

# **REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

## **2026 McDowell County High Impact Opioid Abatement Strategies**

### *Combating Opioid Overdose Through Community-Level Interventions, Cycle 3*

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**Issue Date:** February 9, 2026

**Application Due Date:** March 16, 2026 at 5:00PM EST

**Read, review and comply:** It shall be the applicant's responsibility to read this entire document, review all enclosures and attachments, and any addenda thereto, and comply with all requirements specified herein. Applications shall be submitted in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFA and any addenda issued hereto.

**Direct all inquiries concerning this RFA to email:**

[opiodgrants@mcdowellgov.com](mailto:opiodgrants@mcdowellgov.com)

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## AWARD OVERVIEW

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### PURPOSE

The purpose of this opportunity is to fund eligible organizations to implement evidence-based, high-impact strategies to address the opioid overdose epidemic in McDowell County, North Carolina. The funds provided to McDowell County through the National Opioid Settlements will be used to achieve the following goals:

1. Enhance community efforts to develop and/or expand evidence-based programs and resources to address opioid use disorder.
2. Build capacity and infrastructure to measure the impact of programs and prevent fatal overdoses in McDowell County.
3. Strengthen community partnerships to improve access to care related to opioid use disorder.

All successful applicants will enhance local capacity to address opioid use disorder by participating in mandatory training as assigned and by joining the McDowell County Opioid-Drug Community Collaborative and its associated workgroups. All programs/projects will be required to participate in coordinated meetings with other organizations/agencies and projects funded by McDowell County through this RFA.

### FUNDING CATEGORY

Funding Category	Maximum Award Amount (Year)	Maximum Award Amount (Project period)	Project Duration (Months)	Project Start Date
Program Award	\$50,000	\$150,000	12 - 36	7/1/2026

### FUNDING CYCLE AND TERMS

#### Program and Enhancement Awards

Awarded applicants will receive quarterly or bi-annual payments following submission of required impact and financial reporting. Recommended programs will be considered for approval by the Board of County Commissioners in April 2026.

The initial term of the contract is one (1) year with a maximum funding period of up to three (3) years. Upon completion of year one of the contract period, recipients' progress in meeting project goals and objectives, timely submission of required data and reports, and compliance with all terms and conditions of the award will be reviewed. McDowell County may, in its sole discretion, elect to renew this agreement for successive one (1)

year periods upon year one review and may exercise its right ninety (90) days prior to termination of the then current period.

Program Award applicants may request up to \$50,000 for each program year with up to \$150,000 for three program years.

Cost sharing and/or matching funds are not required for the program period but may help support sustainability. No advance/startup funds will be provided to any program. All unspent funds will be subject to recoupment after the project period.

## **Project Award**

Awarded applicants will receive funds as outlined below. Recommended programs will be considered for approval by the Board of County Commissioners in April 2026.

Project Award recipients will be expected to spend 100% of their award over a period of 12 months on expenses related to their approved activities. Recipients will receive up to 50% of the award upon contract execution. The remaining funds will be disbursed in quarterly or biannual payments after the recipient has (1) documented expenditure of the initial payment through required financial reporting and (2) met satisfactory compliance requirements, including attendance at meetings if deemed necessary by the County, as well as timely performance and financial reporting. All unspent funds will be subject to recoupment at the conclusion of the project period.

## **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

The County will fund approved Opioid Abatement strategies. All contracted services must qualify under the terms of the NC Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). This RFA is open to all established private organizations, non-profit organizations, and public or local governmental agencies licensed to conduct business in North Carolina which can clearly demonstrate a commitment to evidence-based strategies/practices (EBPs) addressing opioid use disorder (OUD) appropriate for the priority community (i.e., individuals with OUD).

Applicants may be individual organizations or a partnership/collaboration of multiple organizations, one of which must serve as the fiscal agent/organization that will take total responsibility for the fiscal, reporting, and grant-related compliance requirements.

## **PROGRAM PRIORITIES**

McDowell County will fund evidence-based services and programs that are appropriate for the priority community—individuals with opioid use disorder (OUD). Proposals must identify the evidence-based practices and/or interventions (i.e., approaches to prevention, harm reduction, treatment, or recovery that are validated by some form of documented research evidence) that are appropriate or that can be adapted to meet the needs of the project's specific priority community.

Proposals must also discuss and document the population for which the practices have been shown to be effective and how they are appropriate for the project, address how the proposed interventions are known to improve outcomes, and describe how the organization will monitor and ensure the fidelity of the proposed evidence-based program and other interventions.

See the [SAMHSA Evidence-Based Practice Resource Center](#) and [SAMHSA's Technical Assistance and Training Directory](#) to identify evidence-informed and contextually appropriate mental illness and opioid use prevention and treatment practice examples.

## **FUNDING RESTRICTIONS**

Funds awarded through this RFA must be used in a manner consistent with the NC Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on the use of opioid settlement funds in North Carolina. Funds awarded through this RFA may only be used to support the strategies outlined in NC Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and will not be allowed for any of the following:

1. Any type of research;
2. Reimbursement of pre-award costs;
3. Lobbying (publicity or propaganda purposes, for the preparation, distribution, or use of any material designed to support or defeat the enactment of legislation before any legislative body); and/or
4. Capital expenses or new construction or renovation of facilities.

## **SECTION 1: BACKGROUND AND STRATEGY INFORMATION**

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### **1.1 BACKGROUND**

#### **McDowell County and the Opioid Overdose Crisis**

McDowell County is located in western North Carolina and is home to approximately 45,000 residents, according to recent U.S. Census estimates. The county is predominantly rural and is designated as a Tier 1 county by the North Carolina Department of Commerce, reflecting higher levels of economic distress compared to much of the state. McDowell County has experienced opioid-related overdose mortality at rates comparable to, and in some years exceeding, the North Carolina average. County-level data indicate that opioid overdose death rates have remained elevated in recent years, driven largely by synthetic opioids such as fentanyl. In addition to overdose mortality, McDowell County continues to experience significant non-fatal overdoses and opioid-related health impacts, underscoring the ongoing need for evidence-based prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery services tailored to the county's rural context and population needs.

## **North Carolina's Opioid and Substance Use Action Plan**

North Carolina's Opioid Action Plan was released in June 2017 with community partners to combat the opioid crisis. The plan was updated in June 2019 and again in May 2021 to become the [Opioid and Substance Use Action Plan \(OSUAP\) 3.0](#). The plan is guided by three priority areas to address the epidemic with an emphasis on including community members with relevant experience:

- Prevent future addiction and address trauma by supporting children and families.
- Reduce Harm by moving beyond just opioids to address polysubstance use.
- Connect to Care by increasing treatment access for justice-involved people and expanding access to housing and employment supports to recover from the epidemic together.

Overarching these priorities is an effort to track progress, measure impact, and monitor emerging trends to ensure that our actions are informed by data. The North Carolina OSUAP 3.0 aims to identify impactful, feasible strategies to reduce overdoses in North Carolina and prevent the next wave of the epidemic.

## 1.2 STRATEGY INFORMATION

In alignment with guidelines set by the NC MOA, McDowell County will consider funding qualified organizations to implement the following strategies:

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 2. Evidence-based addiction treatment | 8. Post-overdose response team                   |
| 3. Recovery support services          | 9. Syringe service programs                      |
| 4. Recovery housing support           | 10. Criminal justice diversion programs          |
| 5. Employment-related services        | 11. Addiction treatment for incarcerated persons |
| 6. Early intervention                 | 12. Reentry programs                             |
| 7. Naloxone distribution              |  |

NOTE: The strategies listed above correspond to the NC Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) approved strategies under Option A of the agreement in the order they appear in the document (and numbered as such) with the omission of the first Option A strategy (collaborative strategic planning).

### 1.2.2 Strategy Descriptions

2. **Evidence-Based Addiction Treatment** – Develop or ensure access to evidence-based addiction treatment consistent with the [American Society of Addiction Medicine's national practice guidelines](#) for the treatment of opioid use disorder by including medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) with any medication approved for this purpose by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration—through Opioid Treatment Programs, qualified providers of Office-Based Opioid Treatment, Federal Qualified Health Centers, treatment offered in conjunction with justice system programs, or other community-based programs offering evidence-based addiction treatment.

The following list of examples represents the types of eligible activities that could be included in your application and some guiding questions to consider when developing your application. Other related activities consistent with the NC MOA may also be proposed in your application. Further information, including strategy resources, can be found at <https://ncopioidsettlement.org/strategy/evidence-based-addiction-treatment/>.

- a. Provide clinical assessment to determine diagnosis and appropriate care, including medications to improve health outcomes.
    - i. How will the referral process work? Describe how referrals to harm reduction services, Substance Use Disorder or Mental Health (SUD/MH) providers (including MOUD/MAT options), and other services will be made. Be sure to include names and contact information of these services/providers.
    - ii. How will your team ensure that treatment options and referrals are being presented to people in an unbiased, non-coercive, and nonjudgmental way?
  - b. Ensure access to prescribed medications through patient assistance programs, community partnerships, etc.
3. **Recovery Support Services** – Build or expand evidence-based recovery support services, including peer support specialists or care navigators based in local health departments, social service offices, detention facilities, community-based organizations, or other settings that support people in treatment or recovery, or those in active use, in accessing addiction treatment, recovery support, harm reduction services, primary healthcare, or other services or supports they need to improve their health or well-being.

The following list represents the types of eligible activities that could be included in your application; related activities consistent with the NC MOA may also be proposed in your application. Further information, including strategy resources, can be found at <https://ncopioidsettlement.org/strategy/recovery-support/>.

- a. Hire recovery coaches, peer support specialists, outreach workers, care navigators, and/or social workers to provide support to people in recovery.
- b. Provide training to staff to strengthen skills and expand recovery support services (e.g., motivational interviewing, wellness recovery action planning, naloxone training, successful engagement documentation, certification programs for peer support specialists).
- c. Utilize recovery capital assessment tools to assist participants in identifying assets to build on and measure growth.
  - i. What recovery capital does the individual have at initial engagement? What goals does the individual have for themselves to expand their recovery capital?
  - ii. How will you use tools to evaluate growth over time?
- d. Develop recovery support groups for people with opioid use disorder and loved ones directly impacted (e.g., Moderation-based support groups like



Harm Reduction Works, Narcotics Anonymous, Parents of Addicted Loved Ones, Medication Assisted Recovery Anonymous).

- e. Develop processes and infrastructure to provide additional referral services, such as connections to communicable disease treatment providers, MOUD providers, housing, transportation, employment, wound care, food, legal services, recovery, and related care services.
  - f. Provide services capable of addressing the complex needs of people returning to their communities after incarceration in prisons or local detention centers.
    - i. Assist individuals with securing identification, connect to health and social services such as housing, transportation, and employment, navigate the court system, and related supports that reduce the likelihood of a drug overdose
4. **Recovery Housing Support** – Programs offering recovery housing support to people in treatment or recovery, or those in active use, such as assistance with rent, move-in deposits, or utilities.

The following list represents the type of eligible activities that could be included in your application; related activities consistent with the NC MOA may also be proposed in your application. Further information, including strategy resources, can be found at <https://ncopioidsettlement.org/strategy/recovery-housing/>.

- a. Provide move-in (deposit), rental, or utility assistance for those in active use, in recovery, or transitioning from residential treatment or incarceration.
  - b. Fund recovery housing programs that provide housing to individuals receiving medications for opioid use disorder.
5. **Employment Related Services** – Assistance for people in treatment or recovery, or those in active use and who may also have prior justice-involvement or other structural barriers to accessing gainful employment.

The following list represents the types of eligible activities that could be included in your application; related activities consistent with the NC MOA may also be proposed in your application. Further information, including strategy resources, can be found at <https://ncopioidsettlement.org/strategy/employment/>.

- a. Provide training and skills building opportunities for people with opioid use disorder focusing on topics such as resume writing, practicing interview skills, or how to address incarceration during the interview process.
- b. Support people with opioid use disorder to pursue education and job opportunities. Some examples of this include providing case management support, helping place job seekers with apprenticeship and internship

opportunities, and hosting education and employment fairs. Consider opportunities for peer-based mentoring and case management.

- c. Fund programs offering transportation services or transportation vouchers to facilitate employment-related services/activities or similar services or supports.
  - d. Communicate with, provide outreach to, and educate policy makers, county government officials, and employers on Fair Chance Hiring policies and practices.
  - e. Promote and support implementation of Fair Chance Hiring policies and practices.
6. **Early Intervention** – Develop or expand programs, services, or training to encourage early identification and intervention for children or adolescents who may be struggling with problematic use of drugs or mental health conditions. Training programs may target parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, health or human services professionals, or others in contact with children or adolescents.

The following list represents the types of eligible activities that could be included in your application; related activities consistent with the NC MOA may also be proposed in your application. Further information, including strategy resources, can be found at <https://ncopioidsettlement.org/strategy/early-intervention/>.

- a. Implement use of evidence-based screening tools for youth to identify risk of developing opioid use disorder and link those youth at risk to appropriate services (e.g., Screening and Brief Intervention; Brief Screener for Alcohol, Tobacco, and other Drugs; Alcohol Screening and Brief Intervention for Youth).
    - i. Develop protocol for linking youth to appropriate MH/OD services as needed.
    - ii. Connect youth to peer support groups that strengthen recovery.
    - iii. Connect families to support groups to enable strong support of their children.
  - b. Provide training for parents, caregivers, school staff, peers, human service professionals, etc. in early identification of opioid use disorder and mental health disorders (e.g., Youth Mental Health First Aid).
  - c. Provide evidence-based programs that strengthen families and communities to enhance support of youth (e.g., Strengthening Families).
7. **Naloxone Distribution** – Programs or organizations that distribute naloxone to persons at risk of overdose or their social networks.

The following list represents the types of eligible activities that could be included in your application; related activities consistent with the NC MOA may also be proposed in your application. Further information, including strategy resources, can be found at <https://ncopioidsettlement.org/strategy/naloxone-distribution/>.

- a. Support programs such as Syringe Service Programs, post-overdose response teams, programs that provide naloxone to persons upon release from jail or prison, emergency medical service providers or hospital emergency departments that provide naloxone to persons at risk of overdose or others in a position to assist in case of an overdose, or community-based organizations that provide services to those in active use. Programs or organizations involved in community distribution of naloxone may, in addition, provide naloxone to first responders.
  - b. Purchase supplies to assemble naloxone rescue kits (e.g., naloxone, syringes, packaging, instructions).
  - c. Train staff and volunteers to train lay persons in identifying signs and symptoms of overdose, naloxone administration, and follow-up care.
  - d. Develop procedures to document naloxone units distributed and community reversals.
8. **Post-Overdose Response Teams** – Develop community-based organizations that have experience working with people directly impacted by drug use to prevent repeat overdose and connect those who have had a non-fatal overdose to harm reduction and social/health services, including housing, employment, food access, treatment, and recovery support. Although the response to the overdose event is expected to be prompt, proposals should indicate how initial interactions with people who have overdosed constitute the beginning of a supportive and ongoing relationship (e.g., light-touch case management). The parameters of these relationships should be dictated by the participant/person who has overdosed.

**Letters of support/commitment must be included for each partner involved in the post-overdose response team process, such as the local EMS agency, emergency department, treatment provider, harm reduction organization, and anyone else that is part of this proposed strategy.** The application should outline a specific protocol or plan used for post-overdose response and outreach.

The following list represents the types of eligible activities that could be included in your application; related activities consistent with the NC MOA may also be proposed in your application. Further information, including strategy resources, can be found at <https://ncopioidsettlement.org/strategy/post-overdose-response-teams/>.

- a. Meaningful involvement of people with lived experience, those in recovery, and other harm reduction specialists, such as being a key member of the response team and/or informing protocol development.
  - b. Follow-up processes with patients who have experienced an overdose within 72 hours of the non-fatal overdose event, including the following details:
    - i. What happens following an overdose reversal? Provide a timeline of events from how the initial referrals are made to the team (e.g., first responders, emergency departments) leading up to and including making the first initial contact. Explain who is responsible for what action and from what agency.
    - ii. How will the referral process work? Please describe how referrals to harm reduction services (refer to NC Safer Syringe Initiative for partners in your area), Substance Use Disorder or Mental Health (SUD/MH) providers (including MOUD/MAT options), and other services will be made. Be sure to include names and contact information of these services/providers.
    - iii. How will your team ensure that treatment options and referrals are being presented to people who have overdosed in an unbiased, non-coercive, and nonjudgmental way?
    - iv. What factors determine how often follow-up visits are conducted? What will be the default suggestion?
    - v. Who will conduct the follow-up visits and what protocol will they follow on these visits?
    - vi. What parameters will dictate discontinuing services and/or disengaging with program participants?
9. **Syringe Services Programs (SSPs)** – Assistance through any governmental or nongovernmental organization authorized by section 90-113.27 of the North Carolina General Statutes that provide syringes, naloxone, or other harm reduction supplies, that dispose of used syringes; that connect clients to prevention, treatment, recovery support, behavioral healthcare, primary healthcare, or other services or supports they need; or that provide any of these services or supports.

The following list represents the types of eligible activities that could be included in your application; related activities consistent with the NC MOA may also be proposed in your application. Further information, including strategy resources, can be found at

<https://ncopioidsettlement.org/strategy/syringe-services-programs/>.

- a. Develop internal capacity to deliver SSP services:
  - i. Hire SSP staff, peers/outreach workers, administrative personnel, case managers, and other roles to support program services and operations.
  - ii. Train SSP staff and participants in first aid, CPR, wound care, safer use practices, naloxone administration, testing for communicable/blood-borne diseases, and related harm reduction and disease prevention practices.
  - iii. Purchase eligible SSP and wound care supplies, such as biohazard disposal containers, safer use supplies, alcohol swabs, gauze, bandages, hygiene products, barrier methods for sexual health, bags, and food. Drug testing strips or other forms of drug checking supplies or tools for the purpose of harm reduction and overdose prevention, such as mass spectrometers, are also allowed.
  - iv. Develop comprehensive support programs within the SSP, such as harm reduction-based support groups, peer navigation to identify participant needs and enroll in local services accordingly, and other methods to ensure connection to appropriate care services.
- b. Provide additional support or linkage to care for program participants and other people in active use:
  - i. Develop processes and infrastructure to provide all required and recommended SSP services under North Carolina law (G.S. 90-113.27), including naloxone access and hepatitis/HIV testing services.
  - ii. Develop processes and infrastructure to provide additional referral services, such as connections to communicable disease treatment providers, MOUD providers, housing, transportation, employment, wound care, food, legal services, recovery, and related care services.
  - iii. Build linkage to care or care management systems to include assistance with scheduling appointments or transportation to and from appointments.

10. **Criminal Justice Diversion Programs** – Pre- and Post-arrest diversion programs/pre-trial service programs connect individuals involved or at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system to addiction treatment, recovery support, harm reduction services, primary healthcare, prevention, or other services or supports they need or that provide these services or supports.

Example 1: Orange County, Lantern Project:

<https://www.orangecountync.gov/2825/Lantern-Project---Behavioral-Health-Dive>.

Example 2: Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion programs (LEAD)

<https://www.nchrc.org/programs/lead/>.

**A letter of commitment from the partnering Sheriff's Office/applicable law enforcement agencies and court system are required for this strategy.**

The following list represents the types of eligible activities that could be included in your application; related activities consistent with the NC MOA may also be proposed in your application. Further information, including strategy resources, can be found at <https://ncopioidsettlement.org/strategy/criminal-justice-diversion/>.

- a. Secure agreements with local district attorney and law enforcement agencies to support diversion program.
- b. Develop eligibility criteria, policies, and procedures to divert individuals from justice system to receive needed support services.
- c. Hire clinical social workers, forensic peer support specialists, and/or peer support specialists to facilitate the referral and screening processes and provide the necessary supports to enrolled individuals.
- d. Provide training to law enforcement to support individuals that may need services (e.g., crisis intervention team, person-first language).

**11. Addiction Treatment for Incarcerated Persons** – Support evidence-based addiction treatment, including medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) with at least one FDA-approved opioid agonist to persons who are incarcerated in jail or prison. Applicants are recommended to demonstrate prior experience working with the justice-involved population or partner with an organization with experience working with justice-involved people and to provide an accompanying letter of commitment with your application. **A letter of commitment from the partnering jail/detention center or Sheriff's Office is required for this strategy.**

The following list represents the types of eligible activities that could be included in your application; related activities consistent with the NC MOA may also be proposed in your application. Further information, including strategy resources, can be found at

<https://ncopioidsettlement.org/strategy/addiction-treatment-for-incarcerated-persons/>.

- a. Educate incarcerated people and their loved ones on harm reduction strategies before release, including but not limited to training on overdose prevention planning and on overdose recognition and response with naloxone.

- b. Develop and implement a program for take-home naloxone distribution for people upon release.
- c. Develop and implement a comprehensive medication-assisted treatment (MAT) or medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) program in the jail/detention center setting.
  - i. Assist individuals with securing identification, connect to social and health services (housing, transportation, employment), navigate the court system, and related supports that reduce the likelihood of a drug overdose.
- d. Support people who were recently incarcerated to pursue education and job opportunities. Some examples of this include providing case management support, helping place job seekers with apprenticeship and internship opportunities, and hosting education and employment fairs for people with a history of incarceration. Consider opportunities for peer-based mentoring and case management.
- e. Establish reentry programs to link or refer people to care services once released from incarceration and provide care service referrals, focusing on individuals with opioid use disorder.
- f. Educate incarcerated people and their loved ones on harm reduction strategies before release, including but not limited to training on overdose prevention planning and on overdose recognition and response with naloxone.
- g. Develop a program for take-home naloxone distribution for people upon release.

12. **Reentry Programs** – Support programs that connect incarcerated persons to addiction treatment, recovery support, harm reduction services, primary healthcare, or other services or supports they need upon release from jail or prison, or that provide any of these services or supports.

The following list represents the type of eligible activities that could be included in your application; related activities consistent with the NC MOA may also be proposed in your application. Further information, including strategy resources, can be found at <https://ncopioidsettlement.org/strategy/reentry-programs/>.

- a. Provide culturally competent, person-centered services capable of addressing the complex needs of people returning to their communities after incarceration in institutional prisons or detention centers.
- b. Develop a relationship with the Department of Public Safety and local detention center to coordinate warm handoffs of care from incarceration to services in the community.

- c. Hire a community health worker, linkage-to-care navigator, clinical service worker, and/or forensic peer support specialist to assist incarcerated individuals to create comprehensive reentry plans and provide ongoing support.
  - i. Assist individuals with securing identification, connect to social and health services (housing, transportation, employment), navigate the court system, and related supports that reduce the likelihood of a drug overdose.
- d. Support people who were recently incarcerated to pursue education and job opportunities. Some examples of this include providing case management support, helping place job seekers with apprenticeship and internship opportunities, and hosting education and employment fairs for people with a history of incarceration. Consider opportunities for peer-based mentoring and case management.
- e. Establish reentry programs to link or refer people to care services once released from incarceration and provide care service referrals, focusing on individuals with opioid use disorder.
- f. Educate incarcerated people and their loved ones on harm reduction strategies before release, including but not limited to training on overdose prevention planning and on overdose recognition and response with naloxone.
- g. Develop a program for take-home naloxone distribution for people upon release.

### 1.3 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources may also be helpful as you plan your project and develop your application:

- CORE-NC: Community Opioid Resources Engine for North Carolina: <https://ncopioidsettlement.org/>
- North Carolina Memorandum of Agreement Resource Center: <https://ncopioidsettlement.org/about/#quicklinks> (please take a close look at the '[Full Text of the NC MOA](#)', '[FAQ about the NC MOA](#)', and '[FAQ about Option A Strategies in the MOA](#)')
- North Carolina Opioid and Substance Use Action Plan Dashboard: <https://www.dph.ncdhhs.gov/programs/chronic-disease-and-injury/injury-and-violence-prevention-branch/north-carolina-overdose-epidemic-data>
- North Carolina Data Portal: <https://ncdataportal.org/>



## SECTION 2: RFA AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

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### 2.1 ELIGIBILITY

The County will fund approved Opioid Abatement strategies. All contracted services must qualify under the terms of the NC Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). This RFA is open to all established private organizations, non-profit organizations, and public or local governmental agencies licensed to conduct business in North Carolina that can clearly demonstrate a commitment to evidence-based strategies/practices (EBPs) addressing opioid use disorder (OUD) appropriate for the priority community (i.e., individuals with OUD).

Applicants may be individual organizations or a partnership/collaboration of multiple organizations, one of which must serve as the fiscal agent/organization that will take total responsibility for the fiscal, reporting, and grant-related compliance requirements.

### 2.2 RFA TERMS AND CONDITIONS

#### 1. RFA Review and Compliance

It shall be the applicant's responsibility to read the instructions, the County's terms and conditions, all relevant exhibits and attachments, and any other components made a part of this RFA and comply with all requirements and specifications herein. Applicants also are responsible for obtaining and complying with all Addenda and other changes that may be issued in connection with this RFA.

Awarded organizations must comply with all provisions of the funding [North Carolina MOA](#), including financial and impact reporting, and expenditure tracking and monitoring including costs incurred no earlier than the beginning of the contract period.

#### 2. Award or Rejection

All qualified applications will be evaluated and awards made to the agency/ies or organization(s) whose combinations of budget and service capabilities are deemed to be in the best interest of the funding agency. The McDowell County Board of Commissioners reserves the complete right to reject any or all offers if deemed to be in its best interest. Successful applicants will be notified by **May 2026**.

#### 3. Cost of application preparation

Any cost incurred by an organization in preparing or submitting an application is the agency's or organization's sole responsibility. McDowell County will not reimburse any agency or organization for any pre-award costs incurred.

#### 4. Elaborate applications

Applicants are encouraged to provide sufficient documentation to support its proposal. However, elaborate applications in the form of brochures or other presentations beyond that necessary to present a complete and effective application are not desired. No

materials other than those described in [Section 3: Application and Selection Processes](#) of this RFA will be reviewed.

## **5. Oral explanations**

McDowell County will not be bound by oral explanations or instructions given at any time during the competitive process or after awarding the grant.

## **6. Reference to other data**

Only information that is received in response to this RFA will be evaluated; reference to information previously submitted will not be reviewed.

## **7. Questions**

Questions, or issues regarding any term, condition, or other component within this RFA, must be submitted as questions in accordance with the instructions in [Section 3: Application and Selection Processes](#) of this RFA. Vendor's proposal shall constitute a firm offer.

## **8. Titles**

Titles and headings in this RFA and any subsequent documentation are for convenience only and shall have no binding force or effect.

## **9. Exceptions**

All applications are subject to the terms and conditions outlined herein. All responses will be controlled by such terms and conditions. The attachment of other terms and conditions by any agency or organization may be grounds for rejection of that agency or organization's application. Funded agencies and organizations will specifically agree to the conditions set forth in the Performance Agreement (contract).

## **10. Advertising**

In submitting its application, agencies and organizations agree not to use the results therefrom or as part of any news release or commercial advertising without prior written approval of the County.

## **11. Right to Submitted Material**

All responses, inquiries, or correspondence relating to or in reference to the RFP, and all other reports, charts, displays, scheduled, exhibits, and other documentation

submitted by the agency or organization will become the property of the funding agency when received.

## **12. Competitive Offer**

Pursuant to the provision of G.S. 143-54, and under penalty of perjury, the signer of any application submitted in response to this RFA thereby certifies that this application has not been arrived at collusively or otherwise in violation of either Federal or North Carolina antitrust laws.

## **13. Agency and Organization's Representative**

Each agency or organization shall submit with its application an authorization agent contact with the name, telephone number, and email address of the person(s) with authority to bind the agency or organization and answer questions to provide clarification concerning the application.

## **14. Subcontracting**

Agencies and organizations may propose to subcontract portions of work provided that their applications clearly indicate the scope of the work to be subcontracted, and to whom. All information required about the prime grantee is also required for each proposed subcontractor. Agencies and organizations shall also ensure that subcontractors are not on the State's [Suspension of Funding List](#).

## **15. Minority Participation**

Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-48, 143-128.4 and Executive Order #13, McDowell County invites and encourages participation in this Request for Applications by businesses owned by minorities, women, disabled, disabled business enterprises, and non-profit work centers for the blind and severely disabled. Additional information may be found at <http://www.doa.nc.gov/hub>.

## **16. Registration with Secretary of State**

Private non-profit applicants must be registered with the North Carolina Secretary of State to do business in North Carolina or be willing to complete the registration process in conjunction with the execution of the contract documents. (Refer to [https://www.sosnc.gov/divisions/business\\_registration](https://www.sosnc.gov/divisions/business_registration))

## 17. Contract

The County will issue a contract to the successful recipient(s) of the Opioid Abatement funding. Expenditures cannot begin until the County's receipt of a completely executed contract.

## 18. Assurances

The contract may include assurances that the successful applicant would be required to execute prior to receiving a contract as well as when signing the contract.

## 19. Additional Legal Provisions

Additional legal provisions are listed in [Section 4: Additional Legal Provisions](#). These provisions all apply to this RFA.

## 2.3 SCOPE OF SERVICES

### 2.3.1 Eligible Option A Strategies

In alignment with guidelines set by the NC MOA, McDowell County will consider funding qualified organizations to implement the following Option A strategies:

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 2. Evidence-based addiction treatment | 8. Post-overdose response team                   |
| 3. Recovery support services          | 9. Syringe service programs                      |
| 4. Recovery housing support           | 10. Criminal justice diversion program           |
| 5. Employment-related services        | 11. Addiction treatment for incarcerated persons |
| 6. Early intervention                 | 12. Reentry programs                             |
| 7. Naloxone distribution              |  |

Descriptions and non-exhaustive examples of allowable activities for each strategy option are detailed in [Section 1.2: Strategy Information](#).

Applicants may propose one or a combination of eligible activities or programs within a single strategy. Selecting more than one activity does not increase the likelihood that the application will score higher than those who select only one. **Proposals should be focused, realistic, well-planned, detailed, and sustainable beyond the project period.**

All proposals are encouraged to include specific plans to promote linkages to care, defined as the deliberate establishment of a connection between the patient/participant and the services they require. Proposals should also clearly describe specific plans to incorporate equity throughout the program, such as defining a role and fair compensation strategy for people with lived experience for each selected strategy. In addition, applications **must** provide a plan to incorporate feedback from program participants to inform program delivery of the selected activity.

### Project Award

Applicants may apply to support a maximum of one (1) evidence-based strategy under the Project Award funding category. *Applicants are not eligible to apply for other funding categories.*

### **2.3.2 Programmatic Requirements**

Funded projects must:

1. Meet a public purpose and fall within County authority to fund per NC General Statutes, to be affirmed and reviewed by the McDowell County legal department and The Opioid Settlements Technical Assistance Team (OSTAT) prior to execution of a contract or funding agreement;
2. Identify and directly address a need related to reducing opioid overdoses and related deaths through treatment, recovery, harm reduction, and other life-saving programs;
3. Provide a plan to incorporate feedback from program participants to inform program delivery of the selected activity;
4. Utilize evidence-based practices;

5. Make best use of County resources;
6. Meet satisfactory compliance requirements based on review of required quarterly performance and financial reports

## **2.4 MONITORING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

### **2.4.1 Audit Requirements**

Funds received through the National Opioid Settlements are not considered to be either federal or State financial assistance. However, as noted in the NC MOA, these funds are subject to G.S. Chapter 159, Article 3, the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act (LGBFCA) and are subject to the audit requirements found in G.S. 159-34. Expenditures incurred are also subject to State Single Audit requirements. In accordance with the MOA, for expenditures for which no compliance audit is required under the Federal Single Audit Act of 1984, a compliance audit shall be required under a compliance supplement approved by the coordination group.

Please be advised that successful applicants may be required to have an audit in accordance with G.S. 143C-6-22 and G.S. 143C-6-23 as applicable to the agency's status. It is the responsibility of each applicant agency to determine and comply with all audit requirements.

G.S. 143C-6-23 requires every nongovernmental entity that receives State or Federal passthrough grant funds directly from a state agency to file annual reports on how those grant funds were used. There are 3 reporting levels which are determined by the total direct grant receipts from all State agencies in the entity's fiscal year:

**Level 1:** Less than \$25,000

**Level 2:** At least \$25,000 but less than \$500,000

**Level 3:** \$500,000 or more

Audit expenses included in award budgets should be prorated based on the ratio of the opioid abatement grant to the total revenues received by the entity. Audit costs are considered as direct costs so long as they conform to this prorated approach.

All grantees must maintain, for a period of at least five years, records of opioid abatement fund expenditures and documents underlying those expenditures, so that it can be verified that funds are being or have been utilized in a consistent manner.

## **2.4.2 Financial and Performance Reporting**

McDowell County is responsible to the State of North Carolina for reporting and audit requirements for all use of Opioid Abatement funds which it has received. Successful applicants will be required to submit documentation on the use of funds and performance reports.

### ***Financial Reporting***

#### **Project Award**

To ensure that the County has all supporting documentation for eligible disbursements, supporting documentation must be submitted on a quarterly basis for each expense for which the funds awarded were used.

### ***Performance Reporting***

Reporting forms will be provided to successful applicants. Suggested measures can be found here in the [NC Opioid Settlement Measures Models](#) document. These measures models were designed to help local governments and their subrecipients report on process, quality, and outcome measures associated with the planning and implementation of opioid abatement strategies. They served as the foundation for developing the Impact Report Measures Workbook, which local governments use to capture strategy-specific data for Annual Impact Report. Each measured model reflects the underlying logic of one of the 12 high-impact opioid abatement strategies listed in Exhibit A ("Option A") of the NC MOA. Each model lists the strategy name and has columns for activities, process measures, quality measures, outcome measures, indicators, and a results statement. Each model also contains a list of assumptions related to various components of the model.

#### **Program and Enhancement Awards**

For each period that the program is funded, required quarterly performance status reports will be due by the 30<sup>th</sup> day following the end of a calendar quarter. Reports must contain information to describe progress, update program objectives on intended and actual impacts, and provide other performance data. For example, future deadlines for grants in 2026 may be:

Reporting Period	Report Due Date
07/01/26 - 09/30/26	10/30/26
10/01/26 - 12/31/26	01/30/27
01/01/27 - 03/31/27	04/30/27
04/01/27 - 06/30/27	07/30/27

## **2.5 BUDGET REQUIREMENTS**

### **2.5.1 Disbursement of Funds**

#### ***Project Award***

Recipients will receive up to 50% of the award upon contract execution. The remaining funds will be disbursed in quarterly or biannual payments after the recipient has (1) documented expenditure of the initial payment through required financial reporting and (2) met satisfactory compliance requirements, including attendance at meetings if deemed necessary by the County, as well as timely performance and financial reporting.

### **2.5.2 Allowable Costs**

1. Salaries, stipends, and other wages for program staff and other supporting positions, such as peers, outreach workers, linkage-to-care navigators, case managers, administrators, contractors, and volunteers.
2. Costs associated with program implementation, linkage to care, and participant engagement, such as offering phone cards, cell phones, application fees, and related expenses.



3. Renting equipment, such as leasing vehicles, for mobile outreach and delivery of services and mileage reimbursement.
4. Transportation-related needs through items such as bus vouchers, rideshare services, cab gift cards, gas cards, or other partnerships to support linkages to care.
5. Housing-related needs, such as short-term move-in deposit, rental, hotel stays, or utility assistance for those in active use, are in recovery, or are transitioning from residential treatment or incarceration.
6. Syringe services program care supplies, such as alcohol swabs, syringes, gauze, band aids, hygiene products, bags, and food. Other forms of drug checking supplies or tools for the purpose of harm reduction and overdose prevention are allowed (e.g., fentanyl test strips).
7. Essential training and conferences related to implementing your program, including necessary travel reimbursement (e.g., mileage, lodging, and meals). Travel expenses for meals and lodging should be justified and documented. Copies of training and conference agendas should be attached to invoices/receipts. Actual documented costs will be reported for reimbursement. Agencies are advised to visit the IRS website to confirm the annual mileage reimbursement rates, <https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates>, and the U.S. General Services Administration website to estimate lodging and meal per diem rates, <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>.
8. Subcontracts, developing memoranda of understanding (MOUs), and/or utilizing another form of demonstrated commitment with partners integral to program implementation.

### **2.5.3 Funding Restrictions**

- Indirect costs or “overhead” are NOT allowed under the NC MOA. The MOA provides that all opioid settlement funds received by local governments must be spent on opioid remediation strategies listed in Exhibit A or Exhibit B – or on reasonable audit costs incurred by local governments in connection with opioid settlement funds. [MOA §§ B.5, E.1, E.5, F.3 and Exhibit E]
- Only U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved medications that address opioid use disorder and/or opioid overdose may be purchased with grant funds.
- Funds may not be expended through the grant or a subaward by any agency which would deny any eligible client, patient, or individual access to their program because of their use of FDA-approved medications for the treatment of opioid use disorder (e.g., methadone, buprenorphine products).

## 2.5.4 Unallowable Costs

1. Purchasing vehicles or paying down existing mortgages and/or other loans.
2. Capital expenses, such as vehicles, new construction or renovation of facilities.
3. Any type of research.
4. Match funding on other federal, state, or private awards.
5. Lobbying activities (i.e., publicity or propaganda purposes, for the preparation, distribution, or use of any material designed to support or defeat the enactment of legislation before any legislative body).
6. Reimbursement of any pre-award costs.

## SECTION 3: APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESSES

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### 3.1 APPLICATION PROCESS AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

#### 3.1.1 Timeline

February 9, 2026	Request for Applications released
March 16, 2026	Applications due by 5:00 PM, Eastern Time
April 2026	Recommendations presented to Board of County Commissioners
May 2026	Successful applicants will be notified
June 15, 2026	Deadline for completing performance contract
July 1, 2026	Proposed contract begins

### Submission Instructions

#### 1. Application Deadline

Applicants must submit their application electronically through the County's application portal at <https://mcdowellgov.com/opioid-settlement-funds> no later than 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Monday, February 28, 2026.

#### 2. Scoring Criteria

Total Possible Score: 100 Points

##### 1. Statement of Need (20 points)

Assesses the clarity and strength of the identified substance use or opioid-related need in McDowell County.

- Clearly identifies a substance use disorder or opioid-related need in McDowell County (0–10 points)
- Explains why the need is important using relevant data, lived experience, or community context (0–10 points)

Maximum Points: 20

## **2. Program Design & Approach (22 points)**

Assesses how well the proposed activities address the identified need.

- Proposed activities clearly address the identified need and are feasible and appropriate (0–10 points)
- Proposal aligns with one or more strategies identified in Exhibit A of the NC Opioid Settlement MOA (0–7 points)
- Proposal demonstrates use of evidence-based or promising practices (0–5 points)

Maximum Points: 22

## **3. Organizational Capacity & Readiness (15 points)**

Assesses the applicant's ability to successfully implement and manage the proposed project.

- Organization demonstrates experience delivering similar programs or services (0–8 points)
- Organization demonstrates administrative, fiscal, and reporting capacity to manage awarded funds (0–7 points)

Maximum Points: 15

## **4. Outputs, Outcomes & Performance Measurement (15 points)**

Assesses how project success will be measured and documented.

- Outputs are clearly defined and measurable (e.g., number served, services delivered, trainings conducted) (0–8 points)
- Outcomes demonstrate meaningful impact and alignment with opioid abatement goals (0–7 points)

Maximum Points: 15

## **5. Budget & Cost Reasonableness (15 points)**

Assesses whether the requested funding is reasonable and appropriate for the proposed activities.

- Budget aligns with proposed activities and clearly supports project implementation (0–10 points)
- Costs are reasonable, necessary, and adequately justified (0–5 points)

Maximum Points: 15

## **6. Sustainability & Long-Term Impact (8 points)**

Assesses the likelihood that project benefits will continue beyond the funding period.

- Proposal includes a realistic plan for sustaining activities or outcomes beyond the funding period (0–8 points)

Maximum Points: 8

## **7. Community Collaboration & Partnerships (5 points)**

Assesses the extent to which the proposal demonstrates coordination with community partners or systems.

- Proposal demonstrates collaboration or coordination with community partners, agencies, or stakeholders relevant to the proposed work (0–5 points)

Maximum Points: 5

TOTAL POSSIBLE SCORE: 100 POINTS

## **3.3 APPLICATION EVALUATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA**

### **3.3.1 Application Evaluation Process**

#### **1. Initial screening for eligibility and completeness**

McDowell County staff will screen all applications to ensure they are complete (i.e., they include all the required information and documentation), they are eligible, and they have complied with basic RFA requirements such as selecting only one eligible Option A strategy per application. Incomplete and/or ineligible applications will not be reviewed further.

The applicant's proposal must meet all the following Phase I application acceptance criteria in order to be considered for further evaluation. Any proposal receiving a "no" response to any of the following qualifying criteria shall be disqualified from consideration.

1. Was the grantee's application received by the deadline specified in the RFA?
2. Grantee proposal includes all required items as described in [Section 3.2: Application Instructions](#)
3. The Grantee is not excluded from entering into a contract with McDowell County due to restrictions related to the federal debarment list, state department list, or state suspension of funding list (see [Section 2.2: RFA Terms and Conditions](#) and [Section 4: Additional Legal Provisions](#))
4. Grantee meets eligibility requirements as stated in [Section 2.1: Eligibility](#)
5. The proposed project meets requirements of the NC Memorandum of Agreement and the allowed Exhibit A ("Option A") strategies

## **2. Reviewer scoring**

Applications will be reviewed by a multi-disciplinary Review Committee who have experience or expertise with opioid overdose prevention, treatment, and/or recovery and are approved by the Board of County Commissioners. At least three reviewers will score each application using the scoring criteria in [Section 3.3.2](#) below. Reviewers may or may not leave comments in addition to their scores. All reviewers will be asked if they have conflicts of interest with any applicants; reviewers will not be assigned to review an application for which they have a conflict of interest.

Applications will be evaluated by the Review Committee according to completeness, content, experience with similar projects, ability of the agency's or organization's staff, cost, etc. The County reserves the right to conduct site visits as part of the application review and award process. The award of a grant to one agency or organization does not mean that the other applications lacked merit, but that, all facts considered, the selected application was deemed to provide the best service to the County.

## **3. Presentation of Proposals to Review Committee**

Applicants may be asked to interview with the Review Committee. Interviews will be scored by using a specific set of questions that will be made available to all applicants that are interviewed. Requests for interviews are not an indication of selection.

## **4. Request for Additional Information**

At their option, the application reviewers may request additional information from any or all applicants for the purpose of clarification or to amplify the materials presented in any part of the application. However, agencies and organizations are cautioned that reviewers are not required to request clarification. Therefore, all applications should be complete and reflect the most favorable terms available from the agency or organization.

## **5. Addressing scoring discrepancies**

McDowell County staff will compile scores for each application and identify any scoring discrepancies, such as a large range of scores on one application, a high or low outlier score, and significantly harsh or lenient review patterns. A review committee call will be convened about any application for which there is a discrepancy. All reviewers who scored such an application will discuss their scores with each other and will have an opportunity to revise and resubmit their scores.

McDowell County staff retains the right to exclude or adjust scores under certain circumstances. Examples of these circumstances include:

- The ability to exclude a reviewer's score for one or more applications if, for

instance, the scores are or appear to be influenced by illegal discrimination.

- The ability to adjust a reviewer or review committee's scores up or down uniformly across the applications reviewed based on patterns of harshness or lenience.
- The ability to exclude a reviewer's score if the scores they submitted are incomplete.

## **5. Recommendations to County Commissioners**

Following application scoring and panel review, all applications, including scores and panel review information, will be submitted to the McDowell County Board of Commissioners for review and selection. Funding decisions will be made by the Board of Commissioners, with consideration given to application scores. McDowell County reserves the right not to fund any applications.

## SECTION 4: ADDITIONAL LEGAL PROVISIONS

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If selected, applications will be fully incorporated as part of the contract. By submitting an application, the applicant agrees to the following terms, in addition to all other terms in this RFA:

### **1. Right to Reject Proposals**

McDowell County reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications for sound documented reasons.

### **2. Form of Application**

Each proposal must be submitted on the application form provided by McDowell County, which will be incorporated into a successful agency's Performance Agreement (contract) that is negotiated between McDowell County and the successful agency.

### **3. Deviations**

McDowell County reserves the right to allow or disallow minor deviations or technicalities should the County deem it to be to the best interest of the County. McDowell County shall be the sole judge of what is to be considered a minor deviation or technicality.

### **4. Preservation of Records**

The successful applicant must maintain, for a period of at least five years, records of opioid abatement fund expenditures and documents underlying those expenditures, so that it can be verified that funds are being or have been utilized in an eligible and consistent manner.

### **5. Responsibility of Compliance with Legal Requirements**

The Applicant's products, service and facilities shall be in full compliance with the North Carolina Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), any and all applicable state, federal, local, environmental and safety laws, regulations, ordinances and standards or any standards adopted by nationally recognized testing facilities regardless of whether or not they are referred to in the application documents.

### **6. Non-Collusion**

By executing and submitting their proposal, the Applicant certifies that this proposal is made without reference to any other proposal and without any agreement, understanding, collusion or combination with any other person in reference to such proposal.

### **7. Indemnity**

Applicant shall indemnify and hold the County, its agents and employees, harmless against any and all claims, demands, causes of action, or other liability,

including attorney fees, on account of personal injuries or death or on account of property damages arising out of or relating to the work to be performed by Applicant hereunder, resulting from the negligence of or the willful act or omission of Applicant, his agents, employees and subcontractors.

#### **8. E-Verify**

Applicant hereby attests that it currently complies with and shall continue to comply with, for the duration of this Agreement, Article 2 of Chapter 64 of the North Carolina General Statutes (commonly referred to as “E-Verify”) and further attests that it ensures and continues to ensure that any subcontractors utilized by Applicant also comply with said Article.

#### **9. State Debarment**

The selected applicant certifies that neither it nor its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible from covered transactions by any State department or agency. The successful applicant further certifies that neither it nor its principals, including subcontractors, are presently listed on the Department of State Treasurer’s Final Divestment List as per N.C.G.S 147-86.55-69. See <https://ncadmin.nc.gov/documents/nc-debarred-vendors>.

#### **10. Federal Debarment**

The selected applicant agrees that it will refrain from entering into any contract or contract modification subject to Executive Order 11246 of September 24, 1965, with a contractor debarred from, or who has not demonstrated eligibility for, Government contracts. The successful applicant further agrees it shall ensure that subcontractors refrain from entering into any contract or contract modification subject to Executive Order 11246 of September 24, 1965, with a contractor debarred from, or who has not demonstrated eligibility for, Government contracts. Instructions to search for an entity to ensure compliance can be found here: [OFCCP Debarred Companies | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\)](https://www.dol.gov/eofclp/whistleblowing/OFCCP-Debarred-Companies).

#### **11. Boycott Israel Clause**

Applicant certifies that it is not identified on any list created by the North Carolina State Treasurer pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 147-86.80 et al (Divestment from Companies Boycotting Israel). This includes but is not limited to the Final Divestment List and the Iran Parent Subsidiary Guidance List located at <https://www.nctreasurer.com/inside-the-department/OpenGovernment/Pages/Iran-Divestment-Act-Resources.aspx>.

Applicant further certifies that it will not subcontract with any entity identified on any such list.



## **12. Iran Divestment**

Applicant certifies that it is not identified on any list created by the North Carolina State Treasurer pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 147-86.55 et al (the Iran Divestment Act). This includes but is not limited to the Final Divestment List and the Iran Parent and Subsidiary Guidance List located

at

<https://www.nctreasurer.com/inside-the-department/OpenGovernment/Pages/Iran-Divestment-Act-Resources.aspx>.

Applicant further certifies that it will not, during the term of this Agreement, subcontract with any entity identified on any such list.