
FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Published: March 16, 2022

Funding Amount: Up to \$150,000 per award

Evaluation Project Period: May 1, 2022-July 31, 2023

Eligibility: This opportunity is available to members of the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI) and private/public institutions of higher education, including Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)-supported Public Health Training Centers.

Award Mechanism: NNPHI anticipates making up to six subawards for Best Practices for COVID-19 Health Equity: TA for OT21-2103 Recipients, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Cooperative Agreement 6 NU38OT000303-04-02.

Timeline:

Request for LOIs released	March 16, 2022
Deadline to submit questions	March 25, 2022
Proposal submission deadline	April 8, 2022
Review and interview period	April 11-22, 2022
Notice of selection status	April 25, 2022
Project period	May 1, 2022-July 31, 2023

Objective

NNPHI seeks to partner with three (3) to six (6) organizations to collaborate with OT21-2103 grant recipients, local equity-focused partners, and community members to conduct evaluation studies using community-based, participatory methods. There will be an initial round of selected organizations for this funding beginning in May, but applications will continue to be considered on a rolling basis for a later start date. Three (3) organizations will be selected in this first phase with a start date of May 1, 2022. Evaluation studies will build evidence for emerging and novel practices implemented under the OT21-2103 grant strategies to improve capacity and services addressing COVID-19 related health disparities.

For the purposes of these evaluation projects, the following definitions of emerging and novel practices will be used:

- **Emerging Practices:** Practices that show potential to achieve desirable public health outcomes in a specific real-life setting and produce early results that are consistent with the objectives of the activities and thus indicate effectiveness.^{1, 2, 3, 4} An emerging practice:
 - has documented some positive changes related to the desired objectives,
 - has relevance beyond the setting(s) in which it was developed or piloted,
 - involves relevant stakeholders in decision-making,

- is ethically sound, which necessitates cultural responsiveness and consideration of groups that are at increased risk of poor outcomes, and
 - considers equitable access, distribution of benefits, and potential impact on health disparities throughout planning and implementation.^{5, 3, 6-8}
- **Novel Practices:** Practices that show potential to achieve desirable public health outcomes in a specific real-life setting and are in the process of generating evidence of effectiveness or may not yet be tested.^{1, 2, 3, 4} A novel practice:
 - shows promise to produce desirable results based on the program theory¹ and/or observation of early implementation,
 - involves relevant stakeholders in decision-making,
 - is ethically sound, which necessitates cultural responsiveness and consideration of groups that are at increased risk of poor outcomes, and
 - considers equitable access, distribution of benefits, and potential impact on health disparities throughout planning and implementation.^{5, 3, 6-8}

Background

In June 2021, CDC awarded \$2.25 billion in awards to 108 state, local, and US territorial and freely associated public health departments through OT21-2103, [National Initiative to Address COVID-19 Health Disparities Among Populations at High-Risk and Underserved, Including Racial and Ethnic Minority Populations and Rural Communities](#). OT21-2103 represents CDC's largest investment to date focusing specifically on reducing health disparities related to COVID-19. The funding was awarded to state, local and territorial health departments to carry out activities aligned with the four grant strategies (listed below). NNPHI is providing services in support of OT21-2103 in two main areas: technical assistance and evaluation. Collaborating with CDC, ASTHO, and NACCHO, NNPHI is providing technical assistance to OT21-2103 grantees across the grant strategies. NNPHI will also conduct evaluation studies with select grant recipients designed to build evidence for novel and emerging practices and contribute to the CDC's overarching evaluation question: *To what extent do grant recipients improve capacity and services to address COVID-19 health disparities and advance health equity among populations at higher risk and that are underserved, including racial and ethnic minority groups and people living in rural communities?*

To guide the evaluation studies for emerging and novel practices, selected organizations will utilize the [RE-AIM framework](#), which looks across the dimensions of Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, and Maintenance to guide planning and evaluation of programs in public health, clinical, and community settings.¹¹ Selected organizations will focus their evaluation studies on the effectiveness and implementation RE-AIM dimensions to understand what works for these emerging and novel practices specifically. The evaluation studies will look at a sample of sites (no more than two per each selected contractor) where practices are being implemented across the 108 state, local and territorial health department recipients. The grant recipients are at different stages of implementing activities within the four grant strategies. Each evaluation study will focus on one grant strategy.

¹ Program theory has been defined as “the process through which program components are presumed to affect outcomes and the conditions under which these processes are believed to operate”⁹ or hypothesized mechanisms that lead from interventions to outcomes.¹⁰

OT21-2103 Grant Strategies:

1. Expand existing and/or develop new **prevention resources and services to reduce COVID-19 related disparities** among populations at higher risk and that are underserved
2. Increase/improve **data collection and reporting** for populations experiencing a disproportionate burden of COVID-19 infection, severe illness, and death to guide the response to the COVID-19 pandemic
3. Build, leverage, and expand **infrastructure support for COVID-19 prevention and control** among populations that are at higher risk and underserved
4. Mobilize **partners and collaborators to advance health equity and address social determinants of health** as they relate to COVID-19 health disparities among populations at higher risk and that are underserved

Scope of Work (SOW)

The purpose of this Request for LOIs is to establish agreements with up to six (6) organizations (herein referred to as “contractor(s)”) to conduct evaluation studies of OT21-2103 grant recipients’ implementation of novel and emerging practices across the four strategy areas listed above. Contractors will utilize the effectiveness and implementation dimensions of the RE-AIM framework to understand processes and outcomes associated with these practices, as well as other identified participatory methods. While funding for this project is 14 months, evaluation studies of each practice should remain short-term and timebound, ideally lasting between 4 and 6 months. In addition to these activities, the following tasks will be within the scope of work for contractors:

- Meet with NNPHI staff and key stakeholders to coordinate evaluation activities outlined in the contractors’ workplans.
- Understand the perspectives of internal and external stakeholders about this work, including, but not limited to, OT21-2103 grant recipients, local equity-focused partners, community members, NNPHI and other project subcontractors, and CDC staff.
- Work directly with select grant recipients and their partners to develop and conduct evaluation studies of emerging and novel practices, as outlined above in the ‘Definitions’ section, using the selected RE-AIM framework dimensions. In partnership with NNPHI and CDC staff and selected grant recipients, contractors will:
 - Develop evaluation questions and methodology
 - Develop evaluation instruments for data collection
 - Conduct all evaluation activities (data collection and management, analysis, etc.)
- Present findings via the suggested reporting systems (e.g., written evaluation report, electronic and virtual meetings), develop tools to translate into practice and include in the repository, and as funding allows, support the development of peer-reviewed documents and journal supplements.

The contractor(s) will work in collaboration with NNPHI, CDC’s Center for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support, and other national partners. The contract end date is July 31, 2023, with a potential for extension based on project needs and the availability of funding.

Evaluation Methods Considerations

As contractors develop the methodologies for their evaluation studies, they should consider the following:

- Contractors will lead the evaluation studies. The evaluation studies will employ participatory methods. Recipients engaging in the evaluations will participate in the evaluation planning and implementation. The extent of recipient participation will vary for each evaluation according to both the methods and recipients' bandwidth. Additionally, the evaluation studies must meet specific objectives which will influence the degree to which collaborative methods may be used at certain steps in the evaluation process. Specifically, each study's evaluation questions will include ones pertaining to effectiveness and implementation of the practice. It will be important to communicate to recipients from the onset the information and objectives the evaluation studies need to obtain. However, the evaluations should be useful to recipients and seek to fulfill their interests to the extent possible while achieving the objectives. Lastly, it will be critical to engage the recipients without creating additional work to the point that the evaluations are burdensome.
- Evaluations will emphasize methods that do not require PRA clearance: the same information cannot be requested of more than nine people or entities. Primary data collection will predominantly employ qualitative methods.
- While all the evaluations will utilize a participatory approach, the exact methods will be different for each study. Each evaluation study will have its own evaluation questions and corresponding methods.

Project Requirements

The independent contractor/evaluator shall:

- Demonstrate prior professional experience in the field of health equity and in conducting similar evaluation studies using RE-AIM or similar frameworks.
- Demonstrate expertise in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis.
- In cooperation with CDC, NNPHI, and its designated partners, develop an evaluation plan with measurable outcomes and a correlating project workplan and timeline with appropriate benchmarks and targets. Submit required findings and reports with respect to the project timeline, including supporting development of peer-reviewed documents, translation tools for the repository, and journal supplements.

Contractor Selection Criteria

Contractor selection will be made by NNPHI based on qualifications in accordance with the provisions of this Request for LOIs. The following criteria will guide NNPHI's selection of a contractor for this project:

- Qualifications and experience of the entity, including capability and experience of key personnel and experience with other public or private agencies to provide these services and meet any required timelines and other requirements.
- Adequate staff and resources to perform the specified tasks required to meet the services

as outlined.

- Demonstrated evaluation expertise with experience in qualitative and quantitative methodology and data analyses
- Demonstrated experience working with high risk and underserved populations experiencing COVID-19 health disparities, including racial and ethnic minority populations and rural communities.
- Proposed approach, including demonstrated understanding of work to be performed and a realistic timeline.

How to Apply

NNPHI is utilizing a *Smartsheet Online System* for the proposal submission process. Submit your proposal and all additional documents through the links provided below. If you have any technical difficulties, please contact Dr. Shakiera Causey at scausey@nnphi.org.

Submit proposal and required attachments [here](#) by **5:00 pm CT on Friday, April 8, 2022**.

Questions

Submit questions about this funding opportunity [here](#) by **5:00 pm CT on Friday, March 25, 2022**. NNPHI will respond to questions within 24 hours. Please check back frequently to review latest questions/answers.

Letter of Interest

Please include responses to the following questions as a part of the letter of interest, not to exceed four (4) single-spaced pages.

1. Introduce yourself and organization, and interest in the project. Explain why you are particularly well-suited to successfully complete the SOW.
2. Describe how your organization's experience and expertise applies to the SOW.
3. Briefly describe at least one example of similar work that speaks to your capacity to perform the SOW.
4. Briefly describe the staff capacity at your organization and who will lead this work.
5. Indicate your preferred start date for this work (May 1, 2022, or later within the project period).

You will receive confirmation of receipt within 24 hours of the deadline. In fairness to all applicants, NNPHI strictly enforces the submission deadline. **LOIs received after the deadline will not be reviewed.** In your application, please indicate your available start date. Three (3) organizations will be selected in this initial phase, but additional funding is available for organizations with later start dates. Note: If you do not receive a confirmation email or have any technical difficulties, please contact Dr. Shakiera Causey at scausey@nnphi.org. We recommend submitting early to avoid any problems.

Notice to Applicants

Please be advised that NNPHI reserves the right to modify the terms of the LOI with reasonable notification to all interested parties. This LOI and any related discussions or evaluations by anyone create no rights or obligations whatsoever. NNPHI may cancel or delay this solicitation at any time at its own discretion. Anything to the contrary notwithstanding, the contract executed by NNPHI

and the selected applicant, if any, will be the exclusive statement of rights and obligations extending from this solicitation. Applicants are further advised that all information submitted in response to this solicitation shall remain in the public domain.

Funding for this opportunity has been provided to the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI) through a Cooperative Agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC 6 NU38OT000303-04-02). NNPHI is collaborating with the CDC's Center for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support (CSTLTS) on this project. Contents of this LOI are solely the responsibility of NNPHI and do not necessarily represent the official views of CDC or the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

References:

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