

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Health Resources and Services Administration

Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

Rural Health Clinic Policy and Clinical Assessment Program

Announcement Type: Initial: New Competition

Announcement Number: HRSA-15-125

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) No. 93.155

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT

Fiscal Year 2015

Application Due Date: April 7, 2015

*Ensure SAM.gov and Grants.gov registrations and passwords are current immediately!
Deadline extensions are not granted for lack of registration.
Registration in all systems, including SAM.gov and Grants.gov,
may take up to one month to complete.*

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (ORHP) is accepting applications for fiscal year (FY) 2015 for the Rural Health Clinic Policy and Clinical Assessment Program. The purpose of this program is to identify key policy, regulatory and clinical challenges facing Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) and identify possible solutions, while also informing them and other rural stakeholders about key RHC issues, including regulatory and programmatic changes that affect care delivery in these locations.

Funding Opportunity Title:	Rural Health Clinic Policy and Clinical Assessment Program
Funding Opportunity Number:	HRSA-15-125
Due Date for Applications:	April 7, 2015
Anticipated Total Annual Available Funding:	\$100,000
Estimated Number and Type of Award(s):	1 cooperative agreement
Estimated Award Amount:	Up to \$100,000 per year
Cost Sharing/Match Required:	No
Project Period:	August 1, 2015 through July 31, 2018 (3 years)
Eligible Applicants:	Eligible applicants include domestic public, private, for-profit and nonprofit organizations, as well as federally-recognized Indian tribal governments and organizations. [See Section III-1 of this funding opportunity announcement (FOA) for complete eligibility information.]

All applicants 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 funding opportunity announcement to do otherwise. A short video for applicants explaining the new *Application Guide* is available at <http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/apply/applicationguide/>.

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I. Funding Opportunity Description

1. Purpose

This announcement solicits applications for the Rural Health Clinic Policy and Clinical Assessment Program. The purpose of this program is to identify key policy, regulatory and clinical challenges facing Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) and identify possible solutions, while also informing them and other rural stakeholders about key RHC issues, including regulatory and programmatic changes that affect care delivery in these locations. The awardee will identify gaps in knowledge among RHCs about issues such as regulatory and program compliance, billing and reimbursement, quality improvement, best practices, disease management, and care coordination, as well as ORHP and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services priorities, and will propose tools, resources, and strategies to address them. RHCs are geographically dispersed, so the proposed tools and resources should be easily accessible, including, but not limited to, listservs, conference calls, and webinars.

RHCs are primary care clinics that are certified by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to provide care in rural underserved areas. They receive reasonable cost-based Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement, subject to certain conditions. RHCs must be staffed by physician assistants and/or nurse practitioners. Currently, there are more than 4,000 RHCs located in 44 states. For more information about RHCs, please visit <http://www.cms.gov/Center/Provider-Type/Rural-Health-Clinics-Center.html?redirect=/center/rural.asp>

The health care delivery system is undergoing dramatic change, with an emphasis on finding new approaches to improve health outcomes, control costs, and improve population health. Financial incentives are moving from volume-based to value-based services, with a focus on quality of care in all settings and improving transitions of care as patients move between care settings. Within this environment, RHCs provide care to millions of rural residents, often serving as the sole health care provider in a community, and serving as the de facto safety net for rural residents. The RHCs require support to effectively participate in the changing health care environment and need to be prepared for related policy and regulatory changes.

2. Background

This program is authorized by Section 711(b) of the Social Security Act.

ORHP is the focal point for rural health activities within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). ORHP is statutorily required to advise the Secretary on the effects of current policies and proposed statutory, regulatory, administrative, and budgetary changes in the programs established under titles XVIII (Medicare) and XIX (Medicaid) on the financial viability of small rural hospitals, the ability of rural areas to attract and retain physicians and other health professionals, and access to (and the quality of) health care in rural areas. ORHP is also statutorily required to coordinate activities within HHS that relate to rural health care and provide relevant information to the Secretary and other agencies. In addition, ORHP is authorized to provide technical assistance and other activities as necessary to support activities related to improving health care in rural areas. For more information about ORHP, please visit <http://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/policy/index.html>.

II. Award Information

1. Type of Award

Type of applications sought: New.

Funding will be provided in the form of a cooperative agreement. A cooperative agreement, as opposed to a grant, is an award instrument of financial assistance where substantial involvement is anticipated between ORHP and the recipient during performance of the contemplated project.

In addition to the usual monitoring and technical assistance provided under the cooperative agreement, **HRSA/ORHP responsibilities shall include:**

- Collaborating with the awardee to identify low-cost approaches to disseminate information about key issues;
- Utilizing HRSA communications resources to support the cooperative agreement; and
- Participating, as appropriate, in outreach and dissemination activities.

The cooperative agreement recipient's responsibilities shall include:

- Identifying gaps in knowledge among RHCs about issues such as regulatory and program compliance, billing and reimbursement, quality improvement, best practices, disease management, and care coordination, as well as ORHP and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services priorities, and proposing tools, resources, and strategies to address them;
- Collaborating with ORHP to identify low-cost approaches to disseminate information about key issues;
- Responding to RHC requests, comments, and questions on a timely basis; and
- Establishing relationships with other ORHP-supported technical assistance providers, clearinghouses, etc. In particular, a working relationship shall be established with the National Organization for State Offices of Rural Health to support its RHC work, and with the Rural Assistance Center, the rural health care clearinghouse established under Section 711 of the Social Security Act.

2. Summary of Funding

This program will provide funding during Federal fiscal years 2015-2017. Approximately \$100,000 is expected to be available annually to fund one (1) awardee. Applicants may apply for an amount up to \$100,000 per year. The project period is three (3) years. Funding beyond the first year is dependent on the availability of appropriated funds for the program in subsequent fiscal years, awardee satisfactory performance, and a decision that funding is in the best interest of the Federal Government.

Effective December 26, 2014, all administrative and audit requirements and the cost principles that govern Federal monies associated with this award are superseded by the Uniform Guidance [2 CFR 200](#) as codified by HHS at [45 CFR 75](#).

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include domestic public, private, for-profit and nonprofit organizations, including tribes and tribal organizations, and faith-based and community-based organizations.

2. Cost Sharing/Matching

Cost sharing/matching is not required for this program.

3. Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System Number and System for Award Management (formerly, Central Contractor Registration)

Applicant organizations must obtain a valid DUNS number and provide that number in their application. Applicant 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 it has 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 an applicant/awardee organization has already completed Grants.gov registration for HRSA or another Federal agency, confirm that it 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://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/pages/CCRSearch.jsp>)
- 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*](#).

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

4. Other

Applications that exceed the ceiling amount will be considered non-responsive and will not be considered for funding under this announcement.

Any application that fails to satisfy the deadline requirements referenced in *Section IV.3* will be considered non-responsive and will not be considered for funding under this announcement.

Multiple applications from an organization are not allowable.

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

HRSA *requires* applicants for this funding opportunity announcement to apply electronically through Grants.gov. Applicants must download the SF-424 application package associated with this funding opportunity following the directions provided at [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Section 4 of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) provides instructions for the budget, budget justification, 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. All applicants are responsible for reading and complying with the instructions included in HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) except where instructed in the funding opportunity announcement to do otherwise.

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 required in the *Application Guide* and this FOA. Standard OMB-approved forms included in the application package are NOT included in the page limit. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement and proof of non-profit status (if applicable) will not be counted in the page limit. **We strongly urge you to print your application to ensure it does not exceed the specified page limit.**

Applications must be complete, within the 80-page limit, and validated by Grants.gov under the correct funding opportunity number prior to the deadline to be considered under the announcement.

Program-Specific Instructions

In addition to application requirements and instructions in Section 4 of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) (including the budget, budget justification, staffing plan and personnel requirements, assurances, certifications, and abstract), please 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 and well organized so that reviewers can understand the proposed project.

Use the following section headers for the Narrative:

- ***INTRODUCTION -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 1***
This section should briefly describe the purpose of the proposed project.
- ***NEEDS ASSESSMENT -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 1***
Outline the need for the proposed assistance. The narrative should clearly demonstrate a strong understanding of the distinct issues pertaining to RHCs, including organizational structure, certification, payment, staffing, participation in existing and emerging healthcare trends, etc., and the challenges they face in providing health care in the communities they serve. Where possible, include data to support the information provided.
- ***METHODOLOGY -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 2***
Describe proposed methods that will be used to address the stated needs and meet each of the previously described program requirements.
- ***WORK PLAN -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criteria 2 and 4***
Describe the activities or steps that will be used to achieve each of the activities proposed during the entire project period in the Methodology section. Identify each activity and responsible staff. In particular, explain how the project will:
 1. Provide support and assistance to RHCs, including communication of a range of operational, programmatic, and regulatory issues;
 2. Facilitate coordination with other applicable ORHP technical assistance providers to facilitate maximum dissemination of program information and resources, as well as to avoid duplication of services; and
- ***RESOLUTION OF CHALLENGES -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 2***
Discuss challenges that are likely to be encountered in designing and implementing the activities described in the work plan, as well as promoting participation by RHCs in those activities, and approaches that will be used to resolve such challenges.
- ***EVALUATION AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT CAPACITY -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criteria 3 and 5***
Describe the expected outcomes of the program, as well as the strategy to monitor and analyze progress toward those outcomes. Include descriptions of measureable, meaningful project outcomes. Explain any potential obstacles for completing the evaluation and how they will be addressed.
- ***ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 5***
Provide information on the applicant organization's current mission and structure, scope of current activities, and an organizational chart, and describe whether and how these contribute to the ability of the organization to perform the program requirements and meet expectations. Specifically, the applicant must explain how project personnel are qualified by training and/or experience to implement and carry out this project, including significant experience working with RHCs. The applicant must have a thorough understanding of the distinct issues pertaining to RHCs, including organizational structure, certification, payment, staffing, participation in emerging healthcare trends, etc., and the challenges they face in providing

health care in the communities they serve. Experience in rural health policy development and analysis, particularly in identifying emerging policy issues and their impact on RHCs, is highly desirable.

The project director must have: 1) senior-level executive experience; 2) at least five (5) years' experience working specifically with RHCs, 3) managed projects providing technical assistance and other resource services, including via teleconferences, webinars, and/or listservs; and 4) existing relationships with RHCs to ensure maximum understanding of the experiences and needs of RHCs around the country.

iii. Budget

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 grant-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.

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

The Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, Division G, § 203, (P.L. 113-235) 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." Please 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 will apply in FY 2016, as required by law.

iv. Budget Justification Narrative

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

v. Attachments

Please 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. **Each attachment must be clearly labeled.**

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

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

Attachment 2: Biographical Sketches of Key Personnel

Include biographical sketches for persons occupying the key positions described in Attachment 1, not to exceed two pages in length.

Attachment 3: Letters of Agreement and/or Description(s) of Proposed/Existing Contracts

Provide any documents that describe working relationships between the applicant organization and other entities and programs cited in the proposal. Documents that confirm

actual or pending contractual agreements should clearly describe the roles of the contractors and any deliverable. Letters of agreement must be dated.

Attachment 4: Project Organizational Chart

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

Attachment 5: Tables, Charts, etc.

To give further details about the proposal (e.g., Gantt or PERT charts, flow charts, etc.).

Attachments 6 – 15: Other Relevant Documents

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. Submission Dates and Times

The due date for applications under this funding opportunity announcement is April 7, 2015, at 11:59 P.M. Eastern Time.

See Section 8.2.5 – Summary of e-mails from Grants.gov of HRSA’s *SF-424 Application Guide* for additional information.

4. Intergovernmental Review

The Rural Health Clinic Policy and Clinical Assessment Program is subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, as implemented by 45 CFR 100. Review Executive Order 12372 in the [HHS Grants Policy Statement](#). See Section 4.1 ii of HRSA’s [SF-424 Application Guide](#) for additional information.

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

5. Funding Restrictions

Applicants responding to this announcement may request funding for a project period of up to three (3) years, at no more than \$100,000 per year. Awards to support projects beyond the first budget year will be contingent upon Congressional appropriation, satisfactory progress in meeting the project objectives, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the Federal Government.

The General Provisions in Division G, of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 (P.L. 113-235), apply to this program. Please see Section 4.1 of HRSA’s [SF-424 Application Guide](#) for additional information. Note that these or other restrictions will apply in FY 2016, as required by law.

All program income generated as a result of awarded grant funds must be used for approved project-related activities.

V. Application Review Information

1. Review Criteria

Procedures for assessing the technical merit of applications have been instituted to provide for an objective review of applications and to assist the applicant in understanding the standards against which each application will be judged. Critical indicators have been developed for each review criterion to assist the applicant in presenting pertinent information related to that criterion and to provide the reviewer with a standard for evaluation. Review criteria are outlined below with specific detail and scoring points.

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

Review Criteria are used to review and rank applications. The Rural Health Clinic Policy and Clinical Assessment Program has six (6) review criteria:

Criterion 1: NEED (25 points) – Corresponds to Section IV’s INTRODUCTION and NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The extent to which the proposal:

- Clearly demonstrates a thorough understanding of the distinct issues pertaining to RHCs, including organizational structure, certification, payment, staffing, participation in existing and emerging healthcare trends, etc., and the challenges they face in providing health care in the communities they serve.

Criterion 2: RESPONSE (25 points) – Corresponds to Section IV’s METHODOLOGY, WORK PLAN, and RESOLUTION OF CHALLENGES

The quality of and extent to which the proposal:

- Appropriately responds to the “Purpose” included in the program description;
- Demonstrates the strength and feasibility of the proposed methodology;
- Describes planned assistance to RHCs regarding a range of operational and regulatory issues;
- Facilitates coordination with other applicable ORHP technical assistance providers to facilitate maximum dissemination of program information and resources, as well as to avoid duplication of services; and
- Exhibits a clear understanding of how emerging national health policy trends affect RHCs; and
- Identifies likely challenges to designing and implementing the activities described in the work plan, and realistic approaches to be used to resolve them.

Criterion 3: EVALUATIVE MEASURES (10 points) – Corresponds to Section IV’s EVALUATION AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT CAPACITY

The extent to which the applicant:

- Describes meaningful, measurable outcomes of the program, as well as a strategy to monitor and analyze progress toward those outcomes; and
- Explains potential obstacles for completing the evaluation and how they will be addressed.

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

The extent to which the applicant:

- Proposes a well-designed, achievable and coherent work and dissemination plan that takes into account the particular challenges for RHCs; and
- Establishes a reasonable plan to collaborate with other applicable ORHP technical assistance providers to facilitate maximum dissemination of program information and resources.

Criterion 5: RESOURCES/CAPABILITIES (20 points) – Corresponds to Section IV’s EVALUATION AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT CAPACITY and ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

The extent to which the applicant demonstrates:

- Organizational capabilities and availability to fulfill the needs and requirements of the proposed project;
- How project personnel are qualified by training and/or experience to implement and carry out the project;
- Significant experience working with RHCs, as well as substantial understanding of rural health care delivery issues;
- That the project director possesses the requisite experience specified in the Organizational Information section of the project narrative; ; and
- Existing relationships with RHCs to ensure maximum understanding of the experiences and needs of RHCs around the country.

Criterion 6: SUPPORT REQUESTED (10 points) –

- The reasonableness of the proposed budget for each year of the project period in relation to the objectives, the proposed activities, and the anticipated results. This includes the extent to which costs, as outlined in the budget and required resources sections, are reasonable given the scope of work.
- Strength of the budget justification in documenting logically how each line item request (such as personnel, travel, equipment, supplies, information technology, and contractual services) supports the objectives and activities of the proposal.

2. Review and Selection Process

Please see Section 5.3 of HRSA’s [SF-424 Application Guide](#). Applicants have the option of providing specific salary rates or amounts for individuals specified in the application budget or the aggregate amount requested for salaries.

This program does not have any funding priorities, preferences or special considerations.

3. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

It is anticipated that awards will be announced prior to the start date of August 1, 2015.

VI. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices

The Notice of Award will be sent prior to the start date. See Section 5.4 of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) for additional information.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

See Section 2 of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#).

3. Reporting

The successful applicant under this funding opportunity announcement must comply with Section 6 of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) **and** the following reporting and review activities:

- 1) **Progress Report.** The awardee must submit a progress report to HRSA on an **annual** basis in the HRSA Electronic Handbooks (EHBs). Further information will be provided in the award notice.

- 2) **Semiannual Report.** The awardee must submit a semi-annual progress report, which includes progress on activities implemented by the recipient and/or subrecipients. The awardee will be required to submit this information in the HRSA EHBs, and the format will be prescribed by ORHP at a later date.

VII. Agency Contacts

Applicants may obtain additional information regarding business, administrative, or fiscal issues related to this funding opportunity announcement by contacting:

Ms. Karen Mayo, Grants Management Specialist
HRSA Division of Grants Management Operations, OFAM
Parklawn Building, Room 18A-75
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857
Telephone: (301) 443-3555
E-mail: KMayo@hrsa.gov

Additional information related to the overall program issues and/or technical assistance regarding this funding announcement may be obtained by contacting:

Aaron Fischbach, Policy Coordinator
Federal Office of Rural Health Policy
Parklawn Building, Room 17W-16
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857
Telephone: (301) 443-5487

Fax: (301) 443-2803
Email: afischbach@hrsa.gov

Applicants may need assistance when working online to submit their application forms electronically. Applicants should 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, seven days a week, excluding Federal holidays at:

Grants.gov Contact Center
Telephone: 1-800-518-4726 (International Callers, please dial 606-545-5035)
E-mail: support@grants.gov
iPortal: <https://grants-portal.psc.gov/Welcome.aspx?pt=Grants>

Successful applicants/awardees 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 Call Center, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET:

HRSA Contact Center
Telephone: (877) 464-4772
TTY: (877) 897-9910
Web: <http://www.hrsa.gov/about/contact/ehbhelp.aspx>

VIII. Other Information

Not applicable

IX. Tips for Writing a Strong Application

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