



Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program- Emergency Medical Services Competing Supplement Notice of Funding Opportunity

Objective Review Committee Pre-Review Orientation

5/3/24

Tahleah Chappel
Rural EMS Project Coordinator
Project Officer
Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP)

Vision: Healthy Communities, Healthy People



The Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program (Flex)

The Flex Program funds states to provide support to help Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs), Emergency Medical Services (EMS), clinics and health professionals. Flex helps CAHs improve:

- Rural health care quality - Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Project (MBQIP)
- Financial health and hospital operations
- Population Health
- **Emergency medical services**



EMS Supplement- Purpose

The purpose of this funding is to enable states to establish or expand programs for the provision of rural EMS by strengthening the EMS workforce in rural areas through recruitment, retention and financial and operational strategies.



EMS Supplement vs Flex

- Applicants are responsible for ensuring that propose EMS activities for this supplement differ from the activities (if any) proposed under the main Flex workplan.
 - This information can be found on page 4 of the NOFO

Program Details

- **Grant Program Dates:** September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2029
- **Award Amount:** approximately \$250,000 per year
- **# of Awards:** up to 8 award
- **Applications Due:** April 26, 2024, no later than 11:59pm EST
- **Page Limit: 20 pages**
 - The following do not count toward the page limit:
 - Standard OMB-approved forms you find in the NOFO's workspace application package
 - Abstract (standard form "Project Abstract Summary")
 - Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
 - Proof of non-profit status (if it applies)
 - Letters of Support
 - Biographical Sketches of Key Personnel
 - The Flex program is authorized by Title XVIII, §1820(g)(2), of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i-4(g)(2)), which authorizes funding "for the establishment or expansion of a program for the provision of rural emergency medical services."



Eligibility Requirements

- This is a competitive supplemental funding opportunity. Only states eligible for cooperative agreements awarded under HRSA-24-002 (Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program (Flex) Cooperative Agreement) are eligible to apply for funding under this notice.



Narrative and Review Criteria Crosswalk

Narrative Section	Review Criteria
Introduction (page 9)	(1) Need
Organizational Information (page 9)	(5) Resources/Capabilities
Need (page 9)	(1) Need
Approach (page 10)	(2) Response, (4) Impact
Work Plan (page 10)	(2) Response, (4) Impact
Resolution of Challenges (page 11)	(2) Response
Evaluation and Technical Support Capacity (page 11)	(3) Evaluative Measures
Budget Narrative (page 11)	(6) Support Requested



Funding Restrictions

Funds under this notice may NOT be used for the following purposes:

- For direct patient care services (including health care services, equipment, and supplies);
- To purchase ambulances and any other vehicles or major equipment (including software that costs more than \$5000/unit);
- To purchase or improve real property;
- Authorizing legislation 42 U.S.C. 1395i-4(g)(2) (Title XVIII, §1820(g)(2)) of the Social Security Act limits indirect costs under the Flex Program. Indirect costs will be budgeted and reimbursed at the lesser of 15 percent of total direct costs or the applicant's negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (ICRA). This limitation on indirect cost rates is a requirement of this federal award and, as required in 45 CFR § 75.351-353, the limitation includes subrecipients; and
- For any purpose which is inconsistent with the language of this NOFO or 42 U.S.C. 1395i-4(g)(2) (§1820(g)(2)) of the Social Security Act



Criterion 1: NEED (10 points) – Corresponds to Section IV's Introduction and Needs Assessment

The extent to which the Introduction section (10 points):

- How well the application describes the purpose of the proposed project, the vision for the supplemental funds, and the goals for the 5-year period of performance.
- How well the application describes the overview of the service area and target population to be served by the EMS workforce programs and or investments.
 - How well the application describes the needs of the EMS agencies that will participate.
 - Whether the application makes use of and cites demographic data to support the information provided.
- How well the applicant demonstrates understanding of the identified barriers (weak education pipeline, training needs, working with neighboring EMS agencies, maternity care deserts, etc.) related to recruitment and retention, and how the project will address such barriers.
- Whether the application identifies contact(s) within the state office of EMS, local EMS agencies, and other relevant community leaders willing to work together for the duration of the project.



Criterion 2: RESPONSE (45 points) – Corresponds to Section IV’s Approach, Work Plan, and Resolution of Challenges

The extent to which the Approach section (25 points):

- How well the applicant’s proposed project responds to the program’s “Purpose.”
- The strength of the proposed goals and objectives and how well they relate to the project.
- How well the activities described in the application will address the problem and meet project objectives.
- How well the application describes the plan to increase rural EMS recruitment, retention and financial stability based on the needs identified for at least five rural EMS agencies.
- The strength of the criteria used to prioritize agencies with the highest need (e.g., lack of staff and low percentage of runs/transportations billed).
- How well the application describes how training, technical assistance, and other support will be targeted to the agencies with the highest needs and capacity to make changes.
- How well the application identifies tools and strategies for trainings, outreach, collaborations, clear communication, and information sharing/dissemination, including efforts to involve key partners.
- How well the application demonstrates a commitment from town, local and or county leadership to be involved in the project.
- Whether the application included at least five letters of support from different rural EMS agencies willing to fully participate for the entire 5-year period of performance.
- Whether the application included both recruitment and retention activities that utilized existing resources on EMS recruitment and retention. How well the application identifies meaningful support and collaboration with key stakeholders in planning, designing and implementation of all activities listed in the workplan.



Criterion 2: RESPONSE (45 points) – Corresponds to Section IV's Approach, Work Plan, and Resolution of Challenges

The extent to which the Work Plan and Resolution of Challenges Sections (20 points):

- Whether the application discusses possible challenges in carrying out the workplan and explains approaches to resolve them.
- Whether the application has a workplan as attachment 1 that includes a brief description of each activity, year and quarter of anticipated completion, expected outputs, actual outputs, and responsible staff.
- Whether the application includes clearly defined outcomes within the workplan that will be measured annually.
- Whether each measure in the workplan includes:
 - The goal you are trying to achieve.
 - What the outcome measure is for each goal.
 - The agencies participating.
 - Space to enter the baseline data and data at the end of each project year.
 - Space for comments on whether the goal was met.



Criterion 3: Evaluative Measures (15 points) – Corresponds to Section IVs Evaluation and Technical Support Capacity

- How well the application describes a strategy to collect, track and analyze data to measure impact (for example, assigned skilled staff, data management software) in a way that allows for accurate and timely reporting of those outcomes.
- How well the application describes the plan to evaluate how the program performs, and how that will contribute to continuous quality improvement.
 - Whether the evaluation will monitor ongoing processes and the progress towards the project's goals and objectives.
- ◦ Whether the application describes barriers and the plan to address them.
- How strong are the included measures, and do they include at a minimum the following:
 - The number of agencies with an increase in staffing of volunteers and/or paid staff;
 - The number of agencies with an increase in EMS providers with advanced certifications, such as paramedics or AEMTs; and
 - When applicable, the number of agencies that have increased their percentage of runs/transportations submitted for billing.



Criterion 4: Impact (15 points) – Corresponds to Section IV's Work plan and Approach

- How well the applicant describes the way(s) that they will achieve each of the objectives (in the Approach section) during the period of performance.
- How well the application demonstrates a clear plan for continuing recruitment and retention efforts beyond the period of performance.



Criterion 5: Resources/Capabilities (10 points) – Corresponds to Section IV’s Organizational Information

- Whether the current staff and/or contractor experience, skills, and knowledge will support effective tracking of performance outcomes and execution of workplan activities.
- How well the application describes the organization’s current mission, structure, and scope of current activities, and how these elements all contribute to the applicant’s ability to implement the program and meet established expectations.
- Whether the applicant describes how they will ensure oversight and coordination between staff, contractors/subrecipients, as applicable.
- How well the application describes the ability to properly account for the federal funds and document all costs to avoid audits.
- Whether the application includes an organized staffing plan and job descriptions for key staff in attachment 2, and an organizational chart as attachment 7.



Criterion 6: Support Requested (5 points) – Corresponds to Section IVs SF424A Budget and Budget Narrative

- How reasonable the proposed budget is for each year of the period of performance.
- Whether costs, as outlined in the budget and required resources sections, are reasonable and align with the scope of work.
- Whether key staff have adequate time devoted to the project to achieve project objectives.



Attachments

- Attachment 1: Work plan
- Attachment 2: Staffing Plan and Job descriptions for key personnel
- Attachment 3: Biographical Sketches of Key Personnel
- Attachment 4: Letters of Support (at least 5)
- Attachment 5: Indirect Cost Rate
- Attachment 6: Multi-Year Budget – 5th Year budget
- Attachment 7: Project Organizational Chart
- Attachment 8-15 Other Relevant Documents (optional)



Key Considerations

- The purpose: To strengthen workforce in rural areas through recruitment, retention and financial and operational strategies (where applicable)
- Partnerships with at least five rural EMS agencies with letters of support
- Demonstrating that the activities of this Supplement are different from those of the regular Flex activities
- Community engagement and local leadership involvement is crucial
- Including relevant measures beyond the minimum measure set is expected
- The budget can not be more than \$250,000 per year, for five years



Contact Information

Tahleah Chappel

EMS Program Coordinator/Project Officer

Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP)

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

Email: TChappel@hrsa.gov

Phone: 301-443-0197

