

## Rural & Medically Underserved Area Grant Opportunity

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (“SCDHHS” or “Agency”) is accepting applications for the fiscal year (FY) 2024 Rural & Medically Underserved Area Grant Opportunity.

The purpose of this program is to provide support to rural and medically underserved areas through the creation and/or improvement of facilities that provide healthcare services to residents of those areas.

RFA Reference Number	SCDHHS-23-002
Anticipated Total Funding	\$15,000,000
Estimated Award Amount	Up to \$3,000,000
Cost Sharing/Match Required	No
RFA Posting Date	10/9/2023
Question Due Date	10/27/2023
Application Due Date	12/4/2023
Anticipated Notice of Award	2/2/2024
Service	Infrastructure/Construction
Issuing Agency	South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
E-mail for Questions and Submission of Application	grants@scdhhs.gov
Eligible Applicants	<p>Eligible applicants must be a public or private health care provider serving the following areas of South Carolina:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural area as designated by the Center of Rural and Primary Healthcare (CRPH) (<a href="#">Map</a>)</li> </ul> <p>AND/OR</p> <p>Medically Underserved Area (MUA) as designated by the Federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)</p>

**THIS REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)** advertises the Agency’s need for the services described herein and solicits applications offering to provide those services pursuant to the specifications, terms and conditions specified herein. Successful applicants will be required to enter into a contract with the Agency to provide such services.

**THE UNDERSIGNED HEREBY SUBMITS** the following application and certifies that (1) he or she has the authority to apply for this grant on behalf of the organization; and (2) all information provided is true and accurate to the best of Authorized Representative’s knowledge.

**TO BE COMPLETED BY APPLICANT:**

Authorized Representative		Organization:	
Title of Authorized Representative		Street Address	
Signature of Authorized Representative			
		Date	

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Grant Coordinator Name		E-mail	
Title		Phone Number	

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## 1. **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA) is to provide support to rural and medically underserved areas through the creation and/or improvement of facilities that provide healthcare services to residents of those areas. The Rural & Medically Underserved Area Grant Opportunity seeks to promote the creation and/or improvement of healthcare facilities that deliver services that are high quality, cost-effective, coordinated, and equitable in rural and medically underserved settings.

### 1.1 **Authority**

The 2023-2024 South Carolina Appropriations Act, Proviso 33.22(B) provides, “the department shall continue to investigate the potential use of disproportionate share, directed payment, and/or any other source of funds in order to improve access to medical services in one or more rural or underserved communities identified by the department in which such access has been determined to be unstable or at-risk. As funds are available to the department, it may establish a grant program for providers to implement sustainable delivery models or capital improvements to enhance access to health care services.”

SCDHHS is further instructed to develop policies and procedures as necessary to ensure accountability in the expenditures of these funds and apply for federal matching funds when appropriate and available. Reports are required to be submitted to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee on all expenditures made under this provision.

### 1.2 **Background**

#### *Objectives and Goals*

In accordance with Proviso 33.22(B) of the 2023-2024 South Carolina Appropriations Act, the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (“SCDHHS” or “Agency”) announces RFA SCDHHS-23-002 to provide support to rural and medically underserved areas through the creation and/or improvement of facilities that provide healthcare services to residents of those areas.

Specifically, program objectives include increasing access to necessary healthcare services, enhancing current services that are offered in the rural and/or medically underserved areas, and improving health outcomes for the community. To achieve these objectives, applicants are required to use an evidence-based model or promising practice to achieve the following:

- 1) Improved health outcomes,
- 2) Increased access to essential health care services (see 3.1 Services), and
- 3) Commitment to quality care.

Program activities include, but are not limited to, providing clinical health services for rural and/or medically underserved residents and conducting community health and prevention efforts for rural and/or medically underserved communities. Applicants are highly encouraged to address the underlying factors that are driving growing disparities in rural health and medically underserved areas.

SCDHHS strongly encourages applicants to form a network of community partners to help meet the needs of the target population.

The Institute of Medicine defines quality health care as care that is “safe, effective, patient centered, timely, efficient, and equitable.”<sup>1</sup> Increasing patient access is essential for rural and medically underserved communities to improve the health outcomes of these populations, reduce the overall cost of care, and address the growing health disparities. Medically Underserved Areas (MUAs) are areas designated by HRSA as having too few primary care providers, high infant mortality, high poverty or a high elderly population<sup>2</sup>. Overcoming these challenges takes collaboration of public health stakeholders and their partners to address a broader range of social determinants of health. This opportunity encourages applicants to address the underlying factors present in these communities and ultimately overcome long-standing health disparities in these areas.

#### Sustainability

SCDHHS is providing **infrastructure** funding through this grant. Applicants will be required to operate grant-funded facilities for a minimum of five (5) years.

#### Target Population

The target population to benefit from the funding received under this opportunity includes individuals who reside or receive care in rural and/or medically underserved communities. These individuals may have publicly or privately funded health insurance, or no health insurance to pay for their care.

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<sup>1</sup> Institute of Medicine (IOM). Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century. Washington, D.C: National Academy Press; 2001.

<sup>2</sup> [National Institutes of Health: Glossary](#)

## 2. **ELIGIBILITY**

Eligible applicants must be a public or private health care provider servicing the following areas of South Carolina:

- Rural area as designated by the Center of Rural and Primary Healthcare (CRPH) ([Map](#))

AND/OR

Medically Underserved Area (MUA) as designated by the Federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

## 3. **SCOPE OF WORK**

SCDHHS is providing **one-time infrastructure** funding for the provision of healthcare services for the State of South Carolina for persons who reside or receive care in rural and/or medically underserved communities.

### 3.1 **Services**

All healthcare services should focus on increasing access for individuals who reside or receive care in rural and/or medically underserved communities. Applicants may focus, but are not limited to, the following:

- Primary Care
- Maternal & Infant Care
- Pediatric Care
- Behavioral Health Care

### 3.2 **Reporting**

Grant applicants will be required to:

- a. Maintain and provide the Agency access to all relevant deidentified client-level data to link with other state-based datasets to better understand outcomes associated with services offered through this grant opportunity. This data will be provided to the Agency annually for the first five (5) years of operation. Reporting templates with guidelines and definitions will be provided to grant recipients. When providing deidentified client-level data to the Agency, applicant may submit it in a different format as long as all required fields are included, and the format has been approved by the Agency's data representative.
- b. Provide a monthly status report on project implementation to the Agency. The Agency may modify the reporting schedule to better align with the applicant's normal month-end financial cycle. The applicant, must complete a Monthly Program Plan Status Report that includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- i. A list of each type of personnel hired by the applicant for the purposes of this project. *Identify which personnel are applicant's staff and which are contractors.*
- ii. A list of all costs associated with developing and/or renovating the proposed facility, including the amount of grant funds expended since the beginning of the grant term.
- c. Report all grant expenditure information to the Agency in an Annual Fiscal Report within thirty (30) days after the end of each year of the grant term. Funds awarded to an applicant that are unspent within the grant term must be remitted to the Agency within thirty (30) days after the end of the grant term.

### **3.3 Compliance with Applicable Laws and Regulations**

Applications shall specify whether applicant intends to meet the goals above through construction and/or improvement of a healthcare facility. Facilities must be designed, constructed, and operated in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations, including state procurement laws and applicable Certificate of Need requirements.

Applicants must adhere to all SCDHHS Medicaid requirements. Applicants will be evaluated for capability and compliance prior to award and distribution of grant funds. This RFA does not commit SCDHHS to contract for any supply or service. In addition, applicants are advised that SCDHHS will not pay for any information or administrative costs incurred in response to this application; all costs associated with responding to this grant opportunity will be solely at the submitting party's expense.

## **4. ASSESSMENT OF NEED**

SCDHHS seeks to expand healthcare services in areas of greatest need throughout the state of South Carolina, specifically in rural and medically underserved areas. As stated earlier, one of SCDHHS' goals for this opportunity is to increase access to essential health care services. Successful applicants will provide **relevant data** to illustrate need and lack of access in their communities. This includes but is not limited to:

- Entirety of projected service area, to include rural areas as defined by CRPH or Medically Underserved Areas as designated by HRSA
- Expected number of new patients to be served in the new/enhanced facility;
- List of current healthcare facilities serving the population in the desired area broken down by number and type (ex. One hospital, two mental health centers, etc.); and
- General healthcare and socio-economic data specific to the proposed area(s) (ex. total population, insured status, income status, prevalence of certain health conditions, etc.).

## **5. QUALITY SERVICES**

Quality of care is another one of SCDHHS' goals in providing this opportunity. Quality healthcare must be effective, safe, people-centered, timely, equitable, integrated, and

efficient<sup>3</sup>. To ensure that quality services are provided under this grant opportunity, successful applicants will provide a continuous quality improvement plan with identifiable and quantifiable outcomes. This plan includes, but is not limited to:

- A description of how the applicant will measure improvement, giving specific quantifiable measures that need to be met; and,
- A description of how the applicant will collect, monitor, and analyze the data for success.

In addition, the application should include examples of successful quality improvement activities for the desired population group as evidenced by improved health outcomes.

Applicants are encouraged to use the [Quality Strategy Toolkit](#) and [CMCS Quality Improvement Program tools and information](#) when completing their continuous quality improvement plan.

## 6. **AWARD INFORMATION**

SCDHHS intends to issue multiple grants in varying amounts for a total of approximately \$15,000,000 under this RFA in one-time funding to support this crucial need in South Carolina.

### 6.1 **Method Of Funding**

Funding will be issued through contracts between SCDHHS and applicants selected in accordance with the process outlined in Section 8 of this RFA. In making awards, SCDHHS will consider the needs as specified in Section 4 of the RFA.

### 6.2 **Funding Limitations**

SCDHHS will fund up to \$3,000,000 per application.

### 6.3 **Applicant Cost Sharing**

This project does not require cost sharing.

### 6.4 **Prohibited Costs**

This grant provides one-time infrastructure funding for increasing healthcare access in rural and/or medically underserved areas through construction, conversion, and/or renovation, this includes equipment costs associated with the project. Operational costs may not be included.

## 7. **BUDGET**

Applicants must provide a proposed budget detailing the total funding requested under this grant opportunity using the template in Attachment I. The budget shall constitute the total cost, not to exceed \$3,000,000, to the Agency for complete performance in accordance with the requirements and specifications herein.

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<sup>3</sup> [World Health Organization](#)



## **8. APPLICATION SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

This section addresses all components SCDHHS is requesting applicants to include in the response to this RFA. Applicants must clearly demonstrate how they will meet the requirements set forth in this RFA. Applicants may provide appendices with relevant documentation, references, and other information as appropriate. Applications should be submitted in a readable PDF format. Applications should include a table of contents and page numbers on each page. Before submitting a response to this RFA, applicants should review the application, correct all errors, and confirm compliance with the grant requirements. Not complying with all the grant requirements may result in an application being rejected. Applications must be submitted on or before the due date listed on the first page of this RFA.

Applicants should submit one PDF document inclusive of the complete response to the RFA and any appendices. Applications should be submitted electronically via e-mail to: [grants@scdhhs.gov](mailto:grants@scdhhs.gov). Any e-mails sent in relation to this RFA should reference grant SCDHHS-23-002 in the subject line.

Applicants should include the following items in this order with clearly enumerated sections:

### **8.1 Grant Application Cover Sheet**

Applicants should complete and sign Page 2 of this RFA.

### **8.2 Settlement Agreements/Claims**

If the applicant has settlement agreements and/or current claims against them with any SCDHHS Medicaid member, county, or state agency in excess of \$10,000 within the last five (5) years, applicant must disclose such information as part of their application.

### **8.3 Proposal Summary**

Provide a short summary of the submission under this RFA (approximately one page). This should serve as a brief overview of the entire application and encompass all key points necessary to communicate the objectives of the project.

### **8.4 Organizational Background**

- a. Overview:** Provide a brief overview of the applicant organization, including its mission, a brief history of the applicant organization, and a description of the organization's leadership structure.
- b. Service Area:** Discuss the service areas where the applicant is currently located and providing services (including site location).

Detail any county areas (including site location) applicant intends to add for the purpose of this grant.

*Reminder that at least part of the service area must be designated as a rural or medically underserved area in accordance with the minimum requirements.*

- c. **Client-Centered and Culturally Responsive Services:** Discuss applicant's ability to provide services that are client-centered and meet the individual needs of each client and their support system. This includes use of community aligned practices and Evidenced Based Practice, as well as an explanation of language capacity and ability to provide exceptional culturally appropriate services.
- d. **Service Capacity:** Describe the organization's clinical, administrative, and managerial capacity to provide healthcare services, to include the following:
  - i. A brief overview of applicant's experience in providing the services proposed in the application. Applicants should note relevant achievements and accomplishments in these areas.
  - ii. A description and list of services the applicant intends to provide either in person or via telehealth to youth, adults and/or older adults in the State of South Carolina, including ages of the target population and the type of services provided. Highlight any service niches the applicant provides or intends to provide as part of this grant.

#### **8.5 Description of Need**

- a. **Description of Need Data:** Provide relevant data showing the need for this grant funding. This includes the data points in Section 4 but can also include other information supporting applicant's explanation of need.
- b. **Description of Need Narrative:** Describe the problem, with particular focus on what happens to patients in need of healthcare services today in applicant's community. List existing services provided by applicant, and any other providers of these services in the community. Explain how this grant will address the needs of the facility and community. Explain how grant funds will be creating and improving healthcare services rather than supplanting existing healthcare services.

#### **8.6 Service Quality**

- a. **Continuous Quality Improvement Plan\*:** Provide a copy of the applicant's continuous quality improvement plan. This includes the elements identified in Section 5 but can also include other information supporting the applicant's plan to provide quality health services.
- b. **Demonstrated Successful Quality Improvement Activities:** Provide a list of current successful quality improvement activities the applicant has implemented including the improved health outcomes. These activities should be inclusive of the population the applicant is seeking to serve through this opportunity.

\*Applicants are encouraged to use the [Quality Strategy Toolkit](#) and [CMCS Quality Improvement Program tools and information](#) when completing their continuous quality improvement plan.

### **8.7 Implementation Plan**

- a. Project Description:** Provide a thorough description of the planned project if awarded grant funding. Include the proposed location, anticipated volume and rationale for the services and facility size. State clearly where applicant is adding a new facility and/or renovating existing facility.
- b. Conceptual Site Plan:** Provide a site plan illustrating the additions/renovations as listed in the Project Description.
- c. Goals and Objectives:** Detail the goals and objectives of this project. These should be SMART, i.e., specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound. This description of applicant's goals and objectives for this project should expand upon the stated goals of the Agency in issuing this RFA as listed in Section 1.2.
- d. Timeline:** Provide a workplan and timeline detailing the length of time the organization would need to commence delivering the services listed in the SOW above. SCDHHS understands that the timeline will be dependent upon the scope of the project, and applicants should present the most accurate possible timeline to reflect their proposed project.
- e. Key Partners:** Provide information on any local providers, state agencies, or other entities that applicant intends to establish or has already established partnerships with to further the goals of this grant.
- f. Relevant Technology:** Describe relevant technology the applicant anticipates using to meet the reporting requirements as described in Section 3.2.

### **8.8 Sustainability**

Explain how applicant intends to ensure future success and continuity of this project beyond the grant funding. This includes details on organizational contribution, anticipated revenues, grants, partnerships, and referrals.

### **8.9 Budget**

- a. Budget:** Provide a budget proposal detailing the total grant funding requested using the Budget Template attached as Attachment I. There is no guarantee that the amount proposed will be the amount awarded. SCDHHS may work with applicants to refine awards based on need and other relevant factors.
- b. Budget Narrative:** Explain how the numbers in the budget were calculated and how expenditures relate to the proposed project. Provide information for the Agency to determine expenditures are reasonable and permissible.

### **8.10 Letters of Support**

Provide a letter of support from the CEO and/or an internal board of directors/advisory entity, as well as a professional/community partner. SCDHHS requests each applicant provide at least two (2) letters of support.

## 9. EVALUATION AND SCORING

Applicants must meet the criteria listed in Section 2 to be considered for evaluation. Any applicant that does not meet the listed criteria may be disqualified from consideration.

### 9.1 Review Process

Applications meeting the initial criteria will be reviewed and scored by a review panel. The evaluation panel will conduct a fair and impartial evaluation of proposals received in response to this RFA. The review panel will be comprised of individuals with varied backgrounds, including professional expertise, lived experience and personal knowledge. SCDHHS is committed to ensuring the review panel is representative of South Carolina's racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity.

### 9.2 Scoring Ranges

Applications will be reviewed and scored within the scoring ranges shown below based on applicant's response in each section.

Section	Points Available
<b>Grant Application Cover Sheet (<i>Page 2</i>)</b>	0-25
<b>Settlement Agreements/Claims</b>	0-25
<b>Proposal Summary</b>	0-100
<b>Organizational Background</b>	0-100
<b>Description of Need</b>	0-275
<b>Service Quality</b>	0-225
<b>Implementation Plan</b>	0-350
<b>Sustainability</b>	0-100
<b>Budget (<i>Attachment 1</i>)</b>	0-250
<b>Letters of Support</b>	0-50
<b>Total Available Points</b>	<b>1,500</b>

### 9.3 Additional Considerations

Applications will be scored on the content, quality, and completeness of the responses to the items in Section 3, Scope of Work, as well as how well the application addresses the components in Section 8. SCDHHS will consider scores, organizational capacity, and geographic needs in determining awards.

Priority will be given to organizations that:

- Have experience with, and current presence in, rural communities; and
- Serve a high percentage of the Medicaid population in the designated service area.

## **10. RFA PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES**

SCDHHS has established the following protocols and procedures in relation to this RFA.

### **10.1 Timeline**

SCDHHS has established the timeline for this RFA as shown on Page 1.

### **10.2 Questions and Clarifications**

All questions and requests must be submitted electronically via email to [grants@scdhhs.gov](mailto:grants@scdhhs.gov). The deadline to submit questions related to this RFA is shown on Page 1. SCDHHS' response to the questions will be posted at <https://www.scdhhs.gov/resources/grants>. To ensure all parties have access to the same information at the same time, except as stated below, SCDHHS will NOT respond to questions as they are received and will not accept telephonic questions.

If a question relates to a proprietary/trade secret(s) aspect of a proposal and the question would expose proprietary information if disclosed to competitors, applicant must mark the question as "CONFIDENTIAL." With the question, the applicant must submit a statement explaining why the question is sensitive. If SCDHHS concurs that the disclosure of the question or answer would expose proprietary information, the question will be answered by email reply, and both the question and answer will be kept confidential. If SCDHHS does not concur regarding the proprietary nature of the question, the question will not be answered in this manner and the applicant will be notified and asked whether the applicant would like the question to receive a public response or no response at all.

### **10.3 Freedom of Information Act Disclosure**

SCDHHS is subject to South Carolina's Freedom of Information Act. All applications received for this RFA are ultimately subject to public review; however, until final decisions are made, all applications will be kept confidential. Upon award and execution of the grant contract, all applications and supplemental information will be subject to public review, with the exception of those elements of an application that contain elements that are clearly marked as confidential or trade secrets. Any such designation should be accompanied by a brief explanation of the reason the information is non-public and protected from disclosure under South Carolina law. SCDHHS reserves the right to disregard such designations if they have been applied indiscriminately to non-protected information, and in no event shall SCDHHS, its agents, representatives, consultants, directors, or officers be liable to an applicant for the intentional or inadvertent disclosure of all or a portion of an application submitted under this RFA, regardless of whether it was marked as confidential or trade secret.

Although the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act allows certain confidential or trade secret information to be protected from disclosure, SCDHHS

may not be in a position to establish that the information submitted is protected. If SCDHHS receives a request for public disclosure of all or any portion of an application that has been designated as exempt from disclosure, SCDHHS will use reasonable efforts to notify the responding party of the request and give such party an opportunity to assert, at its own expense, a claimed exception under the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act or other applicable law within the time period specified in the notice issued by SCDHHS and allowed under the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

## **11. APPLICANT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

It is the responsibility of the applicant to read the entire Request for Applications and inquire about any portions that are not understood by the established deadline listed on Page 1. The applicant is responsible for any cost incurred by the submission of application. Selected applicants will enter into a contract with SCDHHS to reflect the terms of the grant award prior to any funds being made available.

### **11.1 Truth and Accuracy of Representations**

False, misleading, incomplete, or deceptively unresponsive statements in connection with an application shall be sufficient cause for rejection of the application. The evaluation and determination of rejection shall be at SCDHHS's sole judgment, and such shall be final. Any false, misleading, incomplete, or deceptively unresponsive statements discovered after award has been made shall be sufficient cause for SCDHHS to withdraw an award and/or require repayment of any award funds advanced.

### **11.2 Required Performance**

SCDHHS may withhold funds from an applicant who fails to meet the reporting requirements, falls behind schedule, has unexpended funds, or modifies the scope of the project. If an applicant finds themselves in this position, the applicant shall immediately contact SCDHHS and provide a mitigation plan to address the contractual program deficiency. SCDHHS may withhold funds until a mitigation plan is submitted and approved by SCDHHS. If a mitigation plan is not submitted or if it has not been approved by the Agency, SCDHHS reserves the right to reduce a grant award by the amount of any unexpended funds and/or require repayment of any award funds advanced.

### **11.3 Withdrawal**

An applicant may withdraw or amend their application only until the deadline for applications to be submitted, as listed on Page 1.

## **12. SCDHHS RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

SCDHHS reserves the right to accept or reject applications under this grant in accordance with the parameters set forth in this RFA. All qualified applications will be evaluated, and awards

will be made to those applicants whose proposals are deemed to be in the best interest of the funding Agency (SCDHHS).

**12.1 Statements by Employees/Officers**

SCDHHS is not responsible for representations made by any of its officers or employees prior to the full execution of a grant contract culminating in an award. SCDHHS is not responsible for and shall not be bound by any representations otherwise made by any individual acting or purporting to act on its behalf.

**12.2 RFA Amendments**

SCDHHS has the right to alter the grant guidelines by written amendment prior to the application submittal deadline. SCDHHS is responsible only for that which is expressly stated in the Request for Application and any authorized written amendment thereto. Such amendment shall be made available to each person or organization that SCDHHS records indicate has received this Request for Application. Should such amendment require additional information, failure to address the requirements of such amendment may result in the application not being considered, as determined in the sole discretion of SCDHHS.

**12.3 Right to Reject**

SCDHHS, at its sole discretion, may reject any or all applications submitted in response to this grant opportunity. SCDHHS shall not be liable for any cost incurred by an applicant in connection with preparation and submittal of any application.

**12.4 Negotiations/Demonstrations**

SCDHHS reserves the right to negotiate with applicants in an attempt to reach an agreement. If no agreement is reached, SCDHHS may reject the application. SCDHHS also reserves the right to meet with applicants to gather additional information, if necessary, as part of negotiations. Additional information may include, but is not limited to, a demonstration of skills described in the application or an on-site visit.

**ATTACHMENT I: BUDGET WORKSHEET**

**Capital Expenditures**

Plans and Specs	\$
Permits, Inspections, Fees, Licenses	\$
Construction	\$
Medical Equipment	\$
Furniture, Fixtures, & Equipment	\$
Finance & Legal Fees	\$
Other Costs (please define)	\$
Organizational Contribution	(\$)
<b>Total Capital Expenditures</b>	\$