**1. What is the Telehealth Infrastructure Grant (TIG) Program?**

**Answer:** The Telehealth Infrastructure Grant Program is a funding initiative by the North Carolina Office of Rural Health (ORH) designed to support rural healthcare providers by providing grants for telehealth-related infrastructure. This includes equipment, high-speed internet access, and other necessary resources to establish or enhance telehealth services.

**2. Who is eligible to apply for the TIG Program?**

**Answer:** Eligible applicants include rural health providers, independent primary care providers, and independent OB-GYN providers serving rural populations in North Carolina. Priority is given to practices in underserved areas.

**3. What expenses are covered under the TIG Program?**

**Answer:** The grant covers expenses related to telehealth infrastructure, including telehealth equipment, high-speed internet access, telehealth-related training for staff and patients, technology equipment for patients, and other necessary infrastructure. Operational costs like vehicle maintenance are not eligible.

**4. What is the maximum grant amount that can be awarded?**

**Answer:** The maximum grant amount per recipient is $250,000.

**5. Can pre-award costs be reimbursed under this grant?**

**Answer:** Yes, pre-award costs for qualifying telehealth services incurred from July 1, 2023, can be reimbursed through the grant.

**6. What are the primary goals of the TIG Program?**

**Answer:** The primary goals are to enhance access to telehealth services in rural areas, improve healthcare outcomes, and ensure that rural populations have access to high-quality telehealth care through well-established infrastructure.

**7. How will grant applications be scored?**

**Answer:** Applications will be scored based on several criteria, including the organization's overview, community need, project description and access to care, return on investment, collaboration and community engagement, project evaluation, and budget.

**8. What is the timeline for the TIG Program?**

**Answer:** The Request for Applications (RFA) opens on August 5th and closes on September 29th. Application reviews will occur from October 1st to October 31st, with notification of awards shortly after. The grant implementation period runs from January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025.

**9. Can the grant be used to fund software for telehealth services?**

**Answer:** Yes, the grant can be used to fund telehealth-related software, including check-in software like Epion, which supports the delivery and management of telehealth services.

**10. What are the telehealth standards required for grant eligibility?**

**Answer:** At a minimum, the grant requires an essential broadband internet connection of 50-100 Mbps, network redundancy, a dedicated network for compliance needs, and security measures to prevent data breaches.

**11. What should be included in the project description section of the application?**

**Answer:** The project description should detail proposed activities, timelines for implementation, any project partners and their roles, and anticipated outcomes. It should specifically address how the funds will meet the healthcare needs of the rural community.

**12. Are there any specific geographic areas that the grant prioritizes?**

**Answer:** The grant prioritizes multiple geographic areas across North Carolina, with a focus on rural and underserved communities.

**13. What is the role of the ORH in the TIG Program?**

**Answer:** The ORH is responsible for managing and scoring grant activities, ensuring compliance with program guidelines, and supporting grantees through technical assistance.

**14. What are the reporting requirements for grant recipients?**

**Answer:** Recipients are required to submit quarterly or biannual performance reports and expense reports. They must also adhere to all state requirements on record retention throughout the grant term.

**15. What is the importance of collaboration and community engagement in the TIG application?**

**Answer:** Collaboration and community engagement are critical components of the grant application. ORH encourages partnerships that integrate physical and behavioral health services, increase community awareness, and address public health issues such as addiction, preventive care, and family wellness.

**16. What are the specific scoring criteria for the TIG Program applications?**

**Answer:** Applications are scored based on several factors, including the organization's overview (10 points), community need (20 points), project description and improved access to care (25 points), return on investment (20 points), collaboration and community engagement (10 points), and budget and budget narrative (15 points).

**17. Can the grant funds be used to support internet service for patients to access telehealth services?**

**Answer:** Yes, the grant allows for the inclusion of internet service support for patients to help facilitate their access to telehealth services, as part of the infrastructure needed to deliver these services effectively.

**18. What is the definition of a rural health provider according to the TIG Program?**

**Answer:** A rural health provider is defined as a clinic or practice that provides medical services to a rural patient population, typically in areas with a shortage of primary care providers or personal health services.

**19. How does the TIG Program align with the goals of the North Carolina Office of Rural Health?**

**Answer:** The TIG Program supports the ORH’s mission by enhancing the technological infrastructure of rural health providers, improving access to care, and ensuring that underserved populations have access to high-quality telehealth services. The program also aligns with ORH's broader efforts, such as supporting rural health centers and improving the use of electronic health records (EHR) and health information exchange.

**20. What technical assistance is available to applicants and grantees of the TIG Program?**

**Answer:** The ORH's Health Information Technology & Telehealth (HITT) team provides technical assistance to applicants and grantees. This includes support with telehealth implementation, guidance on the use of electronic health records, and collaboration with partners like NCCARE360 and NC Health Connex to improve healthcare access and delivery throughout the state.

**21. Would a telehealth only provider (ie, Technology health care company listed as a provider for telehealth only) be to allowed to apply for the TIG grant?**

**Answer:** Based on the legislative language, being an telehealth only provider does not prohibit an entity from applying and being considered.