



COVID-19 Community Engagement and Diverse Media

GRANT REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

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12/15/2022

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Land Acknowledgement

Every community owes its existence and vitality to generations from around the world who contributed their hopes, dreams, and energy to making the history that led to this moment. Some were brought here against their will, some were drawn to leave their distant homes in hope of a better life, and some have lived on this land for more generations than can be counted. Truth and acknowledgment are critical to building mutual respect and connection across all barriers of heritage and difference.

We begin this effort to acknowledge what has been buried by honoring the truth. We are standing on the ancestral lands of the Dakota people. We want to acknowledge the Dakota, the Ojibwe, the Ho Chunk, and the other nations of people who also called this place home. We pay respects to their elders past and present. Please take a moment to consider the treaties made by the Tribal nations that entitle non-Native people to live and work on traditional Native lands. Consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us together here today. Please join us in uncovering such truths at any and all public events.*

** This is the acknowledgment given in the USDAC Honor Native Land Guide – edited to reflect this space by Shannon Geshick, MTAG, Executive Director, Minnesota Indian Affairs Council.*

Minnesota reservations: Land cessation treaties



RFP Part 1: Overview

1.1 General Information

- **Announcement Title:** COVID-19 Community Engagement and Diverse Media Grant Request for Proposals (RFP)
- **Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Program Website:** www.health.state.mn.us/communities/equity/funding/covidrfp2022/index.html
- **Application Deadline:** **Wednesday, January 18, 2023 at 11:59 p.m.**

1.2 Program Description

The Minnesota Department of Health (“State”) is issuing a request for proposals to aid the State in communicating with and engaging communities most impacted by inequities around COVID-19 messaging. The goal of this funding is to increase community understanding of and engagement around COVID-19 and community recovery among residents of Minnesota and the 11 Tribal Nations that share its geography – particularly residents from communities of color, American Indian residents, LGBTQ residents, residents with disabilities, and residents with limited English proficiency.

While the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) continues to create and disseminate public health messages related to COVID-19, the State recognizes that communities vary in the way they consume, understand, and trust the information they receive. These grants aim to ensure that all communities have access to trusted, timely, and culturally relevant information and resources in their preferred language. Through diverse media messaging and authentic community engagement, the State aims to reduce inequities in COVID-19, including vaccination rates and overall community recovery from the pandemic.

Successful applicants will propose a plan to aid the state in this effort through the use of diverse media strategies, community engagement and outreach strategies, or a combination of both. All strategies must be tailored to the specific communities reached by the applicant (e.g., culturally relevant, linguistically appropriate, accessible, etc.). Grantees may share messaging and media content produced by the State, adapt those messages for their target audience, and/or create and disseminate their own culturally relevant content.

1.3 Funding and Project Dates

Funding

Funding for this grant opportunity will be a sub-award of federal funding sources. Approximately \$7.3 million is available for multiple grant awards. The State anticipates funding a variety of proposals that range in size between \$50,000 and \$175,000 and that provide a mix of media messaging and community engagement. Funding will depend on application scores

and the need to balance funding to serve the breadth of populations listed above, project strategies, and geographic areas in Minnesota. Funding is contingent upon availability.

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process. If selected, grantees may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant agreement is fully executed, and the grant has reached its effective date.

Funding	Estimate
Estimated Amount to Grant	\$7,300,000
Estimated Number of Awards	60-70
Estimated Award Maximum	\$175,000
Estimated Award Minimum	\$50,000

Match Requirement

There is no match requirement for this RFP.

Project Dates

Estimated start date is April 1, 2023, or whenever a grant agreement is negotiated and fully executed, whichever is later. Grants are expected to end on June 30, 2024.

1.4 Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include community-based nonprofit organizations, other community-led organizations (may include for-profit organizations), Tribes, and diverse media organizations. Applicants must have state or federal recognition as a formal organization or entity, such as a Federal Employer Identification Number or 501c3 status. Organizations or groups that do not have state or federal recognition may apply with a fiscal agent^[1]. Applicants must be located in and conduct grant activities in the state of Minnesota, but fiscal agents may be located outside of Minnesota. Eligible applicants who wish to work together but have not formed a legal partnership may designate one organization as a fiscal agent.

^[1] A **fiscal agent** is an organization that assumes full legal and contractual responsibility for the fiscal management and award conditions of the grant funds and has authority to sign the grant agreement. A fiscal agent is often a different organization than the operating organization (which performs the work). In a multi-organization collaboration, however, one organization must be designated as the fiscal agent.

Please note that organizations currently funded by MDH to perform COVID-19 related work, including COVID Community Coordinator (CCC) contractors, are eligible to respond to this Request for Proposals. **However, organizations that are not already performing COVID-19 related work through a legal agreement (e.g., grant, contract) with MDH during the estimated grant period for this funding opportunity (April 2023 – June 2024) will be given priority.** If a CCC contractor or other partner already in a legal agreement with MDH for COVID-19 work during this grant period chooses to apply, they must:

- Ensure their proposal includes distinct activities and deliverables that do not overlap with their current contract or grant deliverables.
- Include in their proposal how they will ensure the two legal agreements will be managed separately with no duplicate payments or activities.
- Be prepared to submit substantiating documentation with invoices as requested by the State.

Collaboration

Multi-organization collaboration is welcomed and encouraged. MDH recognizes that achieving health equity will happen only as we work together. Organizations that collaborate on proposals are encouraged to compensate partners appropriately for their contributions and to consider equity in deciding how resources are distributed among partner organizations.

Depending on the number of collaborating organizations and the scope of their project, multi-organization collaborations may choose to request a higher award amount (toward the top of the estimated award range listed in the table above) than single-organization applicants. For applications that include multi-organization collaboration, the application must list one entity as the primary lead applicant. If awarded funds, that lead organization will be named in the grant agreement and manage the funds, and the partner organizations will be subcontractors.

1.5 Questions and Answers

All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted by email to health.covidmedia.mdh@state.mn.us. State staff will get back to you with a response within 3 business days.

The State will post the questions and answers received on the [COVID-19 Community Engagement Request for Proposals FAQ](#) page. Questions must be submitted no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, January 9, 2023. The State will post final answers to questions no later than 5 p.m. on Thursday, January 12, 2023.

To ensure the proper and fair evaluation of all applications, other communications regarding this RFP including verbal, telephone, written or internet initiated by or on behalf of any applicant to any employee of the Department, other than questions submitted to as outlined above, are prohibited. **Any violation of this prohibition may result in the disqualification of the applicant.**

RFP Information Webinar

All prospective applicants are encouraged to attend the RFP informational webinar. The State will offer an informational webinar for prospective applicants on **Wednesday, December 21, 2022 from 10-11:30 a.m.**

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In this webinar, State staff will walk through the goals, requirements, and process of the Request for Proposals and answer questions. Please note that staff will not be able to help with the drafting of proposals or provide feedback on proposals.

The webinar will be recorded and posted on the [RFP webpage](#). Questions asked during the webinar will be posted on the [COVID-19 Community Engagement Requests for Proposals FAQ page](#).

RFP Part 2: Program Details

2.1 Priorities

Health Equity Priorities

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to ensure fairness, precision, equity and consistency in competitive grant awards. This includes implementing diversity and inclusion in grant-making. [The Policy on Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review](#) establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally identify how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities and/or disparities.

This grant will serve:

- African American communities
- African immigrant communities
- American Indian communities
- Asian Pacific Islander communities
- Hispanic and Latino/Latine communities
- LGBTQ communities
- Disability communities

Approaches to serving these communities may be intersectional.

Grant outcomes will include:

- Increased community understanding of COVID-19 and public health guidance and recommendations related to COVID-19.
- Decreased vaccine hesitancy, especially among communities with longstanding mistrust in government and/or scientific institutions.
- Increased community participation in preventive behaviors including vaccination, masking, and social distancing.
- Increased community participation in COVID-19 testing and appropriate isolation and quarantine.
- Increased community engagement in COVID-19 community recovery programs and activities, including those that address mental health, social connectedness, food and housing stability, and other economic and social determinants of health that were exacerbated by the pandemic.

Other Competitive Priorities

Priority will be given to entities that are led/owned/operated by people of color, American Indians, individuals with disabilities, and/or LGBTQ individuals.

For this Request for Proposal, the State will consider an entity led/owned/operated by people of color, American Indians, individuals with disabilities, and/or LGBTQ individuals if the entity is:

- A Tribal Government
- A nonprofit with at least 51% of the organization's board and leadership identifying as people of color, American Indians, individuals with disabilities, and/or LGBTQ individuals.
- A for-profit entity that is owned and operated by at least 51% people of color, American Indians, individuals with disabilities, and/or LGBTQ individuals.

2.2 Eligible Projects

Strategies

Projects must increase community understanding of and engagement around COVID-19 and community recovery through the use of diverse media strategies, community engagement and outreach strategies, or a combination of both.

- **Media messaging** includes communications that reach large target audiences such as social media, online news, radio, television, and print.
- **Community engagement and outreach** includes activities that enable the grantee to listen authentically to communities to learn about their questions and needs related to COVID-19 and community recovery; work with the State and its partners to address those community needs; and connect communities to vaccines and to trusted information and resources related to COVID-19 and pandemic recovery.

All project strategies must be tailored to the specific racial/ethnic/cultural/disability/LGBTQ community or communities reached by the applicant (e.g., culturally relevant, linguistically appropriate, accessible, etc.). Applicants are encouraged to propose strategies that are adaptable to quickly changing information and to use a trauma-informed lens to approach this work.

Topics

Topics for messaging and engagement may include, but are not limited to, addressing ongoing vaccine hesitancy – especially hesitancy issues affecting specific vaccine coverage rates impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic – booster doses, vaccines for youth, testing, masking, treatment, and other community needs and inequities related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Selected grantees will be required to spend approximately half of their grant award amount on vaccine-related media messaging and/or engagement activities. Proposal work plans and budgets should clearly indicate which activities and expenses relate to vaccine-related work.

Grantees may share messaging and media content produced by the State, adapt those messages for their target audience, and/or create and disseminate their own culturally relevant

content. The State will share updated, timely COVID-19 messaging with grantees at least weekly.

Target Audiences

The primary audience(s) for community engagement and media messaging must include one or more of the following populations: African American, African immigrant, American Indian, Asian Pacific Islander, Hispanic and Latino/Latine, LGBTQ Minnesotans, and Minnesotans with disabilities. Grantees are encouraged to reach diverse communities within communities of color and American Indian communities (such as people of color and American Indians with disabilities and people of color and American Indians who are LGBTQ).

Coordination and Collaboration

MDH encourages applicants to coordinate and/or collaborate with local public health, Tribal health, community health clinics, or other entities that are providing vaccines and other COVID-19 recovery and wraparound services, including the Minnesota Department of Health's [COVID Community Coordinator contractors](#), to promote vaccine events and other COVID-19 recovery resources and services.

Sample Activities

Examples of eligible activities under this contract include ***but are not limited to:***

- Using trusted messengers to answer questions about and connect community members to vaccinations, including pre-registration or making appointments as needed, in their preferred language.
- Implementing a culturally relevant campaign to address vaccine booster hesitancy using the organization's trusted communication networks and channels such as e-newsletters, text message, social media, YouTube, or TikTok.
- Promoting and distributing at-home testing kits and educate community members on their importance and use.
- Partnering with trusted community and/or faith leaders to host community conversations or social media live events around community questions or needs related to COVID-19 and pandemic recovery.
- Disseminating COVID-19 messaging and promoting community vaccination events through radio spots, print media, or online news via trusted media networks.
- Designing and implementing a culturally and linguistically appropriate community questionnaire or needs assessment to better understand and be able to address community questions or needs related to COVID-19 and pandemic recovery.
- Developing culturally and linguistically appropriate communication materials that address community -specific needs related to COVID-19 and pandemic recovery and disseminating them through trusted channels and networks.

- Connecting community members to culturally appropriate pandemic recovery resources, such as mental health, food, employment, and housing support, including those provided by [COVID Community Coordinator](#) contractors.
- Engaging youth in designing and creating graphics, posters, or billboards to be displayed in well-trafficked community spaces.
- Using existing networks to engage community members around COVID-19 and community recovery in spaces where communities gather.
- Evaluating the reach and impact of your COVID-19 messaging and/or engagement/outreach strategies.

Please note that these grants are not for hosting vaccination events. Selected contractors may partner with [COVID Community Coordinator](#) contractors, community clinics, local public health, or other vaccination event coordinators to support community engagement and outreach for vaccination events, but the MDH will not provide vaccines, vaccinators, or other support for vaccination events hosted through this grant.

2.3 Mandatory Requirements

With support and technical assistance from MDH, grantees will be required to:

- Work with State staff to get State approval of adapted messages as appropriate, including any materials co-branded using a State logo.
- Participate in virtual meetings with the State at least monthly to receive updated COVID-19 information, relay community needs and questions to the State, and strategize about media and/or community engagement work.
 - If a grantee is unable to attend a required meeting, the grantee must communicate with their grant manager in advance and provide a brief update on grant progress via email or via a one-on-one check-in.
- Prepare brief monthly progress reports for the State that summarize the work performed, the number of people reached, and the impact the work is having in the target community, as well as copies or screenshots of communications/media created under this grant.

2.4 Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Any expenses that do not directly contribute to the activities or deliverables in the grantee's work plan
- Any individual piece of equipment that costs more than \$5,000
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds
- Capital improvements or alterations
- Cash assistance paid directly to individuals to meet their personal or family need
- Fundraising
- Lobbyists, political contributions

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- Ongoing medical care or treatment of disease(s) or disability
- Oximeters, syringes, or other medical equipment
- Paying for meals or food for community members or staff
- Paying for or providing housing, isolation, or quarantine space
- Paying rent or other bills for community members
- Providing incentives for community members (including incentives to get the vaccine)
- Providing or paying for transportation to testing sites
- Purchase of vehicle(s) for program use
- Purchasing computers, tablets, or any other purchases for community members
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services

RFP Part 3: Application and Submission Instructions

3.1 Application Deadline

All applications *including supplemental materials* must be received by MDH no later than 11:59 p.m. Central Time, on Wednesday, January 18, 2023.

Late applications will not be accepted. It is the applicant's sole responsibility to allow sufficient time to address all potential delays caused by any reason whatsoever. MDH will not be responsible for delays caused by mail, delivery, computer, or technology problems.

3.2 Application Submission Instructions

Applications must be submitted using the [Online Application Form](#). After submitting the form, applicants will receive an automated confirmation email. Responders should reply to that email and attach the required supplemental materials.

If an applicant does not receive an automated confirmation email within one hour of submitting the Online Application Form, please email the required supplemental materials to health.covidmedia.MDH@state.mn.us. Please indicate in the email that the online form was submitted but that you did not receive a confirmation email.

Applicants must submit the following in order for the application to be considered complete:

1. Online Application Form (*link above*)
2. Work Plan
3. Budget
4. Due Diligence Review Form
5. Applicant Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form

Incomplete applications will be rejected and not evaluated.

Applications must include all required application materials, including attachments. Do not provide any materials that are not requested in this RFP (e.g., memorandums of understanding [MOUs] or letters of support), as such materials will not be considered nor evaluated. **MDH reserves the right to reject any application that does not meet these requirements.**

By submitting an application, each applicant warrants that the information provided is true, correct, and reliable for purposes of evaluation for potential grant award. The submission of inaccurate or misleading information may be grounds for disqualification from the award, as well as subject the applicant to suspension or debarment proceedings and other remedies available by law.

All costs incurred in responding to this RFP will be borne by the applicant.

Part 1: Online Application Form

Part 1 of each proposal must be submitted online using the [Online Application Form](#), which asks applicants for the following information:

- Applicant name and contact information.
- Whether applicant is current COVID Community Coordinator contractor or has another legal agreement with MDH for COVID-19 work during the estimated grant period.
- Whether the applicant is a Tribe or an organization led/owned/operated by people of color, American Indians, individuals with disabilities, and/or LGBTQ individuals.
- Communities and geographic areas reached.
- City/county where organization office(s) are located in Minnesota.
- Whether the proposal includes media messaging, community engagement and outreach, or both.
- Which media formats will be used and how frequently communities will be reached with media messaging, if applicable.
- Amount of funding requested.

Short answer questions include:

- How the applicant engages and/or shares power and decision-making with communities of color, American Indians, disability communities, and/or LGBTQ communities.
- A description of the applicant's history and experience relevant to this work, including similar work done in the past and how trust has been established with the community.
- A brief description of the proposed work under this grant, including methods/strategies to be used, how they are tailored to the community, and planned partnerships.
- How the proposal will fill an unmet need for trusted information and resources, taking into consideration geographic location, language barriers, the effects of systemic racism, and other factors contributing to inequities.

Please note that once an application form has been started, there is not an option to save and come back to your application later. Applicants are encouraged to draft their responses to the short answer questions in advance and copy them into the Online Application Form once they are ready to submit.

Part 2: Work Plan

Applicants must submit a work plan that provides an overview of what the applicant plans to accomplish during the grant period.

Applicants are *strongly encouraged* to use the Microsoft Word template provided on the [RFP webpage](#). Most Minnesota libraries – including all metro county libraries and libraries in Rochester, Duluth, Mille Lacs, Morehead and Owatonna – provide free access to Microsoft Word. Applicants who are unable to use the Microsoft Word template provided on the website may submit their work plan in another format that does not exceed the page limit below.

The work plan may not exceed 5 pages. To ensure that all applicants' work plans have a similar format and length for the review process, **we request that applicants use 11-point Calibri font in the work plan tables.**

If a vendor uses a different format, please be sure to include:

- Description of each activity
- Timeline for each activity
- Key staff and partners involved for each activity
- Estimated number of people reached through each activity

Part 3: Budget

Applicants must submit a budget that provides an overview of how funds will be used during the grant period. **Applicants are *strongly encouraged* to use the Microsoft Excel template provided on the [RFP webpage](#).** Most Minnesota libraries – including all metro county libraries and libraries in Rochester, Duluth, Mille Lacs, Moorhead and Owatonna – provide free access to Microsoft Excel. Applicants who are unable to use the Microsoft Excel template provided on the website may submit their budget in another format that provides the same information below.

There are four tabs/sheets in the Excel budget template:

1. Budget Template Instructions
2. MDH Policy and Guidance on Indirect Costs
- 3. Itemized Budget (*applicants must complete this tab/sheet*)**
4. Budget Summary (auto-fills once applicants complete Tab 3)

This budget should represent the applicant's best anticipation of needed expenses at this time. However, budgets may be revised (with approval from the grant manager) at a later date if anticipated expenses change.

Per MDH policy, grantees may modify any line item in the most recently agreed-upon budget by up to 10 percent without prior written approval from MDH. Grantees must notify MDH of any modifications up to 10 percent in writing no later than the next invoice. Grantees must obtain prior written approval from MDH for line-item modifications greater than 10 percent. A grantee's failure to obtain MDH's prior approval may result in denial of modification request, loss of funds, or both.

Itemized Budget

The itemized budget should provide a brief but sufficient explanation of how funds will be used. The budget must be consistent with planned activities in the applicant's work plan and the time frame of the project and grant period. Where possible, the method for computing estimates should be explained by including quantities, unit costs and other similar numeric detail sufficient for the calculation to be duplicated.

Applicants should organize their expenditures into the following categories. Applicants may leave a category blank if no expenses fall into that category. For example, a media organization may include all expenses under “Other” and leave all other categories blank.

I. Salary and Fringe Benefits

For each proposed staff person who will work directly on the grant, applicants must list the following:

- a. Position title and name of the staff person, if known
- b. Salary charged to grant
- c. Fringe benefit rate

The staff included in this section of the budget narrative should match the staff included in the work plan.

II. Contractual Services

For any proposed subcontractors, applicants must list the following:

- a. Name of contractor, if known, or selection process to be used
- b. Scope of work the contractor will provide
- c. Length of time the services will be provided
- d. Total amount you expect to pay the contractor

Grant funds may be used for small contracts – such as facilitators, speakers or trainers – as well as for large contracts if other organizations will be engaged to implement specific parts of proposed activities.

III. Travel

List the expected travel costs for staff working on the grant, including mileage, parking, lodging and meals. This line item may also include bus tokens or other travel for participants to get vaccinated or attend project activities. Grant funds may be used for related professional development and trainings, but funds cannot be used for out-of-state travel without prior written approval from MDH.

Below is an overview of the current [State of Minnesota Commissioner’s Plan](#), which outlines limits for allowable travel expenses. Use the following reimbursement rates to estimate travel expenses.

Reimbursement Rates

Expense	Rate (non-Tribes)	Rate (Tribes)
Mileage	Current IRS rate (\$0.625/mile as of July 1, 2022)	Current IRS rate (\$0.625/mile as of July 1, 2022)
Parking	Actual parking fees	Actual parking fees
Breakfast	\$10.00 maximum	Refer to current GSA Rate
Lunch	\$13.00 maximum	Refer to current GSA Rate

Expense	Rate (non-Tribes)	Rate (Tribes)
Dinner	\$19.00 maximum	Refer to current GSA Rate
Lodging	Actual cost (charges should be reasonable and consistent with the facilities available)	Refer to current GSA Rate

IV. Supplies

These costs may include, but are not limited to, office supplies, postage or mailing, duplication or copies, phone service and equipment and computer or internet expenses.

V. Other

Describe any other expected grant-related costs that do not fit any other line item. Expenses in this line must be directly related to the program activities and linked to an activity in the work plan. Examples include staff training, media expenses*, or stipends for advisory board members or other community members providing a service to the project.

**Please note that if media expenses will be provided through a separate entity, they should be budgeted under "Contractual Services." Only budget for media expenses in "Other" if the media services will be provided in-house by the lead grantee organization.*

VI. Indirect Costs

MDH policy caps indirect costs at either a grantee’s federally negotiated rate or at 10 percent, as applied to a grant’s *total direct costs*. Grantees who wish to charge indirect at a federally negotiated rate must be able to provide a copy of the federal rate agreement. If awarded a grant, a copy of the agreement will be requested before a grant agreement is signed.

If applicants do not have a federally negotiated rate, please list what is covered in your organization’s indirect cost pool. **For more information on how to calculate indirect costs and what may be included as indirect costs, please refer to Tab 2 of the budget template.**

Indirect costs on invoices to MDH for grant funds must be proportional to direct costs on the invoice; invoices that include only indirect costs will not be paid (direct costs must also be included). Expenses must be categorized as either direct or indirect consistently throughout the life of the grant. Grantees must maintain records that verify all grant expenses, including those categorized as indirect costs.

Part 4: Due Diligence

The Due Diligence Review Form can be found on the [RFP webpage](#). **Per MDH policy, the Due Diligence Form is required for all applicants (e.g., nonprofit, for profit, Tribal government).**

Please note that the Due Diligence Review Form score is not part of the 100 total points used to select grantees, and it is for internal use only. The score helps MDH better understand the

capacity of applicants and identify opportunities for technical assistance to those that receive grant funds.

Part 5: Applicant Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form

The Applicant Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form can be found on the [RFP webpage](#).

Applicants must complete the Applicant Conflict of Disclosure form and submit it as part of the completed application. Failure to complete and submit this form will result in disqualification from the review process.

3.3 Application Review and Selection Process

Review Process

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process with review by a committee representing the communities served by the grants, as well as MDH staff, agency partners and other state agency staff. The review committee will evaluate all eligible and complete applications received by the deadline.

MDH will review all committee recommendations and is responsible for award decisions. **The award decisions of MDH are final and not subject to appeal.** Additionally:

- MDH reserves the right to withhold the distribution of funds in cases where proposals submitted do not meet the necessary criteria.
- The RFP does not obligate MDH to award a grant agreement or complete the project, and MDH reserves the right to cancel this RFP if it is considered to be in its best interest.
- MDH reserves the right to waive minor irregularities or request additional information to further clarify or validate information submitted in the application, provided the application, as submitted, substantially complies with the requirements of this RFP. There is, however, no guarantee MDH will look for information or clarification outside of the submitted written application. Therefore, it is important that all applicants ensure that all sections of their application are complete to avoid the possibility of failing an evaluation phase or having their score reduced for lack of information.

Selection Criteria and Weight

The review committee will be reviewing each applicant on a 100-point scale. A standardized scoring system will be used to determine the extent to which the applicant meets the selection criteria (refer to **Attachment A: Application Evaluation Criteria**).

The review committee will then participate in review meetings where applications are discussed in teams. Reviewers will be able to modify their individual scores based on discussions during the review meeting. At the end of the meetings, team members will submit final scores and make recommendations for funding to MDH based on criteria and discussions.

MDH will make final decisions on all applications and will balance the recommendations by the review teams with other factors including, but not limited to:

- Review team scores
- Representativeness of a range of media and engagement strategies
- Representativeness of the priority communities served by this grant
- Geographic distribution of services
- Distribution of funding among new versus current COVID-19 partners
- Total funding available

Grantee Past Performance and Due Diligence Review Process

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to consider a grant applicant's past performance before awarding subsequent grants to them. State policy requires states to conduct a financial review prior to a grant award made of \$25,000 and higher to a nonprofit organization, in order to comply with [Policy on the Financial Review of Nongovernmental Organizations](#).

MDH staff will conduct a pre-award review of finalists prior to awarding funds in accordance with this policy. The review will include both the Due Diligence Review Form and a review of past performance for applicants who are previous grantees of MDH. These reviews allow MDH to better understand the capacity of applicants and identify opportunities for technical assistance to those that receive grants.

Notification

MDH anticipates notifying all applicants via email of funding decisions by the end of February 2023. All notices of award and non-award will be sent via email to the contact person listed on the application.

Awarded applicants who are not current vendors in the State's SWIFT system will need to become vendors before a grant agreement can be made final. Instructions on how to become a vendor will be sent to awarded applicants when they are notified of the award.

There may be negotiations to finalize a grantee's work plan and/or budget before a grant agreement can be made final ("executed"). Once a work plan and/or budget have been agreed upon, a grant agreement can then be executed with the applicant agency being awarded the funds. The effective date of the agreement is estimated to be April 1, 2023 or the date on which all signatures for the agreement are obtained, whichever is later. The grant agreement will be in effect until June 30, 2024, contingent on satisfactory grantee performance and funding availability.

RFP Part 4: Grant Responsibilities and Provisions

4.1 Grant Management Responsibilities

Grant Agreement

Each grantee must formally enter into a grant agreement. The grant agreement will address the conditions of the award, including implementation for the project. Grantee should read the grant agreement, sign, and once signed, comply with all conditions of the grant agreement.

No work on grant activities can begin until a fully executed grant agreement is in place and the State's Authorized Representative has notified the Grantee that work may start.

The funded applicant will be legally responsible for assuring implementation of the work plan and compliance with all applicable state requirements including worker's compensation insurance, nondiscrimination, data privacy, budget compliance, and reporting.

Accountability and Reporting Requirements

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to monitor progress on state grants by requiring grantees to submit written progress reports at least annually until all grant funds have been expended and all of the terms in the grant agreement have been met.

The reporting schedule for this grant will be monthly, due by the end of the month following the month when activities occurred. For example, a report on April activities will be due by May 31. Monthly invoices will not be paid until the corresponding monthly report is complete and satisfactory (refer to the **Grant Payments** section below for more information on invoices).

Grant Monitoring

[Minn. Stat. § 16B.97](#) and [Policy on Grant Monitoring](#) require the following:

- One monitoring visit during the grant period on all state grants over \$50,000
- Annual monitoring visits during the grant period on all grants over \$250,000
- Conducting a financial reconciliation of grantee's expenditures at least once during the grant period on grants over \$50,000

According to state policy, the purpose of a **monitoring visit** (often called a site visit) is to review and ensure progress against the grant's goals, address any problems or issues before the end of the grant period and build rapport between MDH and the grantee. Monitoring visits are an opportunity for MDH to meet grantee staff, learn more about grantee successes and challenges and see grantee work in action. MDH Center for Health Equity staff also view these visits as an opportunity to connect grantees with available resources, to learn how MDH can better support the grantee and provide technical assistance and to receive feedback from the grantee to help improve the grant program.

The purpose of the **financial reconciliation** is to ensure that grant projects are in compliance with all state and federal laws and that expenses are allowable, appropriate, reasonable for the grant program and adequately verifiable by supporting documentation. The reconciliation

involves a review of expenses included on a selected invoice and the relevant supporting documentation. Grantees will be notified at least 30 days prior to a financial reconciliation to allow sufficient time to gather and submit documentation. Please note that a financial reconciliation is not an audit.

Technical Assistance

MDH will provide technical assistance to grantees through various avenues including the required monthly virtual meetings (refer to the **Mandatory Requirements** section above for more on required meetings), one-on-one virtual or in-person meetings as needed, virtual or on-site monitoring visits, and webinars with subject matter experts. Topics may include, but are not limited to, community engagement and outreach strategies, media strategies, COVID-19 messaging and communication, grant management, budgeting and invoicing, and reporting.

Grant Payments

Per [State Policy on Grant Payments](#), reimbursement is the method for making grant payments. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. The State shall review each request for reimbursement against the approved grant budget, grant expenditures to-date and the latest grant progress report before approving payment. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless MDH has given the grantee a written extension.

State policy allows advance payments to be made to grantees only in certain exceptional situations. If a grantee requires advance payment to start up a program, negotiations will be made after a grant award is offered but before a grant agreement is executed.

Grantees will submit monthly invoices for payment. Invoices for each month's expenses should be submitted by the end of the following month (for example, the invoice for April 2022 expenses is due by May 31, 2022).

4.2 Grant Provisions

Contracting and Bidding Requirements

(a) Municipalities A grantee that is a municipality, defined as a county, town, city, school district or other municipal corporation or political subdivision of the state authorized by law to enter into contracts is subject to the contracting requirements set forth under [Minn. Stat. § 471.345](#). Projects that involve construction work are subject to the applicable prevailing wage laws, including those under [Minn. Stat. § 177.41](#), et. seq.

(b) Non-municipalities Grantees that are not municipalities must adhere to the following standards in the event that duties assigned to the Grantee are to be subcontracted out to a third party:

- i. Any services or materials that are expected to cost \$100,000 or more must undergo a formal notice and bidding process consistent with the standards set forth under Minnesota Statutes 16B.

- ii. Services or materials that are expected to cost between \$25,000 and \$99,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of three (3) verbal quotes or bids.
- iii. Services or materials that are expected to cost between \$10,000 and \$24,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of two (2) verbal quotes or bids or awarded to a targeted vendor.
- iv. The grantee must take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that targeted vendors from businesses with active certifications through these entities are used when possible:
 - Minnesota Department of Administration's Certified Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Vendor List (<http://www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us/process/search>);
 - Metropolitan Council's Targeted Vendor list: Minnesota Unified Certification Program (<https://mnucp.metc.state.mn.us/>) or
 - Small Business Certification Program through Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and City of St. Paul: Central Certification Program (<https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/human-rights-equal-economic-opportunity/contract-compliance-business-development-9>).
- v. The grantee must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award and administration of contracts.
- vi. The grantee must maintain support documentation of the purchasing or bidding process utilized to contract services in their financial records, including support documentation justifying a single/sole source bid, if applicable.
- vii. Notwithstanding (i) - (iv) above, State may waive bidding process requirements when:
 - Vendors included in response to competitive grant request for proposal process were approved and incorporated as an approved work plan for the grant or
 - There is only one legitimate or practical source for such materials or services and that grantee has established a fair and reasonable price.
- viii. Projects that include construction work of \$25,000 or more, are subject to applicable prevailing wage laws, including those under Minnesota Statutes 177.41 through 177.44.
- ix. Grantee must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred in MN: The list of debarred vendors is available at: <http://www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us/debarredreport.asp>.

Conflicts of Interest

MDH will take steps to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers per [Minn. Stat. § 16B.98](#) and the Office of Grants Management's Policy 08-01, "Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making."

Applicants must complete the Applicant Conflict of Disclosure form found on the [RFP webpage](#) and submit it as part of the completed application. Failure to complete and submit this form will result in disqualification from the review process.

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- a grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice
- a grantee's or applicant's objectivity in performing the grant work is or might be otherwise impaired
- a grantee or applicant has an unfair competitive advantage

Individual conflicts of interest occur when:

- an applicant, or any of its employees, uses their position to obtain special advantage, benefit, or access to MDH's time, services, facilities, equipment, supplies, prestige, or influence
- An applicant, or any of its employees, receives or accepts money, or anything else of value, from another state grantee or grant applicant with respect to the specific project covered by this RFP/project.
- An applicant, or any of its employees, has equity or a financial interest in, or partial or whole ownership of, a competing grant applicant organization.
- An applicant, or any of its employees, is an employee of MDH or is a relative of an employee of MDH.

In cases where a conflict of interest is perceived, disclosed, or discovered, the applicants or grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to disqualification from eligibility for the grant award or termination of the grant agreement.

Public Data and Trade Secret Materials

All applications submitted in response to this RFP will become property of the State. In accordance with [Minn. Stat. § 13.599](#), all applications and their contents are private or nonpublic until the applications are opened.

Once the applications are opened, the name and address of each applicant and the amount requested is public. All other data in an application is private or nonpublic data until completion of the evaluation process, which is defined by statute as when MDH has completed negotiating the grant agreement with the selected applicant.

After MDH has completed the evaluation process, all remaining data in the applications is public with the exception of trade secret data as defined and classified in [Minn. Stat. § 13.37](#), subd. 1(b). A statement by an applicant that the application is copyrighted or otherwise

protected does not prevent public access to the application or its contents. ([Minn. Stat. § 13.599](#), subd. 3(a)).

If an applicant submits any information in an application that it believes to be trade secret information, as defined by [Minn. Stat. § 13.37](#), the applicant must:

- Clearly mark all trade secret materials in its application at the time it is submitted,
- Include a statement attached to its application justifying the trade secret designation for each item, and
- Defend any action seeking release of the materials it believes to be trade secret and indemnify and hold harmless MDH and the State of Minnesota, its agents and employees, from any judgments or damages awarded against the State in favor of the party requesting the materials, and any and all costs connected with that defense.
- This indemnification survives MDH’s award of a grant agreement. In submitting an application in response to this RFP, the applicant agrees that this indemnification survives as long as the trade secret materials are in possession of MDH. The State will not consider the prices submitted by the responder to be proprietary or trade secret materials.

MDH reserves the right to reject a claim that any particular information in an application is trade secret information if it determines the applicant has not met the burden of establishing that the information constitutes a trade secret. MDH will not consider the budgets submitted by applicants to be proprietary or trade secret materials. Use of generic trade secret language encompassing substantial portions of the application or simple assertions of trade secret without substantial explanation of the basis for that designation will be insufficient to warrant a trade secret designation.

If a grant is awarded to an applicant, MDH may use or disclose the trade secret data to the extent provided by law. Any decision by the State to disclose information determined to be trade secret information will be made consistent with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act ([Ch. 13 MN Statutes](#)) and other relevant laws and regulations.

If certain information is found to constitute trade secret information, the remainder of the application will become public; in the event a data request is received for application information, only the trade secret data will be removed and remain nonpublic.

Audits

Per [Minn. Stat. § 16B.98](#), subd. 8, the grantee’s books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the grantee or other party that are relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the granting agency and either the legislative auditor or the state auditor, as appropriate. This requirement will last for a minimum of six years from the grant agreement end date, receipt, and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

Affirmative Action and Non-Discrimination Requirements for all Grantees

The grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status in regard to

public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. [Minn. Stat. § 363A.02](#). The grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.

The grantee must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The grantee agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and otherwise treat qualified disabled persons without discrimination based upon their physical or mental disability in all employment practices such as the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship. Minn. Rules, part [5000.3550](#).

The grantee agrees to comply with the rules and relevant orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued pursuant to the Minnesota Human Rights Act.

Part 5: Attachments

Attachment A: Application Evaluation Criteria

A numerical scoring system will be used to evaluate eligible applications. Scores will be used to develop final recommendations.

Applicants are encouraged to score their own application using the evaluation score sheet before submitting their application. This step is not required but may help ensure applications address the criteria evaluators will use to score applications.

Rating Levels

Rating or Score	Description
Excellent or 9-10	Outstanding level of quality; significantly exceeds all aspects of the minimum requirements; no significant weaknesses
Very Good or 7-8	Substantial response; meets in all aspects and in some cases exceeds, the minimum requirements; no significant weaknesses.
Good or 5-6	Generally meets minimum requirements; significant weaknesses, but correctable.
Marginal or 3-4	Lack of essential information; significant weaknesses, but correctable.
Unsatisfactory or 1-2	Fails to meet minimum requirements; needs major revision to make it acceptable.
Left blank or 0	Did not answer the question or offered no response at all

Scoring Sections

I. ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES AND CAPACITY (30 POINTS)

Criteria	Score (0-10)	Comments: Strengths/Weaknesses
1. Is applicant organization led/owned/operated by people of color, American Indians, individuals with disabilities or LGBTQ individuals? (Yes = 10 points; No = 0 points)		
2. Does the applicant organization authentically engage and/or share power and decision-making with communities of color, American Indian communities, disability communities, and/or LGBTQ communities?		
3. Does applicant organization have strong history and experience relevant to this work, including similar work in the past, and established trust with the community?		

COVID-19 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DIVERSE MEDIA RFP

Total score points for this section:		
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II. PROJECT NARRATIVE AND WORK PLAN (50 POINTS)

Criteria	Score (0-10)	Comments: Strengths/Weaknesses
4. Are the proposed project strategies and activities intentionally and effectively tailored to the specific racial/ethnic/cultural/disability/LGBTQ community or communities reached by the applicant?		
5. Are the proposed project activities clear and comprehensive (i.e., each activity includes a clear description, timeline, key staff and partners, and estimated reach)?		
6. Does the applicant propose authentic and equitable partnerships that will amplify the project’s ability to reach/engage the target community or communities?		
7. Does the applicant provide a convincing rationale that the proposed project activities will fill an unmet need for trusted information and resources within the primary community or communities reached, taking into consideration geographic location, language barriers, the effects of systemic racism, and other factors contributing to inequities?		
8. Do the proposed project activities seem likely to increase community understanding of and engagement around COVID-19 and community recovery?		
Total score points for this section:		

III. BUDGET (20 POINTS)

Criteria	Score (0-10)	Comments: Strengths/Weaknesses
9. Is the total amount of funding requested realistic and appropriate for the proposed activities, number/size of community or communities reached, and geographic areas reached?		
10. Does the itemized budget provide a clear and reasonable estimation of how funds will be used to support project activities?		
Total score points for this section:		

