

Exchange Network FY20 Grant Cycle Stakeholders Feedback Call

August 27, 2020

Notes

EPA provided background on the grant program, timing, and updates to the process from last year.

Participants provided the following feedback (primarily very positive) in three areas: clarity and usability of the guidance, clarity of the evaluation criteria, and the funding priorities.

Comments or Feedback on the Clarity and usability of SN or applicant Guidance

- The appendices included are used extensively and are very helpful in developing an application response and with coordinating internally. The templates in particular were appreciated, especially to ensure the right information is included.
- First time users also found the appendices helpful in crafting a response to a grant program that was unfamiliar.
- It can be challenging to fit everything into the page limit, particularly when you have multiple partners.
- The fact that the template is optional can be confusing within states.
- Make it clearer in the budget template what pieces of information are considered when reviewing the grant and for checking calculations.

Feedback, Comments, or Questions on the Evaluation Criteria

- The criteria are fair and reasonable.
- The criteria check list is really helpful to make sure all of the criteria are met.

Feedback on EN Priorities/Funding Opportunities

- The priorities are fine but there seems to be a gap between the priorities and the goals of the Exchange Network Grant program.
 - Reusability is not happening across partners right now.
 - The Digital Strategy encourages an information centric approach and it may be helpful to lean into that work and be more specific about how it can occur within the partnership.
- More specificity within the priorities would be helpful to ensure dollars benefit the full partnership whenever possible.
- With all the reporting requirements, states and Tribes appreciate the opportunity to improve their data capture and sharing efficiency and for opportunities to make data easily useable and shareable. Agencies often don't have the time and resources to make these needed improvements.

There was a question about how grant funds could be used directly with a contractor within a state (e.g., multi-vendor contract that could be applied to directly or partnership/consortia projects). The decision was made to follow-up on this question offline.

General Comments:

- Thank you so much for this program, which has added valuable services to our agency over the years. Much appreciated! And thank you for opportunity to provide input to process.
- Thank you for this review. This is helpful and I have to say that the SN you provide make this grant one of the easier ones to put applications together for! Thanks!