Toolkit and Recommended Resources for PPHR

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<sup>3</sup> Applicants who have been oriented are required to submit Part 1 of the application fee and an Intent to Apply Form before beginning work on their applications. The Intent to Apply Form requires signatures from both the director of the applying agency and the state lead and up-to-date contact information that can be used for official documentation.

for relevant models, templates, etc. NACCHO can provide technical assistance regarding content or process questions.

Applicants should participate in monthly calls which are coordinated by your state lead. These phone calls are an opportunity to ask questions or share concerns with your fellow applicants, state lead, or NACCHO. Applicants should maintain regular contact, outside of the monthly calls if necessary, with their state lead regarding progress, questions, and concerns.

### **March 2020 – April 2020 – Assessment & Continued Evidence Development**

Assess your progress-to-date to determine if your application is on track for your in-state review. Continue to work on your application and communicate questions, concerns, and resource requests through your state lead and participate in monthly calls and share brief progress updates.

### **May 2020 – Draft Completion**

At this point, applicants should complete a draft application. Draft an executive summary for your application to provide background on your jurisdiction and how it is structured. There will be an in-state technical review. The technical review is a test run before it is reviewed at the national level.

### **May 2020 - June 2020 – In-State Review**

Your state lead will coordinate a process for two to three reviewers who did not participate in the application preparation to assess your application for content and evidence in order to provide feedback on overall application readiness. NACCHO will work with State leads to recruit and train in-state reviewers.

### **June 2020 – Address Reviewer Feedback**

Discuss and address feedback from your in-state review. Engage subject matter experts for any revisions to plans. Ensure that you will have enough time to finalize any changes to plans, applicants cannot receive full credit for any draft document submitted. If plan changes cannot be accomplished by the deadline, the deadline to defer an application (see [Deferring an Application](#) below) is 5:00pm ET the last business day in June.

### **July 2020 – Final Check**

Ensure that all formatting is correct, and all hyperlinks are functioning. Test the final application on several computers. Continue to communicate final submission related questions and concerns through the state lead; Participate in monthly calls and share brief progress updates. The state lead should also review the application at least two weeks before the submission date to verify that it is functional, complete, and well positioned for national review. The last day to consult NACCHO for content-related technical assistance is the last business day in July.

### **August 2020 – Submission & Fees**

Submit final application for national review via ShareFile as well as mailed a flash drive, along with the Application Signature Form and Part 2 payment by 5:00 PM ET the last business day in August. Payments

are also accepted online via credit card, instructions can be viewed by [clicking here](#). The Application Signature Form requires signatures from the director of the applying agency and the state lead.

### **October 2020 – National Review Meeting**

The state lead will be asked to be available by phone during the national review meeting to represent applications being reviewed and answer any questions from the national reviewers. Applicants should be prepared to address any questions or concerns raised by the national reviewers during the one week additional evidence period following the meeting.

### **November 2020 – Additional Evidence Request**

Applicants will receive an additional evidence request from reviewers in early November. Applicants will have a designated period to provide additional evidence for any elements not fully met. Dates for this period will be reflected on the review calendar.

### **January 2021 – Notification**

Applicants will be notified whether their application received recognition or re-recognition at this time.

### **January 2021 – April 2020**

Applicants who do not receive recognition will receive their assessed application with additional feedback. Applicants will spend this time addressing their remaining deficiencies.

### **April 2021 – Final Re-Submission**

Applicants must submit their final re-submission to ShareFile by the last business day in April.

### **June 2021 – Final Decision**

Applicants will receive a final notification whether their application received recognition or re-recognition at this time.

### **Deferring an Application**

Developing a PPHR application is a time-intensive process, and if unintended obstacles arise, an applicant may wish to postpone the submission of their PPHR application. As stated on the Intent to Apply form, an applicant may decide for any reason to postpone submission of their PPHR application for one calendar year. The applicant must notify NACCHO in writing by the last business day of June in the year their application is due. NACCHO will retain the Part 1 payment that has already been submitted, and the Part 2 payment and Application Signature Form will be due on the applicant's new submission date.

If a new version of the PPHR criteria is released the fall after the applicant defers, the applicant will be responsible for using that new version and updating any work they have already completed accordingly. NACCHO staff will continue to provide technical assistance throughout the next year until the next

application submission date. Once the application is submitted, it is reviewed in the same manner as any other PPHR application.

Applicants utilizing the re-recognition criteria may not defer an application because their recognition status will lapse in the meantime, making them ineligible to use the re-recognition criteria. A re-recognition applicant wishing to defer may switch to the standard PPHR criteria, though they will then be responsible for the full \$5000 application fee (rather than the \$2500 for using the re-recognition criteria).

## National Review Process

### Review Cycle Timeline

A detailed review cycle calendar will be shared with all state leads and national reviewers approximately six months prior to each national review meeting. This calendar is specific to each cycle and details the dates and activities for all parties involved with the national review process.

### National Reviewer Selection

Each application is reviewed by three (3) PPHR national reviewers working as a team. PPHR reviewers are selected for their strong understanding of local public health preparedness and response. Most are LHD personnel and include planners, responders, exercise and training coordinators, and epidemiologists. Qualified candidates from state health departments and other organizations may also be reviewers. All reviewers must attend an orientation and training webinar and complete a training assessment to demonstrate their understanding of the PPHR review process, criteria, and scoring and commenting procedures.

Reviewers for each review cycle will be selected from the list of interested individuals based on the following criteria:

- No affiliation with any application that is under review in the current cycle (this includes both applicants and state leads);
- Agreement to all reviewer responsibilities;
- Previous PPHR experience as a national reviewer (for lead and primary reviewers);
- Public health preparedness experience, particularly on the local level;
- Current position and its relationship to public health preparedness;
- Whether the reviewer's state or local health department is pursuing or interested in pursuing PPHR recognition;
- Involvement in developing or contributing to a past PPHR application; and
- Diversity of geography and professional background.

Reviewers are then assigned to three-person teams based on diversity of background and level of experience as a PPHR national reviewer. Each team has a team lead (ideally two or more recent PPHR national reviews), primary reviewer (at least one previous PPHR national review) and secondary reviewer (no previous PPHR national review experience required).

## National Review Meeting

Review teams initially work independently to review and comment on applications, communicating via e-mail and conference calls. NACCHO provides clarifying documents and answers questions. In October, the review teams meet in person to reconcile their independent assessments and reach consensus on the initial scores and comments for each application. Review teams can connect with the state lead for each application to ask any clarification questions.

## Additional Evidence Period

After the in-person reviewer meeting, NACCHO provides a “request for additional information” along with reviewer feedback to each applicant. Applicants have a brief period to respond to the reviewers’ requests by hyperlinking the additional evidence form to new evidence. The new evidence must be uploaded to the NACCHO ShareFile site at the end of this period.

## Scoring

After receiving the additional evidence from the applicants, reviewers can revise and finalize their scores and comments. Each criteria element is scored by a review team as Met, Partially Met, or Not Met. An applicant cannot be recognized with a score of Not Met anywhere in the application. A certain number of Partially Mets are allowed, as determined by the PPHR scoring algorithm.

## Recognition

### Possible Review Process Outcomes

- **Recognized**—applicants receive recognition with zero Not Mets and a limited number of Partially Mets below the appropriate thresholds in their final review form. Recognition status is valid for five years.
- **Provisionally Recognized**—applicants receive provisional recognition with zero Not Mets and a number of Partially Mets that is just beyond the threshold. Provisionally recognized applicants are recognized for a period of six months and must complete the resubmission process to address the Partially Mets in their application to become fully recognized.
- **Not Recognized**—applicants whose final review forms contain Not Mets or have too many Partially Mets are not recognized. Applicants must complete the resubmission process to be recognized.

## Notification

When the review process is complete, NACCHO will send files for each applicant to the appropriate state lead with the following content:

- Final review forms for each application;
- Recognition letter indicating the applicant’s recognition status, signed by NACCHO’s executive director, and providing information on the recognition ceremony (if applicable);
- Press release templates for agencies that receive recognition;

Recognized agencies are also invited to a reception held annually at the Preparedness Summit where they are honored and awarded a plaque.

### Resubmission

If an agency is not recognized, there will be another opportunity to resubmit evidence for their Partially Met or Not Met criteria. The agency lead must inform NACCHO through the state lead if the agency wishes to resubmit their application.

### Re-recognition

PPHR-recognized agencies maintain their recognition status for five years. Agencies are invited to participate in re-recognition during the year their recognition status expires. The re-recognition process uses the same submission process, deadline, and timeline as first-time recognition, but applicants must use the most recent version of the re-recognition criteria, which are different than the criteria for first-time applicants.

NACCHO will track the recognition expiration of PPHR-recognized agencies and will contact their state lead one year before their recognition expires and remind them to apply. If an agency chooses not to participate in re-recognition, its recognition status will lapse and it will no longer be considered recognized through PPHR. Agencies that choose to pursue PPHR recognition after their status has lapsed are NOT eligible to apply using the re-recognition criteria.

## Appeal Procedures

### Overview

These procedures reflect the appeals process available to PPHR applicants once a recognition decision has been made. The appeals procedure details the circumstances in which appeals are eligible and also outlines the appeals process. The PPHR applicant must allow its application to complete the full review process, including the resubmission process, before appealing a recognition decision. The appeal procedures specified herein are the exclusive remedy for a PPHR applicant that believes a negative decision was unwarranted. The appeals process may not be used to seek reimbursement or refund of application fees. These procedures are not a formal legal process; therefore, many legal rules and practices are not observed, and the procedures are designed to operate without the assistance of attorneys. However, any party may be represented by an attorney with respect to an appeals procedure.

### Process

1. Applicants that are not recognized after completing the initial review and resubmission processes are eligible to appeal a status of not recognized for the following reasons:
  - a. National reviewer oversight (e.g., requests beyond criteria scope, introducing new deficiencies beyond what was included in the additional information request)
  - b. NACCHO oversight (e.g., final scoring calculation error)
  - c. Documented inconsistency in final review scores between national review teams
2. Eligible applicants must submit a notice for appeal within 30 days of notification of recognition status by NACCHO. The right to appeal is forfeited after that time.

3. A notice of appeal must cite a rationale listed in #1, a justification for the rationale, and any supporting documentation or evidence to support the justification. The notice should also include details of which criteria elements the applicant is requesting the appeals committee to consider in its decision.
4. The appeals committee (comprising two members of the advisory group and one NACCHO staff member) will review the notice of appeal to determine whether the applicant is eligible for an appeal. The appeals committee will notify the applicant of the eligibility of the appeal within 30 days of this initial review.
5. The appeals committee will meet by teleconference to review the information submitted by the applicant and determine the outcome of the appeal. If needed, the appeals committee may request additional information or clarification from the applicant.
6. In most circumstances, the appeals committee will share a final decision (by e-mail and by mail) with the applicant within 60 days following determination that an appeal is warranted. The timeline for the appeals committee's final review may vary depending on the volume of information to be reviewed but should be completed within 90 days.
7. The decision of the appeals committee is final.
8. Recognized agencies will be listed as recognized based on their initial application date. Agencies that remain not recognized are eligible to reapply for PPHR at a future date. Agencies that reapply will be considered to be submitting a new application; any and all new application procedures and fees will apply.

## Terms and Definitions

**Executive summary:** A document included within the PPHR application that describes the agency's demographics, preparedness coordination, and how the agency addresses the criteria for each of the three PPHR goals. Specific items that must be included in the executive summary can be found in the PPHR Criteria.

**Additional Evidence:** The process where after receiving the initial reviewers' feedback, applicants have 5 business days to submit additional evidence to reviewers in the fall.

**PPHR criteria:** The complete listing of the PPHR requirements. The document contains all PPHR goals, measures, sub-measures, and evidence elements. Applicants submit documentation to address the PPHR criteria. The PPHR criteria are national standards for local public health preparedness. The criteria are updated regularly to reflect the most recent federal initiatives and innovations in local public health preparedness practice.

**Gap analysis:** The process by which applicants compare the PPHR Criteria to their current preparedness capacities and identify specific areas of need. Completing a gap analysis will provide an applicant a more complete picture of its strengths and gaps. It will also assist in developing a work plan for PPHR implementation.

**Goal:** The PPHR Criteria include three overarching integral goals of public health preparedness: Goal 1: All-Hazards Preparedness Planning; Goal 2: Workforce Capacity Development and; Goal 3: Quality Improvement through Exercises and Real Events.

**In-state review:** In-depth review of the PPHR application that is completed by the state leads or designated technical reviewers. This in-state review is done prior to the national review to ensure that PPHR applications are complete and ready to be reviewed by the national reviewers.

**Intent to Apply Form:** A form that agencies interested in participating in PPHR must complete before beginning work on their PPHR application.

**Local PPHR lead:** The individual at the applying agency who coordinates the PPHR application process and is the primary contact for the state lead.

**PPHR applicant:** Eligible agency that is participating in the PPHR process and submitting an application for PPHR recognition.

**PPHR implementation (PPHR process):** The process by which an agency participates in PPHR and undergoes the PPHR review process. In the PPHR state-supported model, the state or SACCHO, in collaboration with NACCHO, will work with their agencies to implement PPHR.

**PPHR national reviewers:** Local health officials and public health preparedness professionals who volunteer to review PPHR applications to determine whether PPHR applicants have successfully met all the PPHR requirements. NACCHO recruits and trains national reviewers.

**PPHR orientation meeting:** A meeting coordinated by the state lead for all the local PPHR leads in the state at the beginning of the PPHR process. NACCHO staff attend the meeting to introduce the PPHR process, review the PPHR Criteria, and answer questions. The goal of the meeting is to promote peer exchange and information sharing among the agencies participating in PPHR.

**PPHR recognition:** The status given to PPHR applicants who have successfully completed the PPHR process and who have received sufficient passing scores from PPHR national reviewers. PPHR recognition is valid for five years.

**Re-recognition:** The process that recognized PPHR agencies undergo four years following their initial PPHR recognition. Successfully completing this process ensures that the agency will retain its PPHR recognition status. Re-recognition is an integral part of the PPHR continuous quality improvement process.

**Resubmission:** The process that PPHR applicants who do not receive recognition may undergo in an attempt to obtain recognition. During resubmission, documentation for only those areas that were found deficient (Partially Met or Not Met) during the initial PPHR review are requested.

**Review process:** The formal review process through which PPHR recognition status is determined. PPHR applications are reviewed by PPHR national reviewers.

**Review team:** Each application is assigned to a review team comprising three national reviewers who review a PPHR application and score each evidence element.

**State lead:** The individual at the state health department, SACCHO, or other state-level agency who coordinates the activities of all agencies participating in PPHR in the state.

**Technical assistance:** Assistance provided by NACCHO, state leads, and in-state reviewers directly to the PPHR applicants during the implementation and application preparation processes. NACCHO also assists the state lead. This assistance includes conference calls or in-person meetings for planning PPHR implementation, in-person orientation or virtual meeting, responses to questions about the criteria via phone or e-mail, reviewing plans or parts of plans, monthly conference calls, and technical reviewer training. In the state-supported model, the state leads collect questions and requests for assistance from applicants and determine the most appropriate avenue to provide answers (e.g., from NACCHO, other applicants, state health department staff). The state lead compiles and keeps a list of questions and answers.

## Contact Us

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