



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

Opioioid Settlement Funds – Recovery Housing

(Strategy 4, Exhibit A, NC MOA)

Bid Title: Request for Applications (RFA), Opioioid Settlement Funds – Recovery Housing (Strategy 4, Exhibit A, NC MOA)

Issue Date: July 13, 2026

Proposals Due: August 28, 2026

Applicants are eligible to request funding for the estimated grant period (September 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027). It is important to note that continued financial support beyond this timeframe is not guaranteed, and applicants must apply again for future funding. All awards are subject to the availability of current opioioid settlement funds.

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. Proposals shall be submitted in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFA and any addenda issued hereto.

Contact Information:

DeShay Oliver, Deputy Health Director
Deshay.oliver@clevelandcountync.gov

Mailing Address

Cleveland County Health Department
C/O: DeShay Oliver, Deputy Health Director
200 South Post Road
Shelby, NC 28152

Table of Contents

Description	3
Inquiries and Communication	3
Closing Date and Submission Instructions	3
Purpose	4
Background	4
Available Funding	5
Eligible Applicants	5
RFA Terms and Conditions	6
Scope of Project	8
Programmatic Requirements	10
Audit Requirements	10
Performance Reporting	11
Budget Requirements	12
Application Timeline	13
Application Instructions	14
Application Checklist	20
Application Evaluation Process and Criteria	21
Application Scoring Criteria	22
Additional Legal Provisions	24

Attachments (Incorporated by Reference)

[Attachment A – Application Form](#)

[Attachment B – Budget Worksheet and Narrative](#)

The above attachments are incorporated by reference and form part of this Request for Applications. Applicants are responsible for reviewing, completing, and submitting all required attachments in accordance with the instructions contained herein.

Description

Cleveland County has received opioid settlement funds pursuant to national settlement agreements with opioid manufacturers, distributors, and related entities. These funds are allocated to North Carolina local governments under the Memorandum of Agreement between the State of North Carolina and local governments governing the use of opioid settlement proceeds (NC MOA).

The allocation, oversight, and use of these funds are governed by the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners in accordance with applicable state guidance and local policies adopted for the administration of opioid settlement funds.

The Board of Commissioners has delegated advisory responsibilities for opioid settlement funding priorities to The Cleveland County Health Department.

This Request for Proposals is issued to solicit applications for funding under NC MOA Exhibit A, Strategy 4: Recovery Housing, for services and programs that support individuals with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) and co-occurring substance use disorder (SUD) and/or mental health conditions.

Funding awarded through this RFP will support programs and services for the State Fiscal Year 2026–2027 beginning July 1, 2026, subject to availability of funds and approval by the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners.

Inquiries and Communication

Written questions concerning the specifications in this RFA will be received until **5:00 PM on Monday, August 17, 2026**, by **DeShay Oliver, Deputy Health Director** at deshay.oliver@clevelandcountync.gov. To access the Application Package and Budget Template, [click here](#), or visit the Cleveland County Health Department home page and select "Community Resources," then "Recovery Connect & Substance Use Resources."

All communications, any modifications, clarifications, amendments, questions, responses or any other matters related to this Request for Applications (RFA) must be made only through the Contact noted above.

Submission Instructions

1. Application Deadline

Applicants shall submit their application to DeShay Oliver at deshay.oliver@clevelandcountync.gov by **5:00 pm**, Eastern Time on **Friday, August 28, 2026**.

2. Application Submission

The original application must contain all requested information with signature completed by the agency's authorized representative.

Each application should be submitted as two attachments:

- i. One consolidated PDF document that includes all materials except the budget.

- i. This file should follow the naming convention, “ApplicantName_opioidRFA_Strategy#.pdf.”
 - For example, this might read, “ABCProvider_opioidRFA_Strategy4.pdf”
- ii. One Budget worksheet as an Excel file.
 - i. This file should follow the naming convention, “ApplicantName_budget_Strategy#.xlsx”
 - For example, this might read, “ABCProvider_budget_Strategy4.xlsx”

For instructions on how to combine multiple PDFs into one PDF file, [click here](#).

Purpose

The Cleveland County Health Department is soliciting proposals from qualified organizations to expand and/or enhance recovery housing services under Strategy 4: Recovery Housing (Exhibit A, NC MOA Opioid Settlement Agreement). The purpose of this funding opportunity is to increase access to safe, stable, and recovery-supportive housing for individuals with substance use disorders (SUD), particularly opioid use disorder (OUD), and strengthen the continuum of care through evidence-based housing models that promote recovery and reduce overdose risk.

Background

In July 2021, NC Attorney General Josh Stein announced a historic national settlement agreement with companies engaged in the manufacturing, distribution, and dispensing of opioids. These agreements will bring much-needed resources to communities impacted by the opioid overdose epidemic. The allocation, use, and reporting of funds stemming from these national settlement agreements and bankruptcy resolutions (“Opioid Settlement Funds”) are governed by the Memorandum of Agreement between the State of North Carolina and Local Governments on Proceeds Relating to the Settlement of Opioid Litigation (“NC MOA”) and the Supplemental Agreement for Additional Funds from Additional Settlements of Opioid Litigation (“SAAF”).

The NC MOA directs how opioid settlement funds are distributed and used in our state. To maximize funds flowing to NC communities, the MOA allocates 15 percent of settlement funds to the State and sends the remaining 85 percent to NC’s 100 counties and 17 municipalities.

The estimated overdose death rate in Cleveland County was 31.3 out of 100,000 residents in 2025, representing a projected 32 people who died of an overdose.¹ For every death, there are more non-fatal overdoses. While we cannot capture all opioid overdoses, emergency department visits for overdoses are one way to measure the number of overdoses occurring. The estimated overdose emergency department visit rate in Cleveland County is 117.4 per 100,000 residents in 2026, representing a projected 120 emergency department visits for an overdose.²

Under the NC MOA, local governments may elect to expend opioid settlement funds through either the approved strategies identified in Exhibit A or through a specific collaborative strategic planning

¹ <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/opioid-and-substance-use-action-plan-data-dashboard>

² Ibid.

process authorized under Exhibit B. This RFP specifically supports activities authorized under Exhibit A, Strategy 4: Recovery Housing.

Available Funding

On June 2, 2026, the Cleveland County Commissioners approved the utilization of Opioid Settlement funds to fund projects that align with the Option A Strategy listed below:

1. **Recovery Housing Support** – Fund programs offering recovery housing support to people in treatment or recovery, or people who use drugs, such as assistance with rent, move-in deposits, or utilities; or fund recovery housing programs that provide housing to individuals receiving Medication-Assisted Treatment for opioid use disorder.

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:

- a. Provide move-in (deposit), rental, or utility assistance for those who use drugs, are in recovery, or are transitioning from residential treatment or out of houselessness.
- b. Fund recovery housing programs that provide housing to individuals receiving medications for opioid use disorder.

Total Funding Available: \$200,000

Estimated Funding Period: September 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027

The County reserves the right to:

- Fund all, part, or none of any proposal
- Negotiate budgets
- Award multiple contracts
- Modify funding amounts based on available resources

Eligible Applicants

Proposals will be accepted from nonprofit organizations, governmental agencies, hospital systems, and private behavioral health and mental health providers (including providers of Office-Based Opioid Treatment and Opioid Treatment Providers), Federal Qualified Health Centers, colleges and universities, and K-12 schools, and other community-based organizations that are licensed to conduct business in North Carolina. Proof of nonprofit status is required for entities applying as a non-profit. Applicants must clearly demonstrate experience working with individuals with opioid use disorder and a commitment to evidence-based strategies addressing opioid use disorder.

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

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 include 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 combination of budget and service capabilities are deemed to be in the best interest of the funding agency. The Cleveland County Board of Commissioners reserves the unqualified right to reject any or all offers if determined to be the local government's best interest. Successful applicants will be notified by mid to late September 2026.

3. Cost of Application Preparation

Any costs incurred by an organization in preparing or submitting an application is the agency's or organization's sole responsibility. Cleveland 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 the ***Application Instructions*** section of this RFA will be reviewed.

5. Non-Collusion

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

6. Oral Explanations

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

7. Reference to Other Data

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

8. Questions

Questions, or issues regarding any term, condition, or other component within this RFA, those must be submitted as questions in accordance with the instructions in the ***Inquiries and Communications*** section of this RFA. Vendor's proposal shall constitute a firm offer.

9. Exceptions

If a vendor desires modification of the terms and conditions of this solicitation, it is urged and cautioned to inquire during the question period, in accordance with the instructions in this RFA, about whether specific language proposed as a modification is acceptable to or will be considered by the County. It is the County's sole discretion to accept or reject requested modifications and/or exceptions as an Addendum to this RFA package.

All applications are subject to the terms and conditions of this RFA, including all Addenda. All submitted applications 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. Right to Submitted Material

All responses, inquiries, or correspondence relating to or in reference to the RFA, and all other reports, charts, displays, schedules, exhibits, and other documentation submitted by the agency or organization will become the property of the funding agency when received.

11. 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.

12. 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 subrecipient is also required for each proposed secondary subcontractor. Agencies and organizations shall also ensure that subcontractors are not on the state's Suspension of Funding List.

13. Proprietary Information

Trade secrets or similar proprietary data which the agency or organization does not wish disclosed to other than personnel involved in the evaluation will be kept confidential to the

extent permitted by NCAC TO1: 05B.1501 and G.S. 132-1.3 if identified as follows: Each page shall be identified in boldface at the top and bottom as “CONFIDENTIAL.” Any section of the application that is to remain confidential shall also be so marked in boldface on the title page of that section. An applicant may not mark the entire application as “CONFIDENTIAL.”

14. Minority Participation

Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-48, 143-128.4 and Executive Order #13, Cleveland 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>.

15. 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)

16. Contract

The County will issue a contract to the successful recipient(s) of the Opioid Settlement funding for specific services to be provided. Expenditures cannot begin until the County’s receipt of a completely signed contract.

17. 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.

18. Additional Legal Provisions

Additional legal provisions are listed in the **Additional Legal Provisions** section. These provisions all apply to this RFA.

Scope of Project

Recovery Housing Services

Overview

Funds awarded under this RFP shall support recovery housing services for individuals with OUD/SUD in Cleveland County in accordance with Exhibit A, Strategy 4: Recovery Housing Support.

Descriptions and non-exhaustive examples of allowable activities for each strategy option are detailed in Section: Allowable Activities.

The maximum allowable funding request amount of \$200,000 per year is per applicant, not per application. If an applicant submits more than one proposal, the total amount requested across all applications must not exceed this maximum allowable funding request amount per year. Each

application will have the same page limits and submission instructions as detailed in the ***Application Instructions*** section. Multiple proposal applications from a single applicant do not have to be connected to the same project or strategy. Each application will be reviewed independently.

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 include planning for sustainability beyond the project period.**

Allowable Activities

This RFA supports recovery housing programs that provide housing to individuals receiving Medication-Assisted Treatment for opioid use disorder. Eligible activities are housing operations and expansion, including new or expanded recovery residences, staffing, operations, certification costs, and structured recovery supports.

Recovery Housing Operations

- Operation of recovery residences
- Recovery residence staffing (peer support, house management)
- Recovery housing expansion or start-up
- Certification-related expenses (e.g., NARR-aligned standards)

All funded entities shall comply with the following:

- Providers shall maintain safe, stable, recovery-oriented housing environments consistent with applicable state and local regulations.
- Programs shall not deny admission or services solely due to an individual's use of FDA-approved medications (e.g., methadone, buprenorphine products) for opioid use disorder (MOUD/MAT).
- Providers shall coordinate with local behavioral health, treatment, housing, and recovery support systems as appropriate.
- Resident recovery programming and supports.
- At least 51% of participants being served must have an opioid use disorder (if polysubstance use disorder, opioid use disorder must be included).

Funded recovery housing providers are encouraged to maintain National Alliance for Recovery Residences (NARR) certification or demonstrate alignment with recognized recovery housing best practices and applicable housing standards. Preference may be given to programs that are certified or actively pursuing certification.

Programmatic Requirements

Funded projects must:

1. Meet a public purpose and fall within Cleveland County authority to fund per NC General Statutes, to be affirmed and reviewed by the Cleveland County legal department 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. Directly address health inequities, social drivers/determinants of health, and support equitable outcomes for the most impacted populations:
 - a. **“Health inequities** are systematic differences in the health status of different population groups. These inequities have significant social and economic costs both to individuals and societies.”³
 - b. **Social drivers/determinants of health** are “the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.” Example domains include economic stability, education access and quality, health care access and quality, neighborhood and built environments, and social and community contexts;⁴
4. 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;
5. Provide a plan to incorporate feedback from program participants to inform program delivery of the selected activity;
6. Utilize evidence-based practices;
7. Have at least three (3) years of experience and demonstrated success of providing the type of proposed services;
8. Make best use of County resources;
9. Operate in and serve residents of Cleveland County;
10. Proposals must be 1-year projects;
11. A representative of funded agencies must attend bi-monthly meetings of **Drug Free Cleveland County (DFCC)**. These meetings take place on the 3rd Wednesday at 12 PM at the Cleveland County Health Department.

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.

³ <https://www.who.int/news-room/facts-in-pictures/detail/health-inequities-and-their-causes>

⁴ <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>

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

Level 3 grantees are required to submit a "Yellow Book" Audit done by a CPA. Only Level 3 grantees may include audit expenses in the program budget. Audit expenses should be prorated based on the ratio of the opioid abatement grant to the total revenues received by the entity.

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.

Performance Reporting

Cleveland County is accountable to the State of North Carolina for all reporting and audit requirements related to the use of Opioid Settlement grant funds it receives. To ensure the County maintains complete supporting documentation for all eligible disbursements, all reimbursement requests must include required supporting documentation.

Subrecipients / funded Applicants must submit itemized invoices to Cleveland County to receive reimbursement. For salary reimbursements, subrecipients / funded Applicants must submit payroll records and related documentation sufficient to substantiate the time charged to the approved program.

For each period in which the program is funded, subrecipients must submit a quarterly Performance Status Report and an Impact Story and/or Progress Report no later than the 15th day following the end of each calendar quarter. Reports must include sufficient information to describe progress, update program objectives, summarize intended and actual impacts, and provide other required performance data. For example, deadlines in 2026-2027 may be:

Reporting Period	Report Due Date
July 1, 2026 – September 30, 2026	October 15, 2026
October 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026	January 15, 2027
January 1, 2027 – March 31, 2027	April 15, 2027
April 1, 2027 – June 30, 2027	July 15, 2027

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 measures model reflects the underlying logic of one of the opioid abatement strategies listed in Exhibit A & B 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 the various components of the model.

Budget Requirements

Applicants must provide a detailed line-item budget and budget narrative. Any leveraged funds should be identified if applicable.

The budget and narrative must adhere to the following terms.

Reimbursement Basis

Funds will be distributed to subrecipients on the basis of reimbursement of actual expenses. No advance/startup funds will be provided to any programs/projects.

Allowable Uses of Funds

Allowable costs include:

- Personnel: 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.
- Costs associated with program implementation, linkage to care, and participant engagement.
- Housing-related operating expenses
- Participant rental/utilities assistance
- Recovery support services
- Certification and training costs

Housing-related assistance funded under this RFP is intended to promote recovery stability and engagement in recovery-oriented services and is not intended to function as permanent housing assistance.

Unallowable Uses of Funds

1. Funds may not be used for services unrelated to recovery housing, or activities inconsistent with NC MOA Exhibit A Strategy 4.
2. 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].

3. No more than 5% of total grant award for the budget period may be used for administrative costs.

Other Funding Restrictions

- Only U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved medications may be purchased with settlement 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).

Funds may also NOT be used for:

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. 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).
5. Reimbursement of any pre-award costs, including costs incurred by an organization in preparing or submitting an application.
6. Entertainment, social events, or unrelated expenditures
7. Medical services reimbursable through Medicaid or other payers
8. Costs unrelated to Exhibit A, Strategy 4 as outlined in the RFA

Tentative Timeline

07/13/2026	Request for Applications (RFA) released to eligible applicants
08/17/2026	End of Q&A period. All questions due in writing via email to DeShay Oliver (deshay.oliver@clevelandcountync.gov) by 5:00 PM
08/28/2026	Application Package due by 5:00 PM
09/2026	Successful applicants will be notified.
10/2026	Deadline for completing the performance contract
10/2026	Proposed contract begins.

Application Instructions

Format

1. Form of Application

Each proposal **must** be submitted on the application form provided by Cleveland County, which will be incorporated into a successful agency's Performance Agreement (contract). Additional pages can be inserted if necessary for the narrative sections. Use appropriate headings for each section.

2. Space Allowance

Page limit of the Project Narrative section is 10 pages. Responses should be single-spaced, Calibri size 11 font. This limit does not include the Proposal Summary, the budget with narrative, letters of commitment, or signed certifications. Page limit suggestions for each sub-section of the Project Narrative are provided in the application worksheet for each section of the application.

Application Content

The following sections should be submitted as **one PDF file**. The **Proposal Summary, Project Narrative, and Certifications** should be completed in the application form provided by Cleveland County. Additional required documentation should be incorporated at the end of the same PDF.

1. **Proposal Summary (0 points)** – Required, not scored, maximum 250 words Provide a brief (no more than 250 words) overview of the planned project. Summary must include a purpose statement describing how your application will address the needs of people who use drugs in the community, with particular considerations for historically marginalized populations. **Applications without a proposal summary will be deducted 2 points.**

2. **Project Narrative** – Required, scored out of 100 points total

Page limit of the project narrative section is 10 pages total. Suggested page limits are listed beside each section of the Project Narrative below and in the accompanying application. This limit applies only to the Project Narrative section. **Be as specific as possible** in the project narrative section. This will be the basis for evaluating applications and monitoring the selected organization's performance.

A. Assessment of Community Need (16 total points) – Suggested page limit: 1 ½ pages

- List the geographic area to be served by the proposed project and the overdose burden in that area according to DHHS poisoning data (<https://www.injuryfreenc.ncdhhs.gov/DataSurveillance/Poisoning.htm>).
- Provide any pertinent and/or necessary information as it relates to the need for this work in your community. Identify any gaps in services you intend to address by identifying and/or defining current programs/providers.
- Describe the needs of the priority population that this proposal will serve and how those needs were determined (e.g., focus groups, survey, patient engagement).

NOTE: Provide citations/reference sources for any included community demographic or health status data. Current and relevant data is available at:

- <https://ncopioidsettlement.org/data-dashboards>
- <https://www.dph.ncdhhs.gov/programs/chronic-disease-and-injury/injury-and-violence-preventionbranch/north-carolina-overdose-epidemic-data>
- <https://injuryfreenc.ncdhhs.gov/DataSurveillance/Poisoning.htm>
- <https://nc211.org/data/>
- <https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/reports/dashboards#annual>

B. Project Description and Program Sustainability (28 points) – Suggested page limit: 3 pages

- Describe the proposed project in detail, including:
 - Project activities and the evidence base about their effectiveness for the priority population;
 - Plans to incorporate feedback from program participants to inform delivery of the selected activity or activities;
 - How the project will address identified community needs and/or service gaps;
 - The project's expected impact on preventing opioid overdose, increasing access and linkages to care for the most marginalized and underserved populations, and,
 - How the project will build local infrastructure to respond to the opioid overdose crisis.
- Explain how you will engage or have already engaged the priority population in developing this proposed project.
- Detail how this project will advance your organization's goals.
- Include timelines for project implementation with specific program objectives as they relate to performance measures and budget (e.g., hiring staff or subcontractors, purchasing supplies, establishing policies and protocols, enrolling participants, etc.), including who is responsible for associated activities.
- Explain how the project will increase the capacity of your organization or your community over time to address opioid use disorder. Note that applications must describe how they will plan for enhancements, improvements, or increases achieved during the project year to be sustained past the funding secured during the project period.
- Describe obstacles that may affect your organization's ability to sustain this program after the project cycle and potential solutions to identified challenges.
- Detail any other funding sources that will be used towards this project.

C. Equity Impact (8 points) – Suggested page limit: ¾ page

- Describe how the proposed project addresses health inequities and/or social determinants of health (transportation, housing, employment, etc.) directly or through collaboration with other agencies.
- Describe how the proposed project reaches, benefits, and equitably engages historically marginalized populations and addresses the needs of the uninsured and underinsured.

D. Organizational Readiness (20 total points) – Suggested page limit: 2 pages

- Describe the capacity of the fiscal agent/organization that will take total responsibility for the fiscal, reporting, and grant-related compliance requirements to manage grants and comply with financial and monitoring requirements.
- If applicable, identify any proposed subcontractors and their role on the proposed project. If the specific subcontractor is not yet identified, describe how the subcontractor will be selected.
- Provide specific examples of the organizations or partnerships/collaborations of multiple organizations' capacity to deliver information in a culturally humble, sensitive, and appropriate manner. The applicant must demonstrate an understanding of issues specifically affecting people who use drugs (PWUD) and/or other intersecting historically marginalized populations. A successful applicant will have staff and/or volunteers with diverse backgrounds who are sensitive to drug user health issues.
 - If applicable, provide specific examples of how any identified subcontractors demonstrate these capacities.
- Describe your organizations or partnership/collaboration of multiple organizations' history promoting the health and dignity of individuals and communities impacted by drug use, or your plans to incorporate this mission into your core activities, and how your organization will be delivering program activities in a culturally appropriate manner.
 - If applicable, provide specific examples of how any identified subcontractors demonstrate these capacities.
- If applicable, highlight if your organization or partnership/collaboration of multiple organizations and/or any proposed subcontractors serve the following prioritized groups:
 - Those experiencing homelessness and housing instability,
 - Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC),
 - Federal or NC-recognized tribal communities, and/or
 - Those transitioning from correctional settings to the community.

E. Evidence of Collaborations/Partnerships (16 points) – Suggested page limit: 1 ¼ pages

- Describe how you will collaborate on this project or initiative with other relevant organizations in your community and how this project will improve collaboration between local stakeholders and/or engage new ones.
- Describe how you will verify that projects or services are not being duplicated in the community and with the population served.

F. Performance Measures and Program Evaluation (12 points) – Suggested page limit: 1 page

- Detail how you will evaluate your project.
- Describe how you will engage the priority population in the design and implementation of the evaluation of this project.
- Recipients providing direct services will be required to report client-level data on elements including but not limited to demographic characteristics, substance use, diagnosis(es), services received, and types of medications for opioid use disorder received. Explain how you will capture this data. (See <https://nctopps.ncdmh.net/dev/gettingstartedwithnctopps.asp> for a suggested tool.)
- Explain how you will monitor the project and capture metrics for the supported strategy included in your project. You may wish to present metrics in a table format. Consult the [NC Opioid Settlement Measures Models](#) for suggested metrics.

3. Letters of Support (0 points) – Optional, not scored

Letters of support that are relevant and descriptive will strengthen applications. Each key partner referenced in the application narrative and/or the budget should have an accompanying letter of commitment/support to demonstrate evidence of collaboration. The partnership highlighted in the letter of commitment/support should also be reflected in the application narrative. Letters of commitment/support will not be scored, but they will be considered in connection with the scored Evidence of Collaborations/Partnerships section of the Project Narrative.

Letters must be included with each application as an appendix and will not count toward the narrative page limit. Do not have letters sent separately to Cleveland County. Letters sent separately from applications will not be read by reviewers.

4. Latest audited financial statement – Required, not scored

Latest audited financial statement, including Management Letter. If unable to provide, please attach a written explanation.

5. **Documentation of Tax Identification Number** – Required, not scored

All applicants are required to include Tax Identification (TIN) documentation. Those applicants that are private non-profit agencies are to include a copy of an IRS determination letter regarding the agency's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. (This letter normally includes the agency's tax identification number, so it would also satisfy that documentation requirement.) If, during the project period, the recipient agency has any changes to its 501(c)(3) status, it must notify Cleveland County immediately.

6. **For non-profit agencies only** – All required, not scored

- a. IRS Determination Letter: Provide a copy of an IRS determination letter that states that your organization has been granted exemption from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The organization's name and address on the letter must match your current organization's name and address. This IRS determination letter can also satisfy the documentation requirement of your organization's tax identification number (TIN).
- b. Verification of 501(c)(3) Status Form: If applicable, an Authorized Representative must annually submit verification that the organization remains a qualified 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.
- c. Copy of Form 990 Federal Tax return filed for the latest fiscal year.
- d. Agency organizational chart.
- e. Current Board of Directors Roster with names, addresses, office terms (with dates), and professional and/or community affiliations.
- f. A completed and signed statement which includes a copy of the Agency's adopted Code of Ethics.
- g. A copy of the Agency's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws (if applicable).

7. **Certifications and required forms** – Required, not scored

See the Application Form provided by Cleveland County for all required forms and signatures. Please note that some forms require signatures from Board Chairs/Elected Officials, and two require notarization.

8. **Budget and budget narrative** – Required, not scored

Use the Budget Worksheet to document your anticipated program budget, including line-item calculations and a budget narrative. The budget and budget narrative must comply with the budget requirements listed in the **Budget Requirements** section. The budget will not be scored, but if it is incomplete or does not appropriately support the proposed project, **up to 5 points will be deducted from the total score.**

It is important to note that continued financial support beyond the approved timeframe is not guaranteed, and applicants must apply again for future funding beyond FY 27-28. All awards are subject to the availability of current opioid settlement funds.

The budget and narrative worksheet must be submitted as a separate Excel file.

Application Checklist

The following checklist is for your reference only as you prepare your application.

☐ **One PDF file** that includes **all** the following components:

- ☐ Filled application, including agency information, Proposal Summary, and Project Narrative
- ☐ Letters of Commitment and/or letters of Support
- ☐ Latest audited financial statement, if applicable, with Management Letter
- ☐ Documentation of Tax Identification Number

☐ **For non-profit agencies only:**

- ☐ IRS Determination Letter
 - ☐ Copy of Form 990 Federal Tax return filed for the latest fiscal year
 - ☐ Agency organizational chart
 - ☐ Current Board of Directors Roster with names, addresses, office terms (with dates), and professional and/or community affiliations
 - ☐ A completed and signed statement which includes a copy of the Agency's adopted Code of Ethics
 - ☐ A copy of the Agency's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws (if applicable)
- ☐ A. Signed Application Certification (included in Application Form)
- ☐ B. Signed Verification of 501(c)(3) Status Form (included in Application Form)
- ☐ C. Signed Certification of No Overdue Tax Debts (**requires notarization**) (included in Application Form)
- ☐ D. Signed Code of Conduct Policy (included in Application Form)
- ☐ E. Signed Conflict of Interest Policy (included in Application Form)
- ☐ F. Signed E-Verify form (**requires notarization**) (included in Application Form)
- ☐ G. Individuals Authorized to Submit Forms (included in Application Form)

☐ One Excel file that contains a completed budget worksheet with narrative justification

Application Evaluation Process and Criteria

1. Initial screening for eligibility and completeness

Cleveland County staff will screen all applications to ensure they are complete (i.e., they include all the required information and documentation), that they are eligible, and that 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.

2. Reviewer scoring

At least three reviewers who have experience or expertise with opioid overdose prevention, treatment, and/or harm reduction will score each application using the scoring criteria in the Scoring Criteria section 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.

3. 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.

4. Addressing scoring discrepancies

Cleveland 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.

Cleveland 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, or
- The ability to exclude a reviewer's score if the scores they submitted are incomplete.

5. Recommendations to County Manager

Based on applications' average scores after reviewer revisions and government staff exclusion or adjustment, if applicable, Cleveland County staff will make a recommendation to the County

Manager about which applications should be funded. Funding, if awarded, will be awarded to the highest-scoring applications. Cleveland County reserves the right not to fund any applications.

Application Scoring Criteria

Applications will be scored based on the responses to the application content areas in the chart below. Each content area shall be scored on a scale of 1-4 based on the scale below:

1. POOR	Applicant only marginally addressed the application area
2. AVERAGE	Applicant adequately addressed the application area
3. GOOD	Applicant did a thorough job of addressing the application area
4. EXCELLENT	Applicant provided a superior response to the application area

Each content area will be weighted, and the score of 1 to 4 will be multiplied by the assigned weight of the content area. The following represents the evaluation criteria and relative importance of each criterion (criteria weight):

Evaluation Criteria	Score Distribution	Weight
1. Proposal Summary: deduct 2 points if missing	0 pts.	--
2. Assessment of Need a. Clear and appropriate geographic area to be served b. Clear statement of needs and gaps in services c. A thorough description of priority populations that is well supported by evidence	0 pts. if missing. Otherwise, 4-16 pts.	4
3. Project Description and Sustainability a. Exactly one of the eligible Option A strategies is selected, and the proposed project clearly supports the identified strategy b. Well-planned project that is likely to lead to the intended opioid-related impacts, based on the evidence base about strategy and/or activity effectiveness for the prioritized population c. Clear and appropriate plans to incorporate feedback from program participants to inform program delivery d. Intended impacts of the project will likely meet community needs/service gaps e. Applicant has engaged or will engage the priority population meaningfully in developing the proposed project f. Proposed project fits the applicant's organizational goals well g. Project timelines are achievable and adequate to make intended impacts h. Clear and appropriate plans for project sustainability	0 pts. if missing. Otherwise, 7-28 pts.	7
4. Equity Impact	0 pts. if missing.	2

a. Project is likely to improve health inequities and/or social determinants of health b. The project is likely to reach, benefit, and equitably engage historically marginalized populations and uninsured and underinsured people	Otherwise, 2-8 pts.	
5. Organizational Readiness a. Applicant demonstrates the skills and capacity needed to manage the funding award and meet reporting and compliance requirements. b. Subcontractors are clearly identified, if applicable, and will enhance the success of the project c. Applicant (team) has demonstrated the capacity to conduct culturally humble, sensitive, and appropriate work d. Applicant (team) has demonstrated a clear understanding of issues that affect people who use drugs e. Applicant (team) has demonstrated experience and/or clear and adequate plans for promoting the health and dignity of people and communities impacted by drug use f. Applicant (team) has demonstrated experience serving those experiencing homelessness and housing instability; Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; federal or NC-recognized tribal communities, and/or those transitioning from correctional settings to the community	0 pts. if missing. Otherwise, 5-20 pts.	5
6. Evidence of Collaborations/Partnerships, Letters of Commitment/Support a. Clear plan to collaborate with other relevant community organizations that is likely to improve collaboration between local stakeholders b. Clear plan to verify that projects or services are not being duplicated in the community and with the population served c. Letters of commitment/support are present from all key project partners and match partners' proposed roles in the project	0 pts. if missing. Otherwise, 4-16 pts.	4
7. Performance Measures and Program Evaluation a. Specific, achievable plans for program evaluation that will yield meaningful assessment of the project's success b. Clear and appropriate plans to engage the priority population in evaluation design and implementation c. Clear and appropriate plans to capture client data (if applicable) and proposed metrics, and to monitor project progress regularly	0 pts. if missing. Otherwise, 3-12 pts.	3
8. Project Budget: If the budget is incomplete and/or does not appropriately support the proposed project, deduct up to 5 points	0 pts.	--
Total	0-100 points	

Additional Legal Provisions

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. Deviations

Cleveland 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. Cleveland County shall be the sole judge of what is to be considered a minor deviation or technicality.

2. Indemnity

Applicant shall indemnify and hold the County, its agents and employees, harmless against any 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, agents, employees and subcontractors.

3. Responsibility of Compliance with Legal Requirements

The Applicant's products, services, and facilities shall be in full compliance with any 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 Proposal documents.

4. 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.

5. Insurance

Upon award, the applicant is to provide proof of commercial insurance with, at a minimum, the following coverage and limits:

- a. **Workers' Compensation** – The Agency shall provide and maintain Workers' Compensation insurance, as required by the laws of the State of North Carolina, as well as employer's liability coverage with minimum limits of \$1,000,000 for bodily injury per accident. This insurance must cover all of the Agency's employees who are engaged in any work under this Contract.
- b. **General Liability** – The Agency shall provide and maintain General Liability Coverage at a minimum of \$1,000,000 per occurrence for bodily injury, personal injury, and property damage. Non-owned vehicle coverage may be included in General Liability Coverage with proof of a minimum combined single limit of \$1,000,000 bodily injury and property damage; \$1,000,000 uninsured/under-insured motorist; and \$1,000,000 medical payment.
- c. **Automobile Liability** – The Agency shall provide and maintain Automobile Liability Insurance covering all owned, hired, and non-owned vehicles used in connection

with this Contract. The minimum combined single limit shall be \$1,000,000 bodily injury and property damage; \$1,000,000 uninsured/under-insured motorist; and \$1,000,000 medical payment.

Attachments

- [Attachment A: Application Form](#)
- [Attachment B: Budget Worksheet and Narrative](#)