



Affordable Care Act Implementation Fund: Program Overview and Requirements February 1, 2012

Background

The Affordable Care Act has the potential to be the most profound improvement to the American health care system since passage of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965, but actual implementation is key to achieving success. Hanging in the balance are 30 million people who will gain new access to affordable health insurance through the ACA, and millions more who stand to benefit from related social improvements, including reductions in poverty, better controls for health care costs, increased care quality, reductions in individual and family medical debt, increased health equity and elimination of persistent racial and ethnic health disparities.

However, the ACA has faced a litany of challenges since its signing in March 2010. Almost immediately there was vocal opposition to reform on several fronts. The newly-elected House Republican majority pledged repeal. A number of states challenged the law in court or prepared “nullification” ballot initiatives. Nearly all of the states, facing deep budget cuts brought on by the recession, looked to cut existing coverage programs rather than expand them. Today some of the most reactionary rhetoric has died down, but all of the 2012 Republican Presidential candidates have committed to dismantling the law and the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments on the ACA’s constitutionality in March. Some states seem to be taking a “wait and see” approach, unwilling to commit to the ACA or the effort of implementation until they are sure the law will stand. Finally, there is the sheer complexity of implementing a law in which the federal government establishes the framework for implementation but the states have wide latitude in designing the components that most directly affect expansion of coverage to the uninsured.

Despite these challenges and the many unknowns, there is progress on many fronts. The role of state advocates is pivotal. These trusted local groups are skilled in public education, policy analysis, community organizing and administrative, legislative and legal advocacy. In states that are committed to implementation, advocates are focused on state-based public education and advocacy efforts to engage supporters and ensure consumer interests are represented effectively in policy decisions. In more hostile environments, advocates are supporting implementation by engaging state officials on targeted issues while building broad-based understanding of the benefits of the ACA and support for more rapid forward movement once the judicial and legislative uncertainties are resolved.

The Affordable Care Act Implementation Fund

A number of national and state funders have collaborated to create the ACA Implementation Fund. The purpose of the Fund is to fund timely and strategic state-based advocacy initiatives that will move implementation forward and promote consumer interests as the law is implemented. The Fund is administered by Community Catalyst.

Goals

The goals of the Fund are:

- To support successful state implementation of the ACA to improve the health and well-being of individuals and communities.
- To increase the resources available for state-based health advocacy by encouraging the participation of new foundation partners and other major donors in supporting this work.
- To ensure that ACA implementation reflects consumer interests and concerns, especially those of low-income and vulnerable populations.
- To increase public awareness of progress being made in ACA implementation and the benefits of the ACA

Grantees will:

- Identify a desired policy outcome related to implementation of the ACA.
- Build and maintain alliances, with broad stakeholder engagement, to expand support and reduce opposition to the identified policy outcome.
- Closely track the policy development process and move quickly to take advantage of opportunities to intervene.
- Orchestrate the involvement of partners and allies so efforts are coordinated across the state.
- Create specific benchmarks, deliverables and mechanisms for measuring progress and holding coalitions accountable.

Eligibility to Apply for Funding

Application to be a grantee is by invitation only. In most cases, this will go to current ACA Implementation Fund grantees. **Only one proposal per state will be accepted.**

Applicant Organization

One specific applicant organization needs to have fiscal and overall responsibility for the project. The applicant organization must meet certain eligibility criteria. The applicant organization must:

- Be a consumer advocacy organization with documented expertise in health care advocacy.
- Have a state level policy agenda.
- Have a history of engaging and collaborating with other consumer groups and key health care stakeholders such as business, government officials, labor, payers and providers.
- Have a 2012 operating budget at least equal to the level of annual funding requested.
- Operate as a non-profit organization that is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code.

Funding Criteria

Proposals must meet the requirements of the request for proposals in order to be funded. The following criteria will be applied when evaluating the proposals:

- The relevance and timeliness of the project to inform and advance ACA implementation efforts in the state.
- The contribution of the project to addresses consumer interests and concerns in the implementation of the ACA, especially those of low-income and vulnerable populations.
- The contribution of the project to sustaining and advancing health reform nationally.
- The contribution of the project to increasing public awareness and demonstrating the benefits of the ACA.

- The proposal is well written and makes the case for project funding.

Total Awards

The Fund will provide one-year grants in the range of \$75,000 to \$250,000, based on a number of factors, including the needs and scope of the project and the population and size of the state. Advocates in each state will be informed of the maximum level of funding for which they can apply.

This grant program has a 1:1 matching-funds requirement, intended to help grantees leverage additional support for their work. The match requirement is also intended to help grantees with longer-term sustainability by stimulating investment from other funders.

Use of Grant Funds

Grant funds may be used for project staff salaries, consultant fees, data collection and analysis, meetings, supplies, activities related to fundraising and development, project-related travel, and other direct project expenses including a limited amount of equipment essential to the project.

The Budget Worksheet and Budget Narrative should identify all activities outlined in the proposal, including activities that will be supported by the Fund and those that will be supported by other funding.

Lobbying

A limited amount of funding is available to support lobbying activities. It may not be used for election activities, including ballot measures, initiatives, or referendums.

Evaluation and Monitoring

As a condition of accepting the ACA funds, grantees will be required to participate in evaluating and monitoring their project. Community Catalyst will monitor the grantees efforts to provide careful stewardship of grant funds to ensure accountability. Grantees will be required to provide progress reports on their grants.

How to Apply

Proposals for this solicitation must be submitted electronically.

Contact Information

Applicants are encouraged to forward general questions to ACAfund@communitycatalyst.org and a Community Catalyst staff member will respond.

Timetable For Proposals:

- February 29, 2012: Final proposals are due
- April 1, 2012: Grants start

About Community Catalyst

Community Catalyst is a national non-profit advocacy organization dedicated to making quality, affordable health care accessible to everyone. Since 1997, Community Catalyst has worked to build consumer and community leadership to transform the American health care system. With the belief

that this transformation will happen when consumers are fully engaged and have an organized voice, Community Catalyst works in partnership with national, state and local consumer organizations, policymakers and foundations providing leadership and support to change the health care system so it serves everyone – especially vulnerable members of society.