



## Community Transformation Grants

The new national health reform law, the Affordable Care Act, authorized an innovative program to help local communities address racial and ethnic health disparities and reduce chronic diseases by promoting healthy living and tackling the social and economic causes of poor health. These grants are the major provision in the law designed to address the root causes of health disparities. They provide an important opportunity to engage community members in devising solutions that improve their lives. The grants are also designed to develop community-based prevention strategies that work and can be models for other locations.

**Who is eligible?** State and local agencies, state and local nonprofits, national networks of community-based organizations, and Indian tribes may apply for grants. The grants will be awarded competitively, based on proposals submitted and the ability of the applicants to engage stakeholders from across the community, including those in health care and beyond. Twenty percent of the grants are reserved for rural and frontier areas.

**When do the grants begin?** The Obama administration plans to award grants in 2011, if Congress appropriates funding. The request for grant proposals has not yet been issued.

**How much money is available?** The law does not set out a specific amount for the grants. Instead, the law advises Congress to pay for the program from the Prevention and Public Health Fund also established in the law. Congress appropriated \$15 billion for the Prevention Fund from 2010-2019 for a variety of prevention initiatives. Congress has taken steps toward authorizing hundreds of millions of dollars for the grants in 2011, but has not yet voted to approve the funds. Some Republicans in Congress want to eliminate the Prevention Fund, so advocacy may be needed to secure the funding. Obama administration officials say they hope to award multi-year grants.

**What type of activities would be funded?** Applicants must devise a plan that lays out changes in policies, programs, environment and infrastructure. Obama administration officials say all proposals should focus on reducing health disparities, as well as improving the health of everyone in the targeted communities. Specific activities suggested in the law include increasing access to nutritious foods, creating healthier school environments, encouraging physical activity, improving community safety and expanding worksite wellness programs. Administration officials say grant applicants will be asked to choose from a menu of proven strategies, but will also be allowed to try new approaches. They plan to focus on the health factors specified in the law, which include weight, nutrition, physical activity, tobacco use, emotional well-being and mental health.

**Is there a model for this program?** A federal initiative called [Communities Putting Prevention to Work](#) is a [similar initiative](#), which funded two-year projects focused on reducing obesity and tobacco use in 60 communities. The Community Transformation Grants are designed to address more problems, focus more explicitly on health disparities, provide longer grants, and improve key measures of health nationwide.

**Who oversees the program?** The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will develop the criteria for the grants, award the money, help develop community transformation plans and devise a structure for evaluating the program.

**Can communities get help developing their transformation plans?** The CDC plans to award “capacity-building” grants to some communities. These grants can be used for coalition building, assessing community needs, planning, training community members in policy change and other technical skills. Communities that get these grants would then have an opportunity to apply for additional grants to implement the plans.

**What can advocates do now?** CDC officials say that each transformation plan must be overseen by a leadership team that represents the diversity of the community. This team should be supported by a community coalition including organizations and agencies from many sectors of society, including schools, businesses, hospitals, foundations, government and community groups. Advocates can research whether similar efforts are already underway in their communities. Advocates can then either help expand those efforts or work to build coalitions that could support a community transformation initiative. In many communities, a good place to start may be reaching out to local and state public health officials. Advocates can also help convene meetings to shape transformation plans. Separately, advocates can organize community members to educate their U.S. Representatives and Senators about the importance of funding the grants.

**For more details:** Please see section 4201 of the [Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act](#). [Listen to a recording](#) of CDC officials discussing the grants.