



# Quit Partner™ Ambassadors

GRANT REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

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November 2021

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## RFP Part 1: Overview

### 1.1 General Information

- **Announcement Title:** Quit Partner™ Ambassadors
- **Commercial Tobacco Prevention and Control ([www.health.mn.gov/tobacco](http://www.health.mn.gov/tobacco))** Program Website
- **RFP Webpage:** [Request for Proposals for Quit Partner™ Ambassadors \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/initiatives/cessation/grants.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/initiatives/cessation/grants.html)
  - Applications will be submitted online with required attachments submitted via email to [cessation@state.mn.us](mailto:cessation@state.mn.us)
- **Informational Webinar:** November 9, 2021, 12 p.m. – 1 p.m. Central Time
- **Notice of Intent Deadline:** November 12, 2021, by 4:00 p.m. Central Time (*strongly encouraged but not required*)
- **Application Deadline:** December 14, 2021, by 4:00 p.m. Central Time

### 1.2 Program Description

The Minnesota Department of Health (“MDH”) receives state funding from [Minn. Stat. § 144.397 Statewide Tobacco Cessation Services \(https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/144.397\)](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/144.397) to administer Minnesota’s statewide cessation services including the state quitline<sup>1</sup>, [Quit Partner \(https://www.quitpartnermn.com\)](https://www.quitpartnermn.com). Quit Partner launched in April 2020 and provides Minnesotans with free programs and tools to help individuals quit commercial tobacco (also referred to as cessation). MDH is dedicating funds to offer community grants with the purpose of increasing awareness and knowledge of Quit Partner programs in communities that are disproportionately impacted by commercial tobacco and may have been targeted by the tobacco industry. This has led to higher commercial tobacco use within these communities.

The overall goal is to provide grant funding to engage community members to build trust in Quit Partner programs with the intention to increase utilization and ultimately reduce commercial tobacco use rates among adults within the communities.

This RFP refers to commercial tobacco products, which are the products tobacco manufacturers and retailers sell. Commercial tobacco is different from traditional or sacred tobacco, also known as Cansasa, Asemaa, or Kinnikinnick. These are used by some American Indian communities in Minnesota and the region for sacred purposes.

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<sup>1</sup> Quitlines are telephone-based tobacco cessation services that help tobacco users quit. Services offered by quitlines include coaching and counseling, referrals, mailed materials, training to healthcare providers, Web-based services and, in some instances, free medications such as nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). From the North American Quitline Consortium. (2010). *What is a quitline*. Available at [What is a Quitline \(https://www.naquitline.org/general/custom.asp?page=whatisquitline\)](https://www.naquitline.org/general/custom.asp?page=whatisquitline)

References to commercial tobacco product use prevention and cessation do not include traditional or sacred tobacco.

## Background

Quit Partner (<https://www.quitpartnermn.com>) offers free services to Minnesotans who use any form of commercial tobacco, including cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and chew. Quit Partner provides many cessation support options and resources for Minnesotans to help them quit commercial tobacco. Free cessation support includes phone and web coaching, text and email programs, and cessation medications like patches, gum, or lozenges. Phone coaching and use of cessation medications are evidence-based and proven effective in helping individuals successfully quit commercial tobacco. Using coaching and medication together can more than double a individual's chances of successfully quitting smoking.

Quit Partner operates the [American Indian Quitline \(www.aiquit.com\)](http://www.aiquit.com), which was developed with guidance from the American Indian community. It offers completely free and specially designed support for American Indians. Quit Partner has specialized programs for people living with mental illnesses or substance use disorders (see [Support for Those Living with a Mental Illness or Other Addiction \(https://quitpartnermn.com/quit-your-way/behavioral-health\)](https://quitpartnermn.com/quit-your-way/behavioral-health)) and pregnant and postpartum women (see [Help If You're Pregnant or Planning to Be \(https://quitpartnermn.com/quit-your-way/pregnancy-program\)](https://quitpartnermn.com/quit-your-way/pregnancy-program)). Quit Partner also offers two incentive programs, one for individuals that use menthol-flavored commercial tobacco products (see [Menthol Hits Minnesota Communities Hard \(https://quitpartnermn.com/tools-and-support/truth-about-menthols\)](https://quitpartnermn.com/tools-and-support/truth-about-menthols)) and one for the pregnancy program.

Quit Partner and Minnesota's health plans work collaboratively to ensure that individuals receive the support they need to quit commercial tobacco, regardless of health insurance status. Quit Partner serves uninsured Minnesota residents and those whose insurance does not cover commercial tobacco coaching or quit medications. Health care providers and community-based organizations can easily refer patients and clients to Quit Partner through fax or online.

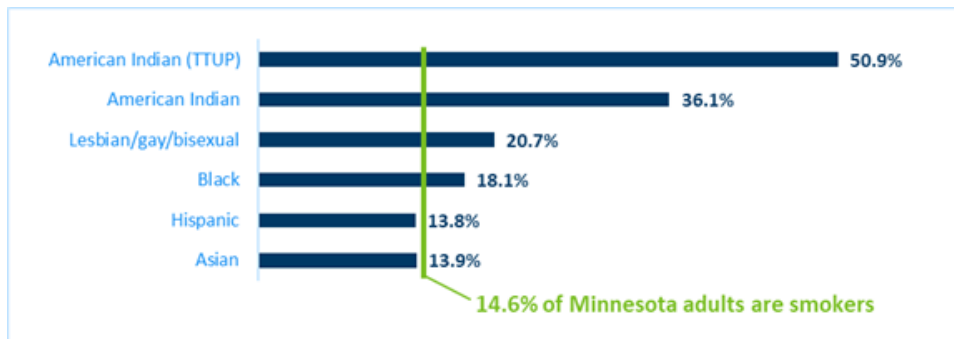
**The purpose of this RFP is to fund organizations that will increase knowledge of, trust in, and use of Quit Partner in the communities they serve.**

MDH will work in partnership with funded organizations to provide in-depth information on all Quit Partner programs. MDH will also provide information on existing culturally-specific marketing strategies and campaigns. Applications are strongly encouraged from organizations serving in communities of color, American Indian, and LGBTQ+ communities. Applicants are also encouraged to include cessation-focused communication and engagement strategies that help support people living with mental illnesses or substance use disorders, individuals that are pregnant, and individuals that use menthol-flavored commercial tobacco products in their application if these are identified as areas that are important in their community.

### Disparities in Commercial Tobacco Use

According to the 2019 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), 14.6% of Minnesota adults smoke.<sup>2</sup> Due to decades of targeting by the tobacco industry, certain communities have above-average smoking rates (BRFSS 2019 and the Tribal Tobacco Use Project (TTUP) 2013).<sup>3</sup> This can lead to addiction and lifelong health conditions that make people more susceptible to a long list of illnesses. As shown in Figure 1, African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, American Indians, and members of the LGB community are more likely to smoke cigarettes.

**Figure 1. Minnesota Adult Smoking Prevalence**



Source: 2019 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) (except where noted); TTUP is Tribal Tobacco Use Project. For the American Indian community, using TTUP data is generally preferable to using BRFSS data, because its sample of American Indian respondents is larger and more accurately represents Minnesota's American Indian populations.

**Table 1. Minnesota Adult Smoking Prevalence**

Community Group	Smoking Prevalence
American Indian (TTUP, 2013)	50.9%
American Indian	36.1%
Lesbian, gay, or bisexual	20.7%
African American	18.1%
Hispanic/Latino	13.9%
Asian American	13.8%
Minnesota adults overall	14.5%

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2019). *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey [Tobacco Use]*. Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>3</sup> American Indian Community Tobacco Projects. (2013). *Tribal Tobacco Use Project Survey, Findings from Minnesota American Indian Communities*.

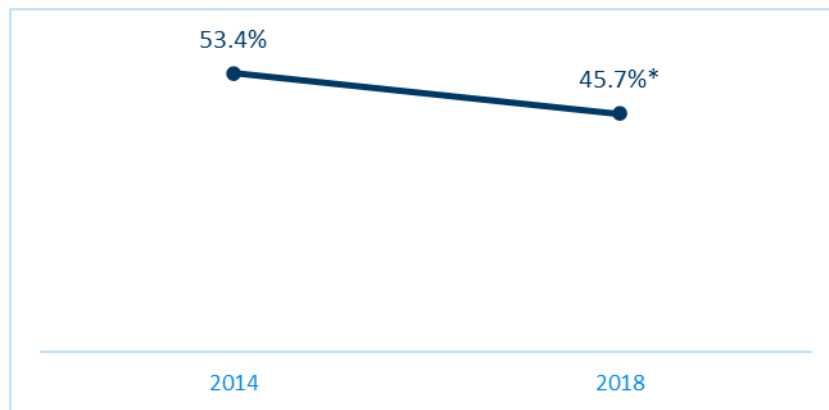
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Source: 2019 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (except where noted); TTUP is Tribal Tobacco Use Project.

### Trying to Quit

According to the 2018 Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey (MATS),<sup>4</sup> 45% of Minnesotans who are current smokers reported making a quit attempt in the past 12 months. These data are shown in Figure 2. Among individuals who had smoked in the past year, 11% were successful at quitting smoking. These data are shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 2. Percentage of Minnesota Adult Current Smokers That Tried to Quit in the Past Year**



Source: Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey (MATS), 2014, 2018; \* indicates a statistically significant difference from 2014.

**Table 2. Percentage of Minnesota Adult Current Smokers That Tried to Quit in the Past Year**

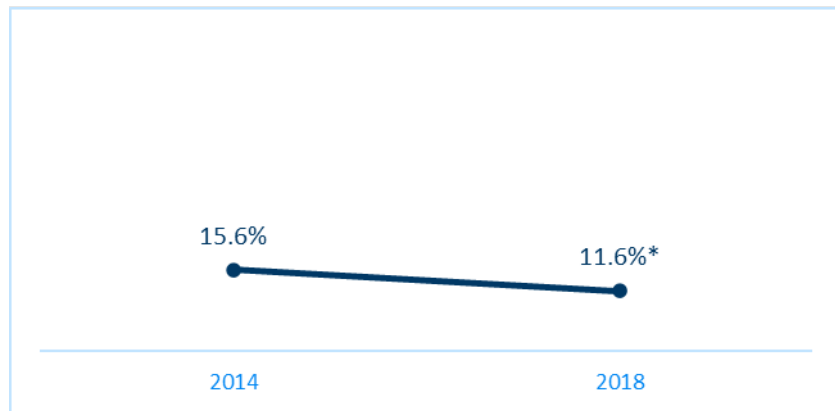
Quit Behavior	2014	2018
Quit attempt in past year	53.4%	45.7%*

Source: Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey (MATS), 2014, 2018; \* indicates a statistically significant difference from 2014.

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<sup>4</sup> ClearWay Minnesota, Minnesota Department of Health, & Westat. (2019). *Tobacco Use in Minnesota: 2018 Update*.

**Figure 3. Percentage of Minnesota Adult Past-year Smokers That Successfully Quit Smoking**



Source: Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey (MATS), 2014, 2018; \* indicates a statistically significant difference from 2014.

**Table 3. Percentage of Minnesota Adult Past-year Smokers That Successfully Quit Smoking**

Quit Behavior	2014	2018
Recent quitting	15.6%	11.6%*

Source: Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey (MATS), 2014, 2018; \* indicates a statistically significant difference from 2014.

These data points elevate the need for more support to help individuals quit commercial tobacco. From previous work, we have learned the value and important role of community leaders in helping people quit commercial tobacco. According to the report [Community Voices: Reducing Tobacco-Related Health Inequities](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/initiatives/docs/voicesreport.pdf) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/initiatives/docs/voicesreport.pdf>):

- Community members are more likely to use services that are referred to them by, and provided by, members of their own community
- Community members want to receive cessation services from people whom they trust, who understand their needs and context, and who are located within their communities
- Across community groups, relationships are key; people want help from those who will understand their situation and know their needs

### Use of Commercial Tobacco Quitlines

Findings from the 2020 National American Quitline Consortium (NAQC)<sup>5</sup> annual survey indicate that communities with the highest smoking rates are underusing quitlines. Table 1 identifies the communities with the lowest utilization of quitlines. As the table shows, communities with the

<sup>5</sup> North American Quitline Consortium. (2020). *Results from the 2020 NAQC Annual Survey of Quitlines*. K. Mason, editor. Available at [2020 Survey](https://www.naquitline.org/page/2020survey) (<https://www.naquitline.org/page/2020survey>)

highest rates of commercial tobacco use are much less likely to use a quitline when compared to white community members.

**Table 1. Characteristics of Quitline Users (Fiscal Year 2020)**

Demographics	Utilization of Quitlines
Asian American	0.8%
American Indian/Alaska Native	2.6%
Identify as LGBT	4.7%
Hispanic/Latino	8.7%
African American	14.7%
White	68.3%

Source: NAQCA Annual 2020 Survey

### Menthol Use

Among Minnesota adults that smoke, 27.5% report using menthol cigarettes as their usual product.<sup>6</sup> The tobacco industry has a well-documented history of developing and marketing menthol flavored brands to racial and ethnic minorities. Menthol cigarette smoking is more prevalent among people who smoke and are part of a sexual, gender, racial, or ethnic minority. There is also significant menthol cigarette use among people who smoke and live with a mental illness. Menthol is a flavor additive commonly used in cigarettes and other commercial tobacco products. Menthol makes cigarettes easier to smoke and harder to quit.<sup>7</sup>

## 1.3 Funding and Project Dates

### Funding

The Quit Partner Ambassadors program is funded through [Minn. Stat. § 144.397 Statewide Tobacco Cessation Services \(https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/144.397\)](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/144.397). Funding will be awarded through a competitive process. If selected, you may only incur eligible expenditures

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<sup>6</sup> ClearWay Minnesota, Minnesota Department of Health, & Westat. (2019). *Tobacco Use in Minnesota: 2018 Update*.

<sup>7</sup> Truth Initiative. (2018). *Annual Report*. Available at [2018 Annual Report \(https://truthinitiative.org/annual-reports/annual-report/2018-annual-report\)](https://truthinitiative.org/annual-reports/annual-report/2018-annual-report)



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when the MDH grant agreement is fully executed, or the grant has reached its effective date, whichever is later.

Annual Funding	Estimate
Estimated Amount to Grant	\$195,000
Estimated Number of Awards	3
Estimated Award Amount	\$65,000

### Match Requirement

There is no match requirement for this grant program.

### Project Dates

**Grants are anticipated to start in April 2022, and end in April 2024.** The grant period will be two years, with the potential to extend the grant up to one additional year, contingent on satisfactory grantee performance and funding availability.

## 1.4 Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include organizations such as, but not limited to; community-based organizations, non-profit organizations, faith-based organizations, community clinics, and tribal governments. Applicants must be located in and conduct grant activities in Minnesota. Applicants that are currently receiving funding from other MDH programs are still encouraged to apply but may not duplicate existing efforts within this application. If a non-profit receives a Quit Partner Ambassadors grant, they may be eligible to receive future grants. MDH will strive to equitably balance overall funding distribution across organizations and communities that are disproportionally impacted by commercial tobacco. For-profit entities are not eligible to apply.

**To be eligible to apply, the organization must demonstrate the following:**

- **Serves adults who use commercial tobacco at rates higher than the statewide average, including communities of color, American Indian communities, and/or LGBTQ+ communities.**
  - The 2019 BRFSS survey showed that the state smoking average is 14.6% for Minnesota adults. Applicants can demonstrate eligibility criteria using data in Table 1 or other sources such as, but not limited to, the [Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/mchs/surveys/mats/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/mchs/surveys/mats/index.html), [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/mchs/surveys/brfss/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/mchs/surveys/brfss/index.html), and/or community data sources.
- **Previous experience with health promotion and engagement activities within the communities they serve.**
- **Eligible organizations must have/demonstrate expertise working directly within their communities.**

Applicants must have state or federal recognition as a formal organization or entity, such as a Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN), Minnesota Tax ID. Organizations or groups that do not have state or federal recognition must apply with a fiscal agent.<sup>8</sup>

## Collaboration

Collaboration between organizations or entities are welcomed, but not required. A single application should be submitted on behalf of all collaborative organizations. Each application should identify one lead organization. The lead organization does not need to be the fiscal agent. The lead organization is defined as the primary entity leading and carrying out the project within the proposal. Lead organization will be the entity that will be responsible for the legal grant agreement and fiscal requirements.

MDH recognizes the sovereignty of tribal nations. We will only fund non-tribal-led projects in tribal communities if the applicant has full support of the tribal government. If a non-tribal applicant proposes to work with a tribal government or tribal community, the applicant must be prepared to provide written verification that the tribal government approves of the project before a grant award is offered.

## 1.5 Questions and Answers

All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted online at [Request for Proposals for Quit Partner™ Ambassadors](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/initiatives/cessation/grants.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/initiatives/cessation/grants.html>).

Answers will be posted on the RFP webpage on Tuesdays no later than 4:00 p.m. Central Time. Please submit questions no later than 4:00 p.m. Central time on November 30, 2021.

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

### RFP Informational Meeting

Potential applicants are urged to attend an optional informational webinar on November 9, 2021, from 12 p.m. - 1 p.m. Central Time. A recording of the webinar will be available on the RFP webpage within two business days.

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<sup>8</sup> 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 may be a different entity from the lead organization (which performs the work). In a multi-entity collaboration, one entity must be designated as the fiscal agent.

## RFP Part 2: Program Details

### 2.1 Priorities

#### Health Equity Priority

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to ensure fairness, precision, equity, and consistency in competitive grant awards. This includes implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion in grantmaking. [The Policy on Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review \(https://mn.gov/admin/assets/08-02%20Grants%20Policy%20Revision%20September%202017%20final\\_tcm36-312046.pdf\)](https://mn.gov/admin/assets/08-02%20Grants%20Policy%20Revision%20September%202017%20final_tcm36-312046.pdf) establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally identify how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities and/or disparities.

MDH is seeking organizations that reach adults experiencing disproportionately high commercial tobacco use rates. Applications are strongly encouraged from organizations serving communities of color, American Indian, and LGBTQ+ communities. Applicants should identify which communities they want to serve under this grant and how they identified that community need. Grantees will measure performance in reaching diverse populations in annual work plans, progress reporting, and program evaluation of grant activities.

### 2.2 Eligible Projects

Applicants must have established relationships within the community they serve. This must be demonstrated by providing examples of existing partnerships with community leaders or organizing community-led events. Although it may be helpful to have previous cessation experience, it is not required to apply for funding. MDH is looking for the expertise of organizations that work directly within their communities throughout Minnesota.

Proposals must demonstrate the organization's ability to develop an innovative approach to engaging community members through promoting Quit Partner to increase knowledge, trust, and use. The work may also include making referrals to Quit Partner programs.

Applicants must identify strategies to build on community level work to achieve the goals of the RFP. The proposal may not duplicate existing efforts funded by MDH. Project strategies must contribute to sustainable change within the community.

#### Project Goals

**The primary focus of the Quit Partner Ambassadors program is for funded organizations to promote and refer to Quit Partner programs and tools. By the end of the grant period, grantees are expected to achieve the following project goals. Applicants should describe the strategies and activities they will use to reach project goals.**

- Increased knowledge of Quit Partner
- Increased trust in Quit Partner programs and tools

Applications should also describe the required evaluation components, as referred to in the accountability and reporting requirements in section 2.3. Please note applicants will receive support from MDH on how to measure their success.

## Project Strategies

The following are *examples* of project strategies to help an applicant achieve required project goals. **These specific strategies are not required.**

- Work with community leaders or other key partners and organizations to increase knowledge and awareness of Quit Partner programs and tools
- Engage and mobilize community members to educate others by providing information about Quit Partner
- Work within applicant organization, or a partner organization, to increase referrals to Quit Partner by implementing a referral process
- Build on existing Quit Partner promotions and communication activities
- Bring awareness around topics tied to Quit Partner programming, such as commercial tobacco use during pregnancy, menthol use, behavioral health conditions and substance use, if applicable

## Project Activities

The following are *examples* of activities for applicants to consider when working with communities to achieve project goals and strategies. **These specific activities are not required.**

- Hire or fund Community Health Workers or other staff for community outreach and engagement around Quit Partner programs and referrals
- Purchase carbon monoxide monitors to demonstrate the immediate impact of smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke at community events while promoting Quit Partner programs
- Develop culturally appropriate materials to connect the community with Quit Partner programs and tools
- Develop activities and operations to conduct Quit Partner enrollment assistance
- Providing incentives may be considered to promote Quit Partner, up to \$25 per incentive per person and no more than \$2,000 total for the annual program budget.
  - Incentives may be in various forms, including but not limited to, pre-paid gift cards, water bottles, stress balls, give-away items, and other reasonable items that can be associated with the programmatic goals and objectives for the project.

## Ineligible Expenses

**The following cessation related expenses are not allowable in this grant agreement**

- Work with primary focus on youth (those under 18 years of age)
- Direct cessation services, medical care, or clinical care (e.g., conducting individual, face-to-face counseling or creating a cessation group)
- Purchase of nicotine replacement therapies (NRT) or cessation medication

**Other ineligible expenses include, but are not limited to:**

- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services
- Lobbyists, political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds
- Costs not directly related to the grant
- Cash assistance paid directly to individuals to meet their personal or family needs
- Alcohol, gifts for staff, staff meals (except approved travel), or parties
- Capital improvements or alterations
- Costs incurred prior to the grant award
- Start up or ongoing costs of a private business venture
- Research
- Ongoing costs of a program

## 2.3 Grant Management Responsibilities

### Grant Agreement

Each applicant must formally enter into a grant agreement. The grant agreement will address the terms and conditions of the award, including implementation for the project. Grantee is expected to read the grant agreement and comply with all the terms and conditions of the grant agreement once signed.

**No work on grant activities can begin until a fully executed grant agreement is in place, or the start date has arrived, whichever is later.**

The funded applicant will be legally responsible for assuring implementation of the work plan and compliance with all applicable state requirements, including but not limited to worker's compensation insurance, nondiscrimination, data privacy, budget compliance, and reporting.

### Accountability and Reporting Requirements

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

- Monthly check-in calls with the MDH grant manager
- Tracking all activities and work done under the grant
- Attending required Quit Partner trainings
- Submitting progress reports

### Evaluation components

- Grantee is required to evaluate the project throughout the grant year and develop a final evaluation report. MDH is available to help support the grantee within this process.
- Gather community input through a pre/post assessment to ensure programming and efforts meet the project goals.

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- Applicants should describe a pre/post assessment that will meet the needs of the community they serve. Some examples of assessments could include, but are not limited to are; listening sessions, focus group, and a pre/post survey.
- Grantee may use up to \$5,000 for evaluation.

### Grant Monitoring

Minn. Stat. § 16B.97 Grants Management

(<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/16B.97>) and the Office of Grants Management's (OGM) Policy 08-10 on Grant Monitoring ([https://mn.gov/admin/assets/grants\\_policy\\_08-10\\_tcm36-207117.pdf](https://mn.gov/admin/assets/grants_policy_08-10_tcm36-207117.pdf)) require the following:

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

### Technical Assistance

MDH will provide technical assistance to help support the grantees to meet stated strategies and activities to increase promotion and referrals to Quit Partner programs and tools.

### Grant Payments

Per OGM's Policy 08-08 on Grant Payments ([https://mn.gov/admin/assets/08-08%20Policy%20on%20Grant%20Payments%20FY21%20\\_tcm36-438962.pdf](https://mn.gov/admin/assets/08-08%20Policy%20on%20Grant%20Payments%20FY21%20_tcm36-438962.pdf)), reimbursement is the method for making grant payments. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. MDH will 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 will not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless MDH has given the grantee a written extension.

Invoices will be due by the last day of the month for the previous month. MDH will pay invoices within 30 days after the invoice has been approved.

## 2.4 Grant Provisions

### Subcontracting Guidelines

If the lead organization decides to subcontract/subgrant with funds, they must adhere to the following guidelines.

Disclosure of Contractual Services:

Applicants must identify any subcontracts that will occur as part of carrying out the duties of this grant program as part of the Contractual Services budget line item in the proposed budget. The use of contractual services is subject to State review and may change based on final work plan and budget negotiations with selected grantees.

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The use of contractual services is subject to State review. Subcontract information to be provided annually must include:

- Description of services to be contracted for;
- Anticipated contractor/consultant's name (if known) or selection process to be used;
- Length of time the services will be provided; and
- Total amount to be paid to contractor

Overview of Grantee Responsibilities for Subcontracts:

- The Grantee is responsible for holding any subcontracting entities to the same standards required of the grantee.
- The Grantee remains solely responsible for the satisfactory performance of all grant duties and ensures that all costs billed against the grant are allowable costs.
- The Grantee must follow its standard procurement practices prior to entering into subcontracts.
- Subcontractors may not be selected if listed on the state or federal prohibited vendors list. (<http://www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us/debarredreport.asp>)
- The Grantee is responsible for all required reports, supporting documentation, deliverables or other items as required by the grant contract.
- The Grantee is responsible for ensuring that any subcontracting entities comply with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13) as it applies to all data created, gathered, generated or acquired under your grant agreement.

### 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 Grants Management Process](#) (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/16B.98>) and OGM's [Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making](#) ([https://mn.gov/admin/assets/OGM%20Policy%2008-01%20Conflict%20of%20Interest%20in%20State%20Grant-Making%20effective%20date%20January%201%2C%202021\\_tcm36-442645.docx](https://mn.gov/admin/assets/OGM%20Policy%2008-01%20Conflict%20of%20Interest%20in%20State%20Grant-Making%20effective%20date%20January%201%2C%202021_tcm36-442645.docx)).

**Applicants must provide a list of all entities with which it has relationships that create, or appear to create, a conflict of interest with the work contemplated by this RFP.** The list must provide the name of the entity, the relationship, and a discussion of the conflict. Submit the list in the application form as directed. If an applicant does not submit a list of conflicts of interest, MDH will assume that no conflicts of interest exist for that applicant.

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- a grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to the State due to competing duties or loyalties
- a grantee or applicant's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties

In cases where a conflict of interest is suspected, 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 (Minn. Stat. ch. 13) 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 Grants Management Process](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/16B.98) (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/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 Public Policy](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/363A.02) (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/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. Administrative Rules part 5000.3500](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/5000.3500/) (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/5000.3500/>).

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.

## 2.5 Review and Selection Process

### Review Process

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process with review by a committee representing content specialists and community leaders with relevant knowledge and

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experiences with cessation and community engagement. 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 will not fund proposals submitted that do not meet the necessary criteria within the RFP.
- 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

The review committee will review and score 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.

After the review team has met and the scores have been finalized, MDH will incorporate the scores into a final funding recommendation, which may also be based on geographic distribution, community distribution and needs, and the applicant's history as a state grantee and capacity to perform the work.

**The scoring factors and weight that will be used to judge the application are based on the scoring criteria in Attachment C.** 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. This is for the benefit of the applicant. Do not include sample score sheet with your application.

### 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 MDH to conduct a financial review prior to awarding grants \$25,000 and higher to a nonprofit organization, in order to comply with [Policy on the Financial Review of Nongovernmental Organizations](https://mn.gov/admin/assets/grants_policy_08-06_tcm36-207113_tcm36-207113.pdf) ([https://mn.gov/admin/assets/grants\\_policy\\_08-06\\_tcm36-207113\\_tcm36-207113.pdf](https://mn.gov/admin/assets/grants_policy_08-06_tcm36-207113_tcm36-207113.pdf)).

### Notification

**MDH anticipates notifying all applicants via email of funding decisions by January 31, 2022.**

## RFP Part 3: Application and Submission Instructions

### Notice of Intent

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a non-binding Notice of Intent by November 12, 2021, to [cessation@state.mn.us](mailto:cessation@state.mn.us) with the subject line “Quit Partner Ambassador Grant Letter of Intent.” While prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a Notice of Intent, it is not a requirement of this RFP. This means that an application will still be considered even if the applicant did not submit a Notice of Intent. Likewise, an applicant is not obligated to submit an application just because they submitted a Notice of Intent.

### 3.1 Application Deadline

**All applications *must* be received by MDH no later than 4:00 p.m. Central Time on December 14, 2021.**

**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 computer or technology problems.

### 3.2 Application Submission Instructions

Application materials can be found on [Request for Proposals for Quit Partner™ Ambassadors \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/initiatives/cessation/grants.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/initiatives/cessation/grants.html).

**You must submit all of the following for the application to be considered complete:**

Applications must be submitted by:

1. Completing and submitting the **online** Application which includes the Work Plan and Budget
2. **Emailing** the following attachments to [cessation@state.mn.us](mailto:cessation@state.mn.us) with the subject line “Quit Partner Ambassador Grant Application”:
  - a. Attachment B: Due Diligence Review Form
  - b. Letters of support (one from a community leader and one from the lead organization)
  - c. Optional attachment with community data. Within the online application, there will be questions around community data. If the data source you are using is neither in the RFP or available online, please email the data.

### Work Plans

The funded applicant work plans will be finalized in collaboration with MDH.

### Letters of Support

Include a letter of support from a community leader who is engaged in developing the proposal. The letter should describe their role in developing the proposal and why they support the proposed approach.

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Include a letter of support from leadership of the lead organization such as but not limited to: supervisor, program director, executive director, or CEO/President of the lead organization. The letter should describe leadership's overall support for the proposed work, how they will help advance the work, and how they will support the community members engaged in the work.

### **Additional Information**

Incomplete applications will not be considered. Applications must include all required application materials, including attachments. Do not provide any materials that are not requested in this RFP, as such materials will not be considered nor evaluated.

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.

## **RFP Part 4: Attachments**

Attachment A: *Sample* Application, Work Plan and Budget

Attachment B: Due Diligence Review Form

Attachment C: Scoring Criteria

Attachment D: Standard Grant Agreement Template