

Health Care Quality Account Grants Program Frequently Asked Questions + Answers

1. What is the Health Care Quality Account grants program and why does it exist?

Maryland's Health Care Quality Account (HCQA) was established in 2000 by the General Assembly. It is similar in purpose and scope to an account established previously by federal regulation that is used to improve the quality of care provided in nursing homes nationwide.

The Maryland HCQA grants program is funded by receipts of civil money penalties (CMP) imposed on owners and operators of nursing homes or assisted living facilities found to be noncompliant with regulatory standards.

It is comprised of the following three non-lapsing special fund accounts:

(1) Nursing Homes Federal CMP Account: Funds collected from nursing homes as a result of civil money penalties imposed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS);

(2) Nursing Homes State CMP State Account: Funds collected from nursing homes as a result of civil money penalties imposed by the Office of Health Care Quality; and

(3) Assisted Living State CMP State Account: Funds collected from assisted living providers as a result of civil money penalties imposed by the Office of Health Care Quality.

2. What is the Health Care Quality Account (HCQA) grant cycle?

Applications are considered on a rolling basis throughout the year.

3. What is the best way to contact the HCQA grants administration team?

Send an email message to: hcqa.grants@maryland.gov. A member of the team will reply to you typically within two business days.

4. Who is eligible to apply?

The applicant organization must be qualified and capable of carrying out the intended project and proposed uses of requested funds.

We may contract with, and grant funds to, any entity permitted under State law, provided that the funds are used to protect or improve services for residents of nursing homes and/or assisted living facilities.

Such organizations may include but not be limited to: consumer advocacy organizations, quality improvement organizations, industry trade associations, professional societies and networks, teams based at institutions of higher learning such as colleges and universities, teams located within governmental agencies or government-sponsored enterprises, and private contractors. Resident and family councils affiliated with nursing homes and assisted living facilities are also eligible to apply.

Exclusions: (a) The applicant organization must not be in any relationship that constitutes a conflict of interest with the beneficiaries of the proposed project. (b) The organizational recipient of an HCQA grant must not be a recipient of a contract or grant, or other payment, from federal or State sources for the same proposed project or uses of requested funds. (c) **Grant monies are not available to fund the start-up or ongoing operation of a regulated business providing health or community-based services directly to consumers.**

5. What projects are most or least likely to be deemed to be competitive and approvable for funding?

Projects that meet all initial eligibility criteria and center upon: (a) professional or paraprofessional staff education and training for better jobs for better long-term care; (b) advances in best practices and policies in long-term care through evidence-based demonstration projects; and/or (c) enhancements to regulatory oversight activities undertaken by the Office of Health Care Quality are more likely to be deemed competitive.

Projects that do not have high-probability potential to benefit the residents of nursing homes or assisted living facilities will not be supported. Project plans which are poorly defined or are not feasible to implement within budget and on time, and/or to evaluate for results, will not be supported. Projects whose deliverables are of limited sustainable value will not be supported.

Proposals to fund the start-up or ongoing operation of a regulated business providing direct health or community-based services will not be approved. This includes requests for funds in support of individual residents and families, employees, physical plant and equipment, supplies, and other goods and services required to run the business.

6. How many grants are issued per year?

The number of approved and funded grants varies from year to year, dependent upon (a) the amount of money available for allocation; (b) the number of reviewed

applications that are approved and funded; and (c) the amount of funding requested via each approved and funded application.

7. What are some examples of previous grants?

During the most recent grants review cycle, the central aims of some of the funded projects included: (a) promote excellence in person-centered care provided in nursing homes through a multi-dimensional awareness campaign focused on the fundamental principles of culture change transformation; (b) deliver to diverse health care providers a wound care training and certification course; (c) accelerate adoption and use of a health status assessment tool by post-acute care facilities; (d) educate professional caregivers in the appropriate use of evidence-based tools to assess the cognitive status of residents of long-term care facilities; (e) design, implement and evaluate a proactive communications and marketing plan to promote awareness, understanding and use of MOLST (Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatments) and to enable the engagement of certified master MOLST trainers in this statewide campaign; (f) provide education in support of certified nursing assistants delivering direct care in medically underserved rural areas; (g) host an educational program for geriatric nursing assistants; (h) build a curriculum for surveyors / investigators to better monitor medication management in long-term care settings; and (i) orchestrate a conference for nursing home and assisted living administrators focused on emergency preparedness plans.

For more information about the scope and content of the current grants cycle, please examine the [2016 Health Care Quality Account Annual Report](#).

8. How much grant funding may I request?

We do not pre-define limits to the amount of funding that may be requested. However, we require and place high importance on the presentation of a fully transparent and well-documented project work plan and corollary project budget plan.

These plans must be supported by a detailed narrative budget justification that is aligned with feasible-to-achieve project goals and objectives. These goals and objectives must be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant to the priorities of this grants program, and time-bound.

Projects with appropriately lean budgets likely to produce the greatest return for the proposed amount to be invested will be favored. Strongly supported and credible project budgets accompanied by a rigorous yet feasible project evaluation plan will be favored.

Non-supported, insufficient or excessive projected expenditures, and/or a weak project work plan or project evaluation plan, will result in an unfavorable review.

9. If our proposal is approved and funded, what happens next?

First, you will be notified of your receipt of a grants award. You may be asked beforehand to provide a more detailed statement of your proposed project's goals and objectives, project plan and timeline, and project budget with justification. If not at the same time you are initially notified, soon thereafter you will receive instructions regarding invoicing for payment and progress and final reporting requirements. The number and timing of required invoices and progress reports will vary based upon the purpose, scope and duration of the approved and funded project. Only under exceptional circumstances will a lump sum payment be authorized. In all cases a final project report, including a summative cash accounting of all project-related expenditures, will be required.

10. May the duration of a proposed project extend beyond one year?

Yes. Although the duration of many approved and funded projects will be one year or less, we do occasionally consider multi-year requests up to (that is, no more than) three years duration. If and when a multi-year project is approved and funded, funding will be allocated only one year at a time. Continuation of funding year by year will be contingent upon available funds and the funded organization's satisfactory performance against stated project goals and objectives, in the absence of (a) cost over run's, (b) significant unwanted revisions to the originally approved or funded project plan, and (c) failure to achieve stated project goals and objectives on time.

11. May I reapply for a grant if I am denied?

Yes. If one or more previous applications have been denied, you may reapply for a grant award. With this said, it often makes sense to improve upon the previously denied application.

12. How do I find the application and application guidance?

The required grant application format is accessible [here](#).

It can be completed and submitted online, using the pre-designed interactive format. Instructions for the overall completion of the application are located at the top of the application format. Instructions specific to each application item will appear when you guide your cursor across the "?" button for that particular item.

It can also be completed offline, printed out and mailed directly to the Maryland Office of Health Care Quality, Quality Initiatives Unit, 7120 Samuel Morse Drive, 2nd Floor, Columbia, Maryland, 21046. The source information needed to build an application format that can be e-mailed or postmarked is available at the following [link](#).

13. How do I find the progress and final report format and the accompanying guidance for their completion?

It can be completed and [submitted online](#), using the pre-designed interactive format.

The required report format can also be built offline, printed out and mailed directly to the Maryland Office of Health Care Quality, Quality Initiatives Unit, 7120 Samuel Morse Drive, 2nd Floor, Columbia, Maryland, 21046. The source information needed to build a report format that can be e-mailed or postmarked. The required progress report and final report format is accessible at following [link](#).

Instructions for the overall completion of the report are located at the top of the report format. Instructions specific to each required report component will appear when you guide your cursor across the “?” button for that particular item.

14. On what basis will a submitted application be evaluated?

We consider each proposed project on its own merits along multiple dimensions. First and foremost, the applicant organization must be eligible to apply and deemed to be capable of carrying out the intended project and proposed uses of requested funds.

We take into account the stated purpose and scope of the project, its goals and objectives, and the proposed timeline for project completion, all in relation to the preceding statement of need and potential significance.

We assess the appropriateness and feasibility of the proposed project plan, the type and extent of stakeholder involvement, anticipated deliverables. Deliverables are those services and products that will result from project activities and accomplishments. We consider the potential immediate impact and longer-term strategic importance of these expected outcomes, the quality of proposed progress and outcomes measures, and the integrity of the budget plan and corollary budget justification.

The applicant organization's prior track record, if any, in regard to its management of previously funded HCQA grants is also taken into account.

15. On what basis will a submitted progress report or final report be evaluated?

We consider the overall quality of the grantee organization's performance to date in reference to the approved and funded project plan, including the results-based evaluation plan. The filed report must include the organization's description of its major activities and accomplishments to date, and the organization's self-assessment of its progress toward achievement of each of its previously defined (i.e., SMART) project goals and objectives. We examine the grantee organization's submitted project financial statements closely against the previously approved project budget plan.

Grantee organizations that sustain timely, open and honest communication with our grants administration team, including (a) prompt submission of required reports and

financial statements and (b) adequate disclosure of obstacles and issues (such as delays, turnover in key personnel, etc.) and actions taken to address these matters, are more likely to be positively evaluated.

Grantee organizations that intend to revise their previously approved project plans, including their project budget plan, are expected to inform the grants management team of these intended changes as soon as feasible. Previously approved budget plans may be revised downward (that is, at a lower level of anticipated cost), but may not be revised upward (that is, at a higher level of anticipated cost).

Grantee organizations that provide insufficient information describing their progress or results to date, and/or who submit their reports and invoices incorrectly or late, are less likely to be positively evaluated.

16. When will we be notified if we will be awarded a grant?

The applicant team will be notified of our selection committee's decisions as soon as we can complete our review of submitted applications.

17. What happens if we, as an organization in receipt of an HCQA grant, cannot fulfill our contractual obligations?

You will be expected to notify the HCQA grants administration team immediately of your inability to fulfill your grant-funded contract. This team will advise you how to proceed thereafter.

18. When can we begin working on my project?

You may begin working on your project at any time once you have been notified of your award and you have executed a grant agreement with us.

19. When may the grantee organization submit an invoice for partial payment of the approved and funded project budget plan?

We define the timetable for invoicing dependent upon the nature, scope and timeline of the approved and funded project plan. The due dates for periodic progress reports, the final report and each of the invoices will be defined in the provided grants management instructions. It is very important that the grantee organization comply with these instructions without fail.

20. To whom are reports and invoices to be submitted?

The grantee organization will be provided this information via the grants management instructions.

21. Who should be contacted if payment of a submitted invoice is not received by the grantee organization in a timely manner?

The grantee organization will be provided this information via the grants management instructions.

22. Is it possible that the grantee organization will be audited?

Yes. The grantee organization's acceptance of a grant award, whether with or without conditions, that results in the subsequent expenditure of public monies, allows for an audit of the grantee organization's project-based performance and management of these monies at any time without cause. The grantee organization is required to apply GAPP (Generally Acccepted Accounting Pinciples) standards, and to maintain requisite documentation in support of all grant-related transactions.

23. May we deem the products of our organization's grant-funded activity to be proprietary and available in the future only for a fee that our (that is, the applicant) organization sets?

No. When the grantee organization accepts and expends public monies to develop reproducible products, the resultant products are in the public domain.

24. Under certain conditions, may the grantee organization request a no-cost extension, thereby allowing it to complete the approved project plan over a longer period of time without an increase in the project budget?

Yes. This option must be discussed with the grants administration team in advance of the submission of a request for a no-cost extension. The request for a no-cost extension must be accompanied by (1) a rationale for the request and (2) a revised project plan, including a revised budget plan that (a) does not require an increase in the previously approved project budget and (b) is accompanied by a detailed budget justification.