Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Employee Scholarship Grant Program – Fiscal Year 2020

GRANT REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

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8/5/2019
To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-3895.
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RFP Part 1: Overview

1.1 General Information

- **Announcement Title:** Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Employee Scholarship Grant Program - Fiscal Year 2020
- **Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Program Website:** [https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/funding/grants/index.html#hcbs](https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/funding/grants/index.html#hcbs)
- **Application Deadline:** September 27, 2019

1.2 Program Description

The Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Employee Scholarship Grant Program, authorized by Minnesota Statutes Section 144.1503, was established for the purpose of assisting qualified HCBS providers to fund employee scholarships for education and training in nursing and other health care fields. Grant funds must be used to cover costs related to a course of study that is expected to lead to career advancement with the provider or in the HCBS field.

1.3 Funding and Project Dates

**Funding**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Estimate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Amount to Grant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Estimated Number of Awards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Estimated Award Maximum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Estimated Award Minimum</td>
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**Match Requirement**

No match is required

**Project Dates**

January 2, 2020 – December 31, 2021
1.4 Eligible Applicants

Nonprofit and for-profit organizations that meet all of the following criteria are eligible to apply for a HCBS Employee Scholarship grant. An eligible applicant organization or facility:

- Is located in Minnesota;
- Primarily provides services to individuals who are 65 years of age and older in home and community-based settings;
- Is one of the following licensed providers:
  - Housing with services establishment as defined in MN Statute 144D.01, subdivision 4
  - Adult day care facility as defined in MN Statute 245A.02, subdivision 2a
  - Home care services provider as defined in MN Statute 144A.43, subdivision 3
- Offers an in-house employee scholarship and/or training program to its staff, or is in the process of developing a scholarship/training program.

1.5 Questions and Answers

All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted by email or phone to Sonya.Borgeson-Bethke@state.mn.us or 651-201-3895. All answers will be posted within three business days at https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/funding/grants/index.html#hcbs

Please submit questions no later than 4:00 p.m. Central Time on September 23, 2019.

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 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 a geographically-diverse population of HCBS recipients and providers by addressing the need for a well-trained HCBS workforce throughout Minnesota.

2.2 Eligible Projects

Grant funds must be used to support eligible scholarships and/or trainings for employees. Scholarships must be for courses or degrees directly related to caregiving roles within the HCBS field. Trainings must be related to caregiving and cannot be trainings required for licensure of the facility.

Eligible Scholarship Recipients

To be eligible, a scholarship recipient must be employed in a caregiving role and must work an average of at least 16 hours per week for the grantee organization while receiving a scholarship funded by the HCBS Employee Scholarship Grant Program.

Eligible Courses of Study or Training

Eligible courses of study for scholarship recipients include trainings, workshops and degree programs directly related to the delivery of patient or client care in home and community-based settings. These may include:

- job-related training or degree programs in the field of long-term care, including care for persons with disabilities
- social work
- occupational therapy
- physical therapy
- nursing or other relevant degrees
- client care-related trainings above and beyond those required for licensure of the organization, for example:
  - dementia care training
  - training for medical care interpreter services
  - job-related English as a Second Language
Eligible Expenses

All expenses must be directly related to the employee’s coursework or training and may include:

- Employee tuition
  - Tuition may be paid directly to the educational institution (by grantee) or reimbursed (by grantee) to the employee upon completion of the course
- Course-related textbooks or fees
- Childcare expenses while the employee is attending classes
- Mileage reimbursement
- Training consultant fees

Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Administrative expenses to manage the grant
- Employee wages, fringe benefits or stipends while the employee is attending school
- Courses or training required to maintain an employee’s current certification or licensure
- Out-of-state travel or lodging
- Supplies or equipment that are not directly related to classes/coursework of scholarship recipients
- Capital improvements
- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services
- Lobbyists, political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds

2.3 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. Once the grant agreement is signed, the grantee is expected to read and comply with all conditions of the grant agreement.

No work on grant activities can begin until a fully executed grant agreement is in place.

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

All grantees must submit invoices and progress reports at least semi-annually, until all grant funds have been reimbursed and all terms in the grant agreement have been met. Grantees may submit invoices more frequently.
Grant Monitoring

Minn. Stat. §16B.97 and the State’s Policy on Grant Monitoring require (1) at least one monitoring visit and (2) a financial reconciliation of grantees’ expenditures before final payment is made on all state grants over $50,000.

Technical Assistance

MDH will provide all forms and templates for invoices and progress reports. MDH is also available to provide technical assistance for grantees. It is the grantee’s responsibility to meet all obligations in the contract and to notify MDH and request approval for any changes to these obligations.

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.

The invoicing and payment schedule will be semiannual, with the option for more frequent requests for reimbursement. Please note: proof of payment must be provided for each expense to be reimbursed; reimbursement will be made to the grantee (not to employees, schools or training programs).

2.4 Grant Provisions

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 Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making.

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 as an attachment to the application. 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 Department due to competing duties or loyalties
- a grantee’s 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 Minnesota Statute Section 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 Minnesota Statute Section 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 (Minnesota Statutes chapter 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 Subdivision 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. Minnesota Rules, part 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 stakeholders with knowledge of the HCBS field. 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.

The scoring factors and weight that applications will be judged are based on the following:

- **Demonstrated ability of the applicant to administer a scholarship program – 20 points**
  - Does the application demonstrate that the organization has the capacity or experience to administer a scholarship and/or training program for its employees? Does the application adequately define the process by which scholarships will be made available and recipients selected?

- **Demonstrated need for an employee scholarship program – 20 points**
  - Does the application identify the need for a scholarship program? Does the application include data and other information about the organization’s employees and their need for training or furthering their education? Do the organization’s clientele and/or business circumstances demonstrate the need for a scholarship program?

- **Applicability of courses of study/trainings – 40 points**
  - Will the proposed courses of study/trainings to be funded by scholarships contribute to a well-trained HCBS workforce in Minnesota?
  - Will the proposed courses of study/training help recruit and retain employees in the applicant agency or the HCBS field?
  - To what extent will the courses of study/training enhance employees’ skills with client care in a HCBS setting and improve care for the clients served by the organization?

- **Reasonableness of the budget– 20 points**
  - Given the courses of study/trainings, educational institutions, duration of courses and other expense descriptions, are the dollar amounts reasonable for each individual scholarship? Are there enough details to substantiate the costs?
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

Notification

MDH anticipates notifying all applicants via email of funding decisions by November 15, 2019.
RFP Part 3: Application and Submission Instructions

3.1 Application Deadline

All applications must be received by MDH Office of Rural Health and Primary Care no later than 4:00 p.m. Central Time on September 27, 2019. If applications are mailed, they must be received by MDH Office of Rural Health and Primary Care by the deadline.

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

Submit two hardcopies of the complete application OR attach one complete copy of the application to an email. Applications must be received by the MDH Office of Rural Health and Primary Care no later than 4:00 PM Central Standard Time on Friday, September 27, 2019. MDH will not be responsible for delays caused by mail, delivery, computer or technology problems. Late applications will not be reviewed.

If sending application via the US Post Office, mail two copies to:

Sonya Borgeson-Bethke, Grant Manager
Minnesota Department of Health, ORHPC
PO Box 64882
St. Paul, MN 55164-0882

If sending application via courier or next day delivery service, send two copies to:

Sonya Borgeson-Bethke, Grant Manager
Minnesota Department of Health, ORHPC
85 East 7th Place, Suite 220
St. Paul, MN 55101

If sending application via email, send to: Sonya.Borgeson-Bethke@state.mn.us

3.3 Application Instructions

All application forms and instructions are available online at: https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/funding/grants/index.html#hcbs

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

- Organization Eligibility Questionnaire (MDH Form)
- Business Information and Signature (MDH Form)
- Client Information Summary (MDH Form)
• Narrative Description (document to be completed by applicant)
• Budget Forms (MDH Form)
• Due Diligence Review and Financial Questionnaire (MDH Form)
• A Financial Statement of the Organization (document to be submitted by the applicant)
• Proof of Active Licensure or Registration (document to be submitted by the applicant)

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, 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 application documents submitted to MDH become public information once awards are announced.

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