

Frequently Asked Questions

PRIMARY CARE TRAINING AND ENHANCEMENT: PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT TRAINING IN PRIMARY CARE PROGRAM HRSA 12-024

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CORRECTION: The Longitudinal Evaluation Preference is no longer available.

Purpose

The purposes of the Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care Program are to:

- Plan, develop, and operate an education program to train physician assistants to practice in primary care settings; and
- Plan, develop and operate an education program for individuals who will teach primary care in physician assistant training programs, preparing trainees to enter practice in primary care settings.

The Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care Program can help improve access to quality healthcare and provide appropriate preparation, composition and distribution of the health professions workforce. Similar to physicians, physician assistants (PAs) have shown a steady trend towards specialization and practice in urban settings and there are too few educators to train the next generation of PA students. The Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care program addresses these key challenges by supporting primary care education in community-based clinical settings and faculty development. Funding preference is given to applicants whose graduates enter practice in medically underserved communities. Additional review points are available to applicants who have veteran-targeted educational activities.

Approximately \$2,500,000 will be available in fiscal year 2012 to fund 11 new Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care Program awards. The project period is 5 years. The maximum total award for the five year project period is \$1,000,000. Applicants can apply for up to \$220,000 for each budget year.

Applying and Awards

Who is eligible to apply?

Accredited public or nonprofit private hospitals, schools of allopathic medicine or osteopathic medicine, academically affiliated PA training programs, or a public or nonprofit private entity that the Secretary has determined is capable of carrying out such grants. Schools of allopathic or osteopathic medicine must be public or nonprofit private institutions. An applicant must be from an organization accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA).

The applicant must provide evidence their education program is accredited by ARC-PA and the date of accreditation as Attachment 1. The complete letter of accreditation is not required or encouraged. Grantees must immediately inform the HRSA program officer of any change in accreditation status.

My physician assistant education program holds provisional accreditation. Am I eligible to apply?

Provisional accreditation as determined by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) is acceptable for new programs. An applicant with provisional accreditation must provide proof, such as a letter from ARC-PA, that full or continued accreditation is expected during the grant's project period, August 1, 2012 to July 31, 2017.

Can I apply if my institution has a Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care grant that has a budget period that extends beyond July 31, 2012?

No. As a current grantee you are not eligible.

Can I apply if my institution has a Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care grant with a no cost extension that expires after July 31, 2012?

You may apply if all objectives have been met and the proposed work completed for the current grant for which you hold a no cost extension by July 31, 2012. You must amend the end date of

the no cost extension to expire on or before July 31, 2012 by submitting a request through the Electronic Handbooks (EHBs). If you have questions regarding additional unspent grant funds, please contact the Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care grants management specialist.

Can I apply if I will have unspent funds from a Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care grant that ends before August 1, 2012?

You may apply if you have met the current grant's objectives and will have completed the proposed work by July 31, 2012. If you are awarded a Competing Continuation grant (see below), the unspent funds may be used to offset the funds requested in the new award. If you have questions regarding unspent grant funds, please contact the Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care grants management specialist.

Can I apply if my institution holds an active Primary Care Training and Enhancement grant that is not a Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care award?

Grantees with an active Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care Program award are not eligible to apply to the 2012 competition. However, grantees with active awards from other Primary Care Training and Enhancement programs (Academic Administrative Units, Pre-Doctoral Training, Residency Training, Physician Faculty Development, Interdisciplinary and Interprofessional Joint Graduate Degree programs) and the Expansion of Physician Assistant Training Program can apply if otherwise eligible.

Can I submit more than one application?

Each medical school or PA program may submit only one application. If more than one application is submitted, both applications will be deemed ineligible and not sent for review.

How do I apply?

Applicants must apply through Grants.gov. Please register on Grants.gov immediately.

What is a Competing Continuation?

A competing continuation is a funding request for new activities that build upon the accomplishments of an expiring grant. In the past, this type of application was called a "renewal". Competing continuations follow the same application, implementation, and reporting requirements outlined in the funding opportunity announcement, as modified by this document, as new grant applications. They have a 5 year project period and will be reviewed by the same standards as other applications; no preference is given to competing continuation applications.

Do I have to register on the Electronic Handbooks (EHBs)?

Yes. If your grant application is awarded the principle investigator/program director and the authorized representative must be registered with the EHBs. If you are applying as a competing continuation please ensure that your registration information is correct.

When will the grants be awarded?

It is anticipated that grants will be awarded before the start date of August 1, 2012.

What is the project period?

The grants will have a 5-year project period, from August 1, 2012 through July 31, 2017.

Must applications be for a 5-year project period?

Yes.

Is a planning period acceptable?

Yes, planning may be included as part of the project. The application must describe objectives and activities to be completed during the planning period.

How will I know if my application has been received?

Be sure that your application is validated by Grants.gov by 8:00 P.M. EST on May 8, 2012. Applicants will receive a confirmation email from Grants.gov that includes a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX). It is important that applicants pay attention to emails received from Grants.gov. Notification of a “rejected” application from Grants.gov is not verification of receipt; it means you must correct an error and resubmit prior to deadline.

What is the application deadline for this funding opportunity?

All applications must be submitted via Grants.gov by May 8, 2012 at 8:00 P.M. EST. Applications received after this time will not be considered.

Will I receive formal notification from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) if my grant is awarded?

Yes. HRSA will electronically transmit a Notice of Award (NoA) to the applicant indicating whether or not the grant will be funded. More information about tracking your application is available online at <https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/checkApplStatus.faces>.

By when do grantees have to use their award money?

Grantees should spend the grant funds in accordance with their originally approved application and complete the proposed objectives by the end of the 5 year project period, July 31, 2017. Budgets and balances are reviewed each budget year. Unspent funds are handled by the grants management specialist in collaboration with the program officer and grantee.

If my grant is awarded, when can my institution apply for another Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care Program award?

The earliest that your institution could receive new funding for another Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care Program grant would be August 1, 2017.

Trainees

Who are appropriate trainees for this funding opportunity?

Students actively enrolled in a program that confers a PA degree, MPAS or MSPAS (Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies).

Faculty who will teach primary care and/or develop and oversee clinical training in community based settings.

Application Content

Are there page limits for the applications?

The page limit for each application is 65 pages. This limit does not include standard forms. Forms and attachments not counted in the page limit are indicated in the SF-424 Research & Related (R&R) Table of Contents, pages 8-11 of the funding opportunity announcement.

For electronic submissions, a table of contents is required for the entire application. HRSA will construct an electronic table of contents for the complete application in the order specified. The Table of Contents pages for attachments, where required, are not counted in the page limit.

Applications exceeding the page limit will not be considered. Please remember all application content is publishable and may be used to provide information to the public and Congress.

Is there a required order for the application documents?

All applications must follow the order described in the funding opportunity announcement.

How many Senior Key Personnel Biographical Sketches should I provide?

Provide a biographical sketch for the principle investigator/project director, the lead evaluator, and up to 2 additional Senior Key Persons. For each of these individuals a maximum 2 page bio-sketch should be attached that lists the individual's credentials/degrees. The attachment accepts up to eight bio-sketches, but only four are requested. Recommended information includes: education and training; research, professional, and synergistic activities that most closely relate to the proposed grant activities. When applicable, biographical sketches should also include language fluency and experience working with the cultural and linguistically diverse populations as relevant to proposed grant activities. Save the information in a single file and attach by clicking Add Attachment. The NIH bio-sketch template may be used: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/biosketch.doc>.

Where do I upload the Project Narrative?

Upload the Project Narrative to SF-424 R&R Other Project Information Form, Box 8. See Page 9 of the funding opportunity announcement for further clarification.

Do subcontract budget documents count toward the page limit?

The SF-424 R&R Subaward Budget *forms* do not count toward the page limit. The Subaward Budget *attachments* (e.g., Budget Justification) do count. See pages 9 and 10 of the funding opportunity announcement for further clarification.

If the application does not request Facilities & Other Resources or Equipment allowances, must these attachments be uploaded?

These attachments are required in the SF-424 R&R Form. If you do not submit them, your application will receive an error message and will not be submitted. If no Facilities & Other Resources or Equipment allowances are requested, please submit a page stating "None Requested" for each of the attachments, as appropriate. The pages containing this statement for these two attachments will not be counted in the page limit.

How should attachments be formatted?

Instructions for formatting are in the Grants.gov Applicant User Guide, available online at <http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/userguide.htm>.

What documentation is required to prove accreditation status?

The applicant must provide a statement they are accredited and name their accrediting body and date of accreditation as Attachment 1. The entire accreditation letter is not required or recommended. See the Eligibility Information section of the funding opportunity announcement for additional information.

What is the difference between a Staffing Plan and the Personnel Costs in the Budget Justification?

The Staffing Plan describes the roles and responsibilities of the personnel receiving grant funds to demonstrate that they have the experience to perform their grant responsibilities and those activities support the proposed objectives. The Personnel Costs in the Budget Justification relate an individual's roles and responsibilities to their percent total effort devoted to grant activities to justify the cost of their participation.

What is an Accomplishment Summary?

You must complete an Accomplishment Summary if your institution held a Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care Program grant that ended in 2008, 2009, 2010, or 2011. See page 25 in the funding opportunity announcement for instructions on preparing the Accomplishment Summary.

What types of documentation will meet the Institutional Diversity Statement requirement?

The statement must be verifiable, official, and include each of the three elements described in the funding opportunity announcement. An example is an official statement from the applicant institution's Diversity Office or equivalent.

Should applicants complete the SF-424 R&R Other Project Information Component?

No, this funding opportunity is not soliciting applications for research grants. This section regarding human subjects protection, therefore, does not apply.

Budget

What are the budget periods?

Budget period 1 is August 1, 2012-July 31, 2013

Budget period 2 is August 1, 2013-July 31, 2014

Budget period 3 is August 1, 2014-July 31, 2015

Budget period 4 is August 1, 2015-July 31, 2016

Budget period 5 is August 1, 2016-July 31, 2017

Can my budget request include costs incurred prior to August 1, 2012?

In general, these grants are intended to support costs incurred after the project start date. This program, however, has authority that allows for reimbursement of allowable grant related costs up to 90 days prior to the beginning of the project period, August 1, 2012, at the applicant's own risk.

How do I adjust my budget calculations for the new Salary Rate Limitations?

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-74), enacted December 23, 2011, limits the salary amount that may be awarded and charged to HRSA grants and cooperative agreements. Award funds may not be used to pay the annual salary of an individual in excess of \$179,700. This is not a "cap" on the salary paid to an individual. The individual may still draw salary from non-grant sources. This is a limitation on how much salary HRSA grant funds will support.

If an individual is under the salary rate limitation, fringe is applied as usual. If they are over the salary rate limitation, fringe is calculated on the adjusted base salary.

Example: Ms. Smith has an annual salary of \$358,000 and is spending 50% FTE on grant activities. Her salary is over the salary rate limit of \$179,700. It is incorrect to say that she is under the limit because 50% of \$358,000 is \$179,700. You must first adjust her base salary to \$179,700. Then take 50% of \$179,700, which is \$89,850. This is the amount of salary support you may request on this grant. The remainder of Ms. Smith's salary may be provided by other sources. The fringe will be calculated from \$89,850. Assuming a fringe rate of 25%, the fringe will be 25% of \$89,850, which is \$22,462.50.

The salary rate limitation also applies to subawards and subcontracts under a HRSA grant or cooperative agreement.

Can I request reimbursement for lost clinical productivity?

Grant funds cannot be used to reimburse for lost productivity, clinical or otherwise.

What are the 2012 recommended stipend levels for full time trainees?

The recommended stipend rate for predoctoral students is \$22,032 per year according to the National Institutes of Health 2012 stipend guidelines (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-12-033.html>). Applicants may determine their own stipend rates, taking into consideration current rates at their institution.

Are stipends available for trainees that are participating in grant funded activities less than full time (1.0 FTE)?

Yes. The stipend level must be adjusted by multiplying the appropriate full time stipend level by the trainee's percent full time equivalent (FTE).

What are “reasonable living expenses”?

Reasonable living expenses are those costs incurred by a trainee that is participating in a temporary grant-related learning opportunity that is outside of the standard curriculum or at a remote location.

Can a stipend be supplemented with non-grant funds?

Stipends may be supplemented by non-Federal funds provided this supplementation does not require any additional obligation from the trainee. An organization can determine the amount of stipend supplementation, if any, it will provide according to its own formally established policies governing stipend support. These policies must be consistently applied to all individuals in a similar status regardless of the source of funds. Federal funds may not be used for stipend supplementation unless specifically authorized under the terms of the program from which funds are derived.

Funding Preferences

What is the benefit of receiving a funding preference?

Applications receiving a funding preference will be placed in a more competitive position among applications. Applications that do not receive a funding preference will be given full and equitable consideration during the review process.

How do I apply for a funding preference?

To apply for a funding preference you must provide the information requested as Attachment 6 (Funding Preference Request). Failure to provide the requested information in sufficient detail and as Attachment 6 will prevent a preference request from being considered.

Who is a graduate?

A graduate is an individual who has met the requirements of a structured educational program that confers a degree.

When applying for the Medically Underserved Community Preference (MUC), what graduate data should I report?

The preference calculation is based only on the applicant's data, not those of partnering entities. The formulas for calculating high rate and significant increase in rate can be found on pages 34-36 of the funding opportunity announcement.

When reporting MUC Preference data, should all graduates be included whether or not they are working in a primary care clinical practice?

Yes, the focus of the MUC Preference is on the geographic setting not the trainee's selected discipline.

How will HRSA determine MUC funding preference awards?

The rates for defining the threshold for high rate and significant increase will be determined by HRSA staff by first computing the median for the applicant pool. HRSA will then compare the rate reported by each de-identified applicant to the median. The MUC Preference will be awarded to those applicants whose rates are greater than the median. The median will vary with each competition. The rates submitted by the applicants and the calculated median will be used by HRSA during the review processes only and not released to the public.

The independent review panel will determine awards for MUC preference applications via the new program pathway based on the established criteria on page 37 of the funding opportunity announcement.

If my institution had a PA program 10 years ago, can we apply for the MUC Preference through the new program pathway?

You may apply through the new program pathway if the training program was closed for at least 3 years, (2009, 2010, 2011), during which time there were no students, graduates, or teaching activities.

How do I apply for the Longitudinal Evaluation?

The Longitudinal Evaluation Preference has been removed from the 2012 competition of the Primary Care Training and Enhancement Programs and will not be offered. The longitudinal evaluation capabilities described in section 761(d)(2) and the database described in section 761(b)(2)(E) of the Public Health Service Act have not yet been fully developed. As a result, meaningful distinctions among proposals cannot be made.

Veteran Activities

How will reviewers award points for veteran-related activities?

Applicants who demonstrate meaningful activities to recruit, retain, mentor, and adjust curricula for veteran students will receive up to four points as determined by the independent peer review panel. See page 30 in the funding opportunity announcement for additional details.

Application Review

Who will review the applications?

Applications will be reviewed by HRSA personnel for eligibility and completeness. Eligible applications will then be reviewed by independent peer reviewers who will score them according to criteria defined in the funding opportunity announcement. The criteria are designed to enable the reviewers to assess an application's quality and likelihood of successful completion. The criteria relate directly to project narrative elements.

What are the relevant qualifications of the reviewers? Will the reviewers have significant experience as it relates to specific program areas?

HRSA's Division of Independent Review in collaboration with the Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care program officer will select a sample of content experts appropriate to review applications for the FY12 Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care program competition. Reviewers are responsible for providing an objective, unbiased evaluation based on the established review criteria stated in the funding opportunity announcement. Each reviewer is screened to avoid conflicts of interest and HRSA staff provide oversight to ensure each application is given an objective review.

Can individuals named as grant personnel in an application to this competition serve as peer reviewers?

At this time the HRSA's Division of Independent Review does not accept peer reviewers who have any financial interest in the funding opportunity under review.

Reporting

The performance measures that are to be reported in the Annual Performance Report have been revised. Grantees will report data on the new performance measures in 2012. There will be a technical assistance call on these new measures in June for all grantees.

Requesting Assistance

Will there be any opportunities for technical assistance prior to the application deadline?

Technical Assistance Call #1 - March 28, 2012
Play-back telephone number: 800-294-4345
Play-back pass code: 77124

Technical Assistance Call #2 – April 13, 2012 at 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. EST
Telephone Number: 800-369-1663
Passcode: 4728648
Play-back telephone number: 866-414-6075
Play-back pass code: 63312

Will the technical assistance call information be available after the call?

Yes. Each call will be available for play back approximately one hour after each call ends and will be available until the funding opportunity closing date. See above for details.

How will the two technical assistance calls differ?

The first call provided an overview of the funding opportunity announcement and answered initial questions. Much of the content of the first call is captured in this Frequently Asked Questions document. The second call will provide an overview of the questions that HRSA has received since the first call and address any remaining applicant concerns.

What if I still have questions?

Address questions about the program purpose, eligibility, acceptable activities, and evaluation to the program officer for the Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care program:

Sherrilyn Crooks
E-mail: scrooks@hrsa.gov
Telephone: (301) 443-7662

Address questions about preparing the budget or other financial matters to the grants management specialist for the Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care program:

Curtis Colston
Email: ccolston@hrsa.gov
Telephone: (301) 443-3438