request for applications
safety net integration 2012

Informational Conference Call Notes
August 29, 2012

Blue Shield of California Foundation
Health Care and Coverage Program

September 2012
Application Content Questions

Eligibility and Organizational Issues

Q: What is the Foundation’s definition of “healthcare safety net”?
A: Blue Shield of California Foundation (BSCF) considers healthcare safety net providers to be those organizations or entities that have a high proportion of patients who are covered by Medi-Cal, CMSP or other programs targeted to low-income Californians, or who are uninsured/self pay, including but not limited to community health centers, county hospital and ambulatory care systems, and private providers.

Q: We would like to submit an application for a multi-county project that includes safety net providers in several counties. Are we eligible to apply?
A: Yes. Applications from multi-county or regional applicants will be considered.

Q: Will the Foundation accept multiple proposals from within the same county?
A: Yes. The Foundation will accept multiple proposals from within the same county, but since this Request for Applications (RFA) focuses on integration, we strongly encourage safety net providers within a county to collaborate on a joint proposal and prefer to receive only one proposal per county. In larger counties, like Los Angeles, we would like the application to demonstrate that providers in a region within the county are collaborating on a joint project.

Q: If our organization’s service area covers more than one county, can we be a part of multiple applications from the different counties?
A: Yes, proposals from different counties that include the same organization (as a lead applicant or project partner) will be accepted.

Q: Does the application have to come from a formally-established coalition of providers?
A: No. The application can be from a group of providers that have come together for this specific project. At a minimum, we want to make sure that the applicant’s project will involve multiple safety net providers, including community health centers. A formal relationship between providers is not required. One organization must be the grant applicant and will be the entity that is accountable for carrying out the proposed project on behalf of a coalition.

Q: Is there a specific number of partners required to participate in the project?
A: Your application should demonstrate how the project will advance safety net integration in your county and must have two references from partnering safety net organizations. If you have only one partner in the project, your application should show the importance of this partnership for improving integration and care coordination for low-income patients at a meaningful scale for the county or multi-county area.

Q: We are a for-profit rural health clinic. Are we eligible to apply?
A: No. Eligible organizations must be nonprofit and tax-exempt organizations under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code (IRC) and defined as a public charity under
509(a) 1, 2, or 3 (types I, II, or a functionally integrated type III) or a governmental, tribal, or public entity.

Q: Are Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) considered community health centers?  
A: Yes.

Q: The RFA states that “private nonprofit safety net hospitals” are eligible to apply. What is the Foundation’s definition of a “private nonprofit safety net hospital”?  
A: These are private nonprofit hospitals that have a high proportion of patients who are covered by Medi-Cal, CMSP or other programs targeted to low-income Californians, or who are uninsured/self pay. Participation in Medi-Cal’s Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) program is evidence of safety net status. Private nonprofit non-DSH hospitals should show in their application evidence that they serve a high proportion of Medi-Cal or uninsured patients.

Q: Can we apply for this funding opportunity if we are a current BSCF grantee?  
A: Yes.

Q: Can we apply for this funding opportunity if we applied for the Rural Safety Net Integration (SNI) grant opportunity earlier this year?  
A: Yes, although we recommend that you first contact Richard Thomason, the Program Officer for this RFA.

Q: We currently have another Blue Shield of California Foundation grant through the Clinic Consortia funding. Are we eligible to apply for this RFA?  
A: Yes. However, your proposal in response to this RFA should clearly articulate how the proposed activities will be different from and build on, but do not duplicate, other currently active or prior grants.

Q: What if we expect our project to take longer than 12 months?  
A: This RFA is for grants with a 12-month term starting January 1, 2013. If you expect the project to take longer than 12 months, please identify in your application the integration goal or deliverable that you will achieve during the grant term.

Q: Over the past year the Foundation has had several rounds of safety net integration (SNI) grantmaking. Do you anticipate having additional rounds of SNI grantmaking in the future?  
A: No decision has been made about any additional SNI grantmaking. Another round of SNI grantmaking may take place in 2013 but we encourage interested applicants to focus on the current opportunity.

Funding Levels and Use of Funds

Q: What kind of restrictions are there on the use of grant funds?  
A: The grant funds must be used for the project identified in your grant application. No grant funds should be used for sponsoring dinners or events; subsidizing individuals for insurance coverage; supporting capital construction or television or film production; supporting religious organizations for religious purposes; supporting political causes,
candidates, organizations, or campaigns; lobbying; making grants to individuals; or grants to 509(a)3, type III supporting organizations that are not “functionally integrated.”

Q: Can we apply to BSCF for funding to support a health information exchange development project for which we are also seeking a grant from Cal eConnect?
A: Yes, if it will connect safety net providers and serve a safety net population. You may apply to the Foundation for a portion of the matching funds required by Cal eConnect for a health information exchange project, but your budget must clearly show the amount of funds sought from Cal eConnect and the cash contribution being made to the project by the applicant. The Foundation will not consider an application for the full amount of the matching funds needed for a Cal eConnect grant project. Your application should also explain clearly what proportion of project funds would serve a safety net population. Please contact Richard Thomason, Program Officer, if you are considering applying to both the Foundation and Cal eConnect for the same project.

Q: We are thinking about submitting a proposal that would improve care for Hepatitis C patients at our health center. Will this type of project be considered for funding?
A: This RFA specifically seeks proposals to improve the integration of care delivery across different safety net settings. Any project aimed at a specific group of patients or a specific health condition should demonstrate how the project can be generalized to other patient populations or health condition to advance integration generally. The project should also demonstrate how it will advance integration and care coordination among multiple providers, such as a community health center and a local hospital. Projects that focus on improving care delivery only at one provider may not be competitive.

Q: Will the Foundation pay for direct services through this RFA?
A: The aim of the RFA is not to fund direct services. Direct services will be considered so long as the application demonstrates clearly why the direct services are critical to achieving the project’s objectives and so long as the direct services constitute only a small portion of the overall budget. The proposal should explain how the services will be sustained when the grant funding ends.

Q: Does the Foundation consider the purchase of equipment as an eligible use of funds?
A: Yes, if your application demonstrates a clear need for certain equipment in order to achieve the goal of the project.

Q: What criteria are used to make decisions about grant awards?
A: Multiple criteria are used, including:

- Vision and leadership for an integrated system of care
- History or other evidence of strong collaboration among local safety net partners
- Involvement of community health centers and community health center consortia
- Implementation of a meaningful strategy to improve integration of different safety net providers into a more effective delivery system for low-income populations
Q: Can we submit an application for a planning grant?
A: Planning can be element of the grant application, but we will look for the application to demonstrate that project implementation will have begun by the end of the grant term.

Q: Can we submit a proposal for development of an accountable care organization (ACO)?
A: Yes, although given the 12-month grant term we will look for evidence that substantial ACO planning has already taken place and that the proposed partners in the ACO have made a significant organizational commitment of resources to ACO development.

Q: What will be the grant award amounts?
A: Grant award amounts will be determined by a number of factors, including the quality of a proposed project, the relevance of the proposed objectives and activities to promoting safety net integration, and the total number of high-quality applications received. We anticipate that grant awards will range from $75,000 to $250,000. Until all applications are received and reviewed, final award sizes will not be known. Invitations have been sent to over 100 organizations and the response rate may affect the size of the grant amounts to be awarded. Submission of an application does not guarantee funding.

Q: What is the maximum grant amount that I can apply for?
A: The maximum amount you can apply for is $250,000.

**Reporting and Evaluation**

Q: What data and reporting requirements will be expected of grantees?
A: The Foundation requires all grantees to submit interim and final reports that document progress towards completion of the project objectives. Reports will be submitted to the Foundation through our online CyberGrants system.

**Application Process**

Q: The RFA states that we need to provide two references from partnering safety net organizations. Will letters of support from these organizations suffice and are we able to upload these documents with the proposal?
A: Yes. You may upload letters of support in the “optional attachment” section of the proposal, as long as the referral contact information is included in the letter. You are not required to submit letters of support, but are required to provide two references along with their contact information.

Q: What type of organizational information is required in the application?
A: Basic information on your organization’s mission, history, and tax status as well as contact information is required. If your organization has previously applied, you will want to review the information stored in our system and update as needed. If your entity is serving as a sponsor for this project, you will want to ensure the sponsor is the applicant agency. Additional information about the sponsored project is required including a formal agreement between the sponsor and sponsored entity.
Q: The application asks for our Twitter and Facebook account. What if we have neither one?
A: Just answer “N/A” in the appropriate field. We have begun collecting this information but it is not required or used in evaluating applications.

Q: Can our organization also apply for funding through other Blue Shield of California Foundation grant programs, such as those for supporting projects to expand health care coverage or build a stronger domestic violence field?
A: Yes, organizations may apply for funds through multiple programs funded by the Foundation. Your application for a Safety Net Integration project is not affected by exploring eligibility for other funding opportunities. More information on other Foundation grant opportunities can be found on the Foundation’s website, www.blueshieldcafoundation.org.

Financials

Q: Our most recent financial audit is from 2010. Is that acceptable?
A: Yes.

Q: If financial documents are too large to upload or send electronically, when do they need to be mailed to the Foundation?
A: Please mail them no later than the application deadline, 5 pm on September 14, 2012. Send to the attention of Gwyneth Tripp, Grants Administrator.

Q: Can you explain more about the financial documents you need?
A: If you do not conduct an audit, simply upload a word document explaining that you do not conduct an audit. For the “Financial Statements” request, we would like you to upload your most recent available financial statement for your organization. A financial statement is a public document that indicates the financial status of your organization year to date. It should contain information such as a trial balance and a statement of revenue and expenditures. For the budget, provide the budget for the whole organization, not just for your organization’s healthcare services.

Technical Questions

Q: If we are current grantee do we need to start a new record in your grantmaking system (CyberGrants)?
A: If you are a current grantee, you may log-in with your organization’s registered grantseeker email and password. Once logged in you will see that some of the organizational fields will auto-fill. There are, however, some fields that may require new information.

Q: The organizational section of my application has been pre-populated with information. How do I change it?
A: You will see that the most recent information BSCF has of record for your organization. Review this information and update anything that is not current. If during the year, if the CEO or grantseeker change, contact Gwyneth Tripp, grants administrator, to keep the Foundation apprised of the appropriate contact person(s) for your organization.
Q: How do I change the email address for the main (grantseeker) contact person for this grant?
A: To change the email address for an existing grantseeker, click the “Edit Profile” link from the welcome page. To register a new grantseeker contact, click “First Time User?” on the login page. To change the email address for the CEO, edit the information in the organization information page. To change the email for a grantseeker or primary contact also listed in the “contact” page, edit the information in this screen directly.

Q: Is there a way in the contact information section to put a secondary contact so that more than one contact can receive information?
A: The CyberGrants system only allows for one “grantseeker” contact to be associated with the application record and to receive notices such as a receipt of application or a notification of a report. However, make sure the CEO contact information on the organization information page is correct as BSCF includes this information to communicate about grant announcements and notifications from the Foundation.

Q: Please clarify the difference between the grantseeker and the other grant contact.
A: The registered grantseeker is not necessarily included in the contact information section. We request that applicants add the grantseeker as a contact in addition to having the information current within the profile section. If the two contacts for this application are the grantseeker and the CEO/ED, the grantseeker’s name and information should be added or edited in the contact section and the CEO/ED’s information should be verified in the CEO data section on the Organization Information page. If there are additional contacts you’d like to provide as references in relation to the application, add them as an “other grant contact” but note they will not be included in regular communications.

Q: In the past, we have had technical issues submitting online grant applications. If we run into this problem again, can we mail the application?
A: No, all applications must be submitted online. Contact Gwyneth Tripp prior to the application deadline of September 14, 2012 if there are technical issues.

Q: Will we get a confirmation email once we’ve submitted the application?
A: Yes, the online grants system will automatically reply with confirmation to the grantseeker when the application is successfully submitted. Be sure to hit the “Submit” button when ready to submit the application.

Q: Do I enter an invitation code?
A: There is no invitation code associated with this application; just use the specific link indicated in the RFA.

Q: Can I start the application, save, and log out without submitting?
A: An application does not have to be completed all at one time. You can access the in-progress application from the welcome page.
Application Deadline is 5:00 PM, Friday, September 14, 2012

For questions on with the online application or document uploading contact:

Gwyneth Tripp, Grants Administrator
gwyneth.tripp@blueshieldcafoundation.org
(415) 229-6149

For questions related to eligibility for this grantmaking or to the content of the application, contact:

Richard Thomason, Program Officer
richard.thomason@blueshieldcafoundation.org
(415) 229-5292