



Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Employee Scholarship Grant Program – Fiscal Year 2021

GRANT REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Minnesota Department of Health
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1/29/2021

To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-3838

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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 2021
- **Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Program Website:**
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/funding/grants/index.html#hcbs>
- **Application Deadline:** Revised 11:59 p.m., April 6, 2021

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.

Funding	Estimate
Estimated Amount to Grant	\$1,450,000
Estimated Number of Awards	25-30
Estimated Award Maximum	\$100,000
Estimated Award Minimum	\$15,000

Match Requirement

No match is required

Project Dates

July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2023

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.

Nursing home establishments and hospice facilities are not eligible for this grant program.

1.5 Questions and Answers

All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted by email or phone to Carol Gronfor at health.hcbsgrant@state.mn.us or 651-201-3842. 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 **April 6, 2021**.

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 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 workforce development through scholarships and/or eligible in-house trainings for employees. Scholarships must be for courses or degrees directly related to courses of study that are expected to lead to career advancement with the provider or in the field of long-term care, including home care, care of persons with disabilities, or nursing within the HCBS field. In house trainings must be related to **caregiving** and cannot be trainings required for licensure of the facility.

The trainings must result in an industry recognized certification, credential or include stackable course credits supporting adult basic education, degree program, diplomas, or license. The certification must be awarded in recognition of an individual's attainment of measurable technical or occupational skills necessary to obtain employment or advance within an occupation. Of note, professional conferences, on the job training or in-service trainings that do not result in career advancement, certified skills attainment or course credits towards a degree are not eligible.

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 in house trainings, and or scholarships for degree programs directly related to the delivery of patient or client care in home and community-based settings. These may include:

- 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 that result in industry-recognized certifications, credentials, or course credits and are *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 materials
- Childcare expenses while the employee is attending classes
- Mileage reimbursement
- Group Training Facilitator and Materials Costs
- Entrance or licensure exam 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 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

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

The reporting schedule will be once every six months. A standard invoice will be provided to grantees.

Grantees will be required to submit at the time of invoice a program report that will include:

- the amount spent on scholarships;
- the number of employees who received scholarships;
- and, for each scholarship recipient,
 - the name of the recipient,
 - the current position of the recipient,
 - the amount awarded,
 - the educational institution attended,
 - the nature of the educational program,
 - and the expected or actual program completion date.
- Additional data deemed necessary for longer term tracking of licensure attainment.

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.

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.

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?
- Note, priority will be given to scholarships for direct care giving roles.
- 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 the [Policy on the Financial Review of Nongovernmental Organizations](#).

MDH anticipates notifying all applicants via email of funding decisions by June 30, 2021.

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 11:59 p.m. Central Time on **April 6, 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 mail, delivery, computer or technology problems.

3.2 Application Submission Instructions

Applications must be submitted electronically through the ORHPC online grant portal [Grants Portal](#).

- Existing users: If your organization has a grant with the ORHPC, and you already have a user account, please enter your credentials and log-in. If you forgot your passwords, please use the "Forgot your Password?" link to reset your password.
- New users: If your organization does not already have a profile in the system, you will need to create an account. Please click on "Create New Account" to complete the registration process and create your logon credentials.
- Not sure? If you think that you or someone at your organization has already registered your organization in the system, do not create a new account. Please contact Kwame Akosah at kwame.akosah@state.mn.us to receive a username and password.

Once in the system, click on the link "apply" located on the upper tool bar on the home page. You will be redirected to a list of open applications in the system; select the appropriate program. Read RFP Part 4: Application Guidance within the request for proposal for further instructions on how to address application questions outlined in the online portal.

If you have any questions, please contact us at: health.hcbsgrant@state.mn.us

3.3 Application Instructions

The Application includes the following components:

- Online form:
 - Organization and Application Information
 - Project Information
 - Narrative
 - Eligibility and Client Services Summary
 - Budget Narrative

- Budget Details and Workplan
- Grant Budget Line-Item Request
- Required Attachments
 1. Audited Financial Statements
 2. [Due Diligence form](#)
 3. Proof of active licensure

Incomplete applications will be rejected and not evaluated.

Applications must include all required application materials, including required attachments. **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.

***Optional attachments**, such as cost estimates, bids, architectural blueprints or photographs, may be included in the application where deemed appropriate. These additional materials should be limited to information highly relevant to the specific scope and purpose of the proposed project.

RFP Part 4: Application Guidance

Section 1. Organization and Applicant Information

Basic information about the applicant entity is requested including legal and business name, address and tax identification information for contracting purposes.

Section 2. Project Information

This section requests summary information about the project including the request amount, the name of the program the grant funds are being requested and contact information.

Section 3. Narrative Guidance

The online application provides open fields for grant applications to respond to narrative questions about the project. Please provide concise and thorough responses to the questions outlined below.

Organization Overview

Provide a brief overview of your organization's history and service area. Describe the clients served, including their age range and other demographics, as well as any unique characteristics or circumstances. Describe your organization's staffing and administrative structure.

Need Statement

Describe the need for a scholarship program at your facility or facilities. This should include an analysis of educational or training needs of your caregiving staff. Describe any concerns regarding retention and turnover with your caregiving staff. Provide any additional information about your organization's clientele and/or business circumstances that demonstrate the need for a scholarship program.

Plans to Operate Scholarship Program

Provide an overview of your organization's proposed scholarship program structure, describing how the funds will be utilized (will grant support current scholarship program or new/different scholarship program?). Describe the process for selecting recipients and how the organization will determine which employees are eligible. How will eligible employees learn about scholarship opportunities? If your organization currently offers a scholarship program, highlight any previous successes.

Proposed Project

Please describe the degree/diploma/licensure programs and/or trainings your proposed scholarships will fund. If specific courses of study and/or trainings are known, please identify and explain why they were selected; otherwise, provide examples of programs/trainings that your employees might pursue (a list of educational resources is available at:

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/funding/grants/pdf/2018hcbsresource.pdf>).

How will the courses of study/training funded by scholarships help your organization recruit and retain employees, improve care for the clients served, and contribute to a well-trained HCBS workforce in Minnesota?

Section 4: Eligibility and Client Services Summary

Grant applications are requested to provide in the application form information about their organization's licensure, number of clientele, and employment retention rates. Your organization's facility must be located in Minnesota. Your organization must also meet one of the three service sites listed below. If your facility is not located in Minnesota and is not recognized as at least one of these service providers below, your organization is **not** eligible to apply for and receive funding under this grant program.

- 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](#)

Section 5: Budget Narrative

Grant applicants are requested to provide a detailed justification of your estimated scholarship program expenses. The budget explanation should be broken down by **each** training requested in Section 6: Budget Detail and Work Plan. The narrative should provide the total costs per training or type of scholarship, including tuition and related expenses, as well as providing an explanation for how individual per participant costs were calculated.

Here is an example of a tuition scholarship budget narrative:

Licensed Practical Nurse Tuition Scholarship

- Per student scholarship costs include estimated tuition and fees of \$2250 per semester x 2 semesters = \$4,500; \$250 books per semester x 2 semesters = \$500. Total Per student scholarship costs = \$5,000
- 5 Scholarship recipients x \$5,000 = \$25,000

Here is an example of a group or in-house training budget narrative:

Certified Nursing Assistant

- Organization will contract with a certified facilitator to offer CNA training onsite for employees. Facilitator costs of \$2,500 per cohort = \$2,500. Books @ \$25 per student x 20 students = \$500. Total cohort costs = \$3000. 2 x cohorts annually = \$6,000
- Classroom supplies and practice medical equipment = \$1500.
- Total group training costs = \$7,5000
- # of participants: 10 per cohort annually x 2 cohorts = 20
- Estimated Cost Per participant: \$7,500 ÷ 20 = \$375 per participant

Grant funds may not be used for coursework and trainings that took place prior to grant start date of July 1, 2021. Here is a list of allowable expenses:

- **Employee tuition:** Employee tuition scholarships pay for eligible costs associated with courses and trainings that individual employees take at an educational institution. Employees' salaries, fringes or stipends while attending school are not allowable expenses for the HCBS Employee Scholarship grant funds.
- **Course-related textbooks or materials:** Funds can be used to cover the cost of in-house training materials, or the costs of books and materials for employees enrolled in course work through the assistance of an employee tuition scholarship.
- **Childcare expenses:** Can be used to support childcare expenses while the employee is attending classes.
- **Mileage reimbursement:** For travel to training. Mileage will be reimbursed at the standard mileage rate issued annually by the Internal Revenue Services.
- **Training consultant fees:** The facilitator costs for in-house trainings provided for employees that measurably advance employees skills and result in certification, credentials, or stackable course credits.
- **Entrance or licensure exam fees:** Employers can use grant funds to assist employees in covering the costs of applications to enroll in college, including the cost of entrance exams, and pay for the cost of licensure exams when applicable.

Section 6: Budget Detail and Workplan

Grantees will be asked to fill in a form that provides a brief description of the type of employee training scholarship or in-house and group training to be provided. This information will serve as the basis for your work plan in a grant contract if the application is awarded. All applicants must have at least one and up to eight activities defined within the Budget Detail and Workplan.

The following information must be provided for **each** scholarship or training being proposed:

- **Certification or Credential:** A description of the type of Certification or Credential that will result from the training or scholarship.
- **Training Institute or Facilitator:** Provide a brief description of the training institute scholarship recipients will attend or the facilitator that will provide in-house or group trainings.
- **# of Recipients:** Provide the estimated number of scholarship recipients or the number of attendees who will participate in group trainings.
- **Individual Scholarship Costs/Participants Costs:** Provide the amount of scholarship to be provided. If requesting support of group training, calculate the estimated per participant costs for group trainings by dividing the total cost of the training (including materials) by the number of projected participants.
- **The total costs:** Provide the totals cost for each certification or credential proposed.
- **Start date:** The estimated date the first scholarship will be issued, or the date the training program will commence.

- End date: The projected end date the last scholarship payment will be issued, or the end date for group trainings.

Here is an example of an employee scholarship response:

- Type of Certification or Credential: Licensed Practical Nurse Tuition Scholarship
- Training Institute or Facilitator: Employee choice of local MNSCU nursing programs including Century College, Dakota County Technical College, Hennepin Technical College.
- # of Recipients: 5
- Individual Scholarship Amounts: \$5,000
- Total Amount: \$25,000
- Start Date: July 1, 2021
- End Date: June 30, 2023

Here is an example of an In-House or Group training response:

- Type of Certification or Credential - Certified Nursing Assistant
- Training Institute or Facilitator: Contracted Nurse with Train the Trainer Certificate
- # of participants: 20
- Estimated Cost Per participant: \$375
- Total Costs: \$7500
- Start date: September 2021
- End date: November 2022

Section 7: Required Attachments

Audited Financial Statements

Please upload a scanned copy of the most recent independent audit to the online application form. If the audit encompasses multiple hospitals within a system/umbrella organization, please provide additional financial information, such as an income statement specific to the applicant hospital.

Due Diligence

Please complete the Due Diligence form and attach to the online application form.

Proof of Active Licensure or Registration (attach only relevant documentation)

Applications must include documentation of current registration either as a housing with services establishment or current licensure as an adult day care facility or a home care agency. *If your grant application is for multiple facilities, provide proofs of active licensure or registration for all those facilities.*