

Rural HIT Workforce Grant

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Eligibility

1. ***NEW*** Please note that two-year educational institutions are NOT required to be a formal network member of the network. On p. 28 of the guidance it states: *"...if the applicant is funded, the training organization will be required to submit a signed MOA and formally join the rural health workforce development network."* Please note this is an error instead utilize the guidance provided on p.6 of the FOA where it states: *"This partner (educational institution) may but does not need to be an official member of the network and must formally express commitment for the program and intent to partner."*
2. If a two-year institution is part of a state wide system providing education to the entire state, is it eligible to submit more than one application, or are applications limited to one per organization?

If the institution system is statewide with several colleges throughout the state, the two-year institutions serving the different regions are eligible to apply as a part of a network for their specific target area. Please note that each college must have its own EIN.

3. Can an organization be a part of multiple networks that will apply for this opportunity?

Multiple applications from an organization are not allowable. An applicant may not be involved as a formal network member in different networks applying to this funding opportunity. The only exception is community colleges a part of a statewide educational institution system. See Eligibility FAQ #1.

4. Location of network versus lead applicant.

Network members may be for-profit or non-profit and may be in a rural or urban area. However the lead applicant applying on behalf of the network for this opportunity MUST be a public or private non-profit entity located in a rural area or in a rural census tract of an urban county, and all services must be provided in a rural county or census tract. The applicant's EIN number should verify it is a rural entity. To ascertain rural eligibility, please refer to: <http://datawarehouse.hrsa.gov/RuralAdvisor/> and enter the applicant organization's state and county. A network serving rural communities but whose applicant organization is not in a designated rural area will not be considered for funding under this announcement.

5. The community college would like to be the lead applicant, but does not have a formal network established. Do we need to form a nonprofit and hire a director to be eligible?

According to the network eligibility requirements listed on page six, a network must be composed of at least three health care providers that are separate, existing organizations which require them to have their own EIN number. If the community college is not a member of a formal network or at least partnered with a network then the community college cannot apply for this opportunity.

If the community college is a part of a network, it is not required that the community college be the lead applicant for this opportunity. Another network member can apply as the lead applicant on behalf of the network. It is important to note that applicants must clearly illustrate previous collaboration and accomplishment between network members in the Project Narrative.

Curriculum and Education Delivery

1. Is the educational entity to deliver the educational component required to be a community college? Can a 4-year institution be involved in the network and offer all or part of the curriculum developed?

Yes, the community college must deliver the educational component of the Rural HIT Workforce Program as stated on page 6 of the FOA. A four-year institution can certainly be involved in the network as noted in page 7 of the FOA (educational institution). The four-year institution can be involved in the development of the curriculum with the two-year institution but as stated above the community college must to deliver the educational component.

2. Can an applicant use an existing curriculum without redoing it to fit the ONC module?

It is expected that the applicant will review the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) for HIT curriculum modules and demonstrate how the modules either already align with the existing curriculum or how they will be adapted to the curriculum. The ONC HIT modules are accessible via the following link: <http://www.onc-ntdc.org> or <http://www.onc-ntdc.info>. Applicants may need to create a new account, if one does not already exist.

3. Can an applicant do an online certificate that is issued through a vocational technical college, because the network cannot issue the degree?

The network is not expected to issue a degree. The network is expected to partner with an accredited two-year educational institution, such as a community, technical, or vocational college, to deliver the educational component of the Rural HIT Workforce Program. The educational institution will issue a degree. In regards to the certificate, upon completion of the educational and apprenticeship training, the student is expected to be able to

complete a certification or competency test that is appropriate for his/her experience, education, and the HIT specialist certificate obtained.

It is also important to note that recruited students should aim to work towards at least an associate's degree or equivalent, if a post-secondary degree has not yet been obtained.

4. Can we use the curriculum provided by the ONC when implementing this program into our rural area Vocational school?

Yes, the FOA expects that the curriculum will either already align with the existing ONC HIT curriculum or will at least align with ONC HIT modules. See page 1 of FOA.

5. Employers are looking for workers with specific skills and competencies; can we enhance our curriculum beyond the required ONC standard?

Yes, as long as the curriculum aligns or adapts to the ONC HIT curriculum modules.

6. Can this curriculum be provided via online distance learning only?

Yes.

Apprenticeship

1. Is distance learning an acceptable means of providing the vendor related portion of the apprenticeship portion of the requirements?

Yes. That should be fine if the vendor provides this option of training. Please remember the students are required to train at a clinical site in addition to the vendor training.

2. Is there a specific amount of time or set of specific requirements associated with the apprenticeship component of the program?

The timeframes listed on page 24 of the FOA should be helpful in determining how long the apprenticeship should last. The CEHRT vendor training should start in month 9 of year 2 and the clinic based apprenticeship training to start month 12 of year 2. By the start of year 3 the student should be formally employed.

Use of Funds

1. Can the grant pay for course development?

Yes, the development of the curriculum can be covered by grant funds; however the funds cannot pay for faculty who will teach the academic courses.

2. Tuition reimbursement for underserved students an eligible expense?

Yes, as stated on page three of the FOA, funded networks can focus on a variety of activities related to the recruitment, education, training, and retention of HIT specialists to include providing recruitment assistance and training support directly to enrolled HIT specialist students. These activities would include scholarships to students which can be used to cover costs such as tuition, books, transportation etc.

3. Are applicants allowed to hire full-time HIT faculty under the funding opportunity?

The faculty members who teach the academic courses of the program cannot be funded through this opportunity, please see page 32 of the FOA. It is important to note, the grant funds can cover preceptors (trainers and coordinators who provide necessary instruction, evaluation, and administrative oversight) during the CEHRT hands-on intensive training and hospital and/or clinic apprenticeship training phase as stated on page 3 of the FOA.

4. What are costs for participants?

That is to be determined by the network. Supported grant funded activities include scholarships to help enrolled students in the program.

5. Can grant funds be used to enhance network member's education?

No, grant funds may not be used to directly pay health care provider continuing education (CE) credits.

6. Can funds be used to create that virtual learning environment or must that already be established?

Yes, grant funds can be used for the creation of distance learning for the Rural HIT Workforce curriculum.

General Questions

1. Strictness of employment placement at end of program?

It is expected for the network to identify and provide the most appropriate employment connections for the students.

2. How does the director FTE have to be allocated? Can it be split?

To ensure success and sustainability, there must be at a minimum 1.0 FTE managing the grant program. If the network director role has historically not been 1.0 FTE, please explain in the Project Narrative, Section IV.2.ix, 1.) why,

2.) what are the other staffing provisions, if any, and 3.) how the director is able to fulfill the network leader responsibilities.

The network director may devote his/her entire FTE or a percentage to the grant program and/or may hire a project director to manage the day-to-day grant program operations.

3. Is there a quota for number of trainees in three years?

No.

4. Must the participating hospitals commit to employ 100% of the students involved with the program? What are the consequences of a student not completing the program or one not selected for employment by one of the hospitals in the network?

The HIT specialist students at the end of the training must be formally employed within the network or with an outside rural health care provider. Looking at page 24 of the FOA, it asks applicants to describe challenges likely to be encountered in designing and implementing the activities described in the Work Plan. Include approaches that will be used to resolve identified challenges. Not completing the program or not getting employed by the hospital within the network would be challenges and potential missed goals that the network would have to consider and address in the application. It is also important to note that the models and plans requested in the FOA such as the logic model, sustainability plan, evaluation plan and hiring plan are tools required to help the network to strategically think about how it will accomplish stated goals and objectives.

5. Does the program favor “new” students (i.e. who are not currently working in one of the health centers and would require placement, etc.) over existing employees?

As stated on page 1 of the FOA, the program is to provide instructional opportunities to current health care staff, local displaced workers, rural residents, veterans, and other potential students. Current health care staff that is interested in becoming a HIT specialist can *certainly* enroll as a student in the program! Upon completion of the program, the staff member must be employed as a HIT specialist.

6. As far as the facilitator of the curriculum am I able to facilitate this program? This would provide a sustainability piece for us.

Please review attachment 12 of the FOA (page 30) where it outlines the CEHRT and Instructor Competency Verification requirements.

Last Revised March 15, 2013

Reminders

- For the **Technical Assistance Call** replay, dial this toll free number 402-998-1566.
- Application deadline is **April 15th** at 11:59 PM EST.