

Request for Proposal:

COVID-19/Flu Vaccine Hesitancy Needs Assessment

Hancock County, Georgia

Deadline to submit proposals: April 15, 2021 by 3:00 pm EDT

About North Central Health District

North Central Health District (NCHD) is a district of the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) and serves a population of 530,945 individuals residing in 13 Central Georgia Counties. As a recipient of the 2018 Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) cooperative agreement administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), NCHD implements strategies and activities to reduce health disparities among Hancock County's African American population in collaboration with Hancock Health Improvement Partnership (HHIP). The REACH program started in Hancock County in October 2018 and focuses on making policy, systems, and environmental changes at the community level through implementing nutrition, physical activity, and community-clinical linkages strategies. Located halfway between Macon and Augusta, Hancock County is a rural county with a population of 8,350. African American residents (72% of the population) are disproportionately affected by chronic diseases and are more likely to live in poverty. Identified in May 2020 as the "latest hotspot in Georgia", Hancock County has been significantly impacted by COVID-19. With 59 COVID-19 deaths reported as of 3/17/21, Hancock County has the highest COVID-19 death rate of all the 159 Georgia counties.

In late August 2020, CDC offered REACH recipients the opportunity to apply for supplemental funding to conduct activities supporting flu vaccination coverage for racial and ethnic groups experiencing disparities in vaccination rates. NCHD applied for and was awarded 12-months of supplemental funding (October 2020 to September 2021). The two focus areas of this work are to 1) Educate and empower trusted voices in the community to support flu vaccine education and delivery, and 2) Increase flu vaccine opportunities and enhance provider partnership. With funding starting in October 2020, NCHD had to "hit the ground running" to recruit influential messengers and plan mobile flu vaccine clinics in collaboration with the local health department and federally qualified health center (FQHC).

In late January 2021, REACH recipients were offered an opportunity to apply for an additional 18 months of supplemental funding to implement community-focused COVID-19 and flu vaccination promotional activities aiming to increase vaccine awareness, access, and confidence for racial and ethnic groups

experiencing disparities in vaccination coverage. This supplemental funding opportunity requires NCHD to conduct a needs assessment in Hancock County to identify drivers of COVID-19 and flu vaccine hesitancy, influential messengers, and community acceptable approaches to increase vaccine access. The project period is April 2021 to September 2022.

Request for Proposal

NCHD seeks an organizational partner to work with NCHD staff to conduct a needs assessment around COVID-19 and flu vaccine hesitancy in the African American population in Hancock County, Georgia. Work will begin in May 2021 and extend through August 2022. This is a request for competitive proposals. If a suitable offer is made in response to this Request For Proposal (RFP), NCHD may enter into a contract with an organization to perform all or part of the work.

Needs Assessment Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this RFP is to identify and contract with an organizational partner to work with NCHD staff to conduct a needs assessment around COVID-19 and flu vaccine hesitancy in the African American population in Hancock County, Georgia to identify:

- Drivers of COVID-19 and flu vaccine hesitancy
- Influential messengers
- Community-acceptable approaches for improving vaccination availability, accessibility, and confidence

Results of the needs assessment will be shared with CDC and will inform:

- Identification and recruitment of key messengers
- Development of audience-tested education and outreach materials
- Development of audience-tested, community-based, culturally and linguistically appropriate messages that focus on COVID-19 and flu disease and vaccines
- Collaboration with vaccination service providers to increase the number, range, and diversity of opportunities for COVID-19 and flu vaccination for the priority population

The major deliverables for this contract are:

PHASE 1: Initial Needs Assessment (9 months)

Completed by July 31, 2021:

- Completion of initial needs assessment activities (e.g. questionnaires, interviews, town halls, focus groups). NCHD's expectation is that some of these activities will be conducted in-person in Hancock County following current COVID-19 precautions. The initial needs assessment should be designed to look at COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and flu vaccine hesitancy separately as they may not have the same drivers.
- Preliminary findings to be presented to NCHD which will inform ongoing work.

Completed by September 30, 2021:

- Results of audience-testing of COVID-19 vaccine messages in Hancock County.
- Results of audience-testing of flu vaccine messages in Hancock County.

Completed by January 31, 2022:

- Report of findings from Initial Needs Assessment submitted no later than January 31, 2022.

Phase 2: Ongoing Assessment of Vaccine Hesitancy (6 months)

Completed by July 31, 2022:

- Continued needs assessment activities (e.g. questionnaires, interviews, town halls, focus groups) to further assess vaccine hesitancy and identify changes in vaccine hesitancy as a result of the project's promotional activities and messages. NCHD's expectation is that some of these activities will be conducted in-person following current COVID-19 precautions. The ongoing needs assessment should also be designed to look at COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and flu vaccine hesitancy separately as they may not have the same drivers.
- Preliminary findings of ongoing assessment to be presented to NCHD which will inform planning for the 2022-2023 flu vaccination campaigns.

Completed by August 31, 2022:

- Final Needs Assessment Report submitted no later than August 31, 2022.

Monthly tracking reporting:

To complete CDC-required reporting, the organizational partner will submit monthly data such as:

- Number of interviews, town halls or focus groups conducted.
- Number of respondents, participants, or attendees for surveys, interviews, town halls, or focus groups.
- Major successes for data collection and insight into barriers to vaccine uptake.
- Major challenges for data collection and insight into barriers to vaccine uptake.
- Number of respondents or participants in audience-testing of messages.

Timeframe and Key Dates

- REACH COVID-19 Supplemental Funding project period is March 30, 2021 until September 29, 2022.
- March 18, 2021: NCHD distributes RFP and opens proposal process.
- April 5, 2021 by 3:00 pm EDT: Final date for Receipt of Questions.
- April 8, 2021 by 3:00 pm EDT: Final Date for Official Responses to Questions.
- April 15, 2021 by 3:00 pm EDT: Proposals Due.
- April 21, 2021: NCHD notifies selected organization to conduct needs assessment.
- April 21-May 7, 2021: NCHD executes contract with selected organization.
- May 17, 2021: Needs assessment activities start by this date.

Intellectual Property

NCHD is the sole owner of all content and materials developed under this RFP and retains the distribution rights to any content or materials to use as it deems appropriate. Selected organization may not use, publish, distribute, or base derivative works upon such materials without the express, prior written consent of NCHD.

Submission Guidelines

Guidelines for asking questions:

- Questions may be submitted until April 5, 2021 by 3:00 pm EDT.
- Submit questions to karen.ebey-tessendorf@dph.ga.gov
- Please use subject line: COVID-19/Flu Vaccine Needs Assessment RFP
- Questions will be answered in a timely manner and posted at:
<http://northcentralhealthdistrict.org/reach-grant/>

- The source of submitted questions will be anonymous.

Guidelines for submitting a Proposal:

- NCHD will review all proposals that meet the deadline and submission criteria.
- Proposals must be received by April 15, 2021 by 3:00 pm EDT. Proposals received after that time will not be considered.
- Proposals must be submitted to karen.ebey-tessendorf@dph.ga.gov.
- Please use subject line: COVID-19/Flu Vaccine Needs Assessment RFP.
- If the proposal includes a link to a file online, please make sure that it is not broken since the deadline is non-negotiable. NCHD will not allow proposals to be replaced or appended after the deadline.

Proposal Requirements:

1. Executive Summary – Highlighting contents of your proposal and description of your interest in being an organizational partner of NCHD in completing the needs assessment.
2. Organizational Overview
 - Core competencies of the organization, including expertise working in rural settings.
 - Areas of expertise and specialization that distinguish the organization from competitors.
 - Approach to working with clients (NCHD).
 - Length of time in business.
 - Number of employees.
 - Physical location of company.
3. Project leader
 - Name and resume for the individual(s) who will serve as the Project Leader including details of this person's experience, education, affiliations, and recognitions received for similar services.
4. Team members
 - Description of the proposed staffing of the project including each person's role and responsibilities.
 - Brief background summary for each team member with relevant experience listed.

Please note: Staffing changes may be made through mutual consent of NCHD and the selected partner after the contract award.

5. Technical proposal for the Needs Assessment in narrative, outline, and/or presentation form to accomplish the scope of work. This section must provide a timeline.
6. Consultants and Vendors that will be used to provide service
 - Name, address, and EIN of all vendors and consultants that you anticipate using to provide service for this project. List of references for vendors or subcontractors.
7. Budget
 - The budget proposed must be clear, comprehensive, and detailed enough to show all costs necessary to provide the deliverables.
 - NCHD may consider modifying the scope of work based on itemized costs.
 - The contractor will be expected to provide its own equipment to conduct work on the project.
 - All costs related to this contract must be reasonable and allowable.
 - Pricing should be competitive and comprehensive. If typical pricing excludes certain fees or charges, please provide a list of excluded fees with an explanation of the nature of those fees.
 - Please itemize the budget as follows:
 - i. Staff: Identify in-house staff anticipated to provide services and their daily rates, and calculate total costs required to execute the proposed scope of work within the required timeline.
 - ii. Travel Expenses: Itemize travel costs by purpose and projected costs (location, transportation method, lodging, meals, etc.).
 - iii. Supplies: Itemize supplies that will be needed for this project.
 - iv. Miscellaneous Expenses: Identify all miscellaneous expenses that will be incurred in performance of this contract, not previously covered in the items listed above. Submit rates for each miscellaneous expense identified.
 - v. Indirect Costs: If the organization has an approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with a cognizant federal agency, please include the rate and provide NCHD with a copy of the current Agreement.

Desired Qualifications:

Submitted proposals will be evaluated by a review team using the criteria below. NCHD will select a COVID-19/Flu Vaccine Hesitancy Needs Assessment Partner based on the following:

- Prior experience in conducting a needs assessment in a rural area using community-based, participatory approaches (20%).
- Prior experience developing and audience-testing community-based, culturally and linguistically appropriate messages (20%).
- Technical Proposal (40%).
- Demonstrated ability to manage logistics for the vaccine hesitancy needs assessment in a rural area given the tight time frame and in-person requirements (15%).
- Project team credentials (5%).

Note: Although a budget is required, it will not be scored. Budgets are subject to negotiation and change as the evaluator learns more about the scope of the project.

- Bidder selected as recipient will be notified by phone and/or email.
- Bidders not selected will be notified by email.
- NCHD will not distribute a list of bidders, finalists, or scores. That information is kept confidential and maintained for internal use only. Only aggregated data is provided to funders or others to whom NCHD is obligated to report.
- NCHD retains the right to terminate the review and selection process at any point.

Resources:

- Learn more about North Central Health District at:
<https://northcentralhealthdistrict.org/>
- Learn more about Hancock Health Improvement Partnership and the five-year Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) at:
<http://northcentralhealthdistrict.org/hancock-health-improvement-partnership/>
- CDC has recently developed a **COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence Rapid Community Assessment Guide**. CDC is not requiring the use of this guide for the vaccine hesitancy needs assessment. However, REACH recipients are being encouraged to review and use this guidance to support the needs assessment activities. It is found at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/vaccinate-with-confidence/rca-guide/index.html>