



Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) Request for Application (RFA): COVID-19 Vaccination Community Outreach

Timetable

Deadline for submission of questions	February 26, 2021 at 4:00 pm CST
Virtual question & answer session (optional)	March 2, 2021 at 3:00 pm CST Zoom Link: https://dhs.wi.zoom.us/j/89601543030
Application due date	March 19, 2021 at 4:00 pm CST
Anticipated award notification date	March 31, 2021
Send questions regarding this RFA to:	DHSCovidResponseTeam@dhs.wisconsin.gov

Overview

Vaccination is a critical tool for containing the virus and minimizing the adverse impact of COVID-19. The State of Wisconsin seeks to achieve herd immunity for COVID-19 across Wisconsin by immunizing approximately 80% of the eligible population. Ongoing efforts to distribute the vaccine safely, efficiently, and equitably must include strategies to ensure that vaccines reach communities that face barriers to accessing medical care and people who have historical mistrust of the medical community and vaccines.

The coronavirus pandemic has been hard on everyone, yet COVID-19 has adversely affected black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) even more acutely. Data, both in Wisconsin and nationwide, show that BIPOC communities have experienced higher rates of infection, hospitalizations, and death. Compared to white Wisconsin residents, Hispanic or Latinx residents have 1.7 times greater case rates, Black residents have 2.1 times greater hospitalization rates, and American Indian residents have 1.5 times greater death rates.

The State of Wisconsin recognizes that community-based organizations and trusted messengers are in the best position to promote acceptance of COVID-19 vaccination among marginalized and underserved communities. The State must rely on those who can make the connections necessary to communicate vital information in culturally appropriate ways. DHS puts forward the following principles for this grant award process:

- We recognize the need for trusted messengers who understand the lived experiences of the diverse individuals, families, and communities across the state.
- We are interested in building trust from shared values.
- We are committed to learning from our applicants and awardees.
- We will focus on the mission of the request.
- We will operate from a place of curiosity and humility.

Opportunity

This funding award seeks to engage community-based organizations to help remove barriers to and promote acceptance of COVID-19 vaccination for communities that have and do face barriers to accessing medical care and people who have historical mistrust of the medical community and vaccines. The awarded community-based organizations will build upon existing relationships within the community and adapt strategies to meet the unique identified needs of each community. Their work should aim to increase knowledge and awareness of factors such as:

- How COVID-19 spreads and the dangers it poses
- The risks and long-term effects associated with COVID-19 infections
- The safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines
- The routine nature of getting immunized
- Where to access COVID-19 vaccines, particularly if uninsured or underinsured
- Support in navigating systems or overcoming barriers to access COVID-19 vaccines in the community



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Opportunity (continued)

By increasing knowledge and awareness about COVID-19 and vaccines, these community outreach activities will facilitate downstream improvements in COVID-19 vaccination rates and the disparities that exist in these rates.

DHS intends to issue awards of either \$10,000-\$50,000 (Tier 1) or \$50,000-\$100,000 (Tier 2) to approximately 50 organizations. Funding will be available for use upon award through 8/31/2021. Applicants will be awarded based on available funding, capacity, and application scores as determined by the review panel. Awards will be geographically dispersed and in consideration of social vulnerability factors and healthcare utilization.

Should additional funding become available at any point during the course of the grant period, DHS reserves the right to use the results of this competitive application process to increase funding to selected agencies or to fund additional agencies that applied but were not funded originally. Wisconsin DHS also reserves the right to award grants for less than an applicant's proposed amount.

Eligibility

Applicants must be based in Wisconsin, conduct their proposed community outreach work in Wisconsin, and be one of the following:

- Local or tribal government entities
- Nonprofit entities certified as a 501(c)(3) by the federal Internal Revenue Service
- Projects sponsored by another 501(c)(3) organization
- K-12 schools or school districts

Eligible organizations may not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, age, or national origin in their staffing policies, use of volunteers, or provision of services.

Mutual Commitments

Grantee Commitments

- Use resources in the manner described.
- Use (or adapt, as needed) science-based information provided by DHS.
- Uphold public health practices and trauma-informed approaches in carrying forth this work.
- Use culturally competent messaging and services.
- Respond to requests for information/activity from DHS.
- Attend listening sessions with DHS to share experiences with other awardees and hear updates from DHS.
- Inform DHS about progress, impacts, and outcomes of the effort.
- Solicit technical assistance and support from DHS to ensure accurate information.
- Submit a final report on activities, a success story(ies), and lessons learned no later than 10/01/21.
- Prepare and submit expense reports monthly.
- (optional) Provide a document of ideas for potential action to further advance health equity in the community(ies) served.

DHS Commitments

- Provide funding for efforts to enhance awareness, accessibility, and access for COVID-19 vaccination.
- Provide technical assistance on credible public health practices and the COVID-19 vaccination program.
- Provide technical assistance related to trauma-informed practices and communications.
- Respond to requests for information/activity from grantees.



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Use of Funds

As more groups become eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine through spring and summer 2021, it is critical to prepare communities to be both mentally ready (i.e., addressing vaccine hesitancy, increasing knowledge of the benefits of vaccine, and dispelling myths) and physically ready (i.e., knowing where, when, and how to access the vaccine, as well as working to remove barriers to access).

Broadly speaking, this RFA will fund activities in Wisconsin focused on increasing knowledge and awareness of the COVID-19 virus and vaccines, decreasing vaccine hesitancy, and decreasing barriers to accessing COVID-19 vaccine.

Following are examples of potential activities:

- Trusted community members conduct culturally competent outreach about COVID-19 and its vaccines that aligns with COVID-related CDC guidance. Trusted community members distribute their messages via channels known to be used by specific populations.
- Use community health workers, who reflect the communities they will serve, to provide culturally competent education (e.g., text messaging, email, webinars, cold calls, call-in phone lines, socially distanced in-person outreach, etc.) about COVID-19 and its vaccines for a specific population.
- Use community health workers or other trainers, who reflect the communities they will serve, to help health care workers overcome barriers to immunizing specific communities (e.g., improve health care providers' cultural sensitivity and ability to answer patients' concerns, etc.).
- Establish or expand a community coalition and regularly convene it. The community coalition consists of diverse stakeholders (e.g., faith-based organizations, hospitals, pharmacies, schools, businesses, etc.) that represent and serve a specific population. The coalition implements culturally competent strategies for improving awareness and knowledge of COVID-19 and vaccines.
- Form partnerships with local health departments to assist them with their COVID-19-related community outreach (e.g., public health education campaigns, advertisement of community-based vaccination clinics, informational briefings, etc.) and in particular assure that such outreach is culturally competent towards a specific population.

Examples of Allowable Expenses

- Personnel (salary/wages, fringe benefits)
- Travel for provision of services (excluding meals and in compliance with state and local restrictions)
- Supplies (office resources, community outreach materials)
- Contractual costs (staffing, grassroots awareness campaigns)
- Purchasing gift cards or other incentives (in compliance with State requirements, at nominal levels to be detailed in the proposal)
- Indirect expenses benefiting multiple projects/activities (must be <10% of total proposed project budget)
- Translation and production/printing services

Examples of Unallowable Expenses – major categories

- Capital purchases or leases
- Reimbursement of pre-award costs
- Funding advocacy or lobbying efforts
- Purchase of vaccines or clinical care to the public
- Research

Please note that outreach materials, including existing materials translated into additional languages, created with this award are to be made available publicly for use with other communities and other areas of the state as applicable.



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Application Submission

Applications are **due to DHS no later than 4:00 pm CST on March 19, 2021**. Late proposals will not be accepted. Applicants should email their application to DHSCovidResponseTeam@dhs.wisconsin.gov with the subject line “Application–COVID-19 Vaccination Community Outreach.” Applicants will receive email confirmation of receipt by DHS. Please see the Application information below for specifics about page limits and requested information.

Application Questions

Applicants should submit all questions about this RFA in writing to DHSCovidResponseTeam@dhs.wisconsin.gov no later than 4:00 pm CST on February 26, 2021. Answers to submitted questions will be posted online. A virtual informational session will be held on March 2, 2021, at 3 pm CST. Questions not received in writing (i.e., email) or during the virtual session will not be addressed; questions submitted after the deadline will not be addressed.

Application Review

All applications will be subject to an initial technical review for completeness and adherence to RFA specifications and requirements. Applications that fail the initial review will receive no further consideration. Applications that pass the initial technical review will be evaluated and scored by a panel of reviewers with knowledge of: community outreach, public health, health care, and/or immunizations. Reviewers will independently evaluate and score applications. Then all scored applications will be compared with each other. DHS will make awards to applicants who demonstrate the ability to perform successfully under the terms and conditions of this RFA.

Favorable applications will reflect the following guidelines:

- Are culturally competent
- Serve a marginalized population
- Can be started quickly (i.e., within one month of award)
- Comply with public health guidance about COVID-19
- Are capable of producing immediate impacts on knowledge and awareness of COVID-19 vaccines
- Ability to reach a large number of marginalized people or those belonging to marginalized communities and/or
- Understanding of target population, barriers faced, and ways to advance racial/economic/geographic equity
- Experience working within the identified population(s)/communities(s)
- Ability to get funds to groups on the ground/grassroots organizations (Tier 2)
- Collaborative approach (for Tier 2)
- Entities led and/or staffed by BIPOC, people with disabilities, and/or LGBTQ individuals will be prioritized

DHS reserves the right to reject any and all submissions. Also, DHS reserves the option to conduct discussions with agencies about their applications for clarification purposes. If discussions are conducted, applicants may be invited to modify their applications as needed.



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Application – Page 1/2

Organization Information

Organization/Project Name: _____

Organization Leader (first name, last name, title): _____

Website and/or social media page: _____

Year Organization/Program Established: _____

Total Annual Organizational/Program Budget: \$_____

Type of organization:

- Local/tribal government entity
501(c)(3)
Project sponsored by another 501(c)(3)* – name of fiscal sponsor: _____
K-12 school or district

Grant Contact Information

First and last name, title: _____

Email address: _____

Telephone (including area code): _____

Mailing Address (including city, state, zip code): Street Address (including city, state, zip code):

Three lines of input fields for mailing and street addresses.

Request Information

Population served by your request (e.g., description of race/ethnicity, migrant, homebound, rural, etc.):

Geographic area served by your request (e.g., names of region(s), county(ies), city(ies), neighborhood(s), etc.):

Requested award amount: \$_____



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Application – Page 2/2

Narrative

Responses should be prepared with Times New Roman, Calibri, or Arial font no smaller than size 10.

Responses are not to exceed

- four (4) pages for Tier 1 (\$10,000-\$50,000) applicants
- eight (8) pages for Tier 2 (\$50,000-\$100,000) applicants

For requests of **any** amount:

- Briefly describe your request for funding and how it will provide timely and accurate information to promote COVID-19 vaccination among high-risk and underserved populations including racial and ethnic minority populations and rural communities and/or how it will reduce barriers for individuals facing racial, economic, or geographic inequities related to COVID-19 vaccination efforts.
- Please describe the intended population(s) for your activities, existing barriers, and how these barriers will be addressed through the project.
- Briefly describe your organization’s unique qualifications to advance this work in the identified community(ies).
- What are your intended expenses and why are they needed? Please be explicit and details by categories.
- What are the major activities and milestones for your effort?
- What does success look like and how do you anticipate knowing you’ve achieved your intended outcomes?

For **Tier 2** requests of \$50,000-\$100,000:

- Describe your experience implementing culturally competent services and programs.
- Describe how you would work with existing partners to connect with the population.
- Detail any sub-awards you would intend to make and the criteria for making and monitoring them.
- Provide a line item budget detailing personnel, travel, supplies and equipment, contractual, indirect, and miscellaneous costs.
- (Optional) Provide letters of support describing your organization’s experience removing barriers to healthcare and/or connecting effectively with your identified target population(s).

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