

## HEALTHIER TOGETHER REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

NC Counts Coalition invites organizations that are committed to ensuring equitable COVID-19 vaccine distribution to apply for grants in the range of \$10,000-\$25,000 for individual organizations. Collaborative proposals among organizations for larger amounts will be considered up to \$60,000. Funds will support plans to support NC communities that experience health inequities and to ensure that individuals from specific historically marginalized populations are able to access COVID-19 vaccines in their areas. In the fall of 2021, up to \$500,000 will be disbursed for short-term vaccine equity efforts for approximately 4 months (estimated November 2021 through February 28, 2022).

### **Section 1. Introduction and Background**

Healthier Together: Health Equity Action Network, also known as Healthier Together, is a public partnership between the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) and NC Counts Coalition that was launched in spring 2021. NC Counts Coalition is a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization committed to building a healthy, just and equitable North Carolina through cross-sector partnerships that advance systemic solutions for communities facing systemic barriers, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, LGBTQ+, low wealth, immigrant, and other communities.

The goal of Healthier Together is to increase the number of individuals who are BIPOC and from other historically marginalized populations (HMP) receiving COVID-19 <sup>1</sup> vaccinations across the state and to ensure that the percentage of vaccinations going to HMPs matches the percentage of the population that is from a HMP. Healthier Together is building a grassroots strategy to help overcome centuries of health inequities by investing in state, regional and community partners led by and serving BIPOC and other historically marginalized populations by:

- Building and earning trust on the ground with BIPOC and other historically marginalized communities and the organizations that are led by and support them
- Co-creating strategies in collaboration with nonprofit, grassroots, and community partners rooted in BIPOC and other historically marginalized communities
- Using data on vaccination gaps to inform planning and investment of resources

The Healthier Together initiative implements strategies to drive demand and increase access to vaccines to BIPOC and other historically marginalized populations by conducting outreach and education efforts, coordinating local vaccine events at trusted and accessible locations, helping people schedule and get to vaccine appointments, coordinating with interpretation providers to ensure language access at vaccine events,

<sup>1</sup> *Historically Marginalized Populations* are defined as individuals, groups and communities that have historically and systematically been denied access to services, resources and power relationships across economic, political and cultural dimensions as a result of systemic, durable and persistent racism, discrimination and other forms of oppression.

and helping ensure people get to first and second dose appointments (and as they are approved, additional doses or booster doses of the COVID-19 vaccine).

As part of this initiative, Healthier Together provides grants to community-based organizations to lead this work. Healthier Together also has a regional health equity team of 12 staff across the state who support community-based organizations in their outreach and education efforts, help match community-based organizations to vaccine providers, and work with NCDHHS to ensure that communities have the vaccine supply, outreach, and transportation resources they need to get people vaccinated. As North Carolina moves from COVID-19 response to recovery, we will extend this program's infrastructure as a foundation for a longer-term framework for health equity. The program is funded by federal COVID-19 dollars.

## **Section 2. Grant Application Process**

Please submit your proposal online with the following link:

<https://bit.ly/HealthierTogetherRFP2>

There will be an informational online webinar regarding the application process with NC Counts Coalition on Monday, September 20, 2021, 6:00 - 7:00 pm. This webinar will cover tips on pulling a grant proposal together in response to this RFP. There will be an opportunity for Q&As during this webinar. Applicants do not have to attend this webinar to respond to this RFP; the webinar is optional. The webinar will be recorded and uploaded to NC Count's Coalition's YouTube Page:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmol4OMEBMn82DfBwriqp8A>.

Click here to register for the webinar: <https://bit.ly/HTFallWebinar>.

If you have any questions about the submission process, please contact [RFPQuestions@NCCounts.org](mailto:RFPQuestions@NCCounts.org) and include the name of your organization in the subject of the email.

In addition to the webinar, NC Counts staff is offering several informal office hour sessions for partners who are interested in applying for funding through this RFP on the following dates:

- [Wednesday, September 22nd at 11 am](#)
- [Thursday, September 23rd at 6 pm](#)
- [Tuesday, September 28th at 10:30 am](#)
- [Monday, October 4th at 4 pm](#)

Click on the date to register for the session.

The grant selection committee appreciates concise, thoughtful proposals. Grants will be reviewed by a committee of representatives from NC Counts Coalition, NCDHHS and

an NC Counts Coalition community partner.

Timeline

Healthier Together Fall 2021 RFP is released	September 15th
Webinar to clarify/answer questions (optional)	September 20th, 6-7 pm
Applications will be accepted September 15th-October 6th	
Office Hours sessions for applicants to receive support as they prepare	September 22nd, September 23rd, September 28th, and October 4th
Deadline for applications October 6 <sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm	
Review of applications by the Healthier Together Grant Review Committee	October 7th-October 18th
Applicants will be notified and grant agreements sent to selected organizations	Week of October 18th-22nd
Grant agreements must be signed By October 28th	
Work begins (tentative) November 1st	
Mandatory orientation session for funded organizations (tentative)	November 3rd, 10-11:30 am
Bi-Weekly or Weekly Reports (grantees can choose to report weekly or bi-weekly, but will need to submit data for the entire time period of 1 or 2 weeks)	Due every other or every Tuesday at 11:59 pm for previous week's work
Monthly Invoices Due The 13th of the month for the previous <u>month's expenses</u> Contracts end February 28th, 2022	

### **Section 3. Priorities**

This initiative will fund proposals specific to reaching historically marginalized populations throughout the state, focusing on all 100 counties as reflected in the [six NC Medicaid managed care regions](#). Within those 6 regions, the initiative will focus more resources on counties with higher social vulnerability and higher proportion of historically marginalized populations that have not yet been vaccinated (see list of priority counties in the Evaluation Criteria section).

#### Funded Activities

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is inviting proposals from Community Based Organizations with a primary focus on activities that will ensure **as many individuals ages 12 and up from HMP communities are vaccinated as possible**. Here are the

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<sup>2</sup>The FDA has issued full approval for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for individuals 16 years of age and older. The FDA has issued emergency use approval for the following vaccines: 1) the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for

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activities we will prioritize:

- Conducting targeted outreach efforts to schedule vaccine appointments through tactics such as direct in-person contact, phone calls, peer-to-peer texting, and leveraging personal and community networks – with an initial emphasis on reaching individuals who have not yet gotten their 1<sup>st</sup> dose of the COVID-19 vaccine;
- Providing individualized vaccine support, including assistance with scheduling vaccine appointments, locating COVID-19 vaccine records for those who previously received at least one dose, providing reminders for 2<sup>nd</sup> dose appointments (or booster appointments, as they become available), arranging transportation for individuals to get to/from vaccination sites, and following up with individuals to confirm if they were able to get vaccinated after an initial outreach;
- Organizing education and outreach activities and events that provide accurate, culturally appropriate information from trusted messengers on COVID-19 (including vaccination) and promote local vaccine events;
- Developing partnerships with public agencies, child care and other service providers, schools, health care centers, local businesses or employers, faith-based groups, public housing agencies, and other entities to plan a comprehensive vaccine outreach campaign for historically marginalized populations;
- Providing ongoing logistical and coordination support for vaccine events in majority BIPOC and/or historically marginalized communities. Key activities for vaccine events include: partnering and coordinating with vaccine providers, providing

facilities and equipment for vaccine events, contributing and coordinating staff, volunteers, and/or interpreters, arranging transportation for individuals to get to/from vaccine events, and conducting outreach to promote vaccine events.

Community Based Organizations may propose additional activities, but must clearly explain how any alternative activity proposed will support getting individuals from BIPOC and historically marginalized populations vaccinated.

#### Activities and Items that Will Not Be Funded

- Billboards
- Website management services
- Participation in media events and/or interviews
- Regranting of funds
- Food and drink
- Entertainment

Activities that are connected to or amplify broader existing or planned service provision or

individuals 12-15 years of age, 2) the Moderna vaccine for individuals aged 18 years of age and older, and 3) the Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) vaccine for individuals aged 18 years of age and older. However, if emergency use is authorized for individuals below the age of 12 after this RFP is released, organizations may prioritize them for the Healthier Together initiative.

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civic engagement efforts are encouraged. Creative and innovative ideas are encouraged.

#### Grant Amounts

Grant amounts will vary, depending on proposed activities and the organization's capacity. Most grants will be in the \$10,000-\$25,000 range (or up to \$60,000 for collaborative proposals), for the time period **November 1st, 2021-February 28th, 2022.** This is a short-term initiative designed to support groups that are already committed to vaccine equity and ready to enhance and sustain their efforts.

#### Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Organizational considerations:
  - a. **Status**: Must be a 501(c)(3) organization. Applicants that are not 501(c)(3) may apply under a fiscal sponsor that is a 501(c)(3) in good standing. If your organization does not have a 501(c)(3), please contact NC Counts **before** applying.
  - b. **Relationships & experience**: Applicants should be able to demonstrate established relationships and experience working with priority HMP communities. Applicants should have a good track record working on activities that increase community engagement or health equity, such as community organizing, public education, health outreach, or advocacy. Priority will be given to NC-established and based organizations.

- c. Capacity: Applicants should be able to demonstrate organizational capacity (staff and/or volunteers) to implement the proposed plan of action.
- d. Representation: Organizational and/or project leadership is reflective of the community the proposal is focused on.
- e. Budget size: Priority will be given to under-resourced organizations (annual budgets under \$500,000).

- 2. Tactics that prioritize at least one of the historically marginalized populations below:
  - a. Historically marginalized populations who face barriers to vaccine access: While the Healthier Together initiative seeks to achieve health equity broadly in the long term, this short-term effort will focus on the following historically marginalized populations due to 1) availability of COVID-19 vaccination data, and 2) trends in vaccination uptake. Applicants should indicate which of the following groups they are prioritizing: Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Latinx/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and high poverty and low wealth communities. Groups may prioritize any eligible age group within the priority communities.<sup>3</sup>
  - b. Geography: While this initiative is open to applicants from across the entire state, priority will be given to applicants working in counties with high proportions of

<sup>3</sup>The FDA has issued full approval for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for individuals 16 years of age and older. The FDA has issued emergency use approval for the following vaccines: 1) the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for individuals 12-15 years of age, 2) the Moderna vaccine for individuals aged 18 years of age and older, and 3) the Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) vaccine for individuals aged 18 years of age and older. However, if emergency use is authorized for individuals below the age of 12 after this RFP is released, organizations may prioritize them for the Healthier Together initiative.

historically marginalized populations who are not yet vaccinated and high social vulnerability. Priority counties based on data as of September 6, 2021 are: • **Region 1**: Burke, Caldwell, Cherokee, Graham, Henderson, Jackson, Rutherford • **Region 2**: Davidson, Forsyth, Guilford, Randolph

- **Region 3**: Anson, Gaston, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Union
- **Region 4**: Chatham, Durham, Franklin, Johnston, Vance, Wake, Wilson •
- Region 5**: Cumberland, Harnett, Hoke, Lee, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson •
- Region 6**: Duplin, Edgecombe, Onslow, Pasquotank, Wayne

- 3. Goals: Clarity on engagement strategies and metrics for progress of outreach efforts. You will need to submit a [Monthly Plan](#) to explain your program's metrics.
- 4. Alignment: Where applicable, knowledge of and willingness to collaborate with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), local governments, local health care providers, or other national and local nonprofit organizations, especially those active in their targeted geographies or with their focused population groups. Collaboration amongst organizations is encouraged and applicants are encouraged. Collaborative proposals will be considered.
- 5. Vision: An overall vision aligned with community engagement, health equity or civic engagement.

#### **Section 4. Section Grant Guidelines (online form)**

In accordance with federal, state, and local laws, and in keeping with its mission, NC Counts will not fund organizations that use race, color, sex, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, veteran status, or any other protected classification as a basis to deny services to qualifying individuals who seek assistance that falls within the scope of the organization's mission.

[Click here](#) for a link to a googledoc template that contains all the information that will be requested in the online form. You can make a copy of this template and work on your answers, but only forms submitted online will be accepted. Here is the link to the online application form: <https://bit.ly/HealthierTogetherRFP2>.

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#### **Section 5. – Healthier Together Agreement**

Agreement items to receive funding include, but are not limited to, the provisions below:

- Follow the Center of Disease Control (CDC), NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), and local guidelines and recommendations regarding social distancing practices and other safety and health recommendations in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Grantee's work under this Agreement must comply with local government laws, ordinances, regulations, guidelines and recommendations set forth in response to COVID-19. State guidance on North Carolina's COVID-19 response can be found here: <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov>.

- Coordinate with Healthier Together Regional Directors and Regional Operations 6

Managers, Community Health Workers, and Local Health Departments in their region(s).

- Work with NC Counts and NCDHHS team members to use data to inform where to prioritize activities.
- Report on progress to goals to NC Counts at least every other week, including reporting on quantitative and qualitative data by census tract. [Click here](#) for an example of what the report form may look like.
- Provide monthly invoices to NC Counts documenting the spending for the previous month by the 13<sup>th</sup> of the month.
- Use communications language and materials provided through the Healthier Together initiative.
- Share your vaccine equity work broadly and including the #HealthierTogether hashtag on social media outreach.
- Share best practices and lessons learned with the Coalition and as relevant, other NCDHHS vendor partners.
- Provide a final grant narrative report after the end of contract.
- Conduct only 501(c)3 appropriate activities with this funding.

- Agree to the terms in the subcontractor agreement included in [APPENDIX 1.7](#)