



Nursing Home Staffing Campaign

Opportunity number: CMS-2V2-26-001



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Before you begin

If you believe you are a good candidate for this funding opportunity, secure your [SAM.gov](#) and [Grants.gov](#) registrations now. If you are already registered, make sure your registrations are active and up-to-date.

SAM.gov registration (this can take several weeks)

You must have an active account with SAM.gov. This includes having a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

[See Step 2: Get Ready to Apply](#)

Grants.gov registration (this can take several days)

You must have an active Grants.gov registration. Doing so requires a Login.gov registration as well.

[See Step 2: Get Ready to Apply](#)

Apply by the application due date

Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, March 27, 2026.



To help you find what you need, this NOFO uses internal links. In Adobe Reader, you can go back to where you were by pressing Alt + Left Arrow (Windows) or Command + Left Arrow (Mac) on your keyboard.



Step 1:

Review the Opportunity

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Basic information

Centers for Medicaid & Medicare Services (CMS)

Center for Clinical Standards and Quality (CCSQ)

Recruiting nurses to work in nursing homes through financial incentives.

Summary

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is committed to improving safety and quality of care in the nation's nursing homes. Nursing home staffing is a critical factor for improving care for nursing home residents.

However, some nursing homes struggle to hire enough nursing staff to meet each resident's needs. Additionally, state survey agencies, which are responsible for inspecting nursing homes for compliance with federal regulations, have also had challenges hiring nurses to conduct these inspections. The Nursing Home Staffing Campaign (NHSC) is aimed at increasing the availability of nurses to work in the nursing home environment, such as in qualifying nursing homes or in an oversight capacity for a state inspection agency.

This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is focused on helping to recruit registered nurses (RNs) and licensed practical nurses or licensed vocational nurses (LPNs) to work in nursing homes by offering financial incentives. Through this NOFO, CMS is accepting applications for cooperative agreements to entities that will administer financial incentives, such as loan repayment and stipends to RNs and LPNs, to work for three years in a qualifying nursing home or in an oversight role with a state agency.

Have questions?
See [Contacts and Support](#).

Key facts

Opportunity name:
Nursing Home Staffing Campaign

Opportunity number:
CMS-2V2-26-001

Assistance listing:
93.693

NOFO version: Original

Key dates

Application submission deadline:
Friday, March 27, 2026

Optional letter of intent deadline:
February 20, 2026

Informational webinar:
February 25, 2026

Expected award date:
June 15, 2026

Expected earliest start date: July 1, 2026

See [application submissions and deadline](#) for other time frames that may apply to this NOFO.

Funding details

Funding type: Cooperative agreement, which means that both you and CMS will have roles in the project. Throughout the life of your project, we will be there to help and work with you.

Expected total funding for the program: \$80,000,000 subject to availability of funds

Expected total awards: 5 to 10

Funding range per applicant for the period of performance: \$1,760,000 to \$20,000,000 per region per applicant

The awards will cover all costs associated with the program, including financial incentives to nurses and costs for administering the incentives (such as staff and technology).

CMS will evaluate applicants' coverage of the entire country, but will award one or two applicants to serve each of the six regions. We will not award more than three applicants for any one region. We recommend that applicants review [Appendix A](#) (estimated number of qualifying nursing homes per state) to help determine the amount of funds needed for each region. However, these estimates are preliminary and will likely increase. Applicants should base their estimates on the amount of funds available and assume more nursing homes will qualify as eligible. For example, an applicant could estimate how many LPNs, two-year RNs, and four-year RNs they plan to recruit based on the funding available for each type of nurse (see [Program requirements and expectations, Financial incentive administration](#)), minus administrative costs. Of the total funding, CMS estimates administrative costs should be approximately 15% or lower.

We will provide funding in 5 budget periods of 12 months each over a 5-year period of performance. The continuity of funding for an award will depend on availability of funds, project evaluation, and any other factors determined as necessary by CMS.

Regional structure

CMS has aligned all states, territories, and Washington, D.C., into six regions of the country for this award. This structure helps interested nurses easily identify the appropriate entity to contact for a financial incentive (see figure 1).

The regions are:

- Region 1: ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, VT, NY, NJ, DE, PA, MD, DC, VA, WV
- Region 2: NC, SC, GA, FL, KY, TN, MS, AL, PR
- Region 3: MN, WI, IL, IN, MI, OH
- Region 4: NM, TX, OK, AR, LA
- Region 5: MO, IA, NE, KS, CO, UT, WY, MT, ND, SD
- Region 6: WA, OR, ID, NV, CA, AZ, HI, AK, GU

Awards are based on these regions in the following way:

- CMS will evaluate applicants' coverage of the entire country but will award up to three applicants to serve each of the six regions. We will not award more than three applicants for any one region.
- We may award applicants to serve more than one region.
- In regions with three awards, one awardee will be responsible for administering financial incentives to RNs who obtained a four-year degree (bachelor's degree in nursing), another awardee will be responsible for administering financial incentives to RNs who obtained a two-year degree (associate's degree in nursing), and the third awardee will be responsible for administering financial incentives to LPNs. In regions with two awards, one awardee will be responsible for administering financial incentives to two types of nurses, and the other awardee will be responsible for administering financial incentives to the remaining type of nurses. For example, CMS may assign one awardee to administer financial incentives to RNs who obtained a two-year degree (associate's degree in nursing) and LPNs. The other awardee would be responsible for administering financial incentives to RNs who obtained a four-year degree (bachelor's degree in nursing).
- If we award only one cooperative agreement in a specific region, the awardee will focus on all types of licensed nurses (two-year and four-year RNs, and LPNs).

For example:

- Region 1 awardees: Applicant A and Applicant B
- Region 2 awardees: Applicant B, Applicant C, and Applicant D
- Region 3 awardees: Applicant A, Applicant B, and Applicant E
- Region 4 awardees: Applicant C and Applicant E
- Region 5 awardees: Applicant B
- Region 6 awardees: Applicant C and Applicant F

Figure 1.

- Six regions of states.
- Up to three administrators per region: one for LPNs, one for two-year-degree RNs, and one for four-year-degree RNs.
- Ensures nationwide coverage.
- Easier to identify which administrator to refer nurses to, and for states to work with.



Eligibility

Eligible applicants

Only these types of organizations may apply:

Education organizations

- Public and state-controlled institutions of higher education.
- Private (nonprofit) institutions of higher education.

Nonprofit nursing and educational organizations

- National associations for nursing schools.
- National associations for nurses.
- National associations for nursing students.

Nonprofit organizations

- Nonprofits that have a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education.
- Nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education.
- Community and consumer-focused nonprofit groups.

Other organizations

- Small nonprofit businesses.

Faith-based organizations that meet the organizational eligibility requirements above are welcome to apply.

Other eligibility requirements

This NOFO is only open to nonprofit nursing and educational organizations, such as national associations for nursing schools, nurses, or nursing students. Your organization must have demonstrated experience working with large numbers of nursing schools (hundreds) and large numbers of nurses (thousands) across multiple states. Institutions of higher education may also partner with other entities as a subrecipient to support the primary applicant's ability to cover multiple states. See the [merit review criteria](#) for more information.

Other eligibility limitations

The following organizations are ineligible:

- Individual nursing homes, nursing home chains, or nursing home associations.
- State agencies or government-owned entities, except for institutions of higher education.
- CMS Quality Improvement Networks or Quality Improvement Organizations.

CMS will also review and disqualify organizations with a perceived conflict of interest that could imply that the funds or activities would be directed to an area, nursing home, or set of nursing homes in an unfair or subjective manner, or that funds might be used in a manner that is inconsistent with the intent of this program.

Completeness and responsiveness criteria

We will review your application to make sure it meets the requirements found in [Eligibility, Application contents and format](#), and [Application submission and deadlines](#).

We won't consider an application that:

- Is from an organization that doesn't meet all [eligibility criteria](#).
- Requests funding above the award ceiling shown in the [funding range](#).
- Is submitted after the deadline.
- Is not submitted through Grants.gov.
- Meets any of the eligibility limitations.
- The Division of Grants Management director or deputy director may choose to continue the review process for an ineligible application if it is in the best interests of the government to meet the objectives of the program.

Application limits

You may only submit one application under this NOFO.

Cost sharing

This program has no cost-sharing requirement, meaning you do not need to contribute to the costs of this project.

If you choose to include cost-sharing funds, we will not consider it during the application review and selection process. If you receive an award, we will include your voluntary commitment in the award, and you must report on the funding.

Program description

Purpose

CMS, through its Center for Clinical Standards and Quality (CCSQ), is accepting applications for cooperative agreements to entities to administer financial incentives, such as loan repayment and stipends, to RNs and LPNs to work in a qualifying nursing home or in an oversight role with a state agency for three years.

CMS will enter into cooperative agreements with organizations, which will become Financial Incentive Administrators (FIAs). These FIAs will identify and accept applications from individuals, who would then receive funds contingent on their working in a qualifying nursing home or state survey agency for three years (with an average of 30 or more hours per week).

In addition, FIAs will coordinate closely with individual states, which will provide additional funding directly to the FIA to increase the number of financial incentives available to recruit nurses in their state, and to gain a deeper understanding of each state's specific staffing needs. FIAs will also work with other stakeholders, such as nursing homes, associations, or private organizations, which may contribute additional funds to the campaign or identify other ways to enhance the program.

Background

CMS is committed to increasing staffing in nursing homes. For example:

- In 2015, CMS implemented a new program to collect and report staffing information for nursing homes, the Payroll-Based Journal (PBJ) program.
- In 2018, CMS began using this data to calculate each nursing home's Five Star Quality Rating, incentivizing nursing homes to increase their staffing.
- In 2022, we began calculating and posting rates of nursing staff turnover, which is also related to the level of staff nursing homes have and the quality of care they provide.

The nursing home staffing campaign (NHSC) will continue these efforts to improve nursing home staffing and quality of care by helping recruit nurses to work in nursing homes or in an oversight capacity with a state survey (inspection) agency.

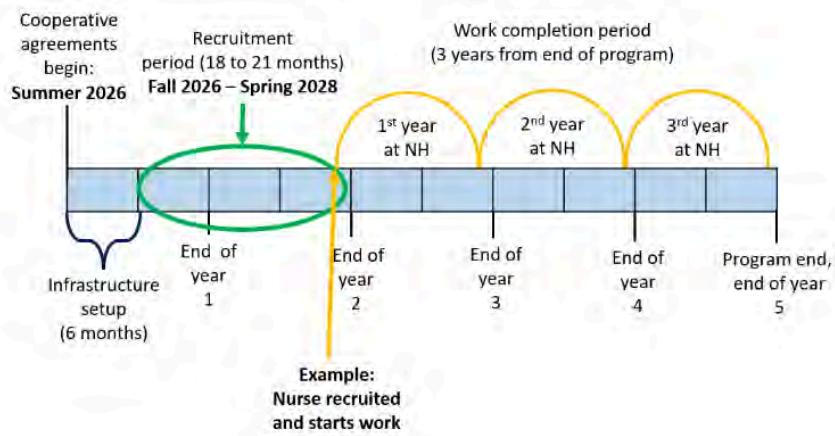
Program requirements and expectations

Program timeline

The timeline for this program includes three distinct phases that CMS will evaluate to determine the continuity of a project throughout the expected period of performance:

- **Infrastructure setup:** Starts at the beginning of the cooperative agreement and lasts for approximately six months.
- **Recruitment period:** Begins prior to the completion of infrastructure setup so that nurses can begin working and receive incentive payments as soon as or before infrastructure setup is complete. You will conduct recruitment for approximately 18 to 21 months.
- **Work completion period:** Starts after recruitment and lasts for three years while financial incentives are being administered. This phase includes all of years 3, 4, and 5 of the period of performance.

Figure 2.



1. National coverage

Even though CMS will award cooperative agreements for specific regions (as described in the [regional structure section](#)), you must demonstrate your ability to perform outreach and maintain coverage for four-year and/or two-year degree RNs, and LPNs, in all states. Organizations that become Financial Incentive Administrators will administer financial incentives (loan repayment and stipends) to RNs and LPNs for a three-year work commitment during the program period. See Figure 2.

2. Infrastructure setup

You must set up your project infrastructure, such as hiring staff, building websites or portals to receive nurse applicants, implementing the process to distribute funds to nurses, and creating processes to ensure that nurses are completing their three-year commitment.

The infrastructure setup period is estimated to be six months. However, we prefer shorter timelines.

FIAs are expected to begin recruitment activities (see 3. Recruitment activities) before completing their infrastructure setup so that nurses can begin working and receive incentive payments immediately upon completion of infrastructure setup or sooner. For example, in month three, FIAs can begin recruiting nurses to start working in month five or six, when the systems to administer financial incentives should be in place.

Note: CMS may require all FIAs to use the same technology system to create consistency for the program and for nurses throughout the country. CMS may also provide the system, in which case FIA costs of developing, purchasing, or maintaining the system would be removed. (See the [budget narrative section](#) for how this might impact FIAs' funding.)

3. Recruitment activities

Next, you must recruit nurses. You will only recruit nurses during the designated recruitment period, which lasts approximately a year and a half. The designated recruitment period will begin immediately after the infrastructure setup has been completed, although we acknowledge some recruitment activities could start earlier. The recruitment period will end three years prior to the end of the program period. This timeline will allow you to distribute funds for RNs/LPNs' entire three-year work commitment during the program period. See example in figure 2.

We also note that there may be overlap between the recruitment period and when RNs/LPNs begin receiving financial incentives, as RNs/LPNs will start to receive funds as soon as they begin their work commitment, as outlined in the following section. Toward the end of the recruitment period (prior to the end of Year 2), CMS will evaluate the program results to determine if we should add an additional year for the recruitment period. This extension would result in a total program duration of six years. Any extension of the program and/or funding available to recipients is contingent on availability of funds, performance evaluation, and other factors determined by CMS.

4. Financial incentive administration

You must administer funds to nurses according to these guidelines.

a. Distribute funds to qualified RNs and LPNs

Funding can include one or both of these options:

- Payment for student loan debt amounts up to \$40,000 (as determined by CMS), depending on an individual's outstanding loan debt for a two-year or four-year RN degree, or LPN program.
- \$10,000 as a stipend for living expenses for working in a qualified location ([see information on qualified locations](#)). The stipend will need to be adjusted for the cost of living for a particular area based on the current wage index used in the [CMS Skilled Nursing Facility \(SNF\) Prospective Payment System \(PPS\)](#).

You must distribute funds to recipients every three months in equal (or relatively equal) amounts so that the final payment to an individual occurs at the end of their three-year commitment.

CMS is allocating the following proportions of all funds to maximize the use of funds (minus any funds allocated to administer this award):

- 30%: LPNs
- 50%: Two-year-degree RNs
- 20%: Four-year-degree RNs

CMS will also allocate amounts for each state and region. For example, if a total of \$10,000,000 were allocated to a region, and a state had \$3,000,000 allocated to it out of that total, the state would allocate \$900,000 to LPN incentives, \$1,500,000 for two-year RNs, and \$600,000 for four-year RNs. This example is for illustrative purposes only and does not account for administrative costs to manage the award. See the [estimated number of qualified nursing homes in each state in Appendix A](#).

Note: CMS may change the financial incentive structure and allocation amounts during the program.

CMS may also remove the expectation that FIAs distribute payments, and instead have them work with CMS and its partners to have payments distributed to nurses through another method or entity (see [Budget Narrative section](#) for how this may impact FIAs' funding).

Note: If an RN or LPN is recruited during the recruitment period but starts working in a qualifying location less than three years from the end of the period of performance, the RN's or LPN's work commitment will be shortened

to the amount of time left in the program period. Their loan repayment and/or stipend will be prorated based on the shortened work commitment.

Note: Unused funds that were intended for RN/LPN incentives will be returned back to the source of those funds. For example, if the recruitment period ends and we do not extend it, and there are remaining funds that were intended for nurse incentives, those funds will be returned to the appropriate source. Also, if CMS or a state opts to target fewer nurses for recruitment than originally sought, the funds commensurate with the reduction in recruitment will also be returned to the appropriate source.

b. Maintain systems for RNs and LPNs to apply

This system could be a website used to qualify applicants. The system could, for example:

- Verify licensure/credentials and outstanding student loan debt.
- Maintain any other relevant information.
- Track each RN's/LPN's fulfillment of the work commitment to receive the funds, such as working an average of 30 hours per week in the nursing home or state agency where they accepted an assignment as a condition for receiving the financial incentive.
 - For example, a process confirming the RN/LPN is fulfilling the work commitment could be submission of paystubs with hours per week worked and/or employer verification at regular intervals until the end of the work commitment.

Your process or processes should make sure that RNs/LPNs who fail to provide evidence of fulfilling their work commitments do not continue to receive funds.

Note: CMS may require all FIAs to use the same technology system to create consistency for the program and for nurses throughout the country. CMS may also provide the system (see [budget narrative section](#) for how this may impact FIAs' funding).

5. Stakeholder collaboration

- You are expected to work with individual states and CMS partners, which may opt to provide additional funding directly to you to increase the funds available for loan repayment and stipends. The additional funding from states should be used in a manner consistent with the guidelines of this program as outlined in this NOFO, or as approved by CMS.

- **Note:** FIAs must report any voluntary contributions from stakeholders to CMS, and these funds can only be used to support the purposes outlined in this NOFO. See also the [section on cost sharing](#). If you receive an award, we will include your voluntary cost-sharing commitment in the award, and you must report on the funding.
- FIAs will also work with other stakeholders, such as nursing homes, associations, or private organizations, which may contribute additional funds to the campaign or identify other ways to enhance the program.
- You are required to coordinate and cooperate with CMS, its contractors, partners, states, and other stakeholders to ensure continuity of program operations and to maximize results. For example, this may include sharing results with CMS strategic partners or collaborating with CMS's contractors to raise awareness on this program through targeted marketing.

6. Vacancy and placement coordination

You will be expected to coordinate placement of RNs/LPNs in jobs by:

- Implementing a process to maintain an updated list of qualifying nursing homes that are seeking to hire RNs/LPNs in their region.
- Working with state agencies to understand their RN/LPN staffing needs.
- Matching recruited nurses to a nursing home or state agency that most aligns with their work preferences and location.

7. Qualifying nursing homes

Qualifying nursing homes must meet CMS's criteria for prioritization within areas of high nurse labor shortages. CMS will publish a list of these nursing homes and update it throughout the period of performance.

You should prioritize the nursing homes in these areas, based on the number of RN/LPN staffing vacancies or staffing levels. To assist you with their proposals, [Appendix A includes the estimated number of qualifying nursing homes](#) in high-labor-shortage areas in each state.

Note: These estimates are preliminary and will likely increase. You should base your estimates on the amount of funds available and assume more nursing homes will qualify as eligible. For example, you could estimate how many LPNs, two-year RNs, and four-year RNs you plan to recruit based on the funding available for each type of nurse ([see Program requirements and expectations, Financial incentive administration](#)), minus administrative costs.

Of the total funding, CMS estimates administrative costs should be approximately 15% or lower.

Note: If a qualifying nursing home loses its qualifying status **after** an RN/LPN has started or has committed to working there under this program, the RN/LPN may continue to work in the nursing home for the entire three-year commitment and continue to obtain their full financial incentive.

Note: While we are prioritizing the recruitment of RNs/LPNs for nursing homes in high-labor-shortage areas, based on program results including recruitment efforts, CMS may expand the scope of the program, such as expanding the criteria for qualifying nursing homes.

8. RN/LPN employment qualifications

- RNs/LPNs must meet all licensure requirements for the state they will be working in.
- RNs/LPNs must work an average of at least 30 hours per week for each quarter. CMS will consider limited exceptions, such as medical leave or a single extended absence. However, the expectation is that the RN/LPN is a full-time employee of the nursing home or state agency.
- RNs/LPNs must be a direct employee of the nursing home or state agency. RNs/LPNs working as a contractor or through a staffing agency (like a travel nurse agency) are not eligible for this program.
- RNs/LPNs with any student loan debt for education related to licensure are eligible for this program, regardless of when they obtained their degree or license. See also the alternative options we are soliciting feedback on in the [project narrative section](#) of this NOFO.
- RNs/LPNs who have obtained their license in the previous 12 months but do not have student loan debt are still eligible for the stipend for the same three-year commitment. However, nurses with no student loan debt will not be eligible for loan repayment funds for any previous education expenses that they paid. See also the alternative options we are soliciting feedback on in the [project narrative section](#).
- RNs/LPNs must start working at a nursing home or state agency after applying for financial incentives to qualify for this program. See also the alternative options we are soliciting feedback on in the [project narrative section](#).

9. Administrative costs

You must manage the distribution of loan repayment for student loan debt and stipends, as described in the [financial incentive administration section](#) in the program description.

Note: Of the total funding, CMS estimates administrative costs should be approximately 15% or lower.

10. Reporting and meetings

You are expected to meet the stated timelines listed here.

- Within two weeks of award:
 - Kickoff meeting with CMS.
- Within one month of award:
 - Implementation plan submitted to CMS.
- Within every 30 days after submission of implementation plan, for 120 days (four reports):
 - Implementation status report.
 - Status update call with CMS.
- Every 30 days after implementation starts:
 - Monthly status call with CMS.
 - Written brief, which must include relevant information about your program such as:
 - Number of nurse applicants.
 - Number of incentives and the amount of incentives distributed.
 - Work locations of nurses.
 - Number of nurses offered a position from a qualifying facility/agency but declined. Include their reasons.
 - Number of qualified facilities/agencies that had a nurse position available to offer, but did not extend an offer. Include their reasons, reported vacancy status, and RN hours per resident per day (HPRPD) when the position was available.
 - A brief narrative of program operations, status of working with states, and other areas identified by CMS.
- 120 days after implementation, and every 90 days thereafter:
 - Quarterly call with CMS (can be combined with a monthly call).
 - Report including a cumulative summation of the monthly briefs and the previous quarter's operations, including an updated budget report.
- Within five days following scheduled and unscheduled meetings/calls with CMS:
 - Meeting minutes that summarize the discussion, action items, and other relevant information.

- Within 90 days after the end of the **first award year**:
 - Annual report, which is a comprehensive review of the year's results, operations, and budget.
- Within 120 days after the end of the **final award year**:
 - Final report — a comprehensive review of all project results, operations, budget, lessons learned, and best practices.

Cooperative agreement terms

Cooperative agreements require substantial CMS project involvement after an award is made. There are specific roles for both you and CMS. We may be in contact at least once a month, and more frequently when appropriate.

Your responsibilities

- Comply with the terms and conditions of the award.
- Collaborate with CMS staff to implement and monitor the project.
- Submit the performance measures requested.
- Submit all required performance assessments, evaluations, and financial reports included in the terms and conditions.
- Attend monthly calls with the CMS project and/or grants management specialist to discuss your project's progress and challenges. The meetings will include key personnel and the project officer.
- Participate in any virtual meetings.

Our responsibilities

- Monitor the project's performance and progress.
- Collaborate with you and provide substantial project planning and implementation input.
- Provide substantial input in evaluation activities.
- Make recommendations for continuing the project.
- Review and approve website content before launch and updates.
- Review and approve all key personnel.
- Maintain regular communication with you through at least monthly conference calls along with technical assistance and consultation.
- Review and provide feedback on all required performance assessment reports.
- Review and approve all required submitted data.

- Provide a structured approach to sharing, integrating, and actively applying improvement concepts, tactics, and lessons learned.

Substantial involvement relates to programmatic involvement, not administrative oversight.

Statutory authority

This program is funded under the authority of Title 18 Section 1819(h)(2)(B)(ii)(IV)(ff) and Title 19 Section 1919(h)(2)(B)(ii)(IV)(ff) of the Social Security Act (SSA), which authorizes the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to use a portion of civil money penalties (CMPs) collected to support activities that benefit nursing home residents. This authority is codified in 42 CFR 488.433, which states that these funds must be used entirely for activities that protect or improve the quality of care or quality of life for residents.

Funding policies and limitations

Changes in HHS regulations

As of October 1, 2025, HHS adopted [2 CFR 200](#), with some exceptions included in 2 CFR 300. These regulations replace those in 45 CFR 75.

Limitations

We do not allow the following costs:

- Pre-award costs.
- Meeting matching requirements for any other federal funds or local entities.
- Services, equipment, or supports that are the legal responsibility of another party under federal, state, or tribal law, such as vocational rehabilitation or education services.
- Services, equipment, or supports that are the legal responsibility of another party under any civil rights law, such as modifying a workplace or providing accommodations that are obligations under law.
- Goods or services not allocable to the project.
- Supplanting existing state, local, tribal, or private funding of infrastructure or services, such as staff salaries.
- Construction.

- Capital expenditures for improvements to land, buildings, or equipment that materially increase their value or useful life as a direct cost, except with our prior written approval.
- The cost of independent research and development, including their proportionate share of indirect costs. See 2 CFR 300.477.
- Funds related to any activity designed to influence the enactment of legislation, appropriations, regulation, administrative action, or executive order.
- Certain telecommunications and video surveillance equipment. See [2 CFR 200.216](#).
- Other than for normal and recognized executive-legislative relationships or participation by an agency or officer of a state, local, or tribal government in policymaking and administrative processes within the executive branch of that government, funding awarded under this NOFO may not be used for:
 - Paying the salary or expenses of any grant recipient, or agent acting for such recipient, related to any activity designed to influence the enactment of legislation, appropriations, regulation, administrative action, or executive order proposed or pending before the Congress or any state government, state legislature, or local legislature or legislative body.
 - Lobbying, but awardees can lobby at their own expense if they can segregate federal funds from other financial resources used for lobbying.

For guidance on some types of costs that we restrict or do not allow, see [2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E](#) – General Provisions for Selected Items of Cost.

General policies

- Support beyond the first budget year will depend on:
 - Appropriation of funds.
 - Satisfactory progress in meeting your project's objectives.
 - A decision that continued funding is in the government's best interest.
- If we receive more funding for this program, we will consider:
 - Funding more applicants.
 - Extending the period of performance.
 - Awarding supplemental funding.

Indirect costs

Indirect costs are those shared across multiple projects and not easily separated. Costs included in the indirect cost pool must not be charged as direct costs.

To charge indirect costs you can select one of two methods:

Method 1 — Approved rate. If you currently have an indirect cost rate approved by your cognizant federal agency, you may use that rate.

Method 2 — *De minimis* rate. If you do not have a negotiated indirect cost rate, you may elect to charge a *de minimis* rate (see [2 CFR 200.414\(f\)](#)). This rate is 15% of modified total direct costs (MTDC). See the definition of MTDC ([2 CFR 200.1](#)). You can use this rate indefinitely.

Salary rate limitation

The salary rate limitation in the current appropriations act applies to this program. As of January 2026, the salary rate limitation is \$228,000.

Program income

If you earn any money from your award-supported project activities (known as program income), you must use it for the purposes and under the conditions of the award. Find more about program income at [2 CFR 200.307](#).

Post-award requirements

Before you apply, make sure you understand the requirements that come with an award.

See [Step 6: Learn What Happens After Award](#) for information on regulations that apply, reporting, and more.



Step 2:

Get Ready to Apply

In this step

Get registered [26](#)

Find the application package [27](#)

Get registered

SAM.gov

You must have an active account with SAM.gov to apply. SAM.gov registration can take several weeks. Begin that process today.

To register:

- Go to [SAM.gov Entity Registration](#) and select Get Started. From the same page, you can also select the Entity Registration Checklist for the information you will need to register.
- You must agree to the [financial assistance general certifications and representations \[PDF\]](#) specifically. Those for contracts are different.

When you register, you will also receive your required Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

Once you register:

- You will have to maintain your registration throughout the life of any award.
- If your organization has multiple UEIs, use the one associated with your physical location.

Grants.gov

You must also have an active account with [Grants.gov](#). You can see step-by-step instructions at the Grants.gov [Quick Start Guide for Applicants](#).

Need Help? See [Contacts and Support](#).

Find the application package

The application package has all the forms you need to apply. You can find it at [this NOFO's Grants.gov opportunity page](#).

We recommend that you select the Subscribe button from the View Grant Opportunity page for this NOFO to get updates.

If you can't use Grants.gov to download application materials or have other technical difficulties, including issues with application submission, [contact Grants.gov](#) for assistance.



Step 3:

Build Your Application

In this step

Application checklist [29](#)

Application contents and format [30](#)

Application checklist

Make sure that you have everything you need to apply:

Narratives

Component	How to upload	Page limit
<input type="checkbox"/> Project summary	Use the Project Abstract Summary form.	1 page
<input type="checkbox"/> Project narrative	Use the Project Narrative Attachment form.	15 pages
<input type="checkbox"/> Budget narrative	Use the Budget Narrative Attachment form.	10 pages

Attachments

Insert each in a single Attachments form.

Component	Page limit
<input type="checkbox"/> Indirect cost rate agreement	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Proof of nonprofit status	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Resumes and job descriptions	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Business assessment of applicant organization	12 pages

Other required forms

Complete each required form in Grants.gov.

Component	Page limit
<input type="checkbox"/> SF-424: Application for Federal Assistance	None
<input type="checkbox"/> SF-424A: Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Project/Performance Site Location	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL)	None

Application contents and format

We will provide instructions on how to build your application, including document formats in the following sections. See [completeness and responsiveness criteria](#) to understand what may disqualify your application from consideration.

Your organization's authorized organizational representative (AOR) must certify and submit your application.

See requirements for [intergovernmental review](#), if any.

Project summary

Limit to one page. May be single spaced. Follow other [formatting requirements for the project narrative](#).

Write a one-page summary of your proposed project including its purpose and outcomes. Do not include any proprietary or confidential information. We will use this document for information sharing and public information requests if you get an award. Include:

- The name of your organization.
- The names of any subrecipients or sub-awardee organizations, if applicable.
- Project goals.
- Total budget amount.
- A description of how you will use funds.

Project narrative

The project narrative is the most important part of your application and should clearly describe your proposed project. You must address the proposed goals, measurable objectives, and milestones in accordance with the instructions in the following sections.

See the scoring criteria under each section to understand how reviewers will assess and score your project narrative.

Required format for project narrative

Page limit: 15

Endnotes are not included in the page limit.

File name: Project narrative

File format: PDF

Font size: 12-point font

Font color:

Footnotes and text in graphics may be 10-point.

Spacing for project abstract, tables, and footnotes: Single-spaced

Spacing for main content: Double-spaced

Margins: 1-inch

Page size: 8.5 x 11

Include consecutive page numbers throughout.

Your project narrative should include the following elements.

Overall criteria

Each element of the NOFO will be scored based on a sliding scale. The first box under each header represents the full set of points you can receive if you successfully meet all the requirements. Subsequent boxes reflect reduced points for instances where you partially meet or fail to meet the requirements.

Criteria	Points (Maximum = 100)
Experience and competency: Your organization's experience (the organization applying and/or the key personnel) operating programs with similar components and objectives, such as your existing relationships with nursing schools (two-year and/or four-year RN degree and LPN schools) or nursing students that will support your ability to recruit RNs/LPNs in all states.	25 points
Operational proposal: How you propose to implement the components of the program.	25 points
Timeline and milestones: The timeline with specific milestones across all components of the program that you will meet to support a successful program.	20 points
Communications plan: How you will meet the expectations for reporting and meetings.	10 points
Budget narrative and administrative costs.	20 points

Experience and competency

As part of the experience and competency requirements, you will need to establish your ability to address the [national coverage](#) requirement. Here are some examples of how you could document this ability:

- You could provide documentation that shows that hundreds of four-year- and/or two-year-degree nursing schools are members of your association, and include the locations of those schools.
- You could provide a letter of intent signed by many nursing schools and include their locations. This letter would indicate the schools' willingness to partner with you on this program.
- You could provide documentation demonstrating that thousands of members of your association are nurses who recently obtained (or will soon obtain) their licenses through a four-year- and/or two-year-degree program.

For the other experience and competency requirements, please respond to the criteria in the first box of the following chart.

Criteria	Points (Maximum = 25)
<p>Evidence of both of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating programs in the past that are similar to the program described in this NOFO. Existing relationships with the majority of two-year- and/or four-year-degree RN schools and LPN programs or evidence of existing relationships with recent or soon-to-be RN or LPN graduates (students who will graduate or obtain their license within six months) in four or more of the regions identified in the NOFO. Relationships can be defined as nursing schools or nurses that are members of the association applying, or existing communication channels with nursing schools or nurses where routine communication occurs. 	21 to 25 points
<p>Evidence of both of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating programs in the past that are not similar, but comparable to the program described in this NOFO. Existing relationships with the majority of two-year- and/or four-year-degree RN schools and LPN programs, or evidence of existing relationships with recent or soon-to-be RN or LPN graduates (students who will graduate or obtain their license within six months) in two or more of the regions identified in the NOFO. 	16 to 20 points
<p>Evidence of either, but not both, of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating programs in the past that are similar or comparable to the program described in this NOFO. Existing relationships with the majority of two-year- and/or four-year-degree RN schools and LPN programs, or evidence of existing relationships with recent or soon-to-be RN or LPN graduates (students who will graduate or obtain their license within six months) in one or more of the regions identified in the NOFO. 	11 to 15 points
<p>The number of points will be based on the degree of similarity or comparability to the program described in this NOFO or the strength and number of relationships with nursing schools or recent or soon-to-be RN or LPN graduates in the regions identified in this NOFO.</p>	

Criteria	Points (Maximum = 25)
<p>Very little or no evidence of either of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating programs in the past that are similar or comparable to the program described in this NOFO. Existing relationships with the majority of two-year- and/or four-year-degree RN schools and LPN programs, or evidence of existing relationships with recent or soon-to-be RN or LPN graduates (students who will graduate or obtain their license within six months) in any of the regions identified in the NOFO. 	0 to 10 points

Operational proposal

In addition to the directions stated in this section, please also review the [program requirements and expectations](#) section of the NOFO for additional information on these requirements and what you should provide in your application. **Also address the items in the criteria chart at the end of this section.**

For [infrastructure setup](#), you must detail your proposed process and the expected timeframe. Address the major milestones, including:

- When you will begin recruiting nurses.
- When you will start disbursing financial incentives.

For [recruitment](#), your description should include:

- Strategies you will use for recruitment, such as relationships and communication channels you will rely on.
- How you have successfully done similar programs or activities in the past.
- Estimates of the number of nurses you will recruit to work in qualifying nursing homes or state survey agencies. Include the methodology used to calculate the estimate.

For [financial incentive administration](#), you should demonstrate experience administering (or the ability to administer) similar types of programs. In your application, you must describe how you will administer funds to nurses according to the guidelines stated in the program requirements and expectations, including:

- Distribute funds for student loan debts up to \$40,000 over three years and/or \$10,000 as a stipend for living expenses over three years.
- Distribute funds every three months in equal (or relatively equal) amounts so that the final payment to an individual occurs at the end of their three-year work commitment.

- Maintain a process to qualify applicants (verify licensure and outstanding loan debt).
- Maintain a process to track each RNs/LPN's fulfillment of their work commitment, such as confirming the individual is fulfilling the work commitment through submission of paystubs and/or employer verification.
- Ensure payment ceases to RNs/LPNs who do not provide evidence of fulfilling their work commitments.

For **stakeholder collaboration**, describe how you will coordinate and cooperate with required stakeholders (CMS, its contractors, partners, states, and other stakeholders) to ensure continuity of program operations and to maximize results. You should also detail plans to work with individual states who will provide additional funding to increase the amount of loan repayment and stipends available to recruit nurses. Additionally, you should summarize how you'll work with other stakeholders, such as nursing homes, associations, or private organizations, that may contribute additional funds to the campaign or identify other ways to enhance the program.

For **vacancy and placement coordination**, explain how you will:

- Maintain an updated list of nursing homes with vacancies.
- Work with state agencies to understand their RN/LPN staffing needs.
- Match recruited nurses to the nursing home or state agency that best aligns with their work preferences and location.

For **RN/LPN employment qualifications**, explain how you will:

- Identify RN/LPNs who meet licensure requirements.
- Identify and hire RNs/LPNs who will work a minimum of 30 hours, on average, per week each quarter.
- Identify and hire direct employees of nursing homes or state agencies.

Alternative options (optional)

Please also provide any additional suggestions, recommendations, and rationales for the following **alternative options**. CMS will make a final decision about these items before the start of the recruitment period, and all recipients will operate under these decisions.

- Provide any additional suggestions to CMS on methods for identifying qualifying nursing homes in high-labor-shortage areas.
- Currently, RNs/LPNs with any student loan debt for education related to licensure are eligible for this program, regardless of when they obtained their degree or license. Please provide recommendations and rationales for any alternatives, such as whether there should be a time limit for when a nurse obtained their degree or license to qualify for this program (for example, within the last 12 months).
- Currently, RNs/LPNs who have obtained their license in the previous 12 months but do not have student loan debt are still eligible for the stipend for the same three-year commitment. We are soliciting alternative options from applicants for this component. Please provide any recommendations for alternative options.
- We are soliciting feedback on the eligibility of nurses who started working at a nursing home or state agency shortly before the program started. Please provide any feedback you may have on whether excluding them from eligibility may cause unintended issues.
 - For example: Would they leave their current employer because they are disappointed that someone who started shortly after them was able to obtain a financial incentive? Would they seek to work in another nursing home or state agency to obtain the financial incentive, creating a vacancy at their original employer?
 - Conversely, we're concerned that allowing them to qualify is not consistent with the intent of the program, which is to recruit new nurses to work in nursing homes and state agencies.
 - If we make these nurses eligible, would there be a timeframe that they must have started working, such as in the last three months? Would they qualify for the full incentive or a portion?

Criteria	Points (Maximum = 25)
<p>You clearly describe how you would implement all of the following items in a manner that would result in a reasonable degree of success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure setup: A clear description of the steps that are needed to set up an efficient and effective infrastructure. • Recruitment activities: A clear description of the actions that you will take to maximize nurse recruitment, such as coordination with nursing schools or nurses, promotional activities, and communication actions. • Financial incentive administration: A clear description of how you will administer the financial incentives to RNs/LPNs, including systems for processing nurse applicants, tracking and verifying licensure/credentials, how RNs/LPNs will be qualified, how you will verify loan debt, and how you will verify employment for the duration of the work commitment. • Stakeholder collaboration: A clear description of how you will communicate with and obtain information from nursing homes and state agencies, such as maintaining an up-to-date status of their RN/LPN staffing needs and matching recruited nurses to the nursing home or state agency that best aligns with their work preferences and location. 	21 to 25 points
<p>You clearly describe how you would implement three of the four items in the previous list in a manner that would result in a reasonable degree of success. The remaining item is described less clearly, but it is likely to be implemented with a reasonable degree of success.</p>	16 to 20 points
<p>You clearly describe how you would implement two of the four items in the previous list in a manner that would result in a reasonable degree of success. The remaining items are described less clearly, but are likely to be implemented with a reasonable degree of success.</p>	11 to 15 points
<p>You clearly describe how you would implement one of the four items in the previous list in a manner that would result in a reasonable degree of success. The remaining items are described less clearly, and it is not clear if they would be implemented with a reasonable degree of success.</p>	6 to 10 points
<p>You do not clearly describe how you would implement any of the four items in the previous list in a manner that would result in a reasonable degree of success.</p>	0 to 5 points

Timeline and milestones

In your application, describe the timeline to complete infrastructure setup, begin and complete recruitment, and complete all other required milestones within the period of performance.

Criteria	Points (Maximum = 20)
<p>The application includes all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A timeline that indicates that the infrastructure will be set up in six months or less. • A timeline that indicates the recruitment period will start in six months or less. It's plausible for some recruitment to begin prior to the completion of the infrastructure setup. • Specific milestones for all actions you will complete throughout the program period. The actions are supported by a rationale for how they will result in an estimated number of RNs/LPNs who will be recruited at different points throughout the recruitment period. 	16 to 20 points
<p>The application includes all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A timeline that indicates the infrastructure will be set up in six to nine months. • A timeline that indicates the recruitment period will start in six to nine months. • Specific milestones for all actions you will complete throughout the period of performance. The actions are supported by a rationale for how they will result in an estimated number of RNs/LPNs who will be recruited at different points throughout the recruitment period. 	11 to 15 points
<p>The application includes one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A timeline that indicates the infrastructure will be set up in nine months or more. • A timeline that indicates the recruitment period will start in nine months or more. • Specific milestones for many actions you will complete throughout the period of performance. Most of the actions are supported by a rationale for how they will result in an estimated number of RNs/LPNs who will be recruited at different points throughout the recruitment period. 	6 to 10 points

Criteria	Points (Maximum = 20)
<p>The application includes one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A timeline that indicates the infrastructure will be set up in nine months or more. • A timeline that indicates the recruitment period will start in nine months or more. <p>Additionally, the application includes few specific milestones for actions that will be completed throughout the period of performance. Most of the actions are not supported by a rationale for how they will result in an estimated number of RNs/LPNs who will be recruited at different points throughout the recruitment period.</p>	0 to 5 points

Communications plan

You should propose how you will structure your communications to CMS, including meeting all the expectations for meetings and reporting.

Criteria	Points (Maximum = 10)
<p>The communications plan clearly describes how you will meet the expectations for meetings and reporting, such as a detailed description or template of the reports, the metrics you will report, and how you will use the metrics to guide future actions.</p>	6 to 10 points
<p>The communications plan partially describes how you will meet the expectations for meetings and reporting, such as a general description or template of the reports, the metrics you will report, and how you will use the metrics to guide future actions.</p>	1 to 5 points
<p>The communications plan does not adequately describe how you will meet the expectations for meetings and reporting, such as a general description or template of the reports, the metrics you will report, or how you will use the metrics to guide future actions.</p>	0 points

Budget narrative

The budget narrative supports the information you provide in Standard Form 424-A. See [other required forms](#).

It includes added detail and justifies the costs you ask for. As you develop your budget, consider:

- If the costs are reasonable and consistent with your project's purpose and activities
- The restrictions on spending funds. See [funding policies and limitations](#).
- HHS now uses the definitions for [equipment](#) and [supplies](#) in 2 CFR 200.1. The new definitions change the threshold for equipment to the lesser of the recipient's capitalization level or \$10,000 and the threshold for supplies to below that amount.

To create your budget narrative, see [detailed instructions and a template](#) on our website.

In your budget narrative, you will:

- Identify a principal investigator/project director (PI/PD) who will dedicate sufficient time and effort to manage and provide oversight of the grant program. Sufficient time and effort are defined as the time and effort required to successfully fulfill all program requirements and expectations as well as meet the project goals. You must justify the time committed as necessary to meet this threshold. CMS reserves the right to require additional time.
 - Include a yearly breakdown of costs for each line item in your SF-424A.
 - Describe the proposed costs for each activity or cost within the line item.
 - Define the proportion of the requested funding designated for each activity.
 - Justify the costs, including how you calculated them.
 - Explain how you separate costs and funding administered directly by you as the lead agency, from funding you subcontract or subaward to other partners.
 - Be clear about how costs link to each activity and the goals of this program.

To create your SF-424A and budget narrative, see detailed instructions in [Guidance for Preparing a Budget Request and Narrative](#) on our website.

Note: You must describe the percent and amount of funds you will use for the administrative activities to set up the infrastructure, and separately, the percent and amount of funds for the administrative activities to manage the ongoing operations of the program. We strongly prefer lower administrative costs to allow for the maximum amount of distribution to as many RNs/LPNs as possible. This should be clear in your budget and budget narrative. As noted above, based on CMS's estimates, you should target administrative costs to be approximately 15% or lower out of the total funding.

Recipients will receive \$1,760,000 to \$20,000,000 per region per applicant over a five-year period of performance. You must provide the amount of funding needed for each of the five years.

- For year one, you must describe the percent and amount of funds you will use for the administrative activities needed to set up the infrastructure, the percent and amount of funds for the administrative activities needed to manage the ongoing operations of the program, and the remaining funds used for the financial incentives for nurses. In your description of activities needed to set up the infrastructure, you must identify the costs associated with developing, purchasing, or maintaining a technology system that will be used for nurses to apply for financial incentives, to verify nurse licensure, verify student loan debt, confirm eligibility for payment by verifying that the nurse is working in a qualifying nursing home, and distributing payments.
- For years two through five, you must provide the percent and amount of funds for the administrative activities needed to manage the ongoing operations of the program and the remaining funds used for the financial incentives for nurses. You must provide this for each year.
- When providing the percent and amount of funds for administrative activities, both infrastructure setup and ongoing operations, you should specify the amount of funds going to each activity, such as for staff and their roles/activities, and for technology systems.

Note: CMS may remove the expectation that FIAs distribute payments, and instead have them work with CMS and its partners to have payments distributed to nurses through another method or entity. In this case, FIA costs associated with distributing payments would be removed.

Note: CMS may require all FIAs to use the same technology system to create consistency for the program and for nurses throughout the country. CMS may

also provide the system, in which case FIA costs associated with developing, purchasing, or maintaining the system would be removed.

Contingent funding: When the period of performance begins, funds will only be released to recipients for infrastructure setup based on their approved proposal. We will approve and release funding for ongoing administrative costs and financial incentives for nurses based on the completion of the infrastructure setup, or assured completion (for example, an FIA demonstrates that they will complete their infrastructure setup on time through completing several components of that infrastructure on time).

Scoring criteria

Criteria: Budget and administrative costs	Points (Maximum = 20)
<p>All of the following are true:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All costs in the budget narrative are reasonable and consistent with the project's purpose and activities. • The budget narrative clearly explains the rationale for all costs and is consistent with the project's purpose and activities, including the costs to support each year, activity, and key milestones. <p>So that more funds will be available for RN/LPN incentives, we will prioritize applicants who achieve budget narrative scores that are at or near the maximum point range while also maintaining low administrative costs. Based on CMS's estimates, you should target administrative costs to be approximately 15% or lower out of the total funding.</p>	16 to 20 points
<p>All of the following are true:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most costs in the budget narrative are reasonable and consistent with the project's purpose and activities. Some costs seem higher than needed. • The budget narrative clearly explains the rationale for most costs and is consistent with the project's purpose and activities, including the costs to support each year and most activities and key milestones. For some costs the rationale is not clear, and some costs don't align with some activities or milestones. • Administrative costs are slightly low (not as low as they could be, but still moderate). 	11 to 15 points
<p>One or more of the following are true:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some costs in the budget narrative are reasonable and consistent with the project's purpose and activities. Some 	6 to 10 points

Criteria: Budget and administrative costs	Points (Maximum = 20)
<p>costs seem higher than needed and a few costs seem excessive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The budget narrative clearly explains the rationale for some costs and is consistent with the project's purpose and activities, including the costs to support each year and some activities or key milestones. For several costs the rationale is not clear, and some costs don't align with some activities or milestones. Administrative costs are slightly high. 	
<p>One or more of the following is true:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few or no costs in the budget narrative are reasonable and consistent with the project's purpose and activities. Some costs seem higher than needed and several costs seem excessive. The budget narrative does not clearly explain the rationale for most costs and is not consistent with the project's purpose or activities. The budget does not include the costs to support each year and many of the activities or key milestones. Administrative costs are high or excessive. 	0 to 5 points

Required format for budget narrative

Page limit: 10

File name: Budget Narrative

File format: PDF

Font size: 12-point font

Font color: Black

Margins: 1-inch

Page Size: 8.5 x 11

Include consecutive page numbers throughout.

Attachments

You will upload attachments in Grants.gov using the Other Attachments form.

Indirect cost agreement

If you include indirect costs in your budget using an approved rate or cost allocation plan, include a copy of your current agreement approved by your cognizant agency for indirect costs. If you use the *de minimis* rate, you do not need to submit this attachment.

Proof of nonprofit status

If your organization is a nonprofit, you need to attach proof. We will accept any of the following:

- A copy of a current tax exemption certificate from the IRS.
- A letter from your state's tax department, attorney general, or another state official saying that your group is a nonprofit and that none of your net earnings go to private shareholders or others.
- A certified copy of your certificate of incorporation. This document must show that your group is a nonprofit.
- Any of these documents for a parent organization. Also include a statement signed by an official of the parent group stating that your organization is a nonprofit affiliate.

Resume and job descriptions

For key personnel, attach resumes for positions that are filled. If a position isn't filled, attach the job description with qualifications.

Business assessment of applicant organization

Maximum 12 pages, single-spaced.

We must assess your organization's risk before we can make an award. This analysis includes your organization's:

- Financial stability.
- Quality of management systems.
- Internal controls.
- Ability to meet the management standards in 2 CFR Part 200.

For us to complete your assessment, you must review, answer, and attach the completed business assessment questions found in [Business Assessment of Applicant Organization \[PDF\]](#) on our website.

Other required forms

You will need to complete some other required forms. Submit the following required forms through Grants.gov. You can find them in the NOFO [application package](#) or review them and their instructions at [Grants.gov Forms](#).

Form	Submission requirement
Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)	With the application. See extra instructions for the SF-424 in the next section.
Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)	With the application.
Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL)	With the application.
Project/Performance Site Location(s) Form	With the application.

Extra instructions for SF-424: Application for Federal Assistance

Special instructions include:

- Check No to item 19c. State that [review under Executive Order 12372](#) does not apply.
- Your authorized organizational representative (AOR) must electronically sign this form. The AOR is the person who can make legally binding commitments for your organization. When the AOR authorizes an application, they agree to assume all award obligations.

Important: Public information

When filling out your SF-424 form, pay attention to Box 15: Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project.

We share what you put there with [USA Spending](#). This is where the public goes to learn how the federal government spends their money.

Instead of just a title, insert a short description of your project and what it will do.

[See instructions and examples \[PDF\]](#). You can also see [Writing a Strong Descriptive Title](#) on our website.

Pre-award requirements

There are no pre-award requirements for this funding opportunity.



Step 4:

Understand Review, Selection, and Award

In this step

Application review [49](#)

Award notices [51](#)

Application review

Initial review

We review each application to make sure it meets basic requirements.

We will review your application to make sure that it meets both the completeness criteria and the responsiveness criteria. If your application does not meet these criteria, we will not move it to the merit review phase.

We will not review any pages that exceed the page limit.

Scoring process

A merit review panel reviews all applications that pass the initial completeness and responsiveness review. The panel members use the following criteria. For more information, see [Merit Review and Selection Process](#) on our website.

See the project narrative and budget narrative sections to see the specific criteria that apply to each.

Criterion	Total number of points = 100
Experience and competency	25 points
Operational proposal	25 points
Timeline and milestones	20 points
Communications plan	10 points
Budget narrative and administrative costs	20 points

We do not consider voluntary cost sharing during merit review.

Risk review

Before making an award, we review the risk that you will mismanage federal funds or fail to complete the project objectives. We need to make sure you've handled any past federal awards well and demonstrated sound business practices.

We use [SAM.gov](#) Responsibility/Qualification to check this history for all awards likely to be over \$350,000. We also check Exclusions.

If we find a significant risk, we may choose not to fund your application or to place specific conditions on the award.

You can see more details about risk review at [2 CFR 200.206](#).

Selection process

CMS selects recipients at our sole discretion unless the authorizing statute says otherwise. Our selections are not subject to administrative or judicial review, per [Section 1115A\(d\)\(2\)\(B\) of the Social Security Act](#).

When making funding decisions, we consider:

- Merit review results. These are key in making decisions but are not the only factor.
- The larger portfolio of agency-funded projects, including project type and geographic distribution.
- The past performance of the applicant. We may choose not to fund applicants with management or financial problems.

We may:

- Fund applications in whole or in part.
- Fund applications at a lower amount than requested.
- Decide not to allow a prime recipient to subaward if they may not be able to monitor and manage subrecipients properly.
- Choose to fund no applications under this NOFO.

Award notices

If you are successful, your authorized organizational representative (AOR) will receive an email notification from GrantSolutions. You can then retrieve your Notice of Award (NoA). We will email you if your application is incomplete or unresponsive.

The NoA is the only official award document. The NoA tells you about the amount of the award, important dates, and the terms and conditions you need to follow. Until you receive the NoA, you don't have permission to start work.

By drawing down funds, you accept the terms and conditions of the award. The NoA incorporates the requirements of the program and funding authorities, the grant regulations, the [HHS Grants Policy Statement \(GPS\) \[PDF\]](#), and the NOFO.

If you want to know more about NoA contents, go to [Notice of Award](#) on our website.



Step 5:

Submit Your Application

In this step

Application submission and deadlines

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Application submission and deadlines

See [Find the application package](#) to make sure you have everything you need.

Make sure you are current with SAM.gov and UEI requirements. See [Get registered](#). You will have to maintain your registration throughout the life of any award.

Optional letter of intent

Due by February 20, 2026

We ask that you let us know if you plan to apply for this opportunity. We do this to plan for the number of expert reviewers needed to evaluate applications. You do not have to submit a letter of intent to apply.

Please email the letter to NHSC@cms.hhs.gov.

In your email, include:

- The funding opportunity number and title.
- Your organization's name and address.
- A contact name, phone number, and email address.
- An expression of interest.
- The preferred regions of participation.
- A brief description of your organization, including information demonstrating that you meet the eligibility criteria and do not meet any of the eligibility limitations.

Informational webinar

Date: February 25, 2026

The webinar is **for eligible applicants only** to ensure there is enough opportunity for applicants to ask questions. Please let us know if you plan to attend the webinar by **February 20, 2026**. Applicants can also request to attend the webinar through the optional letter of intent.

Please email your request to NHSC@cms.hhs.gov. In your email, include:

- Your organization's name and address.
- A brief description of your organization.
- A contact name, phone number, and email address.

- Proof of eligibility and a short summary of your experience working with nursing schools and nurses.
- Additional webinar attendees' names and contact information (up to three).

Application

Due by Friday, March 27, 2026, no later than 11:59 p.m. ET.

Grants.gov creates a date and time record when it receives the application. If you submit the same application more than once, we will accept the last on-time submission.

The grants management officer may extend an application due date based on emergency situations such as documented natural disasters or a verifiable widespread disruption of electric or mail service.

Grants.gov submissions

You must submit your application through Grants.gov unless we give you an exemption for a paper submission. [See Get registered.](#)

For instructions on how to submit in Grants.gov, see the [Quick Start Guide for Applicants](#). Make sure your application passes the Grants.gov validation checks. Do not encrypt, zip, or password protect any files.

Intergovernmental review

Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs does not apply to this. You do not need to take any action other than checking "No" on the [SF-424 box 19c](#).

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Step 6:

Learn What Happens After Award

In this step

Post-award requirements and administration [56](#)

Post-award requirements and administration

Administrative and national policy requirements

There are important rules you need to know if you get an award. You must follow:

- All terms and conditions in the Notice of Award. We incorporate this NOFO by reference.
- The rules listed in [2 CFR 200](#), Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements. As of October 1, 2025, HHS adopted 2 CFR 200, with some modifications included in 2 CFR 300. These regulations replace those in 45 CFR 75.
- The HHS [Grants Policy Statement \(GPS\)](#). This document has terms and conditions tied to your award. If there are any exceptions to the GPS, they'll be listed in your Notice of Award.
- All federal statutes and regulations relevant to federal financial assistance, including those highlighted in the [HHS Administrative and National Policy Requirements \[PDF\]](#).
- All anti-discrimination laws: By applying for or accepting federal funds from HHS, recipients certify compliance with all federal antidiscrimination laws and these requirements and that complying with those laws is a material condition of receiving federal funding streams. Recipients are responsible for ensuring subrecipients, contractors, and partners also comply.
 - Health information technology (IT) interoperability requirements (see the [Health information technology section](#) for more information).

Reporting

If you are successful, you will have to submit financial and performance reports. Reporting requirements include:

- Progress reports.
- Federal Financial Report (FFR).
- Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA).
- SAM.gov Responsibility/Qualification records.
- Payment Management System (PMS).
- Audit reporting (Federal Audit Clearinghouse).
- Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility, and Voluntary Exclusion Certification.

For more information on reporting, see [Post-Award Reporting Requirements](#) on our website.

Continued eligibility

Continued funding is contingent on the availability of funds, program authority, satisfactory performance, and compliance with the terms and conditions of the federal award.

For CMS to issue you continuation funding, you must demonstrate satisfactory progress. If we issue all the funding in the first year, then you must continue to show satisfactory progress to maintain access to your funds.

At any time, we could decrease funding or terminate your award if you fail to perform the requirements of the award. See [2 CFR 200.340](#), Termination.

Satisfactory progress for selected award recipients includes, but is not limited to:

- You adhere to the proposed timeline and milestones in the approved application.
- The number of RNs and LPNs you recruit is similar to the number of RNs and LPNs you estimated you would recruit in the approved application.
- You adhere to the proposed budget in the approved application.
- You conduct activities related to all of the components in the program requirements.

Non-competing continuation application (NCC)

Recipients will be required to submit NCCs annually for the duration of the five-year period of performance. CMS will provide instructions in the Notice of Award Terms and Conditions.

Recipients may use the NCC to adjust their budgets or make other administrative changes. Recipients will be allowed to revise their project goals in accordance with any reductions in funding.

Health information technology

If you receive an award, you must agree to the conditions stated at [CMS's Notice of Award site](#) when implementing, acquiring, or upgrading health IT and the required standards support a related activity. These conditions also apply to all subrecipients.

Cybersecurity requirements

You must create a cybersecurity plan if your project involves both of the following conditions:

- You have ongoing access to HHS information or technology systems.
- You handle personal identifiable information (PII) or personal health information (PHI) from HHS.

See the [HHS Administrative and National Policy Requirements \[PDF\]](#) for fuller information.



Contacts and Support

In this step

Agency contacts	<u>60</u>
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Reference websites	<u>60</u>

Agency contacts

Program and eligibility

Donna Williamson

NHSC@cms.hhs.gov

Financial and budget

Monica B. Anderson

NHSC@cms.hhs.gov

Review process and application status

Monica B. Anderson

NHSC@cms.hhs.gov

Help with systems

Grants.gov

Grants.gov provides 24/7 support. Hold on to your ticket number.

- Phone: 1-800-518-4726
- Email: support@grants.gov

SAM.gov

If you need help, you can:

- Call 866-606-8220.
- Live chat with the [Federal Service Desk](#).

Reference websites

- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#)
- [CMS Grants and Cooperative Agreements](#)
- [Grants.gov Accessibility Information](#)
- [Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\)](#)
- [United States Code \(U.S.C.\)](#)

Appendix A: Estimated number of qualified nursing homes in each state

Note: These estimates are preliminary and will likely increase. You should base their estimates on the amount of funds available and assume more nursing homes will qualify as eligible. For example, you could estimate how many LPNs, two-year RNs, and four-year RNs you plan to recruit based on the funding available for each type of nurse (see [Program requirements and expectations, Financial incentive administration](#)), minus administrative costs. Of the total funding, CMS estimates administrative costs should be approximately 15% or lower.

State	Number of qualified nursing homes
AK	10
AL	91
AR	119
AZ	25
CA	244
CO	55
CT	11
DC	17
DE	7
FL	161
GA	145
HI	12
IA	76
ID	39

State	Number of qualified nursing homes
IL	45
IN	181
KS	13
KY	144
LA	76
MA	86
MD	78
ME	33
MI	23
MN	46
MO	201
MS	132
MT	46
NC	62
ND	51
NE	115
NH	35
NJ	87
NM	40
NV	10
NY	73
OH	61
OK	154
OR	32
PA	41
PR	9

State	Number of qualified nursing homes
RI	18
SD	67
SC	40
TN	131
TX	231
UT	18
VA	129
VT	26
WA	49
WI	139
WV	65
WY	17
Total	3,626