



Minnesota Rural Hospital Flexibility Program Billing and Coding Training

GRANT REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

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05/20/2024

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RFP Part 1: Overview

1.1 General Information

- **Announcement Title:** Minnesota Rural Hospital Flexibility Program Billing and Coding Training Grant
- **Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Program Website:**
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/funding/grants/index.html#flexfi>
- **Application Deadline:** July 19, 2024

1.2 Program Description

Minnesota Statute [144.1482](#) establishes the Office of Rural Health, which shall establish and maintain a clearinghouse for collecting and disseminating information on rural health care issues, research findings, and innovative approaches to the delivery of rural health care and assist rural communities in improving the delivery and quality of health care in rural areas.

Minnesota Statute [144.1483](#) establishes rural health initiatives, to include the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program pursuant to section 1820 of the federal Social Security Act, United States Code, title 42, section 1395i-4, by developing a state rural health plan and designating, consistent with the rural health plan, rural nonprofit or public hospitals in the state as [critical access hospitals](#) (CAHs). Minnesota has 77 licensed critical access hospitals.

The Minnesota Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program (Flex Program) receives funds from the Health Resources and Services Administration’s (HRSA) Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) to help [critical access hospitals](#), emergency medical services and health professionals work together. Flex Program funding is intended to provide training or technical assistance to CAHs to build capacity, encourage innovation, and promote sustainable improvements in the rural health care system.

1.3 Funding and Project Dates

Funding

The Minnesota Department of Health will receive \$1,049,465 in funding each year from the Health Resources and Services Administration’s Federal Office of Rural Health Policy for the next five years. Up to \$15,000 in annual funding will be allocated by a competitive process to eligible organizations to provide billing and coding training in critical access hospitals and rural health clinics. If selected, you may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant agreement is fully executed, and the grant has reached its effective date.

Funding	Year 1 Estimate	Year 2 Estimate	Year 3 Estimate	Year 4 Estimate	Year 5 Estimate
Estimated Amount to Grant	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000

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Funding	Year 1 Estimate	Year 2 Estimate	Year 3 Estimate	Year 4 Estimate	Year 5 Estimate
Estimated Number of Awards	1	Based on awards in Year 1	Based on awards in Year 1	Based on awards in Year 1	Based on awards in Year 1
Estimated Award Maximum	\$15,000	Based on awards in Year 1	Based on awards in Year 1	Based on awards in Year 1	Based on awards in Year 1
Estimated Award Minimum	\$7,000	Based on awards in Year 1	Based on awards in Year 1	Based on awards in Year 1	Based on awards in Year 1

Match Requirement

There are no match requirements.

Project Dates

The eligible project period is September 1, 2024 - August 31, 2029. Applicants will provide a comprehensive overview of the training that will be completed during year 1 and in subsequent project years, will submit an updated workplan and budget.

1.4 Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include organizations that are either for-profit or not-for-profit entities that demonstrate extensive experience providing billing and coding training to critical access hospitals and rural health clinics with specific experience training rural health care staff.

Applicants will be selected based on their ability to complete proposed projects and evidence of experience in the proposed subject matter, including demonstrable experience improving billing and coding accuracy using training techniques or topics described in the proposal to a target audience of different skill levels.

Applicants should also demonstrate experience training a large audience of different skill levels. Applicants will be selected based on their ability to provide a structured billing and coding training and any materials needed or provided. Experience will be assessed based on details provided in the proposal.

Critical access hospitals are not the intended applicant organization(s). CAHs and CAH staff will be the recipients of any proposed education, training or resources developed with these grant dollars. CAHs that have questions about the funding should contact health.flex@state.mn.us.

Grant funds are not transferrable to any other entity. Applicants that are aware of any upcoming mergers, acquisitions, or any other changes in their organization or legal standing, must disclose this information to MDH in their application, or as soon as they are aware of it.

Collaboration

Multi-organization collaboration is encouraged but is not required and will receive no competitive advantage.

1.5 Questions and Answers

All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted by email or phone to health.flex@state.mn.us or 651-201-3528. All answers will be posted within 5 business days at <https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/funding/grants/index.html#flexfi>

Please submit questions no later than 4:30 p.m. Central Standard Time (CST), on July 12, 2024.

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

RFP Information Meeting

An RFP Informational Webinar will be held virtually on June 26, 2024 from 9:00 am – 10:00 am.

Details to access the webinar including the connection information may be found here: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/funding/grants/index.html#flexfi>.

All prospective applicants are urged to attend. Questions from the informational webinar will be posted to the program's webpage:

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/funding/grants/index.html#flexfi>.

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 people residing in rural Minnesota and rural communities by way of Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs). CAHs are a central part of rural communities and the rural healthcare safety net, providing necessary health care services to rural and remote parts of Minnesota. This grant seeks to create and provide billing and coding training to CAHs and RHCs that will improve the accuracy of coding, claims made to third party payers and improve the financial health and sustainability of facilities in rural Minnesota.

Grant outcomes will include:

- Training opportunities for critical access hospitals and rural health clinics on topics related to billing and coding.
- Training opportunities for critical access hospital and rural health clinic staff to recognize common billing and coding errors and implement best practices to prevent errors, reduce percent of claims denied, increase percent of denied claims re-billed, improve clean claims rate, and improve days in net revenue in accounts receivable.
- Grant performance will be measured by the submission of quarterly reports.

2.2 Eligible Projects

Eligible projects will provide training to improve critical access hospital and rural health clinic billing and coding practices. Federal funding for this grant opportunity limits the recipients of training and education created from this funding opportunity to critical access hospitals, critical access hospital staff, and provider-based rural health clinics. The CAH may utilize or build partnerships with community organizations through their participation in funded projects.

In determining which organizations will receive this award, the following criteria shall be considered:

- Demonstrated understanding of the basics of hospital finances.
- Demonstrated understanding of coding requirements including but not limited to ICD-10, ICD-11, CPT and HCPCs.
- Demonstrated understanding of third-party payer requirements, how these requirements impact coding practices and reimbursements in Minnesota.
- Ability to communicate how the proposed activities will improve CAH and RHC reimbursements.

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- Ability to communicate how proposed activities will help CAHs and RHCs meet documentation requirements, coding accuracy, timely submissions, best practices for billing and coding, and how activities will result in measurable improvement in CAH and RHC finances.

Projects must include a training session(s) that will improve billing and coding accuracy and efficiency. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Implementation of best practices
- Accuracy and importance of documentation requirements
- Addressing common coding challenges

Proposed work

Applicants will be scored on the quality of the proposal. Applicants are asked to propose activities to achieve the following expected outcomes:

- Goal: 100% of CAH/RHCs participating in the training identify changes needed to coding and billing processes or systems to enhance compliance and efficiency.
- Goal: Achieve a noticeable reduction in the percentage of claims denied for participating facilities.
- Goal: Increase percent of initially denied claims successfully resubmitted.
- Goal: Improved percentage of claims that are processed and paid without rejections, errors, or delays by refining billing and coding practices to adhere to payer requirements.
- Goal: Enhancing the efficiency of revenue cycle operations within the participating CAH/RHCs by improving days in net revenue in accounts receivable.

Applicants must provide a comprehensive description of how their organization will implement proposed activities. Applicants must provide a detailed evaluation plan for all proposed work. Consider the following aspects when providing a description of proposed work:

- **A description of the proposed project.** Applicants must provide a thorough description of the project, and desired outcomes of the training.
- **Project outreach, engagement and participant recruitment including the expected target audience.** Minnesota has 77 critical access hospitals and 105 rural health clinics. Applicants should specify the strategy for participant outreach and if participants will be identified by need or interest. Applicants should identify what key positions from the CAH are the intended recipient of this work.
- **Project implementation and logistics,** including a detailed timeline of all activities with clear phases for implementation.
- **Description of training.** Provide a detailed description of the training content such as any relevant agendas, learning objectives, participant time commitment, outline if these are one-on-one or group training events.
- **Descriptions of any materials, resources, curriculum or content that will be developed with these grant dollars.** If grant funds will be used for this purpose, provide a summary of how the product will be created (by staff or sub-contracted entity). Describe how any newly developed or existing product(s) will be used or accessed by the CAH, the RHC, the purpose and other relevant details.

- **A detailed evaluation plan** that describes how the activities will achieve desired outcomes, and any metrics that will be used to track and measure the success of the training.
- **Demonstrated experience** in working with the intended audience and topics.

Grant outcome expectations

Applicants should provide their proposed evaluation plan, to include suggested measures for tracking activity progress. Participants will be expected to track some participant information of CAHs and RHCs that are engaged in this work to document actual improvements.

Expected Outcomes

- Goal: 100% of CAH/RHCs participating in the training identify changes needed to coding and billing processes or systems, recognize common billing and coding errors, and implementing best practices within their facility.
- Goal: Reduced percent of claims denied by third party payers and develop strategies to mitigate future claim denials.
- Goal: Increase percent of initially denied claims successfully resubmitted
- Goal: Improved percentage of claims that are processed and paid without rejections, errors, or delays by refining billing and coding practices to adhere to payer requirements.
- Goal: Improved days in net revenue in accounts receivable by improving the efficiency of the revenue cycle operations.

All applicants will participate in Flex Program evaluation with MDH but should also provide an evaluation plan as part of the application. The anticipated and actual outcomes for awards made from this RFP will be included as part of the required evaluation of the Federal Flex Program.

Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Expenses not directly related to the approved work plan and not in the approved budget.
- Supplanting existing operating expenses or existing program expenses.
- Expenses incurred prior to receiving grant agreement.
- Direct patient care (including health care services, equipment and supplies)
- Purchase of ambulances and any other vehicle or major equipment (including software that costs more than \$5,000 per unit) and any other single item purchase over \$5,000.
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services.
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds.
- Fundraising.
- Lobbyists, political contributions.
- To purchase or improve real property.
- To conduct or complete any part of the Community Health Needs Assessment for non-profit 501(c)3 CAHs as required by the IRS.
- Administrative expenses are capped at 10 percent of the total direct costs; or the organization's federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement.

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. Grantee should read the grant agreement, sign, and once signed, comply with all conditions of the grant agreement.

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

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

Accountability and Reporting Requirements

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

The reporting schedule will be quarterly, due 20 days after the end of the quarter. Final payments must be submitted no later than September 20 of each project year. Reporting deadlines will be communicated through the Office of Rural Health and Primary Care's grant portal. A standard report form will be provided to grantees. Written reports documenting activity progress and outcomes will be due at least biannually. Written reports will align with the schedule provided by the federal funding agency Health Resources and Services Administration's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy.

Grant Monitoring

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

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

The monitoring schedule will be determined after awards have been made.

Technical Assistance

MDH will provide technical assistance to ensure the Grantee is meeting proposed deliverables and meeting the goals of the federal funder. MDH will support the Grantee in any outreach or implementation needs to recruit participants from the target audience.

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 quarterly, due 20 days after the end of the quarter. Final payments will be due no later than September 20 of each project year. Reports will be submitted through the Office of Rural Health and Primary Care’s online grant portal. A report form will be provided to grantees. All deadlines will be communicated to grantees through the grant portal.

Funding Statement and Publicity Requirements

When applicable, all products must contain information about publicity requirements, such as including MDH logo on project related documents. Relevant funding statements will be provided to the Grantee in the Grant Agreement Exhibit A.

2.4 Grant Provisions

Contracting and Bidding Requirements

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

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

- i. Any services or materials that are expected to cost \$100,000 or more must undergo a formal notice and bidding process consistent with the standards set forth under Minnesota Statutes 16B.
- ii. Services or materials that are expected to cost between \$25,000 and \$99,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of three (3) verbal quotes or bids.
- iii. Services or materials that are expected to cost between \$10,000 and \$24,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of two (2) verbal quotes or bids or awarded to a targeted vendor.
- iv. The grantee must take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that targeted vendors from businesses with active certifications through these entities are used when possible:

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- Minnesota Department of Administration's Certified Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Vendor List (<https://mn.gov/admin/osp/government/professionatechnicalcontracts/targeted-group-preferences/>);
 - Metropolitan Council's Targeted Vendor list: Minnesota Unified Certification Program (<https://mnuccp.metc.state.mn.us/>) or
 - Small Business Certification Program through Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and City of St. Paul: Central Certification Program (<https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/human-rights-equal-economic-opportunity/contract-compliance-business-development-9>).
- v. The grantee must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award and administration of contracts.
- vi. The grantee must maintain support documentation of the purchasing or bidding process utilized to contract services in their financial records, including support documentation justifying a single/sole source bid, if applicable.
- vii. Notwithstanding (i) - (iv) above, State may waive bidding process requirements when:
- Vendors included in response to competitive grant request for proposal process were approved and incorporated as an approved work plan for the grant or
 - There is only one legitimate or practical source for such materials or services and that grantee has established a fair and reasonable price.
- viii. Projects that include construction work of \$25,000 or more, are subject to applicable prevailing wage laws, including those under Minnesota Statutes 177.41 through 177.44.
- ix. Grantee must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred in MN: The list of debarred vendors is available at: <https://mn.gov/admin/osp/government/suspended-debarred/>.

Conflicts of Interest

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

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

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

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

Individual conflicts of interest occur when:

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

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

Public Data and Trade Secret Materials

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

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

After MDH has completed the evaluation process, all remaining data in the applications is public with the exception of trade secret data as defined and classified in [Minn. Stat. § 13.37](#), subd. 1(b). A statement by an applicant that the application is copyrighted or otherwise protected does not prevent public access to the application or its contents. ([Minn. Stat. § 13.599](#), subd. 3(a)).

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

- Clearly mark all trade secret materials in its application at the time it is submitted,
- Include a statement attached to its application justifying the trade secret designation for each item, and
- Defend any action seeking release of the materials it believes to be trade secret, and indemnify and hold harmless MDH and the State of Minnesota, its agents and employees,

from any judgments or damages awarded against the State in favor of the party requesting the materials, and any and all costs connected with that defense.

- This indemnification survives MDH's award of a grant agreement. In submitting an application in response to this RFP, the applicant agrees that this indemnification survives as long as the trade secret materials are in possession of MDH. The State will not consider the prices submitted by the responder to be proprietary or trade secret materials.

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

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

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

Audits

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

Affirmative Action and Non-Discrimination Requirements for all Grantees

The grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. [Minn. Stat. § 363A.02](#). The grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.

The grantee must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The grantee agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and otherwise treat qualified disabled persons without discrimination based upon their physical or mental disability in all employment practices such as the following:

employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship. Minn. Rules, part [5000.3550](#).

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

Non-Transferability

Grant funds are not transferrable to any other entity. Applicants that are aware of any upcoming mergers, acquisitions, or any other changes in their organization or legal standing, must disclose this information to MDH in their application, or as soon as they are aware of it.

Federal Funding Purpose

The purpose of the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Flex) Program is to enable states to support critical access hospitals (CAHs) in quality improvement, quality reporting, performance improvement and benchmarking; to assist facilities seeking designation as CAHs; and to establish or expand programs for the provision of rural emergency medical services (EMS). The long-term objectives of the Flex Program are to enable CAHs, including CAH-owned clinics, and rural EMS agencies to:

- Show and improve quality of care;
- Stabilize finances and maintain services;
- Adjust to address changing community needs; and
- Ensure patient care is integrated throughout the rural health care delivery system.

2.5 Review and Selection Process

Review Process

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process with review by a committee representing content specialists with knowledge of rural issues and rural health care. 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 that applicants will be judged on are based on a 0-5 rating system. See Attachment B: Application Evaluation Criteria for a detailed description of the scoring system and scoring criteria.

- Problem Statement (30 points total)
- Methods (35 points total)
- Work Plan (20 points total)
- Budget and Budget Narrative (15 points total)

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 pre-award risk assessment prior to a grant award. Additional information may be required for proposed budgets of \$50,000 and higher to a potential applicant in order to comply with [Policy on Pre-Award Risk Assessment for Potential Grantees](#).

Notification

MDH anticipates notifying all applicants via email of funding decisions by September 1, 2024. For successive budget years, MDH will provide the grantee with the award amount via the ORHPC grants portal. Upon notification of the award amount, grantees must submit a budget and narrative due 30 days following the notice of award. Future funding will be contingent on MDH's total funding amount.

RFP Part 3: Application and Submission Instructions

3.1 Application Deadline

All applications **must** be received by MDH no later than 4:30 p.m. Central Time, on July 19, 2024.

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.

Acknowledgement of application receipt. The online [Grants Portal](#) will send an automated email to the user who submitted the application to confirm the submission of your application. Additionally, the application status will change from "Draft" to "Submitted" on the Applicant Dashboard and record the date the application was submitted. If the application is still in draft status by the application deadline, you will no longer be able to edit or submit the application. If you do not receive an automated email confirming submission or encounter any other issues with the online application submission please contact us promptly at health.flex@state.mn.us.

If you encounter any issues with the online application submission, please contact us promptly at health.flex@state.mn.us. We encourage you to submit in advance of the deadline to allow time to address any technical issues.

3.2 Application Submission Instructions

ORHPC requires application submissions to be made through an online [Grants Portal](#). Please reference the Office of Rural Health and Primary Care's [Grant Guide](#) for information on account creation, password recovery, application creation, and collaboration.

Read Attachment B: Application Detailed Instructions within this request for proposals for further instructions on how to address application questions outlined in the Grants Portal.

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

3.3 Application Instructions

You must submit the following for the application to be considered complete. Detailed application instructions are available in Attachment A. Incomplete applications will be rejected and not evaluated.

- Section 1: Organization and Applicant Information
- Section 2: Project Information
- Section 3: Narrative
 - Project Summary
 - Problem Statement
 - Project Methods
 - Key Personnel Biographic Sketch(es)

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- Section 4: Timeline and Workplan
- Section 5: Budget and Budget Narrative
- Section 6: Required Attachments
- [Due Diligence Review Form](#)
 - Community Health Boards and Tribal Nations do not need to submit the Due Diligence as part of their application.
- Audited Financial Statements
- Section 7: [Applicant Conflict of Interest](#) will be completed in the application.

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

RFP Part 4: Attachments

- Attachment A: Application Detailed Instructions
- Attachment B: Application Evaluation Criteria and Scoring

Attachment A: Application Detailed Instructions

ORHPC requires application submissions to be made through an online [Grants Portal](#). Please reference the Office of Rural Health and Primary Care's [Grant Guide](#) for information on account creation, password recovery, application creation, and collaboration.

Section 1: Organization and Applicant Information

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

Applicants will be asked to provide SWIFT Supplier Information. To create an account in SWIFT visit the [SWIFT Vendor Resources](#) page.

This project is funded with federal dollars. Applicants must provide their [Unique Entity Identifier \(UEI\)](#) Name and Number.

Section 2: Project Information

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

Section 3: Narrative

Project Summary

Provide a short overview summarizing the project, a high-level description of activities and how grant funds will be utilized.

Character limit: 5,000

Problem Statement

Provide a description of the need for this project. The problem statement should demonstrate an understanding of financial challenges facing critical access hospitals and rural health clinics and how accurate billing and coding will improve financial sustainability. The problem statement should provide data and context for the project statement and proposed workplan.

Character limit: 5,000

Project Methods

The project methods must clearly explain how the grant funding will be used, what will be accomplished. Applicants should provide robust details on how the project will achieve the expected outcomes.

Character limit: 10,000

Key Personnel Biographical Sketch(es)

Provide the following information for key personnel who will be involved in the project: name, title, role in proposed project, relevant education, and professional experience relevant to the

proposed project. It is important that all staff that will be funded through this grant are include and the FTE correspond to the budget narrative. If the position is currently vacant, please provide a brief description of the position that will be involved and any information on the vacancy.

Character limit: 10,000

Section 4: Timeline and Workplan

Provide a timeline for the top project activities/tasks for the first budget year. The timeline should identify the staff position or role (ex. Clinical Director, Strategic Planning Consultant, etc.) involved in each task, and the estimated start and completion date for each task. All requests must have at least 1 project activity defined.

The workplan and timeline should include all key tasks proposed for this project for a single year. Selected applicants will be requested to submit an updated workplan annually for the duration of the grant.

Section 5: Budget and Budget Narrative

Please provide a detailed budget description organized by the individual budget line items. Do not use combined hourly rates, all costs must be provided in the budget line items below. The narrative must provide a rationale and details regarding how all budgeted costs are calculated.

- **Salary:** This category is for direct employees of the applicant organization. Grant funds can only be used for staff working directly on the proposed project. The anticipated FTE funded by the grant should be included along with an estimated number of hours to complete deliverables.
- **Fringe:** The cost of benefits and fringe based on the applicant organization’s allocation schedules or plans. Provide an explanation for the fringe rate and a summary of what costs are included.
- **Travel:** Travel costs should include separate calculations for mileage, food and lodging. In-State room and board will be reimbursed in the same manner and in no greater amount than provided in the current [“Commissioner’s Plan”](#) promulgated by the Commissioner of Minnesota Management and Budget; or, at the Grantee’s established rate (for all travel related costs), whichever is lower, at the time travel occurred. Mileage must be calculated at the IRS approved rate that is current at the time of the application.
- **Supplies:** Describe all estimated costs for supplies and materials needed to complete the project.
- **Contractual:** This category is for any external contracts required to complete proposed grant deliverables. Outline estimated costs for each proposed contract, separately. Examples include but are not limited to space rental, website development or a training facilitator. Any individual that is not a direct employee of the applicant’s organization should be listed under contractual. Applicants can use grant funds to work with outside consultants for training or curriculum development, but these costs must be project specific. For all subcontracted personnel, provide hourly rates and the anticipated number of hours to complete the intended deliverable.

- **Other:** Project specific costs that are not already addressed in other categories. Provide a brief description of the costs. Costs cannot be billed to this grant if they are already accounted for within an organization's indirect rate.
 - **Indirect:** An indirect cost rate is a percentage used to distribute indirect costs to all of an organization's programs that benefit from them. Grantees cannot claim indirect costs in excess of the indirect cost rate that applies to their organization. Grantees must submit and retain on-file, the corresponding documentation of that indirect cost rate as outlined below:
 - Grantees with a federally negotiated indirect cost rate can use grant funds for indirect costs in an amount up to, but not exceeding, that rate. Grantees must submit a copy of the current federally negotiated indirect cost rate as an attachment to this application.
 - Grantees without a federally negotiated indirect cost rate can use grant funds for indirect costs in an amount up to but not exceeding 10% of total direct costs. The Grantee must provide a summary of what is included in their indirect costs.
- Grantees are responsible for ensuring that the indirect rate is not applied to direct costs that are excluded from the described indirect rate.

Section 6: Required Application Attachments

Audited Financial Statements

Please upload a copy of the most recent independent audit into the online application. If the audit encompasses multiple entities within a system or umbrella organization, please provide additional financial information, such as an income statement, specific to the applicant entity.

Due Diligence

Please complete the [Due Diligence Form](#) and attach to the online application form. Community Health Boards and Tribal Nations do not need to submit this form as part of their application.

Optional Application Attachments

An additional upload field will be available should an applicant have need to submit additional information. There will be no scoring advantage to attaching additional files.

Section 7: Conflict of Interest

Applicants will complete the Conflict of Interest Disclosure form in the online application. See a copy of the form on the [MDH Grant Resources webpage](#).

Attachment B: Application Evaluation Criteria

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

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

Applications will be scored up to a maximum of 100 points possible. General criteria to be used in evaluating the application includes:

- The applicant organization has experience in the proposed subject matter.
- The applicant organization has an overall work plan that is clearly defined and describes goals and deliverables that are measurable, attainable, realistic and time bound.
- The applicant has an appropriate staff and administrative structure available to complete the project by the end of the grant period.

The following scoring system will be applied:

Rating	Description
5	Excellent: Outstanding level of quality; significantly exceeds all aspects of the minimum requirements; high probability of success; no significant weaknesses.
4	Very Good: Substantial response; meets in all aspects and in some cases exceeds the minimum requirements; good probability of success; no significant weaknesses.
3	Good: Generally meets minimum requirements; probability of success; significant weaknesses, but correctable.
2	Marginal: Lack of essential information; low probability for success; significant weaknesses, but correctable.
1	Unsatisfactory: Fails to meet minimum requirements; little likelihood of success; needs major revision to make it acceptable.
0	Blank or did not answer: Applicant did not answer the question or offered no response.

Problem Statement (30 points available)

The criteria to be used in determining the scoring corresponds to the problem statement and project statement.

- The applicant describes the need for the project. (5 points available)

- The applicant provides adequate documentation or data to support the description of need. (5 points available)
- The applicant provides a thorough description of the project. (5 points available)
- The description of the project clearly demonstrates the project will address expected outcomes. (5 points available)
- The applicant clearly describes the target audience of the project. (5 points available)
- The applicant thoroughly describes how the proposed project will meet the needs of the intended audience. (5 points available)

Methods (35 points available)

The criteria to be used in determining the scoring corresponds to the project methods, key personnel biographical sketches.

- The applicant clearly describes the program approach and how they will achieve the proposed project objectives. (5 points available)
- The applicant clearly describes how grant funding will be used to carry out project objectives. (5 points available)
- The applicant provides measurable and reasonable project objectives. (5 points available)
- The applicant provides a reasonable plan to evaluate the impact of grant funds. (5 points available)
- The applicant demonstrates a staffing plan that is consistent with their ability to complete the project. (5 points available)
- The applicant demonstrates experience in the proposed subject matter. (5 points available)
- The applicant demonstrates experience working with intended stakeholders. (5 points available)

Work Plan (20 points total)

The criteria to be used in determining the scoring corresponds to the project workplan.

- The applicant proposes a workplan that addresses the needs for this project. (5 points available)
- The applicant proposes a workplan that is reasonable. (5 points available)
- The applicant provides a thorough description of key activities necessary for project completion. (5 points available)
- The applicant proposes a workplan that will be completed within the timeframe of the grant period. (5 available)

Proposal Budget and Budget Narrative (15 points total)

The criteria to be used in determining the scoring corresponds to the budget and budget narrative.

- The applicant proposes a reasonable budget. (5 points available)
- The applicant provides an adequate budget narrative. (5 points available)
- The applicant provides a budget narrative that describes all costs in the proposed budget. (5 points available)