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## Request for Proposals

Supporting Community-Based Organizations to Increase Vaccination Coverage Among Adults of Color in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi

Date Issued: August 2, 2021

Date Due: August 31, 2021 by 8:00pm ET

Proposals received after August 31 will only be considered if funds have not been fully programmed to proposals submitted by the August 31 deadline. This Request for Proposals (RFP) and subsequent subawards are contingent upon grant funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

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Submit a virtual application through <https://urbaninstitute.force.com/cbovaccineconfidence>

Send any questions to [VaccineConfidence@Urban.org](mailto:VaccineConfidence@Urban.org)

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## SECTION I: FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

### **Background**

Vaccination is considered one of the most important public health achievements of the 20th century and continues to be a critical public health and resilience tool. However, the benefits of vaccination are not realized equally across the population of the United States. While adult vaccination coverage remains low nationally, there are significant geographic, racial, and ethnic disparities. Populations experiencing vaccination disparities are also disproportionately affected by COVID-19, at risk for serious illness from COVID-19, and/or at high risk for complications from influenza infection.

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*, to provide funding and technical assistance to national, state, and local community-based organizations. The program invests in new and existing partnerships to support tailored COVID-19 and influenza vaccine awareness, access, and confidence activities tailored among various populations and communities in the U.S. The program is informed by CDC's strategic framework, [Vaccinate with Confidence](#), which advances three key priorities to strengthen vaccine confidence and prevent outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases in the US.

In April 2021, the Urban Institute launched an RFP for community-based organizations (CBOs) as a part of this program, ultimately selecting 20 CBOs from across the United States to receive grants and technical assistance to advance vaccine confidence and coverage. As vaccination rollout has continued, it has become apparent that particularly low vaccination rates are concentrated in some states and communities in correlation to rising COVID-19 infection rates. Accordingly, Urban has received additional CDC funding to focus on a second round of grants for CBOs in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana – three of the four states with the lowest COVID-19 vaccination rates.<sup>1</sup>

### **Funding Opportunity**

The goal of this program is to support community-based efforts to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in adult immunization by working through CBOs to expand vaccine coverage and improve vaccine confidence. This opportunity will provide funding and technical assistance to 10 community-based organizations (CBOs) based in Alabama, Louisiana, or Mississippi to develop and implement effective health communication and community engagement strategies designed to increase COVID-19 vaccine confidence and acceptance among adults of color in those states.

The project will support CBO activities including (1) equipping influential messengers by providing trainings and materials; (2) increasing vaccination opportunities and enhancing provider partnerships; and/or (3) establishing partnerships with state and local health departments. CBOs will also engage with a large, diverse learning community across the US, comprised of hundreds of other organizations working to address health disparities and advance equity in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout.

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<sup>1</sup> See state-level vaccination data: <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccinations>

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## SECTION II: ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants are organizations that are (1) based and operating in Alabama, Louisiana, or Mississippi and (2) nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) or under an IRS code other than 501(c)(3).

Examples of CBOs could include: faith-based organizations; vaccine advocacy organizations; public health focused associations; and civic, cultural, and social organizations that have the capacity to educate and engage communities of color who are at increased risk of getting COVID-19. CBOs should have demonstrated experience effectively engaging with at-risk populations in the community. Colleges, universities, hospitals, health systems, or their fiscal sponsors are not eligible for funding under this project.

Eligible projects are those that:

- Focus on adults (18+) of color in Alabama, Louisiana, or Mississippi;<sup>2</sup>
- Focus on vaccination for COVID-19 or both COVID-19 *and* influenza;
- Address documented barriers to vaccine confidence and access; and
- Use a community-based approach that emphasizes engagement and appropriately tailors activities and materials to the focus population and context.

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## SECTION III: RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Contingent upon grant funding from the CDC, the Urban Institute intends to award an estimated 10 CBOs cost reimbursement subgrants of up to \$60,000 each. Applicants are encouraged to apply for the full amount necessary to implement their proposed approach and activities (up to \$60,000). The final award amount is contingent on the submission of a detailed and reasonable budget proposal to be approved by the Urban Institute. Selected CBOs will also receive free, one-on-one technical assistance from the Urban Institute designed to support project implementation and build broader, long-term organizational capacity.

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## SECTION IV: EXPECTATIONS OF AWARDEES

This project will require frequent communication and consistent partnership between Urban and the CBOs selected pursuant to this RFP. All selected CBOs will be expected to identify a responsive point of contact who will participate in regular update meetings with the Urban Institute, submit monthly performance reports (using a template designed by the CDC), implement project activities consistent with their proposal, and participate in learning opportunities. In addition, awardees will be expected to adhere to the general terms and conditions ([PDF linked here](#)).

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<sup>2</sup> While funded activities may benefit other population groups, due to the conditions of the source funding, competitive proposals should focus on adults of color.

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## SECTION V: TIMELINE

We anticipate periods of performance starting in October 2021 and applicants are encouraged to propose projects and budgets beginning October 1 or October 15.

<b>August 2, 2021</b>	<b>RFP release</b>
August 13, 2021	Q&A Webinar ( <a href="#">register here</a> )
August 24, 2021	RFP Office Hours (email <a href="mailto:VaccineConfidence@Urban.org">VaccineConfidence@Urban.org</a> by August 23 to request a call)
<b>August 31, 2021 at 8:00pm ET</b>	<b>Application submission deadline</b>
Mid/Late September	Selection notification
October 1, 2021	Earliest potential project implementation start date
March 31, 2022	End of implementation period (up to 6 months)

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## SECTION VI. HOW TO APPLY

Interested parties should follow the following steps to submit an application:

1. Use [this link](#) to **create an account on the Urban Institute grants portal**. Once you create your account, navigate to “Funding Program” at the top of the screen and find this opportunity (“CBO Vaccine Confidence”)
2. You will be prompted to **enter basic organizational information** such as name, address, EIN/tax ID, DUNS number,<sup>3</sup> and points of contact. Then, you will be prompted to save your application.
3. Next, you will be taken to a summary of your information. At the bottom of the page, you should **upload the following attachments**:
  - a. Proposal narrative (see details below on what to include)
  - b. Project budget using this template and a separate budget narrative (see details below on what to include in both)
  - c. A copy of your organization's annual operating budget and most recent audited financial statement (Note: If an audited financial statement is not available, upload a copy of your most recent annual financial report).
  - d. A copy of your IRS Determination Letter
  - e. If your organization is including indirect costs as part of your proposed budget, do one of the following:
    - i. Upload a copy of your negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with your cognizant federal agency, *or*,
    - ii. If your organization does not have a NICRA you can elect to use a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC). Your narrative should indicate the proposed use of the de minimis rate, but no further justification is needed.

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<sup>3</sup> If you do not have a DUNS number, you must request one via <https://www.dnb.com/duns-number/get-a-duns.html>

4. Select “Submit” to **submit your application**. You will receive an email confirmation.

If you encounter technical difficulties at any stage, please email [VaccineConfidence@Urban.org](mailto:VaccineConfidence@Urban.org)

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## SECTION VII. WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

We recommend a proposal narrative that is four pages or less in total length (roughly 12,000 characters) and includes the following information:

- **Organization.** In this section, we are looking for evidence that you are a trusted, capable, and experienced community partner.
  - i. Describe the impact of COVID-19 on your community, risk factors, and vaccination rates in your area (see, for instance: <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>).
  - ii. Describe your organization’s mission, as well as the activities and community that you serve.
  - iii. What prior experience does your organization have that would make you a trusted community partner capable of implementing this project? For instance, do you have demonstrated organizational experience engaging and educating community stakeholders, leading health equity initiatives, and/or collaborating with public health agencies or other local organizations?
- **Project.** In this section, we are looking for evidence that your project is well-conceived and will be effective in achieving its goals.
  - i. What population(s) will your project focus on? (Provide zip codes/county name(s) and basic demographic information) Why are you focusing on this population(s)?
  - ii. What are your proposed project and activities? This should address why your plan is feasible.
  - iii. Why will your approach and strategy be effective at improving vaccine confidence and coverage (rates)?
- **Outputs and outcomes.** In this section, we are seeking to learn what anticipated impact your project will have in your community and how you expect to track those impacts.
  - i. Estimate the number of individuals who will be reached by the proposed activities.
  - ii. Describe the anticipated direct, tangible outputs of your activities. How will you collect this information?
  - iii. Describe the anticipated outcomes (i.e. changes anticipated to occur in people or conditions as a result of the activities and outputs by the end of the grant term).

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## SECTION VIII. WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR BUDGET AND BUDGET NARRATIVE

**Budget.** Applicants must include a budget that outlines proposed expenditures for the project implementation period [using this template](#) and based on the [CDC budget preparation guidelines](#). Line items should be categorized according to your organization’s policies and procedures (for instance,

some agencies may include rent as a direct cost, while others may include as a part of its indirect costs) and not exceed \$60,000.

**Budget Narrative:** Please provide a separate budget narrative document to correspond to the line-item cost components in your budget. This narrative should include justifications for the costs, assumptions, and/or methodologies relevant to the cost components. If such costs are a part of the submitted budget, please consider the following in your narrative:

- **Salaries/Wages:** Detail each position and relevancy to your project. Note: This section should include personnel employed by your agency only; staff from partnering organizations, consultants, and other contractors should be detailed in the Subcontract line-item.
- **Fringe Benefits:** Include numerical rate and description of components (e.g., Health Insurance, FICA, pension, etc.); OR attach most recent Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) if fringe rate is incorporated therein.
- **Subcontracts/Consultants:** Purchased services outside your agency; include justification for each service and explain how the cost estimate was derived.
- **Other Direct Costs:** Provide a detailed justification and breakdown of each cost (e.g., supplies and equipment, payments to volunteers). If including travel, provide the travel purpose, destination(s), number of trips, and estimates for airfare, lodging, per diems, etc., per person. Food and beverage costs as well as incentives payments to induce people to get a vaccine are not allowable and should not be included in your budget.
- **Indirect Costs:** Indirect costs are allowable under this project and your narrative should detail the rate included. If your organization has a current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) approved by a government agency, this should be provided as justification for these costs. In the absence of a NICRA, your agency can elect to use a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC), as outlined in 2 CFR Part 200. Your narrative should indicate the proposed use of the de minimis rate, but no further justification beyond this is needed.

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## SECTION IX: APPLICATION SELECTION CRITERIA

Applications will be reviewed by a selection committee and scored using this rubric.

Domain	Selection Criteria	Score
<b>Organizational mission, populations served, and past experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity of goals and alignment of goals with activities.</li> <li>• Description of demographics and relevant health characteristics of the at-risk populations in the community.</li> <li>• Demonstrated experience engaging community stakeholders in the development of community-driven, culturally appropriate initiatives and education campaigns.</li> </ul>	30 Points

<b>Project plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compelling, realistic, and evidence-based approach and activities to address a clearly defined problem.</li> <li>• Detailed description of how, and with whom, your organization will engage the community in all aspects of the program (e.g., who specifically are your partners?).</li> <li>• Feasibility of the proposed plan.</li> </ul>	30 Points
<b>Clear outputs, outcomes, and impact (M&amp;E)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear and realistic estimates of the project’s anticipated results, including number of individuals that will be reached and expected outputs and outcomes.</li> <li>• Clear system proposed to track these performance measures</li> <li>• Evidence that the organization has tracked performance before and embraces a data-driven performance management model.</li> </ul>	30 Points
<b>Detailed budget and budget narrative</b>	Detailed budget and narrative that follows <a href="#">CDC budget preparation guidelines</a> and the guidance offered above.	10 points
		<b>100 points</b>

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## SECTION X. QUESTIONS

**Email.** Please direct application questions to [VaccineConfidence@Urban.org](mailto:VaccineConfidence@Urban.org). Frequently asked questions and answers will be regularly updated in [this document](#). Questions will not be attributed to specific organizations or people.

**Q&A Webinar.** The Urban Institute will host an applicant Q&A Webinar to answer questions related to this RFP on **Friday, August 13, 2021 at 1pm ET**. The webinar recording will be [available on this page](#) after the event.

You must register in advance for the webinar:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_3WhG0ccYSwKIJZO4V7ojKQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_3WhG0ccYSwKIJZO4V7ojKQ)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. Applicants are encouraged to submit questions ahead of time by 11:59am ET on August 12, sending questions to: [VaccineConfidence@Urban.org](mailto:VaccineConfidence@Urban.org) and writing “Webinar Question” in the subject line.

**Office hours.** Urban Institute staff are holding phone office hours on **Tuesday, August 24** to answer application-related questions in real time. To schedule a call, please email [VaccineConfidence@Urban.org](mailto:VaccineConfidence@Urban.org) by 11:59 A.M. ET on August 23 with your requested call time, using “Call Request” as the subject line.