

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**



Federal Office of Rural Health and Policy

***Rural Communities Opioid Response Program-Evaluation***

**Funding Opportunity Number: HRSA-19-083**

**Funding Opportunity Types: New**

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 93.155**

**NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY**

Fiscal Year 2019

**Application Due Date: May 6, 2019**

***Ensure your 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 1 month to complete.***

**Issuance Date: March 6, 2019**

Fraser Byrne  
Public Health Analyst, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy  
Telephone: (301) 443-2299  
Fax: (301) 443-2803  
Email: [fbyrne@hrsa.gov](mailto:fbyrne@hrsa.gov)

Authority: §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) 2019 Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) - Evaluation. This cooperative agreement will evaluate the impact of RCORP initiatives, which currently include RCORP-Planning, RCORP-Implementation, and RCORP-Technical Assistance (TA) activities. The evaluation activities include data collection and analyses of RCORP activities, as well as developing valuable RCORP-based evaluation tools and resources for use in rural communities and to inform future rural health initiatives.

Funding Opportunity Title:	Rural Communities Opioid Response Program-Evaluation
Funding Opportunity Number:	HRSA-19-083
Due Date for Applications:	May 6, 2019
Anticipated Total Annual Available FY 2019 Funding:	\$3,000,000
Estimated Number and Type of Award:	One 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:	September 1, 2019 through August 31, 2023 (4 years)
Eligible Applicants:	<p>Eligible applicants include domestic public or private, non-profit or for-profit organizations. Institutions of higher education, faith-based and community-based organizations, tribes, and tribal organizations are eligible to apply. Applicants may be a single entity or a consortium.</p> <p>See <a href="#">Section III-1</a> 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: Thursday, March 28, 2019

Time: 12-1:30 p.m. ET

Call-In Number: 888-469-3074

Participant Code: 4647545

Weblink: [https://hrsa.connectsolutions.com/rcorp\\_evaluation-ta\\_webinar/](https://hrsa.connectsolutions.com/rcorp_evaluation-ta_webinar/)

Playback Number: 800-944-8816

Passcode: 4647545

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# I. Program Funding Opportunity Description

## 1. Purpose

This notice announces the opportunity to apply for funding under the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP)-Evaluation. The purpose of this cooperative agreement is to evaluate the impact of RCORP initiatives which currently include the RCORP-Planning, RCORP-Implementation, and RCORP-Technical Assistance (RCORP-TA) activities, and to develop valuable RCORP-based evaluation tools and resources for use in rural communities and to inform future rural health initiatives. Working with all RCORP award recipients, the RCORP-Evaluation anticipated activities include collecting and analyzing award recipient-reported data, defining and implementing impact indicators to assess the effectiveness of TA and award recipient activities, working with the RCORP-TA provider to identify RCORP best practices, using RCORP findings to identify research needs, and making recommendations to enhance RCORP activities and inform future rural health initiatives.

The scope of this RCORP-Evaluation opportunity includes evaluating award recipient activities under all RCORP initiatives. A table showing the current number of awarded and anticipated RCORP award recipients is provided below. HRSA will include any additional RCORP initiatives or additional cycles of RCORP-Planning or RCORP-Implementation awards in FY 2019 or beyond in the scope of this RCORP Evaluation.

### Current RCORP Initiatives Within Scope of RCORP-Evaluation

RCORP Initiatives	Award Date (actual or anticipated)	NOFO #	Number of Awards (actual or anticipated)
RCORP-Planning (FY 2018)	Sept 2018	<a href="#">HRSA-18-116</a>	95
RCORP-TA (FY 2018-FY 2022)*	Sept 2018	<a href="#">HRSA-18-124</a>	1 cooperative agreement
<i>RCORP-Planning (FY 2019)</i>	<i>June 2019</i>	<a href="#">HRSA-19-081</a>	<i>Up to 120</i>
<i>RCORP-Implementation (FY 2019)</i>	<i>September 2019</i>	<a href="#">HRSA-19-082</a>	<i>Up to 75</i>

\*One cooperative agreement providing technical assistance to all RCORP award recipients.

## 2. Background

This program is authorized by Section 711(b) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 912(b)), as amended.

While the opioid epidemic has affected communities across the country, research shows that rural communities suffer a disproportionate burden from the misuse of opioids (illicit or prescription) compared to their urban or metropolitan counterparts.<sup>1</sup> Rural communities

<sup>1</sup> Palombi, Laura C., et al. "A scoping review of opioid misuse in the rural United States," Annals of Epidemiology 28 (2018) 641-652, <https://www.sciencedirect-com.ezproxyhhs.nihlibrary.nih.gov/science/article/pii/S1047279717311031?via%3Dihub>.

face a number of challenges that exacerbate the impacts of opioid misuse. Challenges include: access to health care, particularly substance use disorder (SUD) or opioid use disorder (OUD) treatments; health workforce shortages; and the potential stigma associated with SUD while living in smaller communities. Furthermore, 60 percent of rural counties nationally still lack a physician with a waiver to prescribe buprenorphine,<sup>2</sup> limiting their abilities to provide medication-assisted treatment for OUD. Research also shows that rural opioid users are more likely to have poor health status and socioeconomic vulnerabilities, including limited educational attainment, being uninsured, and low income.<sup>3</sup>

Given the magnitude of the opioid epidemic in rural communities, HRSA supports several programs to create and/or implement consortiums designed to provide SUD and OUD prevention, treatment, and/or recovery services in high need rural communities. HRSA will further enhance these efforts through RCORP initiatives, currently including:

- RCORP-Planning grants will seek to reduce morbidity and mortality associated with opioid overdoses in high-risk rural communities by strengthening the organizational and infrastructure capacity of multi-sector consortiums to address one or more of the focus areas of prevention, treatment, and recovery of OUD (See [HRSA-18-116](#) and [HRSA-19-081](#)).
- RCORP-Implementation grants will fund established networks and consortia in order to deliver SUD/OUD prevention, treatment, and recovery activities in high-need rural communities. (See [HRSA-19-082](#)).
- RCORP-TA cooperative agreement provides TA support for rural communities engaging in activities to combat SUD and OUD at the community, county, state, and/or regional levels. (See [HRSA-18-124](#)).
- This RCORP-Evaluation cooperative agreement will evaluate all RCORP award recipient activities and TA activities, and develop evaluation tools and resources for use in rural communities.

Given the limited access to substance abuse providers and the high needs for OUD prevention, treatment, and recovery services in rural communities, it is especially important that providers have access to the right resources, latest data, and user-friendly tools to effectively and efficiently address this crisis. However, the misuse of opioids in rural populations is a surprisingly understudied area of research that merits greater attention.<sup>4</sup> To help address these research gaps, RCORP-Evaluation will evaluate RCORP award recipient activities and their progress towards the stated award goals; collaborate with the RCORP-TA provider to identify RCORP best practices; use RCORP findings to identify research needs; provide valuable resources for rural communities to use; and make recommendations for future rural SUD/OUD programs. Data collected by RCORP can be used to help rural communities better understand areas for improvement and identify effective improvement interventions to efficiently target limited resources.

HRSA's expertise in working directly with rural communities and diverse and medically underserved population groups, including people living with HIV/AIDS, children, and pregnant women, uniquely positions the agency to make a significant impact on the

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<sup>2</sup> Holly et al, "Barriers Rural Physicians Face Prescribing Buprenorphine for Opioid Use Disorder," WWAMI Rural Health Research Center, August 2017, <http://europepmc.org/backend/ptpmcrender.fcgi?accid=PMC5505456&blobtype=pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Lenardson, Jennifer et al, "Rural Opioid Abuse: Prevalence and User Characteristics," Maine Rural Health Research Center, February 2016, <https://muskie.usm.maine.edu/Publications/rural/Rural-OpioidAbuse.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Palombi, Laura C., et al. "A scoping review of opioid misuse in the rural United States," *Annals of Epidemiology* 28 (2018) 641-652, <https://www.sciencedirect-com.ezproxyhhs.nihlibrary.nih.gov/science/article/pii/S1047279717311031?via%3Dihub>.

nation's opioid epidemic. HRSA has a number of investments targeting OUD and SUD across its bureaus and offices that applicants may be able to leverage. For information on HRSA-supported resources, technical assistance, and training, visit here: <https://www.hrsa.gov/opioids>. For more information about HRSA's rural health programs, please visit: <http://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth>.

## II. Award Information

### 1. Type of Application and Award

Types of applications sought: New

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 anticipated project.

#### A. HRSA Program involvement will include:

- 1) Participating in the planning and development of the RCORP evaluation activities
- 2) Reviewing and providing guidance/input on materials prior to public dissemination
- 3) Facilitating the collaboration between RCORP award recipients, the RCORP-TA provider, and the Evaluation provider
- 4) Providing RCORP award materials and award recipient-reported data
- 5) Creation and submission of the performance measure data collection package to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

#### B. The cooperative agreement recipient's responsibilities will include:

- 1) Capturing both qualitative and quantitative data about award recipient activities (e.g., clinical and health system impacts)
- 2) Analyzing award recipient-reported data through the existing Performance Improvement Measurement System (PIMS) and progress reports
- 3) Analyzing the diverse RCORP award recipient activities to identify similarities or trends
- 4) Analyzing effective consortiums, including developing strategies for enhancing consortiums
- 5) Analyzing the Return on Community Investment (ROCI)<sup>5</sup> for RCORP award recipients including the impact of TA activities
- 6) Reviewing existing performance measures, including recommending additional measures, as appropriate
- 7) Advising HRSA on metrics and measures used to inform progress of RCORP award recipients
- 8) Conducting individual program and cohort wide analyses
- 9) Providing recommendations for improving opioid programs (including adjustments to current or future programs)
- 10) Providing recommendations for improving data gaps/research in the rural opioids field

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<sup>5</sup> See more information on demonstrating outcomes with a Return on Community Investment (ROCI): <https://www.ruralcenter.org/file/demonstrating-outcomes-return-community-investment-roci>.

- 11) Collaborating with the RCORP-TA provider to identify best practices for all RCORP award recipients, and informing the RCORP-TA provider as they implement these best practices in rural communities
- 12) Preparing issue briefs, case studies, anecdotal success stories and other formats for diverse audiences (e.g., HRSA, other federal funders, and the public)
- 13) Collaborating with the RCORP-TA provider to link research and evaluation findings to targeted TA for RCORP award recipients
- 14) Housing and disseminating the products, analyses, and data on a website, database, or other platform that enables HRSA to access all evaluation data during and beyond the end of the period of performance (e.g., through a restricted file)
- 15) Conducting site visits to award recipients to discuss program, progress and outcomes
- 16) Developing new resources to assist communities in determining economic impact of RCORP activities
- 17) Analyzing the data trends of the overall initiative to show progress of program activities and demonstrate impact.
- 18) Utilizing the data to contribute to the development of an evidence base and publication outcomes
- 19) Adhering to HRSA guidelines pertaining to acknowledgement and disclaimer on all products produced by HRSA award funds, per Section 2.2 of the HRSA's SF-424 Application Guide (Acknowledgement of Federal Funding)

## **2. Summary of Funding**

HRSA expects approximately \$3,000,000 to be available annually to fund one recipient. 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. The period of performance is September 1, 2019 through August 31, 2023 (4 years). Funding beyond the first year is subject to the availability of appropriated funds for RCORP-Evaluation 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 or private, non-profit or for-profit organizations. Institutions of higher education, faith-based and community-based organizations, tribes, and tribal organizations are eligible to apply. Applicants may be a single entity or a consortium.

### **2. Cost Sharing/Matching**

Cost sharing/matching is not required for this cooperative agreement.

### 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 NOFO following the directions provided at <http://www.grants.gov/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>.

If you're reading this notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) (also known as "Instructions" on Grants.gov) and reviewing or preparing the workspace application package, you will automatically be notified in the event HRSA changes and/or republishes 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) The prospective recipient certifies, by submission of this proposal, that neither it nor its principals is 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 the prospective recipient is unable to attest to the statements in this certification, an explanation shall be included in **Attachment 6: Other Relevant Documents**.

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

#### ***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 and methodology.

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

##### ***A. INTRODUCTION -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion #1 Need***

Provide a brief overview of how the proposed project aligns with the purpose of this cooperative agreement to provide data, analysis, and evaluation products for RCORP.

##### ***B. NEEDS ASSESSMENT -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion #1 Need***

Provide a detailed discussion of the information gaps related to evaluating or analyzing RCORP award activities (e.g., challenges in accessing or reporting timely data or limited research on rural-appropriate service models). This includes activities of the RCORP-TA provider. Additionally, the broader issues, challenges, and data needs of rural providers should be clearly articulated to ensure all evaluation products address the information gaps of the larger rural population as it relates to SUD and OUD treatment activities.

Additionally, please address how the diversity of RCORP activities (e.g., diverse consortium types, community focus areas, etc.) across all RCORP grant programs will have implications on an evaluation. You should make clear the extent of your familiarity with this issue by citing relevant experience.

### C. METHODOLOGY -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion #2 Response

Propose methods that you will use to address the stated needs and meet each of the previously described program requirements outlined in [Section II B](#). As appropriate, include development of effective tools and strategies for process and outcome/impact evaluation activities for RCORP award recipients. Include a dissemination plan for briefs, reports, and products, so project information is provided to key target audiences and rural stakeholders. Describe how you propose to self-assess progress towards implementing the proposed methodology, to ensure transparency with HRSA and accommodate any course corrections.

You should discuss the proposed methodology for developing all the activities discussed in [Section II B](#), as well as any additional proposed evaluation activities. Describe the proposed approach for:

- *Collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate and inform RCORP activities.* (Includes evaluation activities 1-5 from [Section II B](#)):
  - Develop a strategy for collecting data and conducting evaluation activities that inform current and future rural OUD programs and inform federal and non-federal investments in this area.
  - Analyses should include state, and community-level data, with national data as appropriate. Award recipient-reported quantitative data will be collected through the existing PIMS. Plan for at least two quantitative data analyses per project year, under consultation with HRSA.
  - As appropriate, describe the methodology for primary data collection from the RCORP award recipients to be utilized for individual, cohort, and program level analyses.
  - RCORP intentionally allows for great flexibility in the award recipient-level activities. Describe the proposed methodology for analyses of diverse RCORP activities in order to identify trends and best practices, as well as evaluate the impact of RCORP activities on rural communities and the impact of RCORP-TA activities on the award recipients and the general public (e.g., using the Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model<sup>6</sup>, or another methodology).
- *Identifying gaps, best practices, and recommendations.* (Includes evaluation activities 6-10 from [Section II B](#)):
  - Provide feedback to HRSA and work with the RCORP-TA provider to ensure RCORP measures capture progress and impact across award recipients.
  - Provide approach to assess the effectiveness of the RCORP-TA activities (including process, outcome, and satisfaction measures).
  - Identify new RCORP evaluation activities that will be conducted to inform service gaps or highlight best practices.

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<sup>6</sup> For more information about the Kirkpatrick model, see: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19681007>.

- Provide approach to collaborating with the RCORP-TA provider to identify best practices for all RCORP award recipients, and informing the RCORP-TA provider as they implement these best practices in rural communities.
- *Implementing a communication, dissemination, and collaboration strategy.* (Includes evaluation activities 11-13 from [Section II B](#)):
  - The communication strategy should detail plans to share pertinent findings and evidence-based best practices quickly with distinct audiences, including RCORP award recipients, HRSA and other federal funders, rural providers and communities, and the general public. Plan for at least eight evaluation findings documents (e.g., issue briefs, case studies, anecdotal success stories and other formats), per project year, under consultation with HRSA.
  - The dissemination strategy should include creating and disseminating products that contribute to the evidence-base of rural opioid interventions and/or informs rural providers. Include detailed methods for tracking the use of released products.
  - The collaboration strategy should describe how to work with the RCORP-TA provider to link relevant findings to targeted TA efforts. You should describe the ability to maintain a program website that will serve as a repository for products completed under this cooperative agreement.

*D. WORK PLAN -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criteria #2 Response and #3 Impact*

The work plan provides a succinct overview of the cooperative agreement's goals, objectives, activities, and timeline of projected outcomes in a table format as **Attachment 1**. The work plan table should provide details for all activities proposed in year 1 of the period of performance, as well as all multi-year activities that start in year 1. The work plan should not be a narrative, but instead refer to the Methodology and other narrative sections to explain the relationship between needs, activities, objectives, and goals.

The work plan should clearly identify steps or activities to achieve the goals and objectives of the project and depict how program activities will achieve outcomes. The work plan should include each activity, the timeframe for completing the activity, who on the staff is responsible for that activity, the budget allocated for that activity, progress or process measures, and the intended outcome. As appropriate, identify meaningful points in the period of performance for collaboration with key stakeholders in designing, planning, and implementing all activities, including working closely with FORHP and the RCORP-TA provider.

*E. RESOLUTION OF CHALLENGES -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion #2 Response*

Discuss challenges that you are likely to encounter in designing and implementing the evaluation activities described in [Section II](#), and approaches that you will use to resolve such challenges. As appropriate, provide short examples from previous evaluations, including challenges and successful resolutions.

**F. EVALUATION AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT CAPACITY -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criteria #3 Impact and #4 Organizational Capabilities**

Demonstrate evaluation capacity to successfully implement the proposed work plan. Describe experience, skills, and knowledge, including individuals on staff, materials published, and previous evaluation work of a similar nature. Specifically, demonstrate knowledge and experience evaluating network/consortiums, TA, SUD/ODU treatment, and/or previous evaluations of rural programs. Describe previous collaborative partnerships with federal partners and other organizations (as this evaluation will require ongoing collaboration with both FORHP and the RCORP-TA provider).

Describe the systems and processes that will support your organization's performance management requirements through effective tracking of performance outcomes, including a description of how the organization will collect and manage data in a way that allows for accurate and timely reporting of performance outcomes beyond those included in PIMS.

At a minimum, the evaluation plan should include analysis of the existing RCORP measures (as identified in the table below), as well as propose additional methods for assessing impact of RCORP overall.

<b>Program</b>	<b>Measure Development Process/Source</b>	<b>Reporting Requirements/Data Collection</b>
RCORP-Planning	Recipient-selected	Award recipients will work with the RCORP-TA provider to develop appropriate measures for reporting based on planned activities
RCORP-Implementation	NOFO lists core measures for all recipients to report and optional measures for recipients to choose from (See HRSA-19-082)	Award recipients must report the core measures (listed in the NOFO) and select elective, optional measures to report to reflect programmatic activities (all measures subject to OMB approval)
RCORP-Technical Assistance	List of core evaluation measures developed in collaboration with HRSA, RCORP-TA provider, and Evaluator	TA Progress Reports to include core measures on website traffic, eNewsletter, etc. Award recipient surveys, and pre- and post- analysis to be done by Evaluator

**G. ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion #4 Organizational Capabilities**

Succinctly describe your organization's current mission and structure, scope of current activities, including an organizational chart, and describe how these elements all contribute to the organization's ability to conduct the program requirements and meet program expectations. Explicitly detail previous or current experience in evaluating rural programs. Discuss how the organization will, properly account for the federal funds and document all costs.

Describe the organization’s current skills and staff with experience performing work of a similar nature. Please include descriptions or links to any relevant published materials or experience from key individuals on staff.

Provide and refer to a Staffing Plan and Job Descriptions (**Attachment 2**) with sufficient detail about the role and responsibilities of each award -supported staff position. Propose project personnel that are qualified by training and/or experience to implement and carry out their roles as evidenced by biographical sketches/resumes (**Attachment 3**).

Describe access to data sets currently maintained by you that will contribute to the ability of the organization to meet program expectations and analysis.

You can be a single entity or a consortium of organizations or universities. If a consortium is proposed, describe the rationale for the inclusion of each of the entities in the consortium arrangement, strengths and experience of each entity, and discuss which entity will be primarily responsible for the administrative management of the cooperative agreement award. Also, describe how the entities relate to each other in terms of roles, responsibilities, and program management. Describe the approach for collaboration on projects and the process for project review prior to submission to HRSA for final review and approval.

<b>NARRATIVE GUIDANCE</b>	
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.	
<b><u>Narrative Section</u></b>	<b><u>Review Criteria</u></b>
Introduction	(1) Need
Needs Assessment	(1) Need
Methodology	(2) Response
Work Plan	(2) Response and (3) Impact
Resolution of Challenges	(2) Response
Evaluation and Technical Support Capacity	(3) Impact and (4) Organizational Capabilities
Organizational Information	(4) Organizational Capabilities
Budget and Budget Narrative (below)	(5) 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 the application is selected 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.

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 years, as required by law.

### **iv. Budget 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. **You must clearly label each attachment.**

#### *Attachment 1: Work Plan*

Attach the work plan (in a table format) for Year 1 of the evaluation that includes all information detailed in Section IV.ii.D Work Plan.

#### *Attachment 2: 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 as much as is possible. Include the role, responsibilities, and qualifications of proposed project staff. Also, please include a description of your organization's time keeping process to ensure that you will comply with the federal standards related to documenting personnel costs. Note: The organizational chart should be included in the narrative (as requested in Section IV.2.ii.G Organizational Information) not in the attachment.

*Attachment 3: Biographical Sketches of Key Personnel*

Include biographical sketches for persons occupying the key positions described in Attachment 2, not to exceed two pages in length per person. In the event that a biographical sketch is included for an identified individual who is not yet hired, please include a letter of commitment from that person.

*Attachment 4: Organizational Experience*

Organizational experience of all applicants is carefully considered; therefore, you are advised to include previous experience in the stated goals and objectives in your application and emphasize the accomplishments made in attaining these goals and objectives.

Include a brief description of the accomplishments, in relation to the objectives of the program. This attachment should include:

- (1) The period covered - Provide the dates of experience.
- (2) Specific Objectives - Briefly summarize the specific objectives of the project.
- (3) Results - Describe the program activities conducted for each objective.  
Include both positive and negative results or technical problems that may be important.

*Attachment 5: Letters of Commitment, Memoranda of Understanding, and/or Description(s) of Proposed/Existing Contracts (If applicable)*

If applicable, 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 subcontractors and any deliverables for which they would be responsible. Letters of commitment must be signed and dated.

*Attachments 6 – 15: Other Relevant Documents (optional)*

Include here any other documents that are relevant to the application.  
NOTE: These additional attachments are optional.

All attachments are included in the overall page limit of 80 pages.

**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](#).

**UPDATED 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. Read the [updated FAQs](#) to learn more.

**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 *May 6, 2019 at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time*. HRSA suggests submitting applications to Grants.gov at least **3 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**

Rural Communities Opioid Response Program-Evaluation is a program 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 4 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) 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 2018, as required by law.

You cannot use funds under this notice for the following purposes:

- 1) Purchasing or improving real estate
- 2) Foreign Travel

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.

All program income generated as a result of awarded funds must be used for approved project-related activities. The program income alternative applied to the award under the program will be the addition/additive alternative. You can find post-award requirements for program income at [45 CFR § 75.307](#).

## V. Application Review Information

### 1. Review Criteria

HRSA has procedures for assessing the technical merit of applications to provide for an objective review of applications 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. See the review criteria are outlined below with specific detail and scoring points.

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 RCORP-Evaluation has (5) review criteria:

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

The extent to which the applicant:

- A. Demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose of this cooperative agreement to provide data, analysis, and evaluation of the full RCORP program, including all award recipient and RCORP-TA provider activities, as well as inform RCORP and future rural health initiatives.
- B. Addresses the diversity of RCORP activities (e.g., diverse consortium types, community focus areas, etc.) across the current RCORP award recipients, as well as the diverse RCORP-TA activities.
- C. Demonstrates knowledge of the information gaps related to evaluating or analyzing RCORP award activities (e.g., challenges in accessing or reporting timely data or limited research on rural-appropriate service models).
- D. Demonstrates the broader issues, challenges, and data needs of rural providers are clearly articulated to ensure products address the information gaps of the larger rural population.

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

The extent to which the proposed project responds to the “Purpose” included in the program description. The strength of the proposed goals and objectives and their relationship to the identified project. The extent to which the activities (scientific or other) described in the application are capable of addressing the problem and attaining the project objectives.

Methodology (20 points)

The extent to which the applicant:

- A. Proposes methods to address the stated needs and meet each of the previously described program requirements outlined in [Section II.B.](#)
- B. Proposes to use or develop rural-appropriate tools and strategies for evaluation activities for RCORP award recipients.
- C. Provides a dissemination plan for briefs, reports, and products that specifically provides project information to key target audiences and rural stakeholders.
- D. Proposes how to self-assess progress in implementing the proposed methodology quarterly throughout the period of performance.
- E. Provides a proposed methodology for *collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate and inform RCORP activities*, including a clear description of:
  - 1) Proposed methodology for capturing qualitative and quantitative award recipient activities (e.g., clinical and health system impacts).
  - 2) How analyses will include national, state, and community-level data, including award recipient-reported quantitative data collected through the existing PIMS.
  - 3) How analyses will be adjusted to analyze the diverse activities of the RCORP award recipients in order to identify trends and best practices, as well as evaluate impact of RCORP activities on rural communities and the impact of RCORP-TA activities on the award recipients and the general public.
  - 4) How to evaluate effective consortiums, including developing strategies for enhancing consortiums.
  - 5) Proposed approach for analyzing the Return on Community Investment (ROCI) for RCORP award recipients.
- F. Provides a proposed methodology for *identifying gaps, best practices, and recommendations to inform RCORP activities*, and future behavioral health programs in rural communities. Applicants must include a clear description of:
  - 1) Proposed approach to working with the RCORP-TA provider and HRSA to ensure RCORP measures effectively capture progress and impact across RCORP award recipients.
  - 2) Proposed approach to assessing the effectiveness of the TA activities and frequency for data collection/reporting.

- 3) Proposed approach to reviewing existing evaluation measures, including advising HRSA on existing measures used to inform internal and external progress of RCORP award recipients.
  - 4) Any additional, proposed RCORP evaluation activities or additional measures to inform service gaps and highlight effective investments in response.
  - 5) Proposed approach to providing recommendations for improving opioid programs in rural communities (including adjustments to current or future programs), and recommendations for improving data gaps/research in the rural opioids field.
  - 6) Proposed approach to working with the RCORP-TA provider to identify best practices for RCORP award recipients.
- G. Provides proposed methodology for *implementing a communication, dissemination, and collaboration strategy*, including a clear description of:
- 1) Proposed approach for preparing issue briefs, case studies, anecdotal success stories and other formats for public audiences, including academic articles.
  - 2) Proposed communication strategy with detailed plans to share pertinent findings and evidence-based best practices quickly with distinct audiences, including RCORP award recipients, HRSA and other federal funders, rural providers and communities, and the general public.
  - 3) Proposed dissemination strategy with detailed plans for creating and disseminating products that contribute to the evidence-base of rural opioid interventions and/or informs rural providers, including disseminating the products, analyses, and data on a website, database, or other platform. Description must also include detailed methods for tracking the use of released products.
  - 4) Proposed collaboration strategy with detailed plans or approach to working with the RCORP-TA provider to link relevant findings to targeted TA efforts for RCORP award recipients.
  - 5) Proposed strategy and demonstrated ability to create and maintain a website to serve as a repository for products completed under this cooperative agreement.

Work plan (10 points)

The extent to which the applicant:

- A. Proposes a work plan that works towards the goals and objectives of this cooperative agreement.
- B. Provides a complete, well-organized work plan matrix that details the activities in year 1 of the period of performance as well as all multi-year activities that start in year 1. This includes goal(s), objective(s), and activities as they correlate with budget, personnel responsible, and timelines.
- C. Provides logical milestones that articulate the progression of implementation through final outcomes (short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes) throughout the full period of performance. These milestones should reflect the methodology proposed and explicitly include opportunities for self-evaluation and adjustments as needed.

- D. Specifies points in the timeline where collaboration with key stakeholders will be particularly important for planning, designing and implementing evaluation activities, including HRSA and the RCORP-TA provider.

Resolution of Challenges (5 points)

The extent to which the applicant:

- A. Identifies and discusses potential challenges that may be encountered in implementing the evaluation activities as well as the approaches that would be used to address such challenges to minimize the impact on the quality and timeliness of the project.
- B. Provides examples of previous, relevant experience with evaluation challenges and how they were resolved.

**Criterion 3: IMPACT (25 points) – Corresponds to Section IV’s Work Plan, and Evaluation and Technical Support Capacity**

The extent to which the applicant:

- A. Clearly demonstrates capacity to successfully implement the proposed evaluation activities as described in the work plan.
- B. Describes previous experience, skills, and knowledge, including individuals on staff, materials published, and previous evaluation work of a similar nature.
- C. Demonstrates knowledge and experience evaluating network/consortiums, SUD/ODU treatment programs, and rural programs.
- D. Describes previous collaborative partnerships with federal partners and other organizations in completing evaluations under cooperative agreement mechanisms.
- E. Describes the performance management systems and processes to effectively track performance outcomes.
- F. Demonstrates an understanding of the need for flexibility and responsiveness to the data needs and discusses any challenges and how they will be addressed.
- G. Describes plan for working with HRSA and the RCORP-TA provider to use the existing RCORP measures or propose additional measures to fully assess the impact of RCORP overall.
- H. Describes comprehensive, feasible plans for national dissemination of project results and products.

**Criterion 4: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES (25 points) – Corresponds to Section IV’s Evaluation and Technical Support Capacity, and Organizational Information**

Staff Expertise (10 points)

The extent to which the applicant:

- A. Provides a Staffing Plan and Job Descriptions (**Attachment 2**) with sufficient detail about the role and responsibilities of each award -supported staff position.
- B. Proposes project personnel that are qualified by training and/or experience to implement and carry out their roles as evidenced by biographical sketches/resumes (**Attachment 3**).
- C. Demonstrates available non-staff resources required to support successful implementation of the project, if applicable.

## Organizational Capacity and Experience (15 points)

The extent to which the applicant:

- A. Discusses the organization's mission and structure and provides an organizational chart that clearly demonstrates the ability to fulfill the needs and requirements of the evaluation.
- B. Describes the clear capability of the organization to follow the proposed work plan, and properly account for the federal funds.
- C. Describes relevant experience performing work of a similar nature in rural communities, including any relevant published materials or experience from key individuals on staff. Including clear examples (**Attachment 4**).
- D. Demonstrate knowledge and experience evaluating network/consortiums, SUD/ODU treatment, and/or previous evaluations of rural programs.
- E. Describes any currently maintained data sets and how they could help meet program expectations.
- F. Describes the organizational structure of the applicant, the rationale and specific roles, responsibilities, and program management for each of the proposed entities or partners (if any). Includes a clear letter of commitment from each organizational partners, if proposed (**Attachment 5**).
- G. Describes the approach for collaboration on projects and the process for product or report review prior to submission to HRSA.

### ***Criterion 5: SUPPORT REQUESTED (5 points) – Corresponds to Section IV's Budget and Budget Narrative***

The reasonableness of the proposed budget for each year of the period of performance in relation to the objectives, the complexity of the evaluation activities, and the anticipated results.

- A. The extent to which costs, as outlined in the budget and required resources sections, are reasonable given the scope of work.
- B. The extent to which key personnel have adequate time devoted to the project to achieve project objectives.

## **2. Review and Selection Process**

The independent 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. In addition to the ranking based on merit criteria, HRSA approving officials may also apply other factors in award selection, (e.g., geographical distribution), if specified below in this NOFO. HRSA may also consider assessment of risk and the other pre-award activities described in Section 3 below.

Please see Section 5.3 of HRSA's SF-424 Application Guide for more details.

## **3. Assessment of Risk and Other Pre-Award Activities**

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](#)).

#### **4. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates**

HRSA anticipates issuing/announcing awards prior to the start date of September 1, 2019.

## **VI. Award Administration Information**

### **1. Award Notices**

HRSA will issue the Notice of Award prior to the start date of September 1, 2019. 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 Notice of Award (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.

## 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 Reports.** The recipient must submit a progress report to HRSA on an **annual** basis. Further information will be provided in the award notice.
- 2) **Quarterly Reports.** The award recipient must submit a quarterly progress report through EHB. The quarterly report will be used to demonstrate the award recipient's progress on objectives within the quarter and to discuss issues that impact the Work Plan timeline.
- 3) **Federal Financial Report.** The Federal Financial Report (SF-425) is required no later than October 30th for each budget period. The report is an accounting of expenditures under the project that year. Financial reports must be submitted electronically through EHB. More specific information will be included in the Notice of Award.
- 4) **Integrity and Performance Reporting.** The Notice of Award will contain a provision for integrity and performance reporting in [FAPIIS](#), 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](mailto:kdews@hrsa.gov)

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

Fraser Byrne, MPA  
Public Health Analyst  
Attn: Rural Communities Opioid Response Program-Evaluation  
Federal Office of Rural Health Policy  
Health Resources and Services Administration  
5600 Fishers Lane, Mailstop 17W53B  
Rockville, MD 20857  
Telephone: (301) 443-2299  
Email: [fbyrne@hrsa.gov](mailto:fbyrne@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](mailto: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**

The following technical assistance webinar has been scheduled:

#### *Webinar*

Day and Date: Thursday, March 28, 2019  
Time: 12-1:30 p.m. ET  
Call-In Number: 888-469-3074  
Participant Code: 4647545  
Weblink: [https://hrsa.connectsolutions.com/rcorp\\_evaluation-ta\\_webinar/](https://hrsa.connectsolutions.com/rcorp_evaluation-ta_webinar/)  
Playback Number: 800-944-8816  
Passcode: 4647545

## **Tips for Writing a Strong Application**

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