



**The Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge
Frequently Asked Questions
Challenge Finalists Cycle 2016-2018
Archived April 2016**

The Request for Proposal (RFP)

1. How can the RFP be accessed?

A hard copy of the RFP can be accessed on the Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge website. The website address is www.healthiestcities.org.

2. How do we actually submit our proposal and application to the Challenge?

Your proposal and application to the Challenge is completed online. The submission link is available on the home page of the Challenge's website (www.healthiestcities.org).

3. How will the online proposal submission process work?

Once you access the portal from the link provided on the Challenge's website, you will see several tabs across the top of the landing page. Each tab includes application requirements, including several questions you must answer online. You will be able to upload many of the required documents.

4. One of the documents on the application portal that is available for our use is a table for describing details about our selected measures and data collection/analysis plans. Are we required to complete and submit this table?

No. You are not required to complete and submit this table. However, we encourage you to complete it for your project in an effort to develop a credible measurement plan to which all cross-sector team members agree and understand. If you decide to submit this table, it will not count as part of the 7-page limit. Submitting a completed table would also assist with scoring RFP questions that focus on measurement.

5. When are responses to the RFP due?

Responses to the RFP are due May 31st, by 5:00 P.M. E.D.T. and must be submitted through the online application portal. There is a 7-page limit for the proposal itself. Submission of additional documents is also required. Be certain to read through the RFP carefully to address all requirements.

6. Is there an application fee or any other fee to participate?

There is neither an application fee nor a participation fee.

7. The RFP indicates that a cross-sector team should be formed to design and manage the project. Who should be on this team?

The cross-sector team should include individuals from various stakeholder groups (e.g., government, non-profit organizations, local, state and county public health departments, health care organization systems, educational institutions, etc.). Additional team members may be individuals with unique expertise in the domain area targeted by the applicant (e.g., transportation, agriculture, city/county engineering). The cross-sector team may also include “new and unique players” that are not members of the “traditional team” For example, high school students learning about urban farming and teaching relevant measured community groups (disenfranchised youth groups) how to do this (teenagers teaching teenagers how to change their environment). The cross-sector team should also reflect the diversity of the community.

8. The RFP states that “cities must also address issues of health equity and the social determinants of health”. Please elaborate on this requirement.

According to the [American Public Health Association](#) health equity means everyone has the opportunity to attain their highest level of health.

How do we achieve health equity? We address the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, learn, play and age. These *social determinants of health* are shaped by the distribution of money and resources that include employment, housing, education, health care, public safety and food access.

Health equity focuses on the absence of disparities in health and well-being and implies achieving social justice. Disparities in the quality of health across populations are well-documented globally in both developed and developing nations.

According to the World Health Organization, “the social determinants of health (SDOH) are the economic and social conditions – and their distribution among the population – that influence individual and group differences in health status. They are health promoting factors found in one’s living and working conditions (such as the distribution of income, wealth, influence and power), rather than individual risk factors (such as behavioral risk factor or genetics) that influence the risk for a disease, or vulnerability to disease or injury” (<http://www.who.int/hia/evidence/doh/en/#>). Commonly accepted SDOH include income, education, job security, working conditions, early childhood development, food insecurity, housing, social exclusion, social safety network, health services, gender, race and disability. Public policy can influence the status and effect of these factors.

Submitted proposals should address the community’s plans to address the SDOH that may be contributing adversely to the health of its community members.

9. Does the city or county government leader need to be the lead entity on the project? Or be involved at all?

As described above, we expect that applicants will form a cross-sector team to design and manage the project. One of the organizations represented on the team must be designated as the lead entity, as determined by the applicant. The city or county government is not required to participate,

however we strongly encourage their support and involvement, including a letter of support with the application.

10. Does the proposed project have to be a brand new project for the city or county?

All communities interested in participating should look to develop **new** projects although it can build on existing activities and goals for the community. The basic components and metrics used for evaluation must be based on actions that are new and specifically in response to this RFP.

11. The RFP lists 5 domains of health that will be measured. Does our project have to address all 5 domains?

The RFP states that applicants must identify at least one domain that its' project will focus on; certainly identifying more than one domain is acceptable. There are several metrics listed within each domain; participants are expected to choose at least one of the suggested metrics within the domain; certainly more than one metric is acceptable.

12. How will proposals be reviewed and evaluated?

Each submitted proposal will first be checked for completeness of all requested documents. Each complete proposal will be reviewed and scored by two members of the Challenge's Advisory Council of external experts. Responses to each proposal question will be scored. Overall, scoring will address completeness, innovativeness of the project, replicability and sustainability of the project beyond the Challenge period.

13. Are the scoring guidelines available to applicants in advance of the proposal due date?

No. Selection criteria are included in the RFP.

14. When will applicants know if they have been selected to proceed into the Challenge?

Applicants will be notified of their status approximately 8 weeks after the proposal due date. We expect to announce the finalists on August 1, 2016.

15. Will any assistance be available to would-be applicants during the proposal-writing period (between the launch and due date)?

A webinar regarding the RFP will be offered after the launch of the Challenge. It will be held at three different times/dates to accommodate schedules of interested persons. The dates and times are as follows:

- Monday, April 11th – 1pm E.D.T.
- Thursday, April 14th – 4 pm E.D.T.
- Tuesday, April 19th – 6pm E.D.T.

The connection information will be posted on the Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge website A recording of one of the webinars will also be posted on the Challenge website for ongoing access. In addition, individuals can request assistance via email hccc@apha.org.

16. Will any other webinars be held during the application period (between April 4th and May 31st)?

A webinar about measurement and data collection/submission may be held in April as well. Please check the Challenge's website to stay current on this topic.

Metrics and Measurement Plans

1. What measures will be used to evaluate participants' progress?

Several quantitative metrics currently in use in the public health field will be used to assess baseline, interim, and final rates. In addition, several qualitative metrics will be used to evaluate the project (see Appendices 1 and 2 of the RFP for more details).

2. How will data be collected for the quantitative metrics?

The quantitative metrics are all measures known in the public health field. Appendix 1 of the RFP describes and lists data sources for each quantitative measure. Participants will need to collect data for the metrics they select since most of the data sources only report annual rates and often only at the county level (not city). We will provide more guidance about data collection, both method and frequency, once the project begins. In addition, we strongly encourage all applicants to include data collection expertise as part of their cross-sector team. Representatives from local health departments or academic institutions are likely to be familiar with these quantitative metrics.

3. The proposal also lists qualitative measures that will be used to evaluate the project. How will these data be collected?

The essence of some of the qualitative areas will be considered in the proposal (e.g., extent to which a cross-sector team will be established). Interviews and surveys will be conducted to assess the qualitative metrics during the project and at the end of the Challenge competition. The qualitative metrics are listed and described in Appendix 2 on the online application portal.

4. What if none of the quantitative metrics adequately measure the impact of our project? Can we use additional, unique metrics?

Yes. Please include a description of the additional measure(s) you plan to use in your proposal, including any background information about the measure(s) and how you expect to collect and analyze the reliability and validity of the data necessary to calculate the measure(s). Please note however, that you still must also select at least one measure associated with your selected domain.

5. What if our project focuses on something different than areas represented by the measures listed in Appendix 1 for the selected domain, such as reducing childhood obesity? Is it okay to ONLY collect and submit data for the unique measure or do we also have to collect data for the other measures in that domain?

You must select at least one measure from the domain you've selected to focus on. You may add other measures that are unique and more specific to your project.

6. Why do we have to also collect data for a metric for our selected domain if it has nothing to do with our project?

Although the metric may not be related to your particular project, this requirement is in place to assist us with overall evaluation of the Challenge activities related to all domains and all metrics.

7. How will participants' performance be compared to each other?

A participant's performance will be compared to its own baseline rates for the targeted metrics. The percent change (improvement) will be of primary focus when evaluating participants' interim and final performance.

Expectations of Participating Cities and Counties

1. What are the data collection and submission expectations for participating communities?

Participating communities will be expected to collect and submit data only for their selected metrics three times during the Challenge: at baseline (after being notified of acceptance into Challenge), midterm (July 2017) and at the end of year 2 (July 2018).

2. Will narrative progress reports be required at various times during the Challenge?

There will be some narrative reporting expected at the same three times data are submitted (baseline, midterm and final). A template with specific questions will be provided.

3. Are participants expected to collect the data in a standardized fashion – the same way other participants are collecting data for the same measure?

A template for collecting the data for the quantitative measures is provided for participants' considered use. Since a participant's final measure rate(s) will be compared only to its own baseline measure rate(s), the participant may continue to collect data the way it may already be doing, as long as it is collected the same way for all three reporting periods (baseline, midterm and final).

4. The RFP states that participants will be expected to participate in the Challenge's Learning Network. What is that?

A key premise of the Challenge is the promotion of collaboration and learning across participating communities. In addition to a dedicated website, webinars will be held throughout the duration of the Challenge to encourage sharing of strategies and challenges, as well as to engage external experts in topic-specific discussions.

Assistance During the Challenge

1. Will selected cities and counties receive financial assistance for participating in the Challenge?

Soon after the finalists are notified (August 1, 2016), each selected city and county will receive a \$10,000 community seed grant to assist with project implementation.

2. Do we have to use the \$10,000 for a specific aspect of the project?

You may use the grant dollars for any part of your project activities, such as data collection, meeting support, implementation of intervention, etc.

3. Will any additional funding be provided to all participants during the project?

No, there will be no additional funding provided to all participants beyond the initial \$10,000 community seed grant. Some participants may receive midterm progress awards based on their progress during the first year.

4. Once the Challenge begins, how can I get assistance with various project concerns?

Please email your questions and concerns to JeVonna Ephraim, Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge Project Director, at jevonna.ephraim@apha.org, 202-777-2429.

5. What type of technical assistance is available and who will provide it?

Two main types of technical assistance are available:

- Assistance with public health matters, including quantitative measurement, available resources associated with public health issues, and best practices that help to drive positive changes in your city. Staff will follow up with you when you submit a request for assistance with these types of issues.

- Assistance with project participation, including qualitative measurement, project management, facilitating team meetings and planning sessions, participation in the shared learning network and webinars, and submission of data. Staff will follow up with you when you submit a request for assistance with these types of issues.

Learning Network

What is the learning network? What will it include?

The Challenge's online learning network will serve as an interactive learning community for the HealthyCommunity50 finalists' cross sector teams as well as for those applicants that were not selected as Phase 2 finalists in The Challenge. The learning network will provide a platform for communities to engage with other finalists through forums and discussion and sharing of best practices. It will also provide finalists with various technical assistance opportunities and implementation resources for their projects.

Who can participate in the learning network?

All Phase 1 applicants to The Challenge and their cross sector teams will be invited to join the learning network, whether or not they were chosen as Phase 2 finalists. The content will be tailored to the needs of the finalists, but the learning network will also serve as an opportunity for all applicants to engage and learn valuable strategies to promote in their own communities.

When will learning network events be held?

Regular webinar events will be held and will start later this Fall. Ample notice will be given about the specific topics and dates.

How will topics and speakers be selected for learning network events?

The initial topics have been selected based on the technical assistance areas that were requested by finalists in their Challenge applications. However, we are not limited to these topics and will identify future topics as necessary. Speakers will be selected by The Challenge staff and will include a combination of the Advisory Council members, additional subject matter experts and representatives from finalists' communities.

How can I suggest a learning network topic?

To suggest a learning network topic please contact hccc@apha.org.

Are finalists required to participate in the learning network and to what extent?

There is no formal requirement to participate in all learning network activities, however finalists' participation and active engagement, particularly in activities that pertain to their project, is strongly encouraged. Learning network activities include formal webinars, discussion groups, and cross-finalists' communication with each other.

Contacting Finalists

How can I communicate directly with someone in a finalist community?

Applicants invited to join the learning network will have the opportunity to communicate directly with an individual in a finalist community via ongoing discussion forums or email through the online platform.

For those not in the learning network please refer to each finalist community's unique webpage on (www.healthiestcities.org) for additional contact information.

How can I find out more details about a specific finalist's project?

You can "Go to the Map" tab on the website (www.healthiestcities.org) and click on the pin for that finalist's location. You may need to zoom in for those that are located near to each other. Once you click on the pin, you will be able to click on the link for the finalist's webpage. On that webpage you will find additional information about the project.

Selection of Winners

1. Will one participant be awarded the entire \$1.5 million prize?

No. There will be a winner and 4 runners-up in each of the two tiers. In addition, some of the prize money will be used to make interim awards midway through the Challenge. The prize structure is described below:

- Tier 1 (65,000 – 250,000 population)
 - Grand Prize - \$250,000 (1 prize will be awarded)
 - Runner up - \$25,000 (4 prizes will be awarded)
- Tier 2 (population of 250,001-600,000 population)
 - Grand Prize - \$500,000 (1 prize will be awarded)
 - Runner up - \$50,000 (4 prizes will be awarded)

2. How will winners be selected and who will serve as final judges for selecting the winners?

Final winners will be selected through a review of quantitative and qualitative performance, and via interviews conducted during an onsite visit near the end of the second year of the Challenge. In addition to APHA, NACo, and members of the Challenge's expert Advisory Council will also participate in the review of participants' performance and onsite visits to recommend winners.