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# Request for Proposals

## Vaccine Equity and Access Program

Date Issued: April 21, 2021

Date Due: May 5, 2021 by noon ET. In the event that funds remain after the initial review, applications may be accepted on a rolling basis.

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**COMMUNITY CATALYST**

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## SECTION I: FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

### ***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.

### ***Background***

Vaccination is a highly effective public health intervention that, when accessible, prevents infection and the spread of illness, saving millions of lives every year. However, systemic racism has led to inequities that permeate health care, living and working conditions, and economic mobility across the country. As a result, there are significant health disparities between white people and people of color in the United States, including disparities in adult vaccination rates. In a health care context specifically, people of color have long-confronted injustices—both historical and present-day—that contribute to poorer health outcomes and inequitable access to care. These injustices include medical systems rooted in racialized violence and abuse, discriminatory treatment at the hands of medical providers, lack of research and information about health issues that disproportionately impact people of color, the targeted under-resourcing of communities of color, and services within health systems that do not support identified community needs or culturally competent care.

Over the last year, as the COVID-19 pandemic has gripped the nation and the world, the same racial inequities that have led to disparities in health care more broadly, including in vaccination rates, are leading to much higher rates of COVID-19 infection and death in communities of color, most especially in American Indian/Alaska Native, African American/Black, Asian American, Hispanic/Latinx American and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities.

Now that several vaccines for COVID-19 are available and vaccination is more urgent than ever, community leaders must be equipped to develop vaccine confidence networks that enable individuals and families to absorb accurate, timely, and culturally appropriate information about vaccine options, including information that addresses questions and concerns people may have. These networks can also be invaluable leaders in raising awareness about the need to improve COVID-19 and influenza vaccination access points in communities of color and in connecting providers with information and resources to better meet the needs of the communities they serve in the long term.

In February 2021, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched a grant program, *Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Adult Immunization*, providing funding and technical assistance to national, state and local community-based organizations (CBOs) over the next 18 months. Made available by CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases' (NCIRD) Immunization Services Division (ISD), the program invests in new and existing partnerships to support tailored COVID-19 vaccine awareness, access, and confidence activities among various populations and communities in the U.S. The program will also support similar activities for the

2021–2022 influenza season and continue to engage national and community-based partners in this work in the years ahead.

One strategy the CDC is undertaking to address these issues is providing funding to community-based organizations through the following four national partners: CDC Foundation, Community Catalyst, RF Catalytic Capital Inc. and Urban Institute. These national partners have jointly developed the request for proposal (RFP) below and will be working in partnership to steward CDC funds. In addition to funding specific projects implemented by community-based organizations, these CDC funds will create an extensive network of awardees to broadly promote vaccine confidence within communities of color, share messaging, and leverage peer insights and authoritative data resources to inform program activities in diverse racial and ethnic communities. These efforts will enhance the resource and evidence base and provide a way forward in reducing racial and ethnic disparities in adult immunization.

Prospective community-based organization applicants for this funding are strongly advised to apply for funding by submitting their application materials—outlined in the RFP—to **one national partner only**. Applicants will not be eligible for funding by more than one national partner in this project; however, in order to ensure the best possible chance of a successful application, applicants may consent to having their organization’s proposal shared across the four national partners by selecting the “share my application” option on the first page of the proposal.

### ***Funding Opportunity***

Community Catalyst will provide \$100,000 contracts to 75 community-based organizations to:

- (1) Equip influential messengers by providing trainings and materials;
- (2) Increase vaccination opportunities and enhance provider partnerships; and
- (3) Establish partnerships with state and local health departments.

Awardees of this funding opportunity will participate in a larger learning community, which provides access to subject matter experts, group learning opportunities, peer sharing sessions, materials, relationship building, and one-on-one coaching designed to support awardees in conducting activities to increase vaccine confidence and access within priority populations. The learning community will be made up of a large and diverse cohort of national, state, local, and community-based organizations, all working to address health disparities and advance equity in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Awardees will also have the opportunity and be encouraged to share lessons learned, success stories, expertise, materials, and solutions through their participation in the learning community.

### ***Strategic Framework***

The [National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness](#) highlighted that “the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated severe and pervasive health inequities among communities defined by race, ethnicity, geography, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other factors.”<sup>1</sup> In addition, long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put many people of color at increased risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19<sup>2</sup>.

[Vaccinate with Confidence](#) is the CDC’s strategic framework to strengthen vaccine confidence and prevent outbreaks of Vaccine Preventable Diseases in the United States<sup>3</sup>. The Framework advances three key priorities:

- **Protect Communities** by supporting states, cities, and counties to find under-vaccinated communities and take steps to protect them.

- **Empower Families** by expanding resources for health care professionals to support effective vaccine conversations with parents and community members.
- **Stop Myths** by working with local partners and trusted messengers to improve confidence in vaccines among at-risk groups.

This funding opportunity aims to address health disparities and advance health equity in communities of color. Through this funding opportunity, support will be provided for community-based organizations (CBOs) to develop and implement effective health communication and community engagement strategies designed to increase COVID-19 and influenza vaccine confidence and acceptance in communities of color that are at increased risk of getting sick and dying from these illnesses. Below is a list of illustrative activities that might be supported under this funding opportunity:

- Identify and train trusted community-level spokespersons (e.g., faith leaders, teachers, community health workers, radio DJs, local shop owners, barbers) to communicate the burdens of influenza and COVID-19 and the importance of influenza and COVID-19 vaccination through local media outlets, social media, faith-based venues, community events, and other community-based, culturally appropriate venues.
- Develop or adapt and implement social media campaign strategies to mitigate and address influenza vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine misinformation and disinformation.
- Develop and tailor education and outreach materials and/or leverage materials from the program and other recipients and CBOs involved in the program.
- Connect vaccination providers with places of worship, community organizations, recreation programs, food banks/pantries, schools and colleges/universities, grocery stores, salons/barber shops/beauticians, major employers, elder housing locations and other key community institutions to set up temporary and/or mobile influenza and COVID-19 vaccination sites, especially in communities experiencing disparities.
- Build partnerships with health care providers to increase provider understanding of the populations of interest and interventions to increase vaccination rates for these populations.
- Advocate for dialysis centers, prenatal care centers, well-baby care clinics, family planning clinics, dentists' offices, nursing homes, COVID-19 testing sites, and other specific provider sites or programs to deliver influenza vaccines where patients are already seeking care for themselves or their family members.
- Work with vaccination service providers to expand the types of health professionals (e.g., community health workers, patient navigators, patient advocates) and administrative staff (e.g., front desk workers) engaged in promoting vaccination and increasing referrals of individuals to influenza and COVID-19 vaccination sites.
- Provide technology literacy trainings to support increased understanding of virtual technologies commonly employed to schedule vaccination appointments (e.g., how-to guides and events on using Zoom and other virtual meeting technologies).
- Collaborate with state and local health departments – state immunization programs in particular – on mobile influenza and COVID-19 vaccination clinics, education campaigns, and other vaccination activities in communities experiencing disparities.

### ***Deliverables***

All awardees will be expected to complete the following activities and deliverables:

- Provide brief monthly progress reports on basic activity metrics (see below list of potential indicators)

- Participate in regularly scheduled conference calls with other awardees and subject matter experts to share progress on activities and discuss lessons learned
- Share sample materials and communication products with Community Catalyst and the CDC Foundation for dissemination of project results via a resource clearinghouse, webinars, conference calls or meeting presentations
- Submit semiannual and final narrative reports describing: stakeholder collaboration, successes, challenges, lessons learned, event and activity metrics (i.e.: number of website visitors, hotline callers, virtual event participants, etc.)

Potential indicators include:

- Number and types of local leaders and community members trained
- Number and sub-populations reached by community-level spokespersons
- Percentage of trained community-level spokespersons showing increased competence in implementing training objectives
- Number and types of audience-tested and culturally appropriate messages promoting COVID-19 vaccination
- Number and types of people reached by social media messaging promoting COVID-19 vaccination
- Number and types of events/campaigns held to promote COVID-19 vaccination
- Number and types of people reached by events/campaigns promoting COVID-19 vaccination
- Survey: Number and degree to which people’s vaccination sentiments changed
- Number of referred vaccination recipients
- Survey: Increased awareness of vaccine opportunities
- Number of referred individuals vs actual vaccination recipients
- Number of vaccination venues supported
- Number of individuals reached by activities (i.e. number of individuals attending listening sessions, number of communications campaigns launched, etc.)

### ***Timeline***

April 21, 2021	RFP release
April 26, 2021	Applicant Informational Webinar, 3:00 p.m. ET
May 5, 2021	RFP submission deadline, noon ET
May 24, 2021	Selection notification
May 24, 2021 – June 14, 2021	Finalize agreement and transfer of funding
June 15, 2021	Anticipated project implementation start date
TBD	Project Kickoff Call
June 15, 2021- June 14, 2022	Implementation period of up to 12 months

*\*Please note that the timeline is subject to change*

### ***Funds Available***

Community Catalyst will make approximately 75 grants of approximately \$100,000 per grant. . There is potential for additional funding at the close of this grant in June 2022.

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## **SECTION II: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

## ***Eligible Applicants***

Eligible applicants are based in and serving communities in the United States and its territories. Applicants must be nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) or Native American tribal entities (either a federally recognized government or an organization). Examples of eligible community-based organizations (CBOs) may include: health advocacy organizations, faith-based organizations, vaccine advocacy organizations, public health organizations, direct service providers including food pantries, shelters, and others, civic and social organizations. Applicants may use a fiscal sponsor that is a 501(c)(3) organization. Applicants must have both demonstrated experience and current capacity to engage communities of color at increased risk of COVID-19 infection and mortality with culturally competent outreach and education activities. Colleges, universities, research institutions, hospitals or health systems are not eligible for funding under this project.

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## **SECTION III. APPLICATION INFORMATION**

### ***Content and Form of Application Submission***

The online application can be accessed at [this link](#). The information below will be requested on the application form.

1. Organization Information
  - Organization Name, Address, Website, and Mission
  - EIN/Tax ID
  - DUNS Number - To request a DUNS number, visit <https://www.dnb.com/duns-number/get-a-duns.html>
  - Non-profit status
2. Project Description
  - Project Title and Problem Statement with Objective(s)
  - Geographical focus of the project (cities, states, zip codes and census tracks where the project will focus)
  - Descriptions of the demographics and characteristics of your target at-risk populations for this project
  - Description of the proposed strategies/activities planned
  - Description of how your organization will engage community partners and coalitions through all aspects of the project. Community partners could include health care providers, community health center outreach teams, mutual aid organizations, faith community leaders, civic leaders, existing vaccination sites or others.
  - Description of how your organization will collaborate to achieve project objectives. With whom will you collaborate and how?
3. Outputs/Outcomes
  - Estimate of the number of individuals who will be reached by the proposed activities
  - Description of the direct, tangible results of activities
  - Description of the changes anticipated to occur in people or conditions as a result of the activities and outputs by the end of the grant term.
4. Budget and Budget Narrative
  - Provide a short narrative (can be bullet points) on how you will allocate your 12-month budget for anticipated costs at \$100,000 with an expected implementation period of

June 15, 2021-June 14, 2022. The requested project funds can include the following direct costs: Salary, Fringe Benefits, Supplies, Equipment including personal protective equipment if in-person engagement is proposed, Travel (meal and incidental expenses), Contractual, and Other Direct Costs. Indirect costs are allowable up to 10%

- Please note, if your organization is chosen for funding, you will be expected to submit:
  - i. a full project budget and budget narrative prior to receiving the grant award. Upload a copy of your organization's annual budget and most recent audited financial statement (Note: If one is not available, upload a copy of your most recent annual report).

### ***Submitting a Proposal***

Application materials should be submitted by noon EST on May 5, 2021. Notification of receipt of the application will be sent.

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## **SECTION IV: APPLICATION REVIEW CRITERIA**

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Selection Criteria</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Organizational Mission, Populations Served and Past Experience</b>	<p>Problem statement and objectives</p> <p>Description of demographics and relevant health characteristics of the at-risk populations in the community</p> <p>Demonstrated experience in engaging community stakeholders in the development of community-driven, culturally appropriate initiatives</p> <p>Prior experience or progress with providing science-based information to at risk populations</p>	30 Points
<b>Well-defined Community Engagement Approach and Activities (Project Plan)</b>	<p>Feasibility of proposed plan</p> <p>Detailed proposed strategies, activities, and timeline for completing work</p> <p>Description of how your organization will engage the community through all aspects of the project</p> <p>Description of how and with whom organization will collaborate to achieve project objectives</p>	30 Points
<b>Clear outputs, outcomes, and impact (M&amp;E)</b>	<p>Detailed deliverables specific to the proposed project</p> <p>Estimate number of individuals who will be reached by the proposed activities</p> <p>Description of populations that will be reached (race/ethnicity, age, special needs, etc.)</p>	30 Points

	Describe direct, tangible results of activities  Description of changes anticipated to occur in people or conditions as a result of the implemented activities and outputs by the end of the grant term	
<b>Detailed Budget and Budget Narrative</b>	Budget allocations aligned with the needs of the project	10 points
		<b>100 points</b>

**Review and Selection Process**

Completed eligible applications submitted by the May 5, 2021 noon deadline will be evaluated first in accordance with the review criteria and timeline stated above. If there are additional funds available, applications may be submitted on a rolling basis.

The priority for Community Catalyst in selecting CBOs to partner with on this project will be ensuring a diverse range of populations served. Using the [CDC Social Vulnerability Index \(SVI\)](#) and [Surgo Ventures’ Precision for COVID data index](#), we will identify zip codes and census tracks where need is highest among the communities identified above and select applicants who can target their efforts in these areas. We are committed to ensuring that CBOs representing each of the above populations will be included in our final selections.

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**SECTION V. APPLICANT CONFERENCE CALL**

Community Catalyst will host an applicant informational webinar to provide an overview of the project and the application requirements related to this RFP on April 26, 2021 at 3:00pm – 4:00 p.m. EST.

Register in advance for the meeting: [Webinar Registration](#)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Applicants may submit questions at any point during the application phase, April 21-May 5, 2021, to [VEAP@communitycatalyst.org](mailto:VEAP@communitycatalyst.org). At that point, a Community Catalyst VEAP team member will reply within 24 business hours.

**References**

- 1 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/National-Strategy-for-the-COVID-19-Response-and-Pandemic-Preparedness.pdf>
- 2 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html>
- 3 <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/partners/vaccinate-with-confidence.html>