

Iowa Initiative to Address COVID-19 Health Disparities Guidance

Background

Successful recipients will implement a coordinated approach to include culturally, linguistically and locally tailored strategies to ensure equitable access to COVID-19-related services. Applicants will implement strategies to address social determinants of health (SDOH) needs and work with social service providers and related organizations (traditional and non-traditional) to reduce COVID-19-related health disparities in disproportionately affected populations at higher risk. The successful applicant will carve-out dollars targeting rural communities and populations and will be expected to track rural carve-out dollars separately throughout the project period. People living in rural communities and racial and ethnic minority groups experience disproportionate rates of chronic diseases. As a result, they are at higher risk to experience increased severity of COVID-19 infection and experience barriers to accessing testing, treatment, or vaccination against the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which causes COVID-19. To advance health equity and address COVID-19-related health disparities among populations at higher risk, underserved, and disproportionately affected, awardees will apply evidence-based approaches and a coordinated holistic approach to various settings, populations, and contexts. Populations that have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 include, but are not limited to:

- People who live in rural communities;
- People over the age of 65;
- Racial and ethnic minority groups (African American, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American people, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other people of color);
- People who are immigrants and/or refugees;
- Members of religious minorities;
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) people;
- People with disabilities;
- People who are homebound or isolated;
- People otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality;
- People living in communities with high Social Vulnerability Index (SVI);
- People living in communities with moderate, high to very high COVID-19 Community Vulnerability Index (CCVI);
- People who are underinsured or uninsured;
- People with transportation limitations.

Purpose

To address disparities and advance health equity, the purpose of this is to fund strategies and activities that ensure increased equity and access to COVID-19-related services. The intent is to leverage existing and cultivate new community-based partnerships to extend reach to vulnerable populations.

Eligibility

Eligible Applicants: Nonprofit organizations, for profit organizations, tribal organizations, or governmental entities registered or incorporated to do business in the United States.

Individuals **are not** eligible for this funding opportunity.

Available Funds

The Iowa Department of Public Health anticipates up to \$25 million will be available to support awards under this funding opportunity. **An applicant may apply for any amount up to \$250,000.** The funds requested by an applicant must be appropriate for the project proposed and the Department reserves the right to award an amount less than requested by the applicant.

Allowable Activities

Funding must be used for one or more of the following activities. Activities must be implemented in Iowa and **must be completed by May 31, 2023.**

1. **Support testing/vaccine appointments and health equity information:** With consultation from local public health agencies, work with local chambers of commerce, employers, and workforce agencies to help conduct outreach to employees to encourage vaccination and testing if needed; consider an online tool that coordinates both scheduling appointments and transportation; develop and implement a plan to disseminate health equity-related data and related materials tailored to be culturally and linguistically relevant for diverse audiences; convene monthly check-ins with partners to monitor compliance and make improvements as needed; develop a model (best practice) policy to be approved for business use implementation.
2. **Support education promotion and social determinants of health impacts of COVID-19:** Engage statewide and local nonprofits and solicit their commitment to assist in education promotion, but also assist in supporting local communities to mitigate the long lasting impacts of COVID-19 as it relates to social determinants of health such as mental health, food insecurity, job assistance, and linking individuals to community resources. Target programs that serve vulnerable patients or community members based on socio-economic factors (low income) and other factors that put them at greater risk of dying or being hospitalized due to COVID-19.
3. **Explore strategies to coordinate with local public health to serve Iowa's vulnerable populations:** For example, libraries and non-traditional partners that serve vulnerable populations will collaborate with Local Public Health; organizations to pilot a health navigation program for vulnerable populations; other proposed projects that serve vulnerable populations.
4. **Engage faith-based organizations and non-traditional partners to employ strategies to reach disproportionately affected populations:** Employ targeted communication/messaging; help individuals understand and/or believe in the recommended mitigation measures (address vaccine hesitancy and other concerns); and educate individuals on available COVID-19-related resources, treatments, and practices. Invest in targeted marketing efforts.
5. **Coordinate transportation:** To improve vaccination uptake and testing access, engage local pharmacies in rural areas to coordinate with transportation providers to ensure transportation is not a barrier.
6. **Support individuals experiencing poverty and homebound individuals:** Develop and implement strategies for providing education to individuals experiencing poverty and homebound individuals. For example, engage home health organizations and agencies to ask patients about receiving vaccines; develop a procedure/tool for home health organization use; integrate appropriate translation services tools; work with food assistance programs to identify individuals who may be experiencing poverty and collaborate with programs to implement targeted education.

Reporting

Awarded organizations will be required to report on activities upon completion of each activity and as determined by the Iowa Department of Public Health.

Application Process

Eligible applicants seeking available funds through this funding opportunity must:

1. Review this entire funding guidance document and [draft contract](#).

2. Submit an application, including contact information and a brief description of the proposed project.
3. After submitting the application, you will receive a confirmation email with a copy of your application.
4. You will receive an email from Iowa Department of Public Health staff regarding your application submission, including required clarification, if needed.
5. The Iowa Department of Public Health will coordinate execution of service agreements with successful applicants.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until further notice.