

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



Federal Office of Rural Health Policy
Policy and Research Division

National Rural Health Information Clearinghouse Program

Funding Opportunity Number: HRSA-20-024
Funding Opportunity Types: New, Competing Continuation
Assistance Listings (CFDA) Number: 93.223

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Fiscal Year 2020

Application Due Date: December 2, 2019

MODIFIED on October 8, 2019 to increase the Anticipated Total Annual Available FY 2020 Funding to \$3,000,000. Revisions: Executive Summary; Section II.2 Summary of Funding; and Section IV.6 Funding Restrictions.

*Ensure your SAM.gov and Grants.gov registrations and passwords are current immediately!
HRSA will not approve deadline extensions for lack of registration.
Registration in all systems, including SAM.gov and Grants.gov,
may take up to 1 month to complete.*

Issuance Date: August 19, 2019

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Authority: Section 711(b) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 912(b)), as amended.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is accepting applications for fiscal year (FY) 2020 National Rural Health Information Clearinghouse Program. The purpose of this program is to serve as a national clearinghouse for information on rural health to support access to healthcare and improve population health in rural communities.

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| Funding Opportunity Title: | National Rural Health Information Clearinghouse Program |
| Funding Opportunity Number: | HRSA-20-024 |
| Due Date for Applications: | December 2, 2019 |
| Anticipated Total Annual Available FY 2020 Funding: | \$3,000,000 |
| Estimated Number and Type of Award: | 1 cooperative agreement |
| Estimated Award Amount: | Up to \$3,000,000 per year subject to the availability of appropriated funds |
| Cost Sharing/Match Required: | No |
| Period of Performance: | June 1, 2020 through May 31, 2025 (5 years) |
| Eligible Applicants: | <p>Eligible applicants include domestic public, private and nonprofit entities. Domestic faith-based and community-based organizations, tribes, and tribal organizations are eligible to apply.</p> <p>See Section III.1 of this notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) for complete eligibility information.</p> |

Application Guide

You (the applicant organization/agency) are responsible for reading and complying with the instructions included in HRSA's *SF-424 Application Guide*, available online at <http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/apply/applicationguide/sf424guide.pdf>, except where instructed in this NOFO to do otherwise.

Technical Assistance

HRSA has scheduled the following technical assistance:

Webinar

Day and Date: Wednesday, September 18, 2019

Time: 2 – 3 p.m. ET

Call-In Number: 1-888-455-9679

Participant Code: 9579636

Weblink:

https://hrsa.connectsolutions.com/ta_webinar_national_rural_health_information/

Playback Number: 1-800-294-2476

Passcode: 91819

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I. Program Funding Opportunity Description

1. Purpose

This notice announces the opportunity to apply for funding under the National Rural Health Information Clearinghouse Program. The purpose of this program is to serve as a national clearinghouse for information on rural health to support access to healthcare and improve population health in rural communities. A successful program will continue to build upon the federally funded resources that currently exist and serve as a primary resource for information, opportunities, and tools related to rural health.

2. Background

This program is authorized by Section 711(b) of the Social Security Act, (42 U.S.C. 912(b)), as amended. HRSA's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) is the focal point for rural health activities within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). FORHP plays two distinct but complementary roles within HHS. The first is to advise the Secretary on rural policy issues across the department, including interactions with the Medicare and Medicaid programs, and support policy-relevant research on rural health issues. The second is to administer grant programs focused on supporting and enhancing health care delivery in rural communities. By locating both functions in the same office, FORHP is able to use its policy role to inform the development of grant programs and use its grant role to provide community-level perspective when assessing the impact of HHS policy on rural areas. You can find additional information about the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy at <https://www.hrsa.gov/rural-health/index.html>.

FORHP is statutorily required to establish and maintain a clearinghouse for collecting and disseminating information on rural health care issues, research findings related to rural health care and innovative approaches to the delivery of health care in rural areas. Specific language related to FORHP's Section 711 charge is located at https://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/ssact/title07/0711.htm.

II. Award Information

1. Type of Application and Award

Types of applications sought: New, Competing Continuation.

HRSA will provide funding in the form of a cooperative agreement. A cooperative agreement is a financial assistance mechanism where substantial involvement is anticipated between HRSA and the recipient during performance of the contemplated project.

HRSA program involvement will include:

- Assisting the recipient in identifying new and emerging rural health issues.
- Collaborating in the planning and development of publications and web resources on rural health issues.
- Assisting with the process for providing individualized information to public requests.
- Assisting the recipient in the identifying key contacts including rural health stakeholders at the national, state, and local level; researchers; technical assistance providers; and policy experts.
- Assisting the recipient in identifying key national, regional and state meetings on rural health.
- Assisting the recipient in identifying associations with an interest in rural health.
- Assisting the recipient in identifying promising practices in provision of rural health care.
- Assisting the recipient in identifying funding sources for rural health projects.

The cooperative agreement recipient's responsibilities will include:

- Collecting, analyzing, synthesizing, and disseminating promising practices in rural health and the key findings of leading rural researchers.
- Responding to FORHP requests, comments, and questions on a timely basis.
- Responding to a wide range of information requests on rural issues through operation of a toll-free phone service and via email. Examples of topics covered in such requests could include recruitment and retention of health care personnel, funding of rural health clinics or projects and use of non-physician providers in rural settings.
- Systematically seeking out resources on a range of issues relevant to rural health and providing access to them via the web, email, social media, and other channels appropriate to rural stakeholders.
- Development and maintenance of a Section 508-compliant web site that includes, but is not limited to, issues identified in this NOFO.
- Assisting rural residents in navigating the complex web of federal agencies, foundations and TA providers that support rural health care. This includes being able to assist with inquiries on funding by identifying the most appropriate public and private sources of funding for specific types of rural projects such as, but not limited to, telemedicine, construction or rehabilitation of clinical sites, or new health education programs.
- Making human and technical resources available, as necessary, either directly or contractually to operate the clearinghouse including assistance with public dissemination of HRSA grantee information and access to an academic library that includes at least a focus or concentration in the health sciences.
- Producing and electronically distributing email updates including a newsletter on rural health distributed by email and available on the website.
- Attending and exhibiting at key national, regional or state meetings identified by FORHP and the applicant.
- Maintaining a web-based directory of federal, state, foundation, and other funding available to support rural health.
- Tracking, posting, or linking to policy documents and federal regulations that affect rural health care.

- Developing online toolkits relevant to the recipients of FORHPs community-based grants.
- Tracking and working with philanthropic organizations involved or potentially involved with funding rural health initiatives.
- Producing an annual report listing accomplishments of the clearinghouse, identifying topics frequently requested by users, and outlining future activities.

2. Summary of Funding

HRSA expects approximately \$3,000,000 to be available annually to fund one (1) recipient. The actual amount available will not be determined until enactment of the final FY 2020 federal appropriation. You may apply for a ceiling amount of up to \$3,000,000 total cost (includes both direct and indirect, facilities and administrative costs) per year. This program notice is subject to the appropriation of funds, and is a contingency action taken to ensure that, should funds become available for this purpose, HRSA can process applications and award funds in a timely manner. The period of performance is June 1, 2020 through May 31, 2025 (5 years). Funding beyond the first year is subject to the availability of appropriated funds for the National Rural Health Information Clearinghouse Program in subsequent fiscal years, satisfactory recipient performance, and a decision that continued funding is in the best interest of the Federal Government.

All HRSA awards are subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements at [45 CFR part 75](#).

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include domestic public, private and nonprofit entities. Domestic faith-based and community-based organizations, tribes, and tribal organizations are eligible to apply.

2. Cost Sharing/Matching

Cost sharing/matching is not required for this program.

3. Other

HRSA will consider any application that exceeds the ceiling amount non-responsive and will not consider it for funding under this notice.

HRSA will consider any application that fails to satisfy the deadline requirements referenced in [Section IV.4](#) non-responsive and will not consider it for funding under this notice.

NOTE: Multiple applications from an organization are not allowable.

If for any reason (including submitting to the wrong funding opportunity number or making corrections/updates) an application is submitted more than once prior to the application due date, HRSA will only accept your **last** validated electronic submission, under the correct funding opportunity number, prior to the Grants.gov application due date as the final and only acceptable application.

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

HRSA **requires** you to apply electronically. HRSA encourages you to apply through [Grants.gov](#) using the SF-424 workspace application package associated with this notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) following the directions provided at <http://www.grants.gov/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>.

The NOFO is also known as “Instructions” on Grants.gov. You must provide your email address when reviewing or preparing the workspace application package in order to receive notifications including modifications and/or republications of the NOFO on Grants.gov before its closing date. Responding to an earlier version of a modified notice may result in a less competitive or ineligible application. *Please note you are ultimately responsible for reviewing the [For Applicants](#) page for all information relevant to desired opportunities.*

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Section 4 of HRSA’s [SF-424 Application Guide](#) provides instructions for the budget, budget narrative, staffing plan and personnel requirements, assurances, certifications, and abstract. You must submit the information outlined in the Application Guide in addition to the program-specific information below. You are responsible for reading and complying with the instructions included in HRSA’s [SF-424 Application Guide](#) except where instructed in the NOFO to do otherwise. You must submit the application in the English language and in the terms of U.S. dollars (45 CFR § 75.111(a)).

See Section 8.5 of the *Application Guide* for the Application Completeness Checklist.

Application Page Limit

The total size of all uploaded files may not exceed the equivalent of **80 pages** when printed by HRSA. The page limit includes the abstract, project and budget narratives, attachments, and letters of commitment and support required in the *Application Guide* and this NOFO. Standard OMB-approved forms that are included in the workspace application package do not count in the page limit. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement and proof of non-profit status (if applicable) do not count in the page limit. **We strongly urge you to take appropriate measures to ensure your application does not exceed the specified page limit.**

Applications must be complete, within the specified page limit, and validated by Grants.gov under the correct funding opportunity number prior to the deadline to be considered under this notice.

Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility, and Voluntary Exclusion Certification

- 1) You, on behalf of the applicant organization certify, by submission of your proposal, that neither you nor your principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by any federal department or agency.
- 2) Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in 45 CFR § 75.371, including suspension or debarment. (See also 2 CFR parts 180 and 376, and 31 U.S.C. 3321).
- 3) Where you are unable to attest to the statements in this certification, an explanation shall be included in Attachment 8: Other Relevant Documents.

See Section 4.1 viii of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) for additional information on all certifications.

Program-Specific Instructions

In addition to application requirements and instructions in Section 4 of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) (including the budget, budget narrative, staffing plan and personnel requirements, assurances, certifications, and abstract), include the following:

i. Project Abstract

See Section 4.1.ix of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#).

ii. Project Narrative

This section provides a comprehensive framework and description of all aspects of the proposed project. It should be succinct, self-explanatory, consistent with forms and attachments, and well organized so that reviewers can understand the proposed project.

Successful applications will contain the information below. Please use the following section headers for the narrative:

- ***INTRODUCTION -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 1***
This section provides a brief overview of the purpose of the proposed project, the vision for the clearinghouse, and highlights the goals for the five-year period of performance.

- **NEEDS ASSESSMENT** -- *Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 1*
This section outlines the need for a national clearinghouse for information on rural health to support access to health care and improve population health in rural communities. You should demonstrate an understanding of the evolution of rural health care and the historical challenges facing rural communities in terms of resources and demographics, including populations experiencing cultural and linguistic barriers to care. Use and cite demographic data whenever possible to support the information provided. Please discuss the information gaps that the project hopes to address.
- **METHODOLOGY** -- *Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 2 and 4*
Describe the methods that you propose using to meet the program requirements and expectations outlined below in this NOFO. Describe how you will make human and technical resources available, as necessary, to operate a clearinghouse that identifies and provides access to a full range of existing information about the provision of rural health care and rural population health as well as creates new content to address information gaps.

Describe how you will address the following activities/priorities of this program:

1. Operate and maintain both a toll-free phone service and a Section 508-compliant website with key rural health information of interest to those interested in improving rural health care and rural population health. The applicant must demonstrate the capacity to have an operational website on the first day of the period of performance. Make human and technical resources available, as necessary.
2. Produce and maintain an electronic inventory of key national and state organizations with interests in rural health that includes links to their websites and descriptions of their missions.
3. Produce a general interest newsletter on rural health that is electronically published through e-mail and the clearinghouse website.
4. Develop a 10-member advisory board of rural health experts to advise the recipient of how to best meet the informational needs of the rural community.
5. Promote the clearinghouse to ensure maximum exposure among rural health care providers, associations, stakeholders and rural communities. This includes attending and exhibiting at key national, regional or state meetings on rural health care.
6. Develop a plan for collecting, analyzing, synthesizing, and disseminating promising practices with emphasis on evaluation findings from the Rural Health Outreach Best Practices and Tracking project.
7. Research and share information about rural health programs and interventions as well as policy documents and federal regulations that affect rural health care.
8. Develop, collect and share information rural health care's economic impact on communities.
9. Develop online toolkits related to the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy's community-based grants with the goal of allowing other rural communities to reproduce sustainable rural health services.

10. Develop and maintain a web-based inventory of rural health-relevant funding available from a wide range of federal, state and public/private foundation sources.

- *WORK PLAN -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 2*
Align the work plan with the intent and goals of the National Rural Health Information Clearinghouse Program. Activities in the work plan should link to the priority needs described. The work plan should be a matrix that carefully integrates goals, objectives, activities and outputs. These activities should be time framed, realistic and measurable, and the means of implementing the work plan should be clearly expressed. The plan should also indicate the person responsible for each activity.
- *RESOLUTION OF CHALLENGES -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 2*
Discuss challenges that you are likely to encounter in designing and implementing the activities described in the Work Plan, and approaches that you will use to resolve such challenges. Demonstrate your ability to respond to the needs of users with flexibility and with individually customized information.
- *EVALUATION AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT CAPACITY -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 3*
Discuss your plans for monitoring and assessing performance, including the methods to be employed by project staff to ensure that proposed activities are being successfully documented and completed, based on the overall work plan.
- *ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 5*
Describe your organization's current mission and structure (including an organizational chart – **Attachment 5**), existing infrastructure and capacity. Describe how these all contribute to the ability of your organization to conduct the program requirements and meet program expectations. Discuss your organization's experience in maintaining a clearinghouse for collecting and disseminating information on rural health care issues, research findings relating to rural health care and innovative approaches to the delivery of health care in rural areas. Your organization must be affiliated, either directly or contractually, with a university-based library with a health science focus.

Describe the experience, skills, and knowledge of individuals on staff, including materials published and previous work of a similar nature.

Describe your experience working with the full range of key rural interest groups (including State Offices of Rural Health, state and national rural health associations, foundations, research organizations, and other state and national organizations). Discuss your ability to illustrate their knowledge of rural health issues and of the key individuals and organizations involved in ensuring availability of health services in rural areas.

| NARRATIVE GUIDANCE | |
|--|---|
| To ensure that you fully address the review criteria, this table provides a crosswalk between the narrative language and where each section falls within the review criteria. Any attachments referenced in a narrative section may be considered during the objective review. | |
| <u>Narrative Section</u> | <u>*Review Criteria</u> |
| Introduction | (1) Need |
| Needs Assessment | (1) Need |
| Methodology | (2) Response and (4) Impact |
| Work Plan | (2) Response |
| Resolution of Challenges | (2) Response |
| Evaluation and Technical Support Capacity | (3) Evaluative Measures |
| Organizational Information | (5) Resources/Capabilities |
| Budget and Budget Narrative | (6) Support Requested – the budget section should include sufficient justification to allow reviewers to determine the reasonableness of the support requested. |

iii. Budget

See Section 4.1.iv of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#). Please note: the directions offered in the SF-424 Application Guide may differ from those offered by Grants.gov. Follow the instructions included in the Application Guide and the additional budget instructions provided below. A budget that follows the Application Guide will ensure that, if HRSA selects the application for funding, you will have a well-organized plan and by carefully following the approved plan can avoid audit issues during the implementation phase.

Reminder: The Total Project or Program Costs are the total allowable costs (inclusive of direct **and** indirect costs) incurred by the recipient to carry out a HRSA-supported project or activity. Total project or program costs include costs charged to the award and costs borne by the recipient to satisfy a matching or cost-sharing requirement, as applicable.

The Department of Defense and Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Act, 2019 and Continuing Appropriations Act, 2019 (P.L. 115-245), Division B, § 202 states, "None of the funds appropriated in this title shall be used to pay the salary of an individual, through a grant or other extramural mechanism, at a rate in excess of Executive Level II." See Section 4.1.iv Budget – Salary Limitation of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) for additional information. Note that these or other salary limitations may apply in the following fiscal year, as required by law.

iv. Budget Narrative

See Section 4.1.v. of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#).

v. Attachments

Provide the following items in the order specified below to complete the content of the application. **Unless otherwise noted, attachments count toward the application page limit.** Indirect cost rate agreements and proof of non-profit status (if applicable) will not count toward the page limit. You must clearly label **each attachment**.

Attachment 1: Staffing Plan and Job Descriptions for Key Personnel (see Section 4.1. of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#)) (REQUIRED)

Keep each job description to one page in length. Include the role, responsibilities, and qualifications of proposed project staff.

Attachment 2: Timekeeping Process (REQUIRED)

Include a description of your organization's timekeeping process to ensure that you will comply with the federal standards related to documenting personnel costs.

Attachment 3: Biographical Sketches of Key Personnel (REQUIRED)

Include biographical sketches for persons occupying the key positions described in Attachment 1, not to exceed two pages in length per person. In the event that a biographical sketch is included for an identified individual not yet hired, include a letter of commitment from that person with the biographical sketch.

Attachment 4: Letters of Agreement, Memoranda of Understanding, and/or Description(s) of Proposed/Existing Contracts (OPTIONAL)

Provide any documents that describe working relationships between your organization and other entities and programs cited in the proposal. Documents that confirm actual or pending contractual or other agreements should clearly describe the roles of the contractors and any deliverable. Make sure any letters of agreement are signed and dated.

Attachment 5: Project Organizational Chart (REQUIRED)

Provide a one-page figure that depicts the organizational structure of the project.

Attachment 6: For Multi-Year Budgets--5th Year Budget (REQUIRED)

After using columns (1) through (4) of the SF-424A Section B for a 5-year period of performance, you will need to submit the budget for the 5th year as an attachment. Use the SF-424A Section B, which does not count in the page limit: however, any related budget narrative does count. See Section 4.1.iv of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#).

Attachments 7-15: Other Relevant Documents (15 is the maximum number of attachments allowed)

Include here any other documents that are relevant to the application, including letters of support. Letters of support must be dated and specifically indicate a commitment to the project/program (in-kind services, dollars, staff, space, equipment, etc.).

3. Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number and System for Award Management

You must obtain a valid DUNS number, also known as the Unique Entity Identifier, for your organization/agency and provide that number in the application. You must also register with the System for Award Management (SAM) and continue to maintain active SAM registration with current information at all times during which you have an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by an agency (unless the applicant is an individual or federal agency that is exempted from those requirements under 2 CFR § 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the agency under 2 CFR § 25.110(d)).

HRSA may not make an award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable DUNS and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time HRSA is ready to make an award, HRSA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as the basis for making an award to another applicant.

If you have already completed Grants.gov registration for HRSA or another federal agency, confirm that the registration is still active and that the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) has been approved.

The Grants.gov registration process requires information in three separate systems:

- Dun and Bradstreet (<http://www.dnb.com/duns-number.html>)
- System for Award Management (SAM) (<https://www.sam.gov>)
- Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov/>)

For further details, see Section 3.1 of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#).

SAM.GOV ALERT: For your SAM.gov registration, you must submit a [notarized letter](#) appointing the authorized Entity Administrator. The review process changed for the Federal Assistance community on June 11, 2018.

If you fail to allow ample time to complete registration with SAM or Grants.gov, you will not be eligible for a deadline extension or waiver of the electronic submission requirement.

4. Submission Dates and Times

Application Due Date

The due date for applications under this NOFO is December 2, 2019 *at 11:59 p.m. ET*. HRSA suggests submitting applications to Grants.gov at least **3 calendar days before the deadline** to allow for any unforeseen circumstances. See Section 8.2.5 – Summary of emails from Grants.gov of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) for additional information.

5. Intergovernmental Review

The National Rural Health Information Clearinghouse Program is subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, as implemented by 45 CFR part 100.

See Section 4.1 ii of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) for additional information.

6. Funding Restrictions

You may request funding for a period of performance of up to 5 years, at no more than \$3,000,000 per year (inclusive of direct **and** indirect costs). Awards to support projects beyond the first budget year will be contingent upon congressional appropriation, satisfactory progress in meeting the project's objectives, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the Federal Government.

The General Provisions in Division B of the Department of Defense and Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Act, 2019 and Continuing Appropriations Act, 2019 (P.L. 115-245) are in effect at the time this NOFO is posted. Please see Section 4.1 of HRSA's SF-424 Application Guide for additional information. Awards will be made subsequent to enactment of the FY2020 appropriation. The NOA will reference the FY2020 appropriation act and any restrictions that may apply. Note that these or other restrictions may be updated, as required by law, upon enactment of a FY 2020 appropriations act.

You are required to have the necessary policies, procedures, and financial controls in place to ensure that your organization complies with all legal requirements and restrictions applicable to the receipt of federal funding including statutory restrictions on use of funds for lobbying, executive salaries, gun control, abortion, etc. Like those for all other applicable grants requirements, the effectiveness of these policies, procedures, and controls is subject to audit.

V. Application Review Information

1. Review Criteria

HRSA has procedures for assessing the technical merit of applications to provide for an objective review and to assist you in understanding the standards against which your application will be reviewed. HRSA has critical indicators for each review criterion to assist you in presenting pertinent information related to that criterion and to provide the reviewer with a standard for evaluation.

These criteria are the basis upon which the reviewers will evaluate and score the merit of the application. The entire proposal will be considered during objective review.

Review criteria are used to review and rank applications. The National Rural Health Information Clearinghouse Program has six review criteria. See the review criteria outlined below with specific detail and scoring points.

Criterion 1: NEED (10 points) – Corresponds to Section IV’s Introduction and Needs Assessment

The extent to which the application:

- Demonstrates an understanding of the need for a national clearinghouse for collecting and disseminating research on and innovative projects for the delivery of health care services in rural areas. The applicant should also demonstrate the ability to provide information on possible sources of funding for such projects. Dissemination can include but is not limited to producing an online topical newsletter on rural health.
- Describes how the National Rural Health Information Clearinghouse Program will address information gaps for rural communities.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the evolution of rural health and social services and the historical challenges facing rural communities in terms of resources and demographics.

Criterion 2: RESPONSE (35 points) – Corresponds to Section IV’s Methodology, Work Plan, and Resolution of Challenges

Alignment with Section IV’s Methodology (15 points)

The extent to which:

- The applicant’s work plan and methodology clearly and effectively address each of the 10 items numbered under Section IV’s Methodology.

Alignment with the Intent and Goals of the Program (20 points)

The extent to which:

- The applicant’s work plan clearly aligns with the intent and goals of the National Rural Health Information Clearinghouse Program, in particular making a full range of existing information about the provision of rural health care and rural population health available while also creating new content to address information gaps.
- The applicant’s work plan carefully integrates goals, objectives, activities, outputs and how the outputs will be measured, and the matrix outlines the individual(s) responsible for carrying out each activity and includes a project timeline.
- The application includes a sound approach for ensuring its flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of its customers served by the project; applicant describes any anticipated problems/challenges and approaches to addressing them.
- The application clearly describes how human and technical resources will be made available to rural stakeholders.

Criterion 3: EVALUATIVE MEASURES (10 points) – Corresponds to Section IV’s Evaluation and Technical Support Capacity

The effectiveness of the method proposed to monitor and evaluate the project results.

Extent to which the application describes:

- A plan for monitoring and assessing its performance. The applicant proposes methods to be employed by project staff for ensuring that proposed activities are being successfully documented and completed, based on the overall work plan.

Criterion 4: IMPACT (10 points) – Corresponds to Section IV’s Methodology

- The extent to which the proposed methodology and work plan will create and/or maintain access to wide range of information about the provision of rural health care and rural population health.
- The feasibility and effectiveness of plans for dissemination of National Rural Health Information Clearinghouse Program materials, tools, and/or impact of information provided to users.

Criterion 5: RESOURCES/CAPABILITIES (25 points) – Corresponds to Section IV’s Organizational Information

The extent to which project personnel are qualified by training and/or experience to implement and carry out the projects.

Existing Infrastructure and Capabilities (5 points)

The extent to which:

- The existing infrastructure and capabilities of the applicant organization, and quality and availability of facilities and personnel to fulfill the needs and requirements of the proposed project. This includes an affiliation with a university-based library with a health science focus.

Experience (20 points)

The extent to which:

- Applicant organization’s experience in maintaining a clearinghouse for collecting and disseminating information on rural health care issues, research findings relating to rural health care and innovative approaches to the delivery of health care in rural areas.
- Prior experience working with the full range of key rural interest groups (including State Offices of Rural Health, state and national rural health associations, foundations, research organizations, and other state and national organizations) and ability to illustrate their knowledge of rural health issues and of the key individuals and organizations involved in ensuring availability of health services in rural areas.

Criterion 6: SUPPORT REQUESTED (10 points) – Corresponds to Section IV’s Budget

The reasonableness of the proposed budget in relation to the objectives, the complexity of the activities, and the anticipated results. In particular, the extent to which the application:

- Demonstrates a realistic, adequately justified budget consistent with the proposed project work plan and proposed expenditures are allocated for allowable purposes.
- Demonstrates that the costs of administration, monitoring/evaluation, and quality assurance are reasonable and proportionate to the costs of service provision.
- Demonstrates that the costs of the proposed project are economical in relation to the proposed service utilization.

2. Review and Selection Process

The objective review process provides an objective evaluation to the individuals responsible for making award decisions. The highest ranked applications receive consideration for award within available funding ranges. HRSA may also consider assessment of risk and the other pre-award activities described in Section 3 below. See Section 5.3 of HRSA’s [SF-424 Application Guide](#) for more details.

3. Assessment of Risk

HRSA may elect not to fund applicants with management or financial instability that directly relates to the organization’s ability to implement statutory, regulatory or other requirements ([45 CFR § 75.205](#)).

HRSA reviews applications receiving a favorable objective review for other considerations that include past performance, as applicable, cost analysis of the project/program budget, assessment of your management systems, ensuring continued applicant eligibility, and compliance with any public policy requirements, including those requiring just-in-time submissions. HRSA may ask you to submit additional programmatic or administrative information (such as an updated budget or “other support” information) or to undertake certain activities (such as negotiation of an indirect cost rate) in anticipation of an award. However, even at this point in the process, such requests do not guarantee that HRSA will make an award. Following review of all applicable information, HRSA’s approving and business management officials will determine whether HRSA can make an award, if special conditions are required, and what level of funding is appropriate.

Award decisions are discretionary and are not subject to appeal to any HRSA or HHS official or board.

Effective January 1, 2016, HRSA is required to review and consider any information about your organization that is in the [Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System \(FAPIIS\)](#). You may review and comment on any information about your organization that a federal awarding agency previously entered. HRSA will consider any of your comments, in addition to other information in [FAPIIS](#) in making a judgment about your organization's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under federal awards when completing the review of risk posed as described in 45 CFR § 75.205 HHS Awarding Agency Review of Risk Posed by Applicants.

HRSA will report to FAPIIS a determination that an applicant is not qualified ([45 CFR § 75.212](#)).

VI. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices

HRSA will issue the Notice of Award (NOA) prior to the start date of June 1, 2020. See Section 5.4 of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) for additional information.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

See Section 2.1 of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#).

Requirements of Subawards

The terms and conditions in the NOA apply directly to the recipient of HRSA funds. The recipient is accountable for the performance of the project, program, or activity; the appropriate expenditure of funds under the award by all parties; and all other obligations of the recipient, as cited in the NOA. In general, the requirements that apply to the recipient, including public policy requirements, also apply to subrecipients under awards. See [45 CFR § 75.101 Applicability](#) for more details.

Data Rights

All publications developed or purchased with funds awarded under this notice must be consistent with the requirements of the program. Pursuant to 45 CFR § 75.322(b), the recipient owns the copyright for materials that it develops under an award issued pursuant to this notice, and HHS reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use those materials for federal purposes, and to authorize others to do so. In addition, pursuant to 45 CFR § 75.322(d), the Federal Government has the right to obtain, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use data produced under this award and has the right to authorize others to receive, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use such data for federal purposes, e.g., to make it available in government-sponsored databases for use by others. If applicable, the specific scope of HRSA rights with respect to a particular federally supported effort will be addressed in the NOA. Data and copyright-protected works developed by a subrecipient also are subject to the Federal Government's data rights.

3. Reporting

Award recipients must comply with Section 6 of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) and the following reporting and review activities:

- 1) **Progress Report(s)**. The recipient must submit a progress report to HRSA on an **annual** basis. Further information will be available in the NOA.
- 2) **Integrity and Performance Reporting**. The NOA will contain a provision for integrity and performance reporting in [FAPIS](#), as required in [45 CFR part 75 Appendix XII](#).

VII. Agency Contacts

You may request additional information and/or technical assistance regarding business, administrative, or fiscal issues related to this NOFO by contacting:

Kimberly Dews
Grants Management Specialist
Division of Grants Management Operations, OFAM
Health Resources and Services Administration
5600 Fishers Lane, Mailstop 10SWH03
Rockville, MD 20857
Telephone: (301) 443-0655
Email: kdews@hrsa.gov

You may request additional information regarding the overall program issues and/or technical assistance related to this NOFO by contacting:

Steven Hirsch
Program Analyst
Attn: National Rural Health Information Clearinghouse Program
Federal Office of Rural Health Policy
Health Resources and Services Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857
Telephone: (301) 443-7322
Fax: (301) 443-2803
E-mail: shirsch@hrsa.gov

You may need assistance when working online to submit your application forms electronically. Always obtain a case number when calling for support. For assistance with submitting the application in Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, excluding federal holidays at:

Grants.gov Contact Center

Telephone: 1-800-518-4726 (International Callers, please dial 606-545-5035)

Email: support@grants.gov

Self-Service Knowledge Base: <https://grants-portal.psc.gov/Welcome.aspx?pt=Grants>

Successful applicants/recipients may need assistance when working online to submit information and reports electronically through HRSA's Electronic Handbooks (EHBs). For assistance with submitting information in HRSA's EHBs, contact the HRSA Contact Center, Monday–Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET, excluding federal holidays at:

HRSA Contact Center

Telephone: (877) 464-4772

TTY: (877) 897-9910

Web: <http://www.hrsa.gov/about/contact/ehbhelp.aspx>

VIII. Other Information

Technical Assistance

HRSA has scheduled following technical assistance:

Webinar

Day and Date: Wednesday, September 18, 2019

Time: 2 – 3 p.m. ET

Call-In Number: 1-888-455-9679

Participant Code: 9579636

Weblink:

https://hrsa.connectsolutions.com/ta_webinar_national_rural_health_information/

Playback Number: 1-800-294-2476

Passcode: 91819

Tips for Writing a Strong Application

See Section 4.7 of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#).