

## United States National Postal Model Funding Opportunity

EP-PMC-11-001

### Frequently Asked Questions

1. According to the Funding Opportunity Announcement, my [university, church, foundation, not-for-profit organization, non-governmental organization] is eligible to apply for this award and is interested in contributing to our community's preparedness for a bioterrorism event. How will we be able to take advantage of this funding opportunity?

For your application to be considered responsive to this Funding Opportunity Announcement, your institution must meet the responsiveness criteria as contained within the FOA. If your organization is not in a position to mobilize, coordinate, and speak on behalf of local/State public health, law enforcement, emergency management, and other pertinent community organizations, you should consider offering your assistance to one of those entities.

2. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through their Cities Readiness Initiative (CRI) and Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) funding provide state and local health departments with the opportunity to plan for an aerosolized anthrax attack, including consideration of the Postal Plan Option. Why is this funding opportunity different?

This Funding Opportunity Announcement focuses exclusively on enabling municipalities to develop venue-specific Postal Plans pursuant to the National Postal Model (Executive Order 13527) in collaboration with the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response/HHS and the United States Postal Service. A municipality may have performed preliminary work toward this objective using funds from the Cities Readiness Initiative or another source. If so, the application should describe this preliminary work in their Project Narrative (Section IV.2.b) as it relates to the Phase 1 Section V.1, Application Review Information—Criteria, and take that preliminary work into account in the budget request so as to avoid the fact or appearance of double funding.

While the scope of PHEP funding allowed state and local (S/L) health departments consideration of the Postal Option, true institution of an operationally capable Postal Plan involves expense to the Postal Service unfunded through CRI grants, but now available through the same appropriations which made this funding opportunity possible. The National Postal Model supersedes earlier CRI Postal Option guidance, and all relevant CDC Department Strategic National Stockpile (DSNS) materials/postings concerning the Postal Option are to be updated accordingly.

3. Beyond this fiscal year, how long will this Postal Plan funding be available? How much money will be available for sustainment?

The President's Budget Proposal for Fiscal Year 2011 requested funding for the postal project through the end of Fiscal Year 2012 (September 30, 2012). To date, the Congress has provided funding by means of a Continuing Resolution but has yet to complete action on the President's request. As with all discretionary programs of the Federal Government, the Postal project is subject to the annual appropriations process; and future availability of funds will depend upon the outcome of that process. Budgetary planning includes sustaining this initiative for the municipalities who are on board this fiscal year. Subsequent on-boarding of additional jurisdictions will be subject to the availability of funds.

4. Our public health department's budget has been decreasing over the past few years as a result of fiscal and budgetary constraints. How are we expected to develop and sustain a program?

This funding opportunity and its requirements are designed to diminish the financial burden upon a public health department while streamlining the grant application process. Successful applicants under this Funding Opportunity Announcement will receive not only financial assistance to develop a venue-specific Postal Plan but also substantially more resources in kind – namely, extensive technical assistance in developing the plan and, upon completion, a standing response force of Postal volunteers trained and equipped to effect direct residential delivery of self-administrable medical countermeasures in response to a wide-area bioterrorism event, such as an anthrax attack. The costs associated with establishing and maintaining the cadre of Postal volunteers will be borne by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response/HHS, working in collaboration with the United States Postal Service. Once a venue-specific Postal Plan has been developed, the municipality's costs associated with sustaining it should be modest and readily accommodated with annual preparedness funding from agencies of the Federal Government (e.g., CDC/HHS and DHS), State, or local government.

5. Has this Postal Model been piloted? If so, will we have access to documents and after action reports to assist in our plan development and deployment of the capability?

Yes, the Postal Model has been piloted in Minneapolis & Saint Paul (MSP), Minnesota. This pilot launched in 2008 and continues today. The pilot includes a subset of the metro area - 14 Post Offices serving approximately 205,000 residences, or roughly 500,000 people. A venue-specific Postal Plan is in place, providing for direct delivery of emergency medical countermeasures to every residence in the 20 Zip Codes that span the urban core. Operational capability has been successfully established. Additional information on this pilot is available upon request.

6. How has the addition of a Postal Plan to other Mass dispensing plans impacted jurisdictions that have already committed to its adoption? Is there a noted improvement in the capability to dispense to more citizens and residents? Statistics?

As indicated in the response to Question 5, only Minneapolis/St. Paul has implemented a venue-specific Postal Plan. The participating public health, law enforcement, and emergency management agencies see the Postal Plan as enhancing their response capability in the wake of a bioterrorism event. That is, the Postal Plan provides capability for a quick strike (1 day) direct delivery of a small quantity of medical countermeasures to every residence in the affected area while local authorities are setting up Points of Dispensing and other modalities to provide people in the affected area the remainder of the medical countermeasures they are likely to need during the ensuing weeks.

7. Will a local public health department need additional staff to institute a Postal Plan based on the National Postal Model?

No, your staffing requirements should not be impacted.

8. We had previously assessed security options, and developed a plan which could not be supported by S/L law enforcement. Nothing regarding the ratio of security personnel to the USPS delivery personnel has changed in the Postal Model. May we submit that plan as documentation of the security plan requested as a deliverable under Phase 1?

Yes, you may submit such documentation, but it would not in itself constitute a valid Strategic Security Plan - your admission that law enforcement is either unable or unwilling to meet the security requirement would prevent any further progress on the application. Work performed previously related to a Postal Plan (e.g., a Strategic Security Plan) should be discussed in the application; and proposed further work appropriately may build upon the earlier results. The budget should request funding only for the new work, so as to avoid the fact and appearance of double funding.

9. May we use the funding to contract Security to protect Points Of Dispensing (PODs) while local law enforcement protects the USPS delivery personnel?

No, this is not allowed. Funding is strictly for the development of plans and full-scale testing.

10. Where do I find a copy of the current National Postal Model?

Key content from the National Postal Model is located within the funding opportunity in Section I, "Funding Opportunity Description", and applicants will be able to download the National Postal Model under the "Full Announcement" link in Grants.gov.

11. Will funding be received before or after the deliverables have been completed and approved?

Standard HHS cash management policy applies here. Successful applicants for either a Phase I award or a Phase II award will receive a Notice of Grant Award, and will be able to begin drawing down funds immediately. HHS policy permits awardees to draw down funds from the HHS Payment Management System as often as they wish; however, they must spend the funds drawn down within 72 hours.

12. What are the minimum requirements for the mass dispensing plan which will be submitted during the application process? We have several types of mass prophylaxis plans which include sensitive information.

Before investing substantial financial and in-kind resources toward developing and testing an operational Postal Plan in any particular municipality, HHS and USPS need to know whether a specific and apparently feasible plan (as called for in Section V.1, Application Review Information, Criteria, and as described in Section IV.2.b, Project Narrative for Phase 1)) already exists for emergency mass distribution of medical countermeasures through Points of Dispensing (PODs) and possibly other means. That determination is necessary because, to be more than marginally effective, a venue-specific Postal Plan must be an integral part of overall municipal preparedness for a bioterrorism event and work in conjunction with other mass prophylaxis measures. In particular, the best use of a venue-specific Postal Plan is to deliver small quantities of antibiotics and associated information to every residence in a target geographic area while the more traditional dispensing arrangements are being put in place. A venue-specific Postal Plan should not be viewed as either a stand-alone mechanism or a substitute for more traditional approaches to mass prophylaxis.

HHS and USPS do not need to receive a copy of the entire municipal mass dispensing plan. However, the application should describe the current municipal mass dispensing plan in enough detail so that reviewers can understand readily its intended geographic scope; the number of pre-identified sites that can serve as PODs (both open and closed); the number of municipal staff and volunteers that are expected to be available to operate the open PODs; non-POD distribution mechanisms (e.g., direct delivery of medical countermeasures to hotels); the proposed means for transport of medical countermeasures from the RSS warehouse to PODs and possibly other sites; and the expected security arrangements for all aspects of transport, distribution, and dispensing of countermeasures. The application need not include sensitive or confidential information or detailed reference information typically contained in appendices (e.g., contact lists, volunteer rosters, or equipment inventories).

13. CDC reviews our dispensing plans periodically. Is it possible for the reviewers to obtain the results of those reviews directly from them?

No, reviewers may only evaluate and score the formal application submitted. If applicants choose not to include this information, it will not be included in the objective review process. ASPR may request the information as part of its final award decision (see Section V.3), but it will not be captured in the reviewers' scores if it is not included. Therefore, ASPR highly recommends inclusion of this information (described in Section IV.2 under Phase I).

14. Will the USPS be reviewing mass dispensing plans?

USPS will not be making any assessments independently. The review of the applications will be conducted by an independent review panel of experts in their field. The review process will be managed through a joint effort between HHS and USPS Joint Program Enterprise staff, with assistance from the CDC DSNS in the review of mass dispensing plans.

With respect to existing municipal plans for mass distribution of medical countermeasures, HHS and USPS do not intend to perform a comprehensive review. Rather, the intent is simply to determine that a specific and apparently feasible plan exists, thereby providing a credible municipal response infrastructure within which a venue-specific Postal Plan can be integrated and made operational.