Updated April 27, 2015

FY 2015 National Training and Technical Assistance Cooperative Agreements (NCA) Funding Opportunity Announcement Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) HRSA-15-140

The FY 2015 National Cooperative Agreement (NCA) Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) (HRSA-15-140) is available at http://www.grants.gov/. Below are common questions and corresponding answers for the FY 2015 NCA FOA. New FAQs will be added as necessary, so please check the NCA FOA TA Web page (http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/apply/assistance/ncafoa) frequently for updates. The FAQs are organized under the following topics:

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General Information

1. **What is the purpose of this NCA funding?**
   This NCA funding will establish cooperative agreements between HRSA and national organizations to support existing and potential Health Center Program grantees and look-alikes in providing better, more affordable care and improving the health of individuals and communities. Organizations that receive NCA funding under this announcement will provide specialized national training and technical assistance (T/TA) to health centers in the target areas of Oral Health, Health Information Technology (HIT) and Data, and Clinical Workforce Development.

2. **How and when should I submit my application?**
   Applications must be completed and successfully submitted via Grants.gov by 11:59 pm ET on June 1, 2015. HRSA recommends applicants ensure registrations and passwords are current for their System for Award Management (SAM) and Grants.gov accounts **as soon as possible**. SAM registration may take up to two weeks and must be completed before Grants.gov registration.

HRSA suggests submitting applications to Grants.gov at least three days before the deadline to allow for any unforeseen circumstances. **Application deadline extensions are not granted for lack of registration**. Detailed instructions for registering with Grants.gov, SAM, and all other required systems are included in Section 3.1 of HRSA's SF-424 Application Guide, http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/apply/applicationguide/sf424guide.pdf .

3. **How much funding is available in FY 2015? How many awards are expected?**
   HRSA anticipates that approximately $3 million will be available to award 3-4 NCA cooperative agreements in FY 2015. One award will be made in each of the following target areas: Oral Health and Clinical Workforce Development. One or two awards will be made in the Health Information Technology (HIT) and Data target area. See the Summary of Funding in Section III of the FOA for details.

4. **How will applicants be notified if their application was not successfully submitted in Grants.gov?**
   Grants.gov will send a series of notification emails to the applicant once the Grants.gov application has been validated or if there are errors. Errors must be corrected and applications re-submitted in Grants.gov prior to the Grants.gov application deadline.

Eligibility and Program Requirements (includes NEW item)

5. **Who can apply for this NCA funding?**
   Eligible applicants include public, non-profit, and for-profit entities, including tribal and faith-based organizations, that can provide T/TA on a national level to Health Center Program grantees, look alikes, and other organizations seeking Health Center Program resources.

   Note: Existing NCAs currently funded through Section 330(l) (via HRSA funding opportunity announcement number HRSA-14-031) are **not** eligible to apply. The list of current NCAs funded through Section 330(l) is available on the HRSA NCA Web page: http://bphc.hrsa.gov/qualityimprovement/supportnetworks/ncapca/natlagreement.html.

6. **NEW: Are subawards/contracts with current NCAs or other technical assistance providers allowed?**
   The National Training and Technical Assistance Cooperative Agreements (NCA) allow award recipients to make subawards to other entities (subrecipients) to carry out a portion of the grant-funded activities. **However, the award recipient is entity responsible for fulfilling the grant's funded purpose; no subrecipient can perform or be responsible for a majority of grant-funded activities.** In addition, subrecipients must comply with all NCA statutory and regulatory requirements, as well as applicable grant requirements specified in Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200 as codified by HHS at 45 CFR 75. The award recipient must demonstrate that it has systems in place to provide reasonable assurances that the subrecipient complies with all statutory and regulatory requirements throughout the period of award.

7. **Can an individual apply for NCA funding?**
   No. Eligible applicants are organizations positioned to provide national training and technical assistance.

8. **What are the program requirements for NCAs?**
   Applicant organizations must propose the provision of T/TA to support measurable improvements in the Target Area Specific Measure(s) applicable to the selected target area.
   - Applicants for the **Oral Health** and **Clinical Workforce Development** target areas must address at least one Target Area Specific Measure.
   - Applicants for the **HIT and Data** target area must address at least two Target Area Specific Measures.

   Refer to Appendix C in the FOA for the list of eligible Target Area Specific Measures. Applications that do not address the minimum required Target Area Specific Measure(s) for the selected target area will not be eligible for funding.

Application Development

9. **Where can I access the NCA FOA and application package?**
   The NCA FOA and application package are available at http://www.grants.gov/. Follow the instructions below:
   - Go to http://www.grants.gov/.
   - Under Search Grants, enter HRSA-15-140 in the Keyword or Funding Opportunity Number field and click SEARCH or GO.
   - Click the Funding Opportunity Number link (HRSA-15-140).
   - Click the Application Package tab (to the right of the Synopsis and Full Announcement tabs).
   - Under Instructions and Application, click the Download link.
   - Click the Download Application Instructions link for the FOA.
   - Click the Download Application Package link for the Grants.gov application.

   Note: This NCA funding opportunity is a single-tiered, Grants.gov only application. Unlike previously released HRSA funding opportunities, there is no Electronic Handbooks (EHB) component to this NCA application.

10. **Can more than one application be submitted by an organization?**
    HRSA will accept only one application from an organization. If more than one application is submitted, HRSA will only accept the last application received in Grants.gov.

11. **Is there a page limit for the NCA application?**
    Yes, there is an 80-page limit on the length of the total application when printed by HRSA. Refer to Appendix A in the FOA for more information on what is counted in the page limit. Applications exceeding the page limit will be deemed unresponsive and will not be reviewed

by HRSA. **Note**: This limit is strictly enforced. Please print your application and double-check your page count prior to submission.

12. **Does HRSA have formatting guidelines (e.g., font type, font size) for the NCA application?**
    Yes, narrative documents should be single-spaced in 12-point, easily readable font (e.g., Times New Roman, Ariel, Courier) with 1-inch margins. Smaller font (no less than 10-point) may be used for tables, charts, and footnotes. For more information, reference Section 4.2 of HRSA's SF-424 Application Guide, http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/apply/applicationguide/sf424guide.pdf.

13. **How should attachments be formatted?**
    HRSA will accept PDF, Microsoft Word, and/or Excel files. Do not use spaces or special characters when naming files. When using Excel or other spreadsheet documents, be aware that reviewers will only see information that is set in the "Print Area" of the document. Be sure to upload the attachments in the appropriate fields in Grants.gov. **Note**: The required Project Work Plan (Attachment 1) must be submitted as an Excel document.

14. **How does the Project Narrative differ from the Review Criteria?**
    The Project Narrative details the information applicants must include to provide a complete overview of the proposed NCA project. The Review Criteria is the tool grant reviewers on the Objective Review Committee (ORC) will use to evaluate the information presented. Applicants should review both the Project Narrative and Review Criteria when developing the application.

15. **Why do the Project Narrative and Review Criteria repeatedly refer me to other sections of the application (e.g., appendices, attachments)?**
    The Project Narrative and Review Criteria were written to guide applicants and reviewers to the relevant sections of the application where information should be presented. Both applicants and reviewers are expected to check the cross-referenced documents to ensure the application provides complete and consistent information.

16. **Are all sections of the Project Narrative required?**
    Yes, applicants must provide information in response to all sections of the Project Narrative (e.g., Need, Response), as described in the NCA FOA.

17. **Where do I submit the Public Health System Impact Statement (PHSIS) mentioned on page 15 of the FOA?**
    The PHSIS is submitted to the state or local health agencies in the areas to be impacted by the proposed project. For applicants in states that have a Single Point of Contact (SPOC), contact the SPOC to alert them that you will be submitting an application and ask where to submit the PHSIS, if you do not already know. For applicants in states that do not have a SPOC, you may contact your Primary Care Office (PCO) for guidance.
    See https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc for the list of SPOCs and http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/shortage/hpsas/primarycareoffices.html for the list of PCOs.

Forms and Attachments

18. Which staff should be included in the Staffing Plan?

Include staff supported by NCA funds that will execute the proposed project. Staff whose salaries are paid through an indirect cost rate must be included in the Staffing Plan. A Staffing Plan template is available on the NCA FOA TA Web page: http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/apply/assistance/ncafoa.

19. How is the Staffing Plan different from the Position Descriptions and Biographical Sketches for Key Personnel?

The Staffing Plan (Attachment 2) is a presentation and justification for all staff required to execute the project. Position Descriptions (Attachment 3) and Biographical Sketches (Attachment 4) are focused on key personnel only.

20. Who in the organization is considered key personnel?

Key personnel may include key management staff such as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Information Officer (CIO), Chief Operating Officer (COO), and Program Leads, along with other individuals directly involved in oversight of the proposed project.

21. What is the difference between a Position Description (Attachment 3) and a Biographical Sketch (Attachment 4)?

A position description outlines the key aspects of a position (e.g., position title, description of duties and responsibilities, position qualifications, salary range, work hours). A biographical sketch describes the key qualifications of a specific individual that make him/her qualified for a position (e.g., past work experience, education/training, language fluency).

22. Are letters of support required?

Yes, applicants must provide evidence of proposed collaborations by submitting letters of support. Include only signed and dated letters of support that indicate a specific commitment of support to the NCA project.

23. To whom should letters of support be addressed and how should they be provided?

Letters of support should be addressed to the appropriate applicant organization contact person (e.g., NCA board, CEO). They should not be addressed to HRSA or mailed separately from the application. Letters of support must be included with the application as Attachment 5 or they will not be considered by reviewers.

24. What if I am not able to get a letter of support from one or more of the entities required in the FOA?

If efforts to obtain one or more letters of support are unsuccessful, document the applicant's efforts to obtain the letter(s) and provide additional details about collaboration and coordination in the Project Narrative.

25. Can applicants upload additional attachments?

Applicants may upload additional relevant material in Attachment 7. Documents provided in this attachment will be included in the 80-page limit.

Budget

26. What are the dates of the project period?

The project period will be September 1, 2015 through June 30, 2017.

- Year 1 begins September 1, 2015, and ends June 30, 2016.
- Year 2 begins July 1, 2016, and ends June 30, 2017.

27. What should be included in the budget narrative?

The budget narrative must detail the cost of each object class category from Section B of the SF-424A. A detailed budget narrative in line-item format must be completed for each year of the project period. A sample budget narrative is available on the NCA FOA TA Web page, http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/apply/assistance/ncafoa. Refer to the budget narrative section of the NCA FOA for detailed guidance on this required attachment.

28. Should the budget include non-federal funding (e.g., grant funding, program income)?

No, budget requests should only identify the NCA Federal funding requested. Do not identify other program income/non-federal resources supporting the NCA project. Similarly, the NCA Project Work Plans and any attachments submitted with the application should only address activities proposed to be supported by Federal funds under the NCA cooperative agreement.

29. Does HRSA require NCAs to have an indirect cost rate?

No, organizations are only required to have an indirect cost rate agreement if indirect costs are included in the NCA budget. If an organization does not have an indirect cost rate agreement, costs that would fall into such a rate (e.g., administrative salaries) may be charged as direct line-item costs. If an organization wishes to apply for an indirect cost rate agreement, more information is available at https://rates.psc.gov/.

Note that organizations that include indirect costs in the budget must include a copy of the indirect cost rate agreement in Attachment 7.

30. Does the Federal salary limitation apply to FY 2015 NCA awards?

Yes, Federal funds may not be used to pay the salary of an individual at a rate in excess of Federal Executive Level II or $183,300. Detailed guidance on the information that must be provided in the budget narrative for each staff position supported in whole or in part with Federal funds is included in Section 4.1.iv of HRSA's SF-424 Application Guide, http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/apply/applicationguide/sf424guide.pdf.

31. Is a budget justification the same thing as a budget narrative or budget justification narrative?

Yes, for the purpose of this NCA FOA, they are the same.

Project Work Plan

32. What are the requirements for the Project Work Plan?

The NCA Project Work Plan must outline the T/TA activities to be conducted throughout the entire project period. Applicants must identify the target area and the selected Target Area Specific Measure(s). For each Target Area Specific Measure, the Project Work Plan should include 4-10 activities that are directly related to the measure. For each activity, applicants must identify 1 activity audience, 1 person/area responsible, 1 time frame, and 1 expected outcome. Lastly, under each Target Area Specific Measure, applicants are required to provide goals for each of the four Standard Evaluative Measures listed in Appendix C.

The Project Work Plan must be submitted as a Microsoft Excel attachment. A template is available on the NCA FOA TA Web page: http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/apply/assistance/ncafoa. Applicants are encouraged to use and customize the Project Work Plan template. Applicants must follow the instructions for the Project Work Plan included in Appendix B of the FOA to ensure that all required fields are completed. A sample Project Work Plan is also available in the FOA for reference.

33. How do I calculate goals for the Standard Evaluative Measures?

Goals are projected numerical values that should be realistic and attainable by the end of the project period. They should be informed by a current understanding of health center capacity and experience working in the target area. If awarded, progress toward proposed goals will be monitored by HRSA staff through future progress reports.

34. How should Key Factors be developed?

Key Factors represent issues or circumstances that will contribute to or inhibit the applicant's efforts to reach the goals outlined in the Target Area Specific Measure Expected Impact Narrative. An understanding of the relevant Key Factors should also impact the selection of proposed activities to be conducted under each Target Area Specific Measure (e.g., needs assessment data, focus group data). Applicants must include at least one contributing and one restricting factor for each Target Area Specific Measure.

35. How should Expected Outcomes be developed?

Applicants are required to identify at least one outcome that will result directly from each proposed T/TA Activity. Outcomes should be realistic and achievable and represent goals projected for the end of the project period based on expectations, predicted contributing and restricting factors, and past performance.

36. How are the Activity Audiences defined?

For each Target Area Specific Measure, applicants must propose activities targeted toward two Activity Audiences:

- **Learning Collaborative Audience**: Activities engage a subset of existing and/or potential health centers to facilitate information exchange and support implementation of best practices (e.g., collecting best/promising practices from successful grantees, experimenting with new methods of improving grantee performance) and should inform National Audience activities.
- **National Audience**: Activities engage health centers across the country and are focused primarily on disseminating information (e.g., webinars on innovative strategies, fact sheets on best practices).

Applicants must identify in the Project Work Plan the audience (i.e., Learning Collaborative Audience or National Audience) for each activity proposed. Only one audience should be selected for each activity. At least 2 activities under each Target Area Specific Measure must target each audience type, with a maximum of 5 per audience type (resulting in four to ten activities in total for each Target Area Specific Measure).

37. What are the HHS National Quality Strategy priorities?

NCA applications must demonstrate in the Project Narrative that the proposed T/TA activities will support health centers in providing better, more affordable care and improving the health of individuals and communities in accordance with the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) National Quality Strategy (NQS) priorities. The NQS priorities are detailed in Appendix D of the NCA FOA.

Award Information

38. When will NCA funds be awarded?

NCA awards will be issued through a Notice of Award (NoA) on or around September 1, 2015.

39. If awarded, will Federal funding for the NCA cooperative agreement continue beyond the initial project period?

Funding beyond the first year of the project period will be subject to availability of funds, satisfactory awardee performance, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the Federal government. Continuations beyond the project period ending on June 30, 2017, may be awarded through a subsequent competitive application process.

Funding Restrictions

40. Are there activities that are ineligible for NCA funding?

Yes, NCA funding may not be used for the following activities:

- Construction/renovation of facilities
- Activities not approved under this cooperative agreement
- Reserve requirements for state insurance licensure
- Support for lobbying/advocacy efforts

41. Can NCA funding be used to provide education on health centers and health care needs?
Yes, organizations may propose activities that result in products or educational documents (e.g., issue briefs) that analyze and/or describe issues impacting health centers and underserved populations. Such products/analyses may be made available to the general public and other stakeholders such as policy makers, health centers, other safety-net providers, community leaders, and potential partners. However, organizations must not use Federal funding to create or disseminate documents relating to pending or existing legislation.

42. Is there guidance on allowable costs related to T/TA events hosted by NCAs?
Refer to the following resources:

- The HHS Grants Policy Statement: http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/hhsgrantspolicy.pdf.
- The HHS Policy on Promoting Efficient Spending: Use of Appropriated Funds for Conferences and Meetings, Food, Promotional Items, and Printing and Publications: http://www.hhs.gov/asfr/ogapa/acquisition/policies/appropriated-funds-use-for-conferences-meeting-space-6-24-2013.html.
- The Conferences section of The BPHC Primary Care Association Guide 2012-2013: http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/apply/assistance/pca/pcaguide2012-2013.pdf.

Technical Assistance

43. Who should be contacted with programmatic questions (e.g., application requirements)?
Refer to the NCA FOA TA Web page at http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/apply/assistance/ncafoa for TA resources including a replay of the TA call, presentation slides, FAQs, and sample documents. Applicants may also contact Sarah Costin in the Bureau of Primary Health Care's Office of Policy and Program Development at bphcncafoa@hrsa.gov or 301-594-4300.

44. Who should be contacted for questions about budget preparation, including eligible costs?
Contact William Davis in the Office of Federal Assistance Management's Division of Grants Management Operations at WDavis@hrsa.gov or 301-443-8217.

45. If I encounter technical difficulties in Grants.gov, whom should I contact?
Refer to http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html for applicant FAQs or contact the Grants.gov Contact Center 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (excluding Federal holidays) at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.