REQUEST FOR INFORMATION- GRANTS

Expanding Public Health Workforce in Aging & Disability Networks

1. ISSUED BY

The State of Nebraska, Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care, State Unit on Aging.

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2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to seek input from the community to expand the public health workforce within the aging and disability networks.

BACKGROUND

The State of Nebraska, Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care, State Unit on Aging (SUA) is the pass-through agency for federal funds supporting the Older Americans Act, and state funds supporting the aging network, in an effort to help Nebraskans age in place. This is accomplished through community programs managed by Area Agencies on Aging, and their relationships with senior centers.

The State Unit on Aging maintains Nebraska’s Aging State Plan. The plan outlines goals and objectives for the aging community for the next four years. Nebraska’s Aging State Plan can be found online: https://dhhs.ne.gov/Medicaid%20SUA/Aging%20State%20Plan.pdf

SUA anticipates using American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) sponsorship to deliver an Expanding Public Health Workforce in Aging & Disability Networks (ARPA Workforce) project. ARPA Workforce projects may recruit, hire, and train public health workers to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare for future public health challenges. ARPA directs that funds may be used to offset costs of hiring a range of public health professionals, including but not limited to social support professionals, community health workers, communication and policy experts, and “other positions as may be required to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19....”

ARPA Workforce projects must expand the public health workforce to address the unique needs of older adults, family caregivers of older adults, grand-families, and kinship families. Projects are required to be targeted toward the needs of a specific population.

GUIDELINES

Information regarding the ARPA Workforce effort can be found online:
• Frequently asked questions for State Units on Aging: https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/COVID19/FAQ%20-%20PHWF%20SUA_1-12-22.docx

Timeline
SUA anticipates projects sponsored by ARPA funding will have a project period through September 30, 2024.

Eligibility
SUA anticipates partners for these projects will include organizations such as the Agency Areas on Aging (AAAs), local health departments, or other community-based organizations working with the public health workforce to serve the aging population. As trusted members of their communities and providers of services that support older adults and people with disabilities in every community across the country, the aging and disability networks play an essential role in public health. The networks provide a variety of services that directly support public health, such as health and wellness education and information, counseling, case management and assistance with accessing health care services, including COVID-19 vaccinations. With more than fifty (50) years of experience and unmatched knowledge of the unique needs of older adults and people with disabilities, these networks also are critical partners with the public health system, providing technical assistance and guidance on meeting the unique needs of older adults and people with disabilities.

Allowable Activities
The intent of the project is to increase the number of public health professionals within the aging and disability networks to support the public health of older adults and people with disability, but there is flexibility in how this is accomplished. Activities could include hiring new staff, hiring contracted staff, expanding knowledge and duties of current staff, paying existing staff for additional hours worked, etc.

Activities of the project may be performed by public health professionals for a wide range of public health services and supports, including culturally affirmative and linguistically accessible information, assistance with accessing vaccines (including boosters) and connecting to other services, transition and diversion from high-risk congregate settings to community living, health and wellness programs, activities that address social isolation and social determinants of health, and other activities that support the public health and wellbeing of older adults and people with disabilities.

Public health professionals represent a wide range of jobs, functions and responsibilities found through the aging and disability networks, and include but may not be limited to:

• Community health worker
• Program manager
• Public health nurse
• Communication and policy experts
• Case investigator
• Contact tracer
• Social support specialist
• Disease intervention specialist
• Epidemiologist
• Laboratory personnel
• Informaticians
• Other positions required to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19
ARPA specifically focuses on public health activities to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, ARPA allows for activities to “prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19,” which encompasses a very broad range of activities that have applicability to a wide variety of public health needs and scenarios. ARPA states projects may include the activities of “other positions required to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19.” Therefore, public health professionals may provide COVID-19-related assistance. Projects can include staff to plan, organize, and participate in meetings with local public health officials and other entities, and/or collect and analyze data on COVID-19 vaccination rates of the people with disabilities and older adults, family caregivers, and network staff and volunteers. Proposals can include COVID-19-related activities, such as assistance with getting vaccinations and boosters or assistance for people who have contracted COVID. These are considered public health activities related to COVID-19 response.

Projects may include support public health activities other than COVID-19 response and recovery. Projects may include activities to advance equity within SUA networks. As with all of SUA’s projects, activities should target those with greatest needs, and there are many ways projects could be used to advance equity. For example, grantees may propose to add staff to provide public health services for people with limited English proficiency, focus on improving the cultural competency of public health programs, increase the organization’s ability to reach underserved populations with public health services, or other similar activities.

Projects may include collaboration and possible joint financial arrangements with partner organizations in the community.

Unallowable Activities

The ARPA Workforce grants to state units on aging (SUAs) share a CFDA number with OAA Title III B grants. However, projects must be separate and distinct.

This proposal opportunity does not include flexibilities available for bucketing under the Major Disaster Declaration (MDD) of the Older American’s Act.

Allowable Expenses

ARPA Workforce projects may provide funding to help cover the costs of staff to conduct crucial public health activities. Example allowable expenses to carry out public health related activities of the project could include:

- Wages and benefits for public health professionals (directly or through contract), as well as the costs of associated equipment, training, and supplies for these professionals and estimates of indirect costs, would be permissible. Wages and benefits are defined in the compensation section of the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (eCFR) (45 CFR § 75.430-431). Public health professionals could include temporary staffing, independent contractors, new, and/or current staff.

- Equipment to support the recruiting, hiring, and training of staff supporting public health activities. This could include IT equipment, personal protective equipment, data management and other technology, or other necessary supplies.

Unallowable Expenses

- Incentives to individuals to get a COVID-19 vaccine/booster.

- The provision of transportation stipends/vouchers to individuals.

- General equipment for staff who are not involved in public health activities, or for the organization as a whole.

- The purchase a vehicle to transport people with disabilities or older adults to vaccination appointments.
3. INFORMATION REQUESTED

SUA seeks the following information:

1. Aggregate, non-personally identifiable information regarding the needs of public health workforce within the aging and disability networks.
2. Innovate ideas for public-private partnerships and strategies that meet the goals and objectives of the ARPA Workforce effort.

4. HOW TO SUBMIT A RESPONSE

To respond to this RFI, please send responses in electronic format via email to DHHS.Grants@nebraska.gov. Succinct responses submitted in a single Portable Document Format (PDF) are preferred.

Responses to this RFI are voluntary. This RFI is for planning purposes only and should not be construed as a solicitation or imposing an obligation on the part of DHHS. DHHS does not intend to make any type of award based on responses to this RFI. DHHS shall not pay for either the preparation of information submitted or the DHHS’s use of such information.

DHHS may use the information submitted in response to this RFI at its discretion and will not provide comments to any responder’s submission. However, responses to the RFI may be reflected in future Requests for Applications. The information provided will be analyzed and may be shared publicly or appear in reports. Respondents are advised that DHHS is under no obligation to acknowledge receipt of the information received or provide feedback to respondents with respect to any information submitted. No proprietary, classified, confidential, or sensitive information should be included in your response. DHHS reserves the right to use any non-proprietary technical information in any later Requests for Application.

5. INQUIRIES

Please direct all inquiries to:

DHHS Office of Procurement and Grants
Email: DHHS.Grants@nebraska.gov

END OF TEXT