**S*FY2021-2023 Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant Program***

**NOTIFICATION OF GRANT FUNDING**

The Rural Hospital Flexibility Program (Flex Program) is a federal grant program directed to State Offices of Rural Health to support:

* Improving the quality of health care provided in communities served by Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs)
* Improving the financial and operational performance of CAHs
* Developing collaborative regional and local delivery systems in CAH communities to improve Population Health

The purpose of these Flex Program funds is to improve the quality of care provided by CAHs by focusing on improvement of financial and operational implementation, quality metrics, and management of population health according to performance measures as defined by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. Specifically, these funds will support a hybrid technical assistance model that includes both group and individual CAH support.

This two-year grant will be awarded to an organization or organizations that create a plan to perform the following activities:

* Conduct, manage, and facilitate meetings of CAH executives to share best practices, receive technical assistance on quality, financial and operational areas of interest, population health and investigate primary care capacity, innovative model ideas and workforce concerns. Project anticipates up to six statewide and/or regional meetings per year.
* Develop individualized projects with select CAHs or groups of CAHs to identify opportunities for and initiate improvement in quality, financial and operational and population health.
* Conduct ongoing productivity, financial and operational benchmarking performance for review and educational opportunities for CAHs.
* Engage CAHs in submitting quality performance data as required by the Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Program (MBQIP).
* Organize collaborative networks for CAHs to share best practices and work together on various quality initiatives.
* Support ongoing network needs and activities by providing technical assistance when necessary.

The aforementioned activities will be performed with intent to improve CAH performance in the following areas:

* Key financial indicators identified by the Flex Monitoring Team (FMT)
* Improvement of Population Health Management
* Inpatient core measures as defined by MBQIP
* Outpatient core measures as defined by MBQIP
* Patient satisfaction / Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) scores

***The maximum total per grant year not to exceed* $350,000*. For the two-year grant programming, the maximum total grant award cannot exceed $*700,000*.*** All funding must be expended by August 31, 2023. ***(funding amount is dependent on federal allocation)***

Only one grant application per organization will be accepted for review. **You must request a link to your application through the online survey tool by clicking on the following link**:
<https://ncruralhealth.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dm7Qb3Vok9vQG0t>

Questions regarding the application may be directed to Nick.Galvez@dhhs.nc.gov. **S*FY 2021-2023 Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant Program***

***RFA Instructions***

All required forms may be found on the ORH website [www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/orh](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/orh)

Forms are not included in this document.

**Application Deadline**

Grant applications must be submitted electronically by 5:00 pm***,*** August 18, 2021. Hard copies will not be accepted. Only electronic applications will be accepted. Access to the electronic application is a two-step process:

1 - You must submit your organization name and contact information through the following link:  <https://ncruralhealth.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dm7Qb3Vok9vQG0t>

2 - Once you submit your contact information in the link above, you will receive an email with a personalized link specific to your organization. The link in the e-mail will give you access to the electronic application. **The application closes 5:00 PM on August 18th, 2021.**

**Eligible Applicants**

Any organization that is staffed to provide quality and operational technical assistance to Critical Access Hospital is eligible to apply. All eligible applicants must submit a complete grant application to be considered for funding.

**Funding Cycle**

It is anticipated that notification of grant awards will be made by August 20, 2021. Funding Period is September 1, 2021 through August 31, 2023. Regardless of application or approval date, grant funds must be expended by August 31, 2023.

**Organizational Information Sheet**

Grant application Page 1

Grant Request: This grant is reflective of a two-year cycle, each year maximum amount total is $350,000, with the total request cannot exceed $700,000. ***(funding amount is dependent on federal allocation)***

Summary of Proposal: Provide a very brief (1 paragraph) description of your project.

Contact Person: Enter the name and contact information for the person best able to answer questions about the grant application.

Grant Application Submitted By: This form should be signed by a person authorized to enter into contracts for your organization.

**Grant Narrative**

PART I - Overview of Organization (1-2 paragraphs)

Provide 1-2 paragraphs describing your organization and its ability to positively affect Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) quality of care by focusing on improvement in the following areas: quality, population health and finance and operations.

PART II - Project Description and Ability to Improve CAH Performance in Finance and Operations, Quality and Population Health areas (up to 6 pages)

Describe your proposed project or initiative. Create a plan to perform the following activities:

* Conduct, manage, and facilitate meetings of CAH executives to share best practices, receive technical assistance on quality, financial and operational areas of interest, population health and investigate primary care capacity, innovative model ideas and workforce concerns.
* Develop individualized projects with select CAHs or groups of CAHs to identify opportunities for and initiate improvement in quality, financial and operational and population health.
* Conduct ongoing productivity, financial and operational benchmarking performance for review and educational opportunities for CAHs.
* Engage CAHs in submitting quality performance data as required by the Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Program (MBQIP).
* Engage 3 to 5 CAHs in Quality Improvement Project focused on hospital discharge from swing beds.
* Support ongoing network needs and activities by providing technical assistance when necessary to the Office of Rural Health, Flex partners and CAHs.

Detail how your proposed project will improve or assess CAH performance in the following areas:

* Improve number of CAHs attending meetings each agreement year.
* Improve number of CAHs with positive operating margins.
* Provide support to develop action plans to CAHs to improve patient experience and hospital staff responsiveness.
* Provide support to CAHs for communication tools for discharge.
* Assess CAHs ability to operate provider-based services or other non-acute services.
* Assess CAHs ability to operate rural health clinic or other outpatient services.
* Assess Population Health recommendations based on community health needs assessments.

During the grant period, the Office of Rural Health will provide technical assistance to the grantee to support the activities mentioned above. Since the CAHs will be in various statewide locations, please explain how your organization will outreach to these locations and provide services.

List the number of FTEs who will work with each hospital. Include an implementation timeline for your project, assuming funding is received in September 2021. Project timeline must align with the budget. Budget to include all meeting expenses.

PART III - Project Evaluation (1 page)

Describe how you will evaluate your project, including how you will evaluate its influence on CAH improvement. Describe potential factors that could negatively affect your organization’s ability to reach your evaluation targets and describe how these factors will be mitigated.

PART IV - Project Budget

Complete the Program Budget Template using the file Flex SFY 2021-2023 Budget Template.

**Budget Template**

Applicants must submit the budget template provided with this RFA (see the attachment file *FLEX RFA Budget 2021-2023 Release.xls*); if the budget template is not used, zero points will be awarded for the budget feasibility section. The budget is September 1, 2021 through August 31, 2023. Budget information should be project specific, not the budget for your entire organization.

Provide a detailed cost breakdown for the project and identify all sources of funding for the project. Clearly identify which project costs will be covered with FLEX Grant funds and enter these in Column A; all other project costs should be entered in Column B.

**Scoring Criteria**

Complete applications will be reviewed and scored on the following criteria:

Part I – Overview of Organization 10 points

Part II – Overview of Staffing 25 points

Part III – Project Description 20 points

Part IV – Project Evaluation 25 points

Part V – Project Budget 20 points  **Total Available Points: 100 points**

**Application Packet Checklist**

* Application Information should be organized in the following order:
	+ Organizational Information and Signature Sheet
	+ Overview of Organization
	+ Overview of Staffing
	+ Project Description
	+ Project Evaluation
	+ Budget Template
* Provider Documents: If the following documents are not currently on file with the Office of Rural Health, all applicants must e-mail (as separate PDFs or include in the application package) the following signed information attachments. Please contact Renee Clark at Nick.Galvez@dhhs.nc.gov for copies of these documents.
* [Federal Certification Forms](https://ncruralhealth.az1.qualtrics.com/CP/File.php?F=F_cZMMk9XiQOxxl7n) for:
	+ Certification Regarding Environmental Tobacco Smoke
	+ Certification Regarding Lobbying
	+ Certification Regarding Debarment
	+ Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace
* North Carolina - Contractor Certifications Required by North Carolina Law

The following Provider Documents are required for nongovernmental entities only:

* + Copy of your [No Overdue Tax Debt Certification](https://ncruralhealth.az1.qualtrics.com/CP/File.php?F=F_6eSU3cvTNvst1lj)
	+ Copy of your [Conflict of Interest Acknowledgement and Current Policy](https://ncruralhealth.az1.qualtrics.com/CP/File.php?F=F_3PpSlegE5gYw1bT)
	+ Copy of your [Conflict of Interest Annual Verification](https://ncruralhealth.az1.qualtrics.com/CP/File.php?F=F_bE3jSrFgH5q0wQd)