



Community Transformation Grants

The health care reform law 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 or 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 law authorized the program to begin in 2010 and run through 2014. However, no request for grant proposals has been issued, and it appears that the first grants will not be awarded until 2011.

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 by health reform. Congress appropriated \$15 billion for the Prevention Fund from 2010-2019 for a variety of prevention initiatives. For fiscal year 2010, President Obama did not designate any of the \$500 million in Prevention Fund money for the Community Transformation Grants. Congress has taken steps toward authorizing hundreds of millions of dollars for the grants in 2011, but a Republican proposal would wipe out the fund until 2017.

What type of activities would be funded? Applicants must devise a plan that lays out changes in policies, programs, environment and infrastructure. Specific activities suggested in the law include increasing access to nutritious foods, creating healthier school environments, encouraging physical activity, improving community safety, expanding worksite wellness programs and reducing health disparities. However, communities are not limited to these suggestions. The law bars using the grants to create video games or for activities that “may lead to higher rates of obesity or inactivity.”

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

For more details: Please see section 4201 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.