

Questions and Answers for CE-22-010 (Rigorous Evaluation of Strategies to Prevent Overdose through Linking People with Illicit Substance Use Disorders to Recovery Support Services)

1. **Question:** Would an application that proposes to link families who have been affected by addiction to equine therapy and evaluate the effectiveness of equine therapy meet the scientific intent of this NOFO?

- a. **Answer:** It is incumbent upon the applicant to demonstrate to the scientific and technical merit peer reviewers that the application proposes to link and evaluate an evidence-based recovery support service in alignment with the scientific intent of the NOFO. Per Section I Funding Opportunity Description, 2. Approach of the NOFO: “**Connecting** people to existing services can help to maximize the use of services already available within a community. This approach may help to inform translation to other communities. Such strategies can also help to address structural inequalities. Outcome evaluations should examine the effectiveness of the linkage strategies that facilitate access to an individualized recovery ecosystem on key health outcomes, including, but not limited to, maintaining recovery, re-linking people with care, and preventing overdose.” For this NOFO, “applicants are expected to propose research that links, or re-links, people to recovery support services across the social ecology and link, or re-link, people to at least one recovery support service that is evidence-based.”

We advise applicants to thoroughly read Section I. Funding Opportunity Description of the NOFO for more information about the background and purpose of the NOFO, intent and objectives of the NOFO, and guidance on the type of research being solicited. The focus of this NOFO is on “on understanding the effectiveness of evidenced-based strategies to link people who are in recovery, or re-link people following resumption of illicit substance use, to services across the social ecology that are available in their community to comprise a recovery ecosystem tailored to the needs of the individual” and is intended to support research that “Conduct a process and outcome evaluation of linkage strategies, programs, or policies that link people in recovery for illicit substance use disorders to at least one evidence-based recovery support service available within their community and, if needed, re-link people to such services following resumption of illicit substance use.”

We also advise applicants to review Section III. Eligibility Information 5. Responsiveness for additional information on responsiveness criteria for this NOFO. Please note that one responsiveness criterion is the following: “Applications that do not propose the implementation of linkage strategies, programs, or policies that link people in recovery for illicit substance used disorders to at least one recovery support service, as evidenced in the Research Strategy section of the application’s research plan, will be considered nonresponsive and will not be forwarded for peer review.”

2. **Question:** Would an application proposing to develop and evaluate a hybrid intervention-based treatment and linkage model meet the scientific intent of this NOFO?

- a. **Answer:** An application proposing to develop and evaluate a hybrid treatment and linkage model can meet the scientific intent of the NOFO, **provided that** the application proposes to conduct a process and outcome evaluation of linkage strategies, programs, or policies that link people in recovery for illicit substance use disorders to at least one evidence-based recovery support service. Per [Section I. Funding Opportunity Information](#), this NOFO is intended to support research that conducts “a process and outcome evaluation of linkage strategies, programs, or policies that link people in recovery for illicit substance use disorders to at least one evidence-based recovery support service available within their community and, if needed, re-link people to such services following resumption of illicit substance use.”

In [Section I. Funding Opportunity Description, 2. Approach](#), the NOFO specifies that “Applicants are expected to propose research that links, or re-links, people to recovery support services across the social ecology and link, or re-link, people to at least one recovery support service that is evidence-based. In addition, applicants are expected to propose research linking, or re-linking, people to recovery support services that create a recovery ecosystem that goes beyond solely providing medical services such as inpatient or outpatient treatment for substance use, mental health conditions or other medical problems” and “Applications that solely evaluate the effectiveness of a public safety program without also including, as a primary aim, evaluation of at least one public health component focused on linking people in recovery for illicit substance use disorders to recovery support services, as evidenced by the Research Strategy section of the application’s research plan, will be considered nonresponsive and will not be forwarded for peer review.”

It will be incumbent on the applicant to demonstrate to the scientific and technical merit peer reviewers that the application meets the intention and objectives of the NOFO. Please review [Section I. Funding Opportunity Description, 1. Background and Purpose](#) and [2. Approach](#) while considering your research goals. Please review [Section III. Eligibility Information, 5 Responsiveness](#) and [Section V. Application Review Information](#) for information on how the applications will be reviewed.

3. **Question:** Would research that seeks to examine the efficacy of different types of linkages in multiple populations be consistent with the intention of this NOFO?
- a. **Answer:** An application that seeks to examine the efficacy of different types of linkages in different populations could meet the scientific intent of the NOFO, **provided that** the application proposes to conduct a process and outcome evaluation of linkage strategies, programs, or policies that link people in recovery for illicit substance use disorders to at least one evidence-based recovery support services. Per [Section I. Funding Opportunity Information](#), this NOFO is intended to support research that conducts “a process and outcome evaluation of linkage strategies, programs, or policies that link people in recovery for illicit substance use disorders to at least one evidence-based recovery support service available within their community and, if needed, re-link people to such services following resumption of illicit substance use.”

Additionally, per [Section I. Funding Opportunity Description](#): “Applicants are also encouraged to examine aspects of the linkage strategy approach, such as implementation and cost, as well as the effectiveness of the approach by subgroups, such as groups

disproportionately affected by illicit substance use and overdose (including but not limited to those experiencing reduced economic stability; people experiencing homelessness, a mental health condition, chronic pain, incarceration or recent release from incarceration, limited educational attainment, access or quality, limited healthcare access or quality, limited access to substance use treatment or limited health literacy; people with disabilities; people from non-English speaking populations, tribal populations, rural communities and other geographically underserved areas, racial/ethnic minority groups, sexual and gender minority groups, people with a history of substance use disorders and/or overdose).”

It will be incumbent on the applicant to demonstrate to the scientific and technical merit peer reviewers that the application meets the intention and objectives of the NOFO. Please review [Section I. Funding Opportunity Description, 1. Background and Purpose and 2. Approach](#) while considering your research goals. Please review [Section III. Eligibility Information, 5 Responsiveness and Section V. Application Review Information](#) for information on how the applications will be reviewed.

4. **Question:** Would a Hybrid Type 1 implementation trial or a mixed-methods approach be acceptable study methods for this funding announcement?
 - a. **Answer:** It will be incumbent on the applicant to propose a rigorous evaluation design and provide data analytic plans that are analytic plans appropriate to the research design and hypotheses. Per [Section I. Funding Opportunity Description, 2. Approach](#) applicants are “expected to propose a rigorous evaluation design: experimental (i.e., randomized controlled trials) and quasi-experimental designs (e.g., designs involving matched comparison groups, designs using propensity-score matching, instrumental variable methods, regression point displacement, regression discontinuity, or time series designs) methods. All applications are expected to provide data analytic plans that are appropriate to the linkage strategy, research design, hypotheses, data collection measures, and project period. Investigators are expected to anticipate, evaluate, and address threats to the internal and external validity of the specified research design.”
5. **Question:** Would an application that proposes to link and evaluate a recovery support service in a major city be sufficient, or does the NOFO require evaluation of a larger geographic region?
 - a. **Answer:** An application may propose to link and evaluate a recovery support service at the local or regional level, **provided that** the Research Strategy focuses on communities experiencing **disproportionate burden** of illicit substance use and overdose. Per [Section I. Funding Opportunity Description, 2. Approach](#) “NCIPC intends to fund applications that focus on communities experiencing **disproportionate burden** of illicit substance use and overdose (including but not limited to those experiencing reduced economic stability; people experiencing homelessness, a mental health condition, chronic pain, incarceration or recent release from incarceration, limited educational attainment, access or quality, limited healthcare access or quality, limited access to substance use treatment or limited health literacy; people with disabilities; people from non-English speaking populations, tribal populations, rural communities and other geographically underserved areas, racial/ethnic minority groups, sexual and gender minority groups, people with a history of substance use disorders and/or overdose).”

We also advise the applicant to review the “Target Population” section of [Section I. Funding Opportunity Description, 2. Approach](#). The target population of focus for this NOFO is the

following: “The target population includes youth or adults with illicit substance use disorders, regardless of where they are in the process of recovery. People at higher risk of overdose may also be considered, including people with past nonfatal overdoses and incarcerated populations. Research focused on communities experiencing disproportionate burden of illicit substance use and overdose (including but not limited to those experiencing reduced economic stability; people experiencing homelessness, a mental health condition, chronic pain, incarceration or recent release from incarceration, limited educational attainment, access or quality, limited healthcare access or quality, limited access to substance use treatment or limited health literacy; people with disabilities; people from non-English speaking populations, tribal populations, rural communities and other geographically underserved areas, racial/ethnic minority groups, sexual and gender minority groups, people with a history of substance use disorders and/or overdose) is encouraged. **Research that examines effectiveness of strategies in high burden areas (e.g., identified through high overdose rates or vulnerability assessments) or that addresses health equity and is tailored for populations at greatest risk or with least access is also encouraged.**”

6. **Question:** What is the expected sample size a research proposal should consider for their proposal?
- a. **Answer:** There are no specific requirements related to sample size for this NOFO. The applicant is encouraged to review the Section I. Funding Opportunity Description, 2. Approach that states that applicants are “expected to propose a rigorous evaluation design: experimental (i.e., randomized controlled trials) and quasi-experimental designs (e.g., designs involving matched comparison groups, designs using propensity-score matching, instrumental variable methods, regression point displacement, regression discontinuity, or time series designs) methods. All applications are expected to provide data analytic plans that are appropriate to the linkage strategy, research design, hypotheses, data collection measures, and project period. Investigators are expected to anticipate, evaluate, and address threats to the internal and external validity of the specified research design” and that “Applications should clearly describe and justify the proposed sampling methods, sample size, power estimates, and data collection methods for the primary outcome(s), at a minimum, and other proposed secondary measures and subgroup analyses.”

Additionally, we encourage the applicant to review Section V. Application Review Information, 1. Criteria. Please note that under the “Approach” section, the following will be considered in the review process “Does the application’s proposed strategy assure sample retention and adequate statistical power to produce meaningful results, including for subpopulations?”

7. **Question:** How do I submit a letter of intent? What format is required for the letter of intent?
- a. **Answer:** Please review Section IV. 3. Letter of intent which includes more information about the type of information to include for the letter of intent and submission guidance.
8. **Question:** Would an evaluation of the efficacy of two types of recovery support services be consistent with the intent of the funding announcement?
- a. **Answer:** Research projects that focus on evaluating the efficacy of different types of recovery support services **do not** meet the intent of the funding announcement. The focus of this funding announcement is “on understanding the effectiveness of strategies to **link** people who are in recovery, or **re-link** people following resumption of illicit substance use, to recovery support services.” The purpose of the NOFO is not to evaluate the recovery

support services themselves, but rather strategies that link people in recovery to such services or relink people who have resumed substance use to such services. It will be incumbent on the applicant to demonstrate to the reviewers that the application meets the intention and objectives of the NOFO.

Please review Section I. Funding Opportunity Description, 1. Background and Purpose and 2. Approach while considering your research goals. Also, please review Section III. Eligibility Information, 5 Responsiveness and Section V. Application Review Information for information on how the applications will be reviewed.