

**Maryland Department of Health
Office of Health Care Quality
Health Care Quality Account Grants Program
Pre-Award**

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 accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year. The Grants Committee meets quarterly to review State eligible applications and make award decisions. Federally eligible applications are reviewed by the Grants Administrator on a rolling basis.

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

Send an email message to: HCQA.Grants@Maryland.gov. The Grants Administrator 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. The applicant 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 licensed 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. How do I find the application and application guidance?

Applications are completed using Smartsheet. The link can be found on our OHCQ Grants webpage or by clicking this link.

Guidance for applications can be found on the OHCQ Grants webpage and the Grants Administrator is available to answer specific questions by emailing HCQA.Grants@Maryland.gov.

If you do not have access to internet, please contact the Grants Administrator at (410) 402- 8190 for support.

6. 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.

7 . Can funds be utilized to start or maintain a business?

Applications 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.

8. 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.

9. 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 reference the Health Care Quality Account Annual Reports or the State Plans for all participating states on the CMS website.

10. How much grant funding may I request?

While we do not pre-define limits to the amount of funding that may be requested, federal guidance has placed a \$5,000 cap per qualified licensed facility per funding category annually. Some funding categories allow applicants to request \$5,000 per qualifying licensed facility per year for up to 3 years.

Projects with appropriately lean budgets likely to produce the greatest return for the proposed amount to be invested 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.

11. If our grant application is approved and funded, what happens next?

First, you will be notified by email that your grant is being awarded. You will be required to provide detailed statement of your proposed project's goals and objectives, project plan and timeline, and project budget with justification prior to award. 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. A new grantee orientation will be available for approved projects.

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

The time constraints of funding are specific to each funding category. 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 depending on the restrictions of the funding category. If and when a multi-year project is approved and funded, funding will be allocated only one year at a time.

Awardees may apply for a No Cost Extension in the event of a delay in service delivery that is reasonable and requires no additional funds be dispensed.

Awardees may request Continuation funding to extend project timeline and request additional funding to complete project deliverables. Continuation funding 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.

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

If one or more previous applications have been denied after state review, you may reapply for a grant award. It is suggested that you communicate with the Grants Administrator to strengthen your application and address the causes of denial prior to resubmission.

While applications denied at the state level are eligible to reapply, if your application has been denied by federal review you may not reapply for the same project.

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

The applicant will be notified of the grant committee's decisions typically within two business days following quarterly committee meetings.