

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



**Health Resources & Services Administration**

Federal Office of Rural Health Policy  
Policy Research Division

***Rural Policy Analysis Program***

**Funding Opportunity Number:** HRSA-21-024  
**Funding Opportunity Types:** Competing Continuation, New  
**Assistance Listings (CFDA) Number:** 93.155

**NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY**

Fiscal Year 2021

**Application Due Date: December 14, 2020**

*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: October 14, 2020**

Jennifer Burges  
Public Health Analyst, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy  
Telephone: (301) 945-3985  
Email: [jburges@hrsa.gov](mailto:jburges@hrsa.gov)

Authority: 42 U.S.C. § 912(b)(5) (§ 711(b)(5) of the Social Security Act)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is accepting applications for the fiscal year (FY) 2021 Rural Policy Analysis Program. The purpose of this program is to support research and analysis of key policy issues affecting rural communities that informs policy makers.

The FY 2021 President's Budget does not request funding for this program. This notice is a contingency action taken to ensure that, should funds become available for this purpose, HRSA can process applications and award funds appropriately. You should note that this program may be cancelled prior to award.

Funding Opportunity Title:	Rural Policy Analysis Program
Funding Opportunity Number:	HRSA-21-024
Due Date for Applications:	December 14, 2020
Anticipated Total Annual Available FY 2021 Funding:	\$225,000
Estimated Number and Type of Award:	Up to one cooperative agreement
Estimated Award Amount:	Up to \$225,000 per year subject to the availability of appropriated funds
Cost Sharing/Match Required:	No
Period of Performance:	July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2024 (3 years)
Eligible Applicants:	Eligible applicants include domestic public, private, and non-profit organizations, including tribes and tribal organizations, faith-based and community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, state and local governments, and hospitals.  See <a href="#">Section III.1</a> of this notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) for complete eligibility information.

### Application Guide

You (the applicant organization/agency) are responsible for reading and complying with the instructions included in HRSA's *SF-424 R&R Application Guide*, available online at <http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/apply/applicationguide/sf424rrguidev2.pdf>, except where instructed in this NOFO to do otherwise.

## **Technical Assistance**

HRSA has scheduled the following technical assistance:

### *Webinar*

Day and Date: Thursday, October 22, 2020

Time: 1 – 2 p.m. ET

Call-In Number: 1-800-369-2096

Participant Code: 9160956

Weblink: [https://hrsa.connectsolutions.com/rural\\_policy\\_analysis/](https://hrsa.connectsolutions.com/rural_policy_analysis/)

Playback Number: 1- 800-331-1949

Passcode: 102220

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# **I. Program Funding Opportunity Description**

## **1. Purpose**

This notice announces the opportunity to apply for funding under the Rural Policy Analysis Program. The purpose of this program is to support research and analysis of key policy issues affecting rural communities that will inform policy makers. This program is national in scope and focuses on cross-cutting rural health and human services issues, identifying historical and emerging trends and challenges faced by rural communities. Analyses funded under this cooperative agreement should focus on:

- Providing timely analysis and synthesis of policies and regulations impacting rural health systems and communities in the form of policy briefs or reports, and webinars and oral presentations
- Describing the historical context and current implications of rural policy issues
- Facilitating public dialogue around rural policy issues
- Identifying opportunities for integrating health and human services in policies impacting rural communities
- Identifying considerations for rural stakeholders and policy makers

These activities should inform rural decision makers and policy leaders, including the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services (NACRHHS) and organizations focused on improving health and human services in rural communities such as State Offices of Rural Health (SORHs) and State Rural Health Associations (SRHAs).

## **2. Background**

This program is authorized by 42 U.S.C. § 912(b)(5) (§ 711(b)(5) of the Social Security Act). The Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) 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 is statutorily required to advise the Secretary on the effects of current policies and proposed statutory, regulatory, administrative and budgetary changes in Medicare and Medicaid programs on the financial viability of small rural hospitals, the ability of rural areas to attract and retain physicians and other health professions and access to and the quality of health care in rural areas. For additional information about FORHP, please see <http://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/index.html>.

# **II. Award Information**

## **1. Type of Application and Award**

Types of applications sought: Competing Continuation, New

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

**HRSA program involvement will include:**

- Participating in the planning and development of the recipient's annual policy analysis portfolio and the final selection of projects;
- Reviewing the recipient's products including the methodology, analysis, results, policy implications, format and tone prior to public dissemination;
- Participating, as appropriate, in the planning and implementation of any meetings, training activities or workgroups conducted during the period of performance; and
- Providing consultation to the recipient to design dissemination strategies of the projects and findings to multiple audiences interested in rural health issues in the form of policy briefs, journal manuscripts, chart books, presentations to policy makers, responses to health policy programs and experts, and presentations at national, state, and regional conferences.

**The cooperative agreement recipient's responsibilities will include:**

- Creating and distributing at least 2 policy briefs or reports, and accompanying 1-page highlights and webinars per year that will inform public policy makers, providers, leaders, and decision makers on timely issues in the area of rural health policy;
- Facilitating public dialogue on key rural policy issues by tracking emerging rural health and human services policy issues and quickly synthesizing them in a manner that provides for easy consumption by rural community leaders such as members of the NACRHHS with particular emphasis on Medicare, Medicaid, human services, rural health care providers, and systems;
- Identifying opportunities for integrating health and human services in rural policy, program, and evaluation in a local community context;
- Identifying opportunities to demonstrate broad community impact of policies and programs in rural health and human services;
- Providing timely analysis of policies and regulations that optimize positive impacts on rural health systems and communities for both technical and non-technical audiences and stakeholders such as NACRHHS;
- Adhering to HRSA guidelines pertaining to acknowledgement and disclaimer on all products produced by HRSA award funds;
- Adhering to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended;
- Developing policy analysis projects that aim to produce new information in alignment with FORHP's charge under 42 U.S.C. § 912(b)(5) (§ 711(b)(5) of the Social Security Act);
- Planning and developing an annual policy analysis portfolio and selecting final policy analysis projects;
- Responding to FORHP requests (including execution of short-term qualitative or quantitative analyses to assist in informing emerging policy questions), comments and questions within a timely manner;
- Submission of all finalized research findings to the Rural Health Research Gateway (<https://www.ruralhealthresearch.org/>)

- Sharing policy analysis findings (e.g., policy briefs) for FORHP review by work plan guidelines; and
- Designing and implementing dissemination strategies of policy analyses to multiple audiences interested in rural health issues in the form of policy briefs, journal manuscripts, presentations to policy makers, responses to health policy programs and experts, and presentations at national, state, and regional conferences.

## **2. Summary of Funding**

HRSA estimates approximately \$225,000 to be available annually to fund one recipient. The actual amount available will not be determined until enactment of the final FY 2021 federal appropriation. You may apply for a ceiling amount of up to \$225,000 total cost (includes both direct and indirect, facilities and administrative costs) per year. The FY 2021 President's Budget does not request funding for this program. 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 appropriately. The period of performance is July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2024 (3 years). Funding beyond the first year is subject to the availability of appropriated funds for the Rural Policy Analysis Program in subsequent fiscal years, satisfactory recipient performance, and a decision that continued funding is in the best interest of the Federal Government. HRSA may reduce recipient funding levels beyond the first year if they are unable to fully succeed in achieving the goals listed in their application.

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 non-profit organizations, including tribes and tribal organizations, faith-based and community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, state and local governments, and hospitals.

### **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.

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 Research and Related (R&R) 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 select “Subscribe” and provide your email address for each NOFO you are reviewing or preparing in the workspace application package in order to receive notifications including modifications, clarifications, and/or republications of the NOFO on Grants.gov. You will also receive notifications of documents placed in the RELATED DOCUMENTS tab on Grants.gov that may affect the NOFO and your application. *You are ultimately responsible for reviewing the [For Applicants](#) page for all information relevant to this NOFO.*

### 2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Section 4 of HRSA’s [SF-424 R&R 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 *R&R 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 R&R 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 [SF-424 R&R Application Guide](#) for the Application Completeness Checklist.



## Application Page Limit

The total size of all uploaded files included in the page limit may not exceed the equivalent of **60 pages** when printed by HRSA. The page limit includes the abstract, project and budget narratives, attachments including biographical sketches (biosketches), and letters of commitment and support required in HRSA's [SF-424 R&R Application Guide](#) and this NOFO. Standard OMB-approved forms that are included in the workspace application package do not count in the page limit. Biographical sketches **do** count in the page limitation. Please note: If you use an OMB-approved form that is not included in the workspace application package for HRSA-21-024 it may count against the page limit. Therefore, we strongly recommend you only use Grants.gov workspace forms associated with this NOFO to avoid exceeding the page limit. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement and proof of non-profit status (if applicable) do not count in the page limit. **It is therefore important 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.**

## Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility, and Voluntary Exclusion Certification

- 1) You certify on behalf of the applicant organization, 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 4: Other Relevant Documents](#).

See Section 4.1 viii of HRSA's [SF-424 R&R 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 R&R Application Guide](#) (including the budget, budget justification, 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 R&R 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: [Need](#)  
Briefly describe the purpose of your proposed project(s) and how it will align with FORHP's charge under 42 U.S.C. § 912(b)(5) (§ 711(b)(5) of the Social Security Act).
- **NEEDS ASSESSMENT** -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 1: [Need](#)  
Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of:
  - The need for timely research and analysis of national health and human services policy issues (particularly Medicare, Medicaid and other broad Federal public insurance programs) impacting rural health systems and communities
  - The unique characteristics of rural communities and why rural residents are considered an underserved population
- **METHODOLOGY** -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 2: [Response](#)  
In this section you must include specific information for two policy analysis projects that you propose to conduct in the first budget year. Proposed projects should aim to produce policy briefs or reports with a high likelihood of being applied in meaningful ways for rural health systems and communities and align with FORHP's charge under 42 U.S.C. § 912(b)(5) (§ 711(b)(5) of the Social Security Act). Competing continuation applicants must propose research projects that are not duplicative of past projects, but they may propose projects that build on or update previously funded work. Post award, final projects will be chosen in consultation with HRSA and may include emerging priorities from HRSA/HHS. Projects will be defined collaboratively between the successful applicant and HRSA. This process may include additional input from HRSA on possible alternative proposals and/or suggested proposal modifications, depending on policy needs at that time. The proposals must be national in scope.

You must avoid duplication with research that is already underway or recently completed by FORHP's Rural Health Research Center Program; query the Rural Health Research Gateway ([www.ruralhealthresearch.org](http://www.ruralhealthresearch.org)) for help in identifying projects previously funded and currently underway. Projects must not duplicate or overlap with work conducted by the Flex Monitoring Team, which evaluates the Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant program and also conducts larger analyses on Critical Access Hospital (CAH) trends specific to quality and performance improvement (<https://www.flexmonitoring.org/the-flex-program>).

It is expected that all policy analysis projects proposed for the first year will be completed within the 12 month budget period.

Present **two** policy analysis proposals using the format outlined below. Limit each research proposal to a maximum of four pages.

## Policy Analysis Proposal

- *Project Title*
- *Statement of the Policy Issue and Relevance for Rural Health Systems and/or Communities:*
  - Clearly state the purpose of the policy analysis.
  - Identify the gaps in the existing knowledge and historical context that the policy analysis is intended to fill.
  - State the relevance of the analysis and its implications for rural health systems and/or communities.
- *Geographic Coverage:* Describe the geographic coverage and any sub-populations of focus for the policy analysis.
- *Methods and Data/Information Sources:* Identify the proposed methods and data/information sources for completing the policy analysis.
- *Human Subjects Research:* Provide answers to the questions below:
  - Are human subjects involved? If activities involving human subjects are planned at any time during the proposed policy analysis project, indicate YES even if the proposed project is exempt from Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects. Indicate NO if no activities involving human subjects are planned and skip to the Staff Qualifications and Staff-loading Chart section of the NOFO.
  - If the answer was YES, indicate if the Institutional Review Board (IRB) review is pending. If the IRB has been approved, enter the approval date.
  - If exempt from IRB approval enter the exemption numbers and a short description corresponding to one or more of the exemption categories. See [http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.html#46.101\(b\)](http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.html#46.101(b)) for a list of the six categories of research that qualify for exemption from coverage by the regulations as defined in the Common Rule for the Protection of Human Subjects.
  - For the Human Subject Assurance Number provide the IRB approval number or the approved Federal Wide Assurance (FWA), Multiple Project Assurance (MPA), Single Project Assurance (SPA) or Cooperative Project Assurance Number (CPA) that the applicant has on file with the Office of Human Research Protections, if available.
  - If you have not yet been reviewed by IRB and you believe your policy analysis is exempt, provide a justification for the exemption(s) with sufficient information about involvement of human subjects to allow a tentative conclusion by HRSA staff that the claimed exemption(s) seems appropriate.
  - Note that non-exempt research involving human subjects cannot be conducted under a HHS-sponsored award unless your organization provides verification of the justification of the exemption per HHS regulations. Documentation of IRB review when it is completed and its exemption or approval must be sent to the Project Officer. This IRB certification must include the grant number, the title of the project, name of the appropriate IRB that has reviewed and exempted, or approved, the proposed activity, name of the principal

investigator/program director, date of IRB exemption or approval, and appropriate signatures.

- *Staff-loading Chart*: Identify the project leader and other senior staff involvement. Include a staff-loading chart that represents the number of hours devoted to the project for each staff member and the total number of hours for each activity (e.g., writing, editing). Indicate the relevant expertise and experience of the staff.
- *Timetable*: Provide a schedule for the project work. Deliverable due dates for each project should be included. Gantt charts are not necessary.
- *Literature Citations*: Provide citations to published literature relevant to this proposal.

▪ *WORK PLAN -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criteria 2: [Response](#) and 4: [Impact](#)*

In this section you must describe the activities or steps proposed to complete the proposed project. This discussion must include the following:

- Explanation of quality control processes, including the quality of the written products produced under this cooperative agreement. This should include a plan for the Principal Investigator to review all draft reports to assure their quality and readability.
- Plan to comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.
- Project management plan that will ensure each funded activity stays on track throughout the first 12 month budget period.
- A general work plan for budget periods two and three. This SHOULD NOT include specific proposals for work that will be conducted during those years but should highlight activities that will span all three years of the period of performance.
- Plan for notifying HRSA prior to any public release of policy analyses funded through this cooperative agreement (e.g., a courtesy copy of manuscripts submitted to HRSA prior to journal acceptance, advance notice of a presentation at a conference and any accompanying slides or materials, etc.)
- Plan for disseminating the policy analyses (e.g., policy briefs or reports) produced under this cooperative agreement. At minimum, this plan should include strategy to:
  - Develop and maintain a website dedicated to FORHP funded policy analyses that will house completed projects.
  - Provide the Rural Health Research Gateway with links to completed research products housed on the recipient's individual website.
  - Alert users to new analyses through multiple channels of communication and target dissemination to rural policy makers and other relevant rural stakeholders such as NACRHHS, SORHs and SRHAs.

- **RESOLUTION OF CHALLENGES** -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 4: [Impact](#)  
Discuss challenges that are likely to be encountered in designing and implementing the projects proposed in the Methodology section as well as activities described in the Work Plan. Explain the approaches that will be used to resolve these challenges.
  
- **EVALUATION AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT CAPACITY** -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 3: [Evaluative Measures](#)  
This section should describe a plan for the following:
  - Reporting the number of times that each policy brief or report posted on your website is accessed and/or downloaded as well as a plan to track any journal citations.
  
- **ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION** -- Corresponds to Section V's Review Criterion 5: [Resources/Capabilities](#)  
This section should describe your expertise in analyzing rural health and human services policy issues, placing them in the larger historical context, and identifying policy considerations for policy makers and other rural stakeholders. This includes your organization's structure and staffing plan.
  - Provide information on your organization's current mission and structure, including an applicant organizational chart ([Attachment 3](#)), and how this aligns with the scope of the proposed activities.
  - Succinctly describe your capacity to effectively manage the programmatic, fiscal, and administrative aspects of the proposed project.
  - Provide information on your program's past experience conducting similar work (from any funder). Include specific examples of past publications or reports that are national in scope and synthesize existing and/or original research of existing or emerging health policy issues that have affected rural communities.
  - Provide information on your current resources and capabilities to analyze rural health and human services policy issues at a national level.
  - Demonstrate past experience and current capability to communicate complex public policy issues and key rural concerns to a wide variety of audiences and through multiple mediums.
  - Demonstrate your organization's existing relationships with key rural stakeholders such as NACRHHS, SORHs and SRHAs.

### iii. Budget

The directions offered in the [SF-424 R&R Application Guide](#) may differ from those offered by Grants.gov. Follow the instructions in Section 4.1.iv of HRSA's [SF-424 R&R Application Guide](#) and the additional budget instructions provided below. A budget that follows the *R&R 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, may 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) you incur to carry out a HRSA-supported project or activity. Total project or program costs include costs charged to the award and costs borne by you to satisfy a matching or cost-sharing requirement, as applicable.

The Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-94), Division A, § 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 R&R 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 Justification Narrative

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

<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. Any attachments referenced in a narrative section may be considered during the objective review.	
<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 (4) Impact
Resolution of Challenges	(4) Impact
Evaluation and Technical Support Capacity	(3) Evaluative Measures
Organizational Information	(5) Resources/Capabilities
Budget and Budget Justification Narrative	(6) Support Requested

## **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. **Clearly label each attachment.**

### *Attachment 1: Staffing Plan and Job Descriptions for Key Personnel (see Section 4.1.vi. of HRSA's [SF-424 R&R 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.

### *Attachment 2: Letters of Agreement, Memoranda of Understanding, and/or Description(s) of Proposed/Existing Contracts*

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 3: Project Organizational Chart*

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

### *Attachments 4–15: 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. Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number Transition to the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)**

You must obtain a valid DUNS number, also known as the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), and provide that number in the application. At a future, to-be-determined date, the \*DUNS number will be replaced by the UEI, a "new, non-proprietary identifier" requested in, and assigned by, the System for Award Management (SAM.gov). For more details, visit the following pages: [Planned UEI Updates in Grant Application Forms](#) and [General Service Administration's UEI Update](#).

You must also register with 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)).

If you are chosen as a recipient, HRSA would not make an award until you have complied with all applicable DUNS (or UEI) and SAM requirements and, if you have not fully complied with the requirements by the time HRSA is ready to make an award, you may be deemed 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 it is still active and that the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) has been approved.

\*Currently, 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 R&R 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.

In accordance with the Federal Government's efforts to reduce reporting burden for recipients of federal financial assistance, the general certification and representation requirements contained in the Standard Form 424B (SF-424B) – Assurances – Non-Construction Programs, and the Standard Form 424D (SF-424D) – Assurances – Construction Programs, have been standardized federal-wide. Effective January 1, 2020, the forms themselves are no longer part of HRSA's application packages and the updated common certification and representation requirements will be stored and maintained within SAM. Organizations or individuals applying for federal financial assistance as of January 1, 2020, must validate the federally required common certifications and representations annually through SAM located at [SAM.gov](#).

**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 14, 2020 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 R&R Application Guide](#) for additional information.



## 5. Intergovernmental Review

The Rural Policy Analysis 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 R&R Application Guide](#) for additional information.

## 6. Funding Restrictions

You may request funding for a period of performance of up to 3 years, at no more than \$225,000 per year (inclusive of direct **and** indirect costs). The FY 2021 President's Budget does not request funding for this program. 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 appropriately. 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 A of the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-94) and Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act (P.L. 116-159) are in effect at the time this NOFO is posted. Please see Section 4.1 of HRSA's [SF-424 R&R Application Guide](#) for additional information. Awards will be made subsequent to enactment of the FY 2021 appropriation. The NOA will reference the FY 2021 appropriation act and any restrictions that may apply. Note that these or other restrictions will apply as required by law in subsequent appropriations acts for FY 2021.

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(s) 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 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 Rural Policy Analysis Program has six review criteria. See the review criteria outlined below with specific detail and scoring points.

*Criterion 1: NEED (15 points) – Corresponds to Section IV's [Introduction](#) and [Needs Assessment](#)*

The extent to which:

- The purpose of the proposed project(s) aligns with FORHP's charge under 42 U.S.C. § 912(b)(5) (§ 711(b)(5) of the Social Security Act)
- The application demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the need for timely research and analysis of national health and human services policy issues (particularly Medicare and Medicaid) impacting rural health systems and communities
- The application demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the unique characteristics of rural communities and why rural residents are considered an underserved population

*Criterion 2: RESPONSE (30 points) – Corresponds to Section IV's [Methodology](#) and [Work Plan](#)*

Connection to FORHP's 42 U.S.C. § 912(b)(5) (§ 711(b)(5) of the Social Security Act) Charge (10 points)

The extent to which:

- The two policy analysis projects proposed in the application have a high likelihood of being applied in meaningful ways for rural health systems and communities
- Proposed projects are national in scope

Strength of the Proposed Policy Analysis Projects (20 points)

The extent to which the application:

- Clearly describes each item included in the *Policy Analysis Proposal* outline as described in Section IV's *Methodology*
- Includes a clear explanation of quality control processes
- Includes a clear plan to comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended
- Has a thorough project management plan to ensure that each funded activity stays on track throughout the first 12 month budget period
- Provides a general work plan for budget periods two and three that highlights activities that will span all three years of the period of performance
- Has a clear plan to notify HRSA prior to any public release of policy analyses funded through this cooperative agreement

*Criterion 3: EVALUATIVE MEASURES (5 points) – Corresponds to Section IV's [Evaluation and Technical Support Capacity](#)*

The strength and effectiveness of the plan to:

- Report the number of times each policy brief or report posted on the applicant organization's website is accessed and/or downloaded as well as a plan to track any journal citations

*Criterion 4: IMPACT (15 points) – Corresponds to Section IV's [Work Plan](#) and [Resolution of Challenges](#)*

- Strength of the applicant organization's ability to identify challenges likely to be encountered in designing and implementing the proposed projects and the feasibility and effectiveness of the proposed approaches to resolve those challenges
- The extent to which the application includes a well thought out plan for disseminating the policy analyses (e.g., policy briefs or reports) produced under this cooperative agreement including:
  - Develop and maintain a website dedicated to FORHP-funded policy analyses that will house completed projects
  - Provide the Rural Health Research Gateway with links to completed research products housed on the recipient's individual website
  - Alerting users to new analyses through multiple channels of communication and targeting dissemination to rural policy makers and other relevant rural stakeholders such as NACRHHS, SORHs and SRHAs

*Criterion 5: RESOURCES/CAPABILITIES (30 points) – Corresponds to Section IV's [Organizational Information](#)*

Organizational Structure (10 points)

The extent to which:

- The organization's current mission and structure aligns with the scope of the proposed activities
- The applicant organization can effectively manage the programmatic, fiscal and administrative aspects of the proposed project
- The applicant organization has the resources and capabilities necessary to analyze rural health and human services policy issues at a national level
- The application demonstrates the organization's capability to communicate complex public policy issues and key rural concerns to a wide variety of audiences and through multiple mediums
- The applicant organization has existing relationships with key rural stakeholders such as NACRHHS, SORHs and SRHAs

## Past Experience Conducting Similar Work (20 points)

The extent to which:

- The application clearly demonstrates through specific examples of reports and/or publications past experience conducting similar work (from any funder) that is national in scope and focuses specifically on the rural implications of health policy issues.
- The application clearly describes the applicant organization's expertise in analyzing rural health and human services policy issues, placing them in the larger historical context, and identifying policy considerations for policy makers and other rural stakeholders

*Criterion 6: SUPPORT REQUESTED (5 points) – Corresponds to Section IV's [Budget](#) and [Budget Justification Narrative](#)*

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

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

## **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 R&R 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.

HRSA is required to review and consider any information about your organization that is in the [Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System \(FAPIS\)](#). You may review and comment on any information about your organization that a federal awarding agency previously entered. HRSA will consider your comments, in addition to other information in [FAPIS](#) 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 FAPIS 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 July 1, 2021. See Section 5.4 of HRSA's [SF-424 R&R Application Guide](#) for additional information.

### **2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

See Section 2.1 of HRSA's [SF-424 R&R 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, and it is the recipient's responsibility to monitor the compliance of all funded subrecipients. 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 grant-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 copyright license and data rights.

## Human Subjects Protection

Federal regulations ([45 CFR part 46](#)) require that applications and proposals involving human subjects must be evaluated with reference to the risks to the subjects, the adequacy of protection against these risks, the potential benefits of the research to the subjects and others, and the importance of the knowledge gained or to be gained. If you anticipate research involving human subjects, you must meet the requirements of the HHS regulations to protect human subjects from research risks.

## 3. Reporting

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

- 1) **Progress Report(s)**. The recipient must submit a progress report to HRSA **annually**. 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](mailto:kdews@hrsa.gov)

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

Jennifer Burges  
Public Health Analyst, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy  
Attn: Rural Policy Analysis Program  
Health Resources and Services Administration  
5600 Fishers Lane  
Rockville, MD 20857  
Telephone: (301) 945-3985  
Email: [jburges@hrsa.gov](mailto:jburges@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 the 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 the following technical assistance:

#### *Webinar*

Day and Date: Thursday, October 22, 2020  
Time: 1 – 2 p.m. ET  
Call-In Number: 1-800-369-2096  
Participant Code: 9160956  
Weblink: [https://hrsa.connectsolutions.com/rural\\_policy\\_analysis/](https://hrsa.connectsolutions.com/rural_policy_analysis/)  
Playback Number: 1- 800-331-1949  
Passcode: 102220

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

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