Strengthening the Technical Advancement & Readiness of Public Health via Health Information Exchange Program (The STAR HIE Program)

Notice of Funding Opportunity - Informational Session

Wednesday, August 19, 2020; 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. EDT

The Office of the National Coordinator for
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Agenda

- Introduction of Speakers

- Housekeeping

- Summary, Background, Purpose, and Objectives

- Program Activities, Milestones, and Performance Activities

- Funding, Eligibility, and Application Information

- Application Responsiveness and Merit Review Criteria

- Questions and FAQs

- Dates to Remember

Introduction of Speakers

- **Yolonda Thompson, Moderator**
  Grants Management Specialist
  ONC Procurement and Grants Division

- **Terah Tessier, PhD, Speaker**
  Program Manager
  ONC Interoperability Division

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Housekeeping

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Reminders

- This webinar is being recorded and will be made publicly available.

- All phone lines will be muted during the presentation.

- If you have questions, please enter them into the chat box.
  - Note: All questions will be answered and made publicly available every Friday until the application close date on September 1st.

- Webinar and FAQs will be available at https://www.healthit.gov/topic/onc-funding-opportunities/strengthening-technical-advancement-and-readiness-public-health

How to Ask a Question

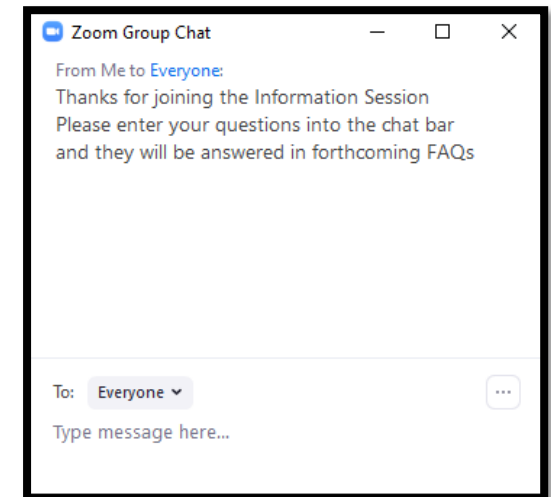Use the chat function to submit questions during the presentation.

1) Find and click the Chat button on the bottom of your zoom webinar window.

❶
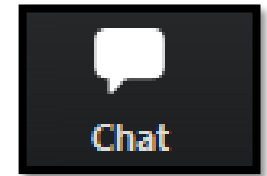
2) The Zoom Group Chat window will expand on your screen.

❷

3) Type your question into the chat box and hit "Enter" to submit your question

❸

Additional Questions

If you have additional questions after today's webinar session, please direct them to the following email address:

STARHIENOFO@hhs.gov

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Summary, Background, Purpose, and Objectives

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STAR HIE Program – Summary

This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is designed to strengthen and accelerate innovative uses of health information via health information exchanges (HIEs) within states, communities, and regions to support public health agencies' abilities to advance data-driven prevention of, response to, and recovery from public health events, including disasters and pandemics such as COVID-19.

Background

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is committed to advancing the secure, interoperable exchange of health information which is critical to enhancing the health and well-being of all Americans.

- In March 2020, Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The CARES Act responds to the COVID-19 (i.e., coronavirus disease 2019) outbreak and its impact on the economy, public health, state and local governments, individuals, and businesses. This notice of funding opportunity is supported with funding from the CARES Act.

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Purpose

- This NOFO provides an opportunity to strengthen and expand the ability of HIEs to support public health agencies in communities and states.

- There is a clear need for new data and new approaches for public health programs, including approaches made possible by modern computing.

- For example, case investigation and contact tracing can be augmented by new data and new approaches to better identify the sources of a disease and help prevent additional outbreaks.

- Pandemics like Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) stress our information infrastructure and can be best addressed when there are efficient modes to make information available where and when it is needed most.

- A key challenge that has emerged with the current COVID-19 response is around public health agencies' access to clinical data (e.g., information on comorbidities, hospital admission/discharge, and/or detailed treatment information) and demographic information on patients who have tested positive for the disease.

- The extensive amount of clinical data held by HIEs is often not accessible by public health agencies nor are the insights HIEs can provide regarding trends and a community's longitudinal health.

Purpose (cont.)

- Better aligning HIEs with public health agencies can bring more and better data to bear on public health events, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

- This program seeks to respond to the needs facing public health agencies by leveraging the unique abilities and characteristics of HIEs. These include, for example, the following:

  o HIEs serve as hubs for rich data from a multitude of sources.

  o HIEs are often state, local, or regional entities, with a strong understanding of and experience with local health care environments, including policies dictating data use for public health agencies.

  o HIEs facilitate competition within the healthcare system by acting as trusted third parties who work with otherwise competitive healthcare entities.

  o HIEs either actively support public health agencies or have the ability to do so (e.g., activities such as supporting public health reporting, improving data quality, and other data services).

Purpose (cont.)

- This NOFO will build upon previous and existing Federal investments in HIEs.

- It also will leverage work done by the industry to advance HIE services for the benefit of public health.

- The result of this would be improved linkages between public health agencies and the services that health information exchanges are well situated to provide. These services include, but are not limited to, establishing or updating:
    - o Services that benefit public health registries,
    - o Connectivity services that benefit a public health agency, and/or
    - o Data services that benefit a public health agency.

Objectives

- **Objective 1: Build innovative health information exchange services that benefit public health agencies.**
  - o Applicants must propose activities that would benefit public health agencies.
  - o This requirement is included in the NOFO because of the unique opportunity that HIEs present regarding supporting public health agencies.
  - o The outcome of achieving this objective will be that public health agencies are more capable of responding to public health events, including pandemics such as COVID-19.

- **Objective 2: Improve the health information exchange services available to support communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.**
  - o Applicants must describe how they would deploy services or functionalities to enable, enhance, or increase the use of health information exchange among relevant entities, including providers who care for vulnerable or at-risk populations.
  - o Applicants must describe how their activities under the cooperative agreement address communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including as it relates to the stratifying factors of age, race, ethnicity, disability and sex.
  - o The outcome of achieving this objective will be to increase public health understanding of how COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted various communities and increase the capability of public health agencies and the healthcare system to respond to that impact.

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Program Activities, Milestones, and Performance Activities

Program Activities

- HIEs often function as data service providers, such as by enhancing data that is already available. HIEs perform such functions by leveraging their wide range of capabilities, which include such functions as identity management or provider directories. One particularly powerful aspect of HIEs is their ability to create a longitudinal record of a patient, and use that for enhancing treatment, care coordination, public health monitoring, or enhancing quality of care.

- All proposed activities are expected to take into account applicable law, including—for example—existing applicable public health, state, tribal, local, and/or territorial laws and policies.

- The activities proposed within applications to this NOFO must include investments in health information technology (health IT). Health IT refers to the use of information and communication technologies in caring for patients, tracking diseases and protecting public health, conducting research, and improving the health of individuals and populations.

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Milestones and Performance Activities

- Funding will be released pursuant to milestones established by each award. Upon successful completion of Milestones 0, 1 & 2 subsequent funding will then be released for Milestones 4, 5 and 6. Recipients are expected to work with ONC to establish reporting mechanisms to track and monitor progress towards milestones (qualitative and quantitative).

- Recipients are also expected to work with ONC to refine performance activities throughout the period of performance where applicable.

- Where appropriate, there will be standardized milestones and activities to ensure comparability and tracking across recipients.

- However, there may also be customized performance activities, created in consultation with the recipient, to demonstrate progress toward and completion of the milestone.

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Milestones

Milestone 0: Program Support and Engagement Funding: This funding is provided upon award and may be used to meet initial programmatic needs which include the following:

- Establishing financial and programmatic reporting requirements.

- Establish reporting mechanisms to track and monitor progress towards outcomes (qualitative and quantitative).

- Developing resources to conduct initial outreach, education, and/or implementation.

Milestones

Milestone 0 (cont.): Program Support and Engagement Funding

- Within six (6) months of receiving the Notice of Grant Award (NGA), recipients are required to submit to ONC a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), or Notarized Agreement from the state, tribal, local, or territorial public health agency(ies) and/or emergency management agency(ies) (e.g., public health preparedness program), that are necessary for achieving the goals of the program.

Milestones

Milestone 0 (cont.): Program Support and Engagement Funding

- Development of processes for ongoing program monitoring activities (bi-weekly calls with ONC, monthly reports, and quarterly and annual progress reports).

- Development of a draft Program Monitoring Plan that should reflect and be consistent with the project narrative and budget and should cover all years of the period of performance. The plan should identify important milestones and each major task or action step needed to reach those milestones.

- For each major task or action step, the work plan should identify timeframes involved, including start and end dates.

- Identifying and documenting of initial challenges and bright spots.

Milestones

Milestone 1: Completed Final Program Monitoring Plan

- Within three (3) months of receiving the Notice of Grant Award (NGA), recipients are required to complete a Final Program Monitoring Plan.

- The Final Program Monitoring Plan should reflect and be consistent with the project narrative and budget and should cover all years of the period of performance. The plan should identify milestones and each major task or action step needed to reach those milestones. For each major task or action step, the plan should identify timeframes involved, including start and end dates.

- If a technical solution build out is required for the activities under the proposal, then the plan must include, but is not limited to, a timeline and testing plan. Additional system testing processes and procedures may also need to be included. The Final Program Monitoring Plan must also describe how the program will be deployed and managed, as well as the stakeholders involved.

Milestones

Milestone 2: Documentation of Engagement with Public Health Agency/Authority (and Health Information Exchange(s))

- Within six (6) months of receiving the Notice of Grant Award (NGA), recipients are required to submit to ONC a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), or Notarized Agreement from the state, tribal, local, or territorial public health authority(ies)/agency(ies) that are necessary for achieving the goals of the program.

- The public entities described here may be broader than strictly governmental agencies. ONC and recipients will work collaboratively on defining the appropriate agency(ies)/authority(ies) for which documentation of engagement is required.

- This documentation ensures that recipients are actively and adequately engaging appropriate public health officials on all efforts throughout the period of performance. Specifically, this means that if proposed functionality requires a technical interface with a public health agency, then the MOU (or MOA or Notarized Agreement) must describe the shared understanding that such a technical interface will be created within the period of performance.

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Milestones

Milestone 3: Implementation Experience and Collaboration

- The purpose of this milestone is to create mechanisms to ensure that recipients are successful.

- ONC's experience with similar programs has shown that recipients gain significant benefit from networking, experience/information sharing, and/or collaborating with other recipients via in-person or virtual events and activities.

- ONC will require recipient participation in such collaboration activities and seek technical assistance support via their external consulting networks. Such activities may occur at the ONC Annual Meeting or similar federal meetings.

Milestones

Milestone 4: Achievement of Primary Performance Activities (e.g., "Go Live")

- This milestone will demarcate, for the purposes of effective cooperative agreement collaboration, the initial creation of new HIE services. In most cases, this will be the first live data exchange enabled by the program (often called "Go Live"). However, the primary performance activity may be customized in consultation with the recipient and depending on the proposed activities. For example, if the recipient seeks to create mechanisms to reduce or eliminate duplicative data flows, the successful achievement of the primary performance activity may be to turn off a data exchange activity.

- The activities to achieve this milestone will include all potential work described in the Performance Activities section above. The activities for this milestone will commence upon successful completion of Milestone 1 and Milestone 2. Recipients will then be required to report on the major tasks and action steps within the Program Monitoring plan as a means of demonstrating progress toward the achievement of the milestone. Activities within this milestone include testing and potential pilots, provided they provide a path to production.

Milestones

Milestone 5: Operations and Maintenance

- This milestone ensures that after an entity (e.g., a provider or laboratory) has subscribed or enrolled for services under this program, actual exchange of health information is continuously enabled and actively used.

- This milestone will include activities to expand the volume or quality of connections or service offerings. For example, it would include deployment of marketing materials to facilitate customer interest or improvements to onboarding processes. This includes ongoing stakeholder outreach efforts. It would also include technical and policy monitoring of connections, and optimization activities requiring technical or policy refinements.

Milestone 6: Completed Sustainability Plan

- ONC expects recipients to complete a sustainability plan to ensure the ongoing success and replicability of efforts to strengthen and expand the ability of HIEs to support public health agencies. Recipients are encouraged to consult with partners/stakeholders in the development of the plan.

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Funding, Eligibility, and Application Information

Summary of Key Details

FOR APPLICATIONS UNDER THE STAR HIE NOFO	
Type of Award	Cooperative Agreement
Available Funding	$2,500,000
Number of Awards	Up to 5 awards
Application Due Date	September 1, 2020
Anticipated Award Date	September 30, 2020
Performance Period	Up to 2 years
Anticipated Start Date	September 30, 2020
Available Funding	Approximate amount of each award $500,000

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Eligible Applicants

- This funding opportunity is a limited competition. It is limited to U.S.-based HIE entities.

- This includes non-profit or for-profit HIE entities. However recipients are not able to make a profit on activities funding by the cooperative agreement per federal requirements.

- Applicants must provide an attestation that the applicant is a Health Information Exchange or Health Information Network as defined in 45 CFR 171.102.

- Entities may enter into multi-organizational and/or regional agreements to apply to this NOFO.

- However, one singular entity must be the applicant; act as the responsible agent; submit the application on behalf of all entities involved, who must provide written documentation affirming the applicant's role as their agent; and maintain accountability for the proper use of federal funds.

Notice of Intent

- Applications submitted will be funded under the STAR HIE NOFO (COVID-C3-20-002)

- Applicants are <u>strongly encouraged but not required</u>, to submit a nonbinding email Notice of Intent to apply.

- Submit by August 21, 2020, 11:59 p.m. ET

- Identify:

  - Name of applicant organization

  - City and State in which the applicant organization is located

  - Notice of Funding Opportunity title and number

- Send to: STARHIENOFO@hhs.gov

Application Process

- Applicants must:
  - Submit all material electronically through Grants.gov; this process is outlined in the NOFO.

  - For assistance with submitting applications on Grants.gov, please contact the Grants.gov Helpdesk at support@grants.gov or call at (800) 518-4726.

  - Have a Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number.

  - Register in the System for Award Management (SAM) at www.sam.gov; allow 5-7 business days to process the registration. If you are already registered in SAM and have not renewed your registration in the last 12 months, you must renew your registration.

  - Ensure the application meets application requirements and page limits.

Application Package

COMPONENT	LIMIT
Project Abstract	≤ 500 words
Project Narrative	25 pages
Form SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance	No limit
Form SF-424 A, Budget Information for Non-construction Programs	No limit
Form SF-424 B, Assurances for Non-construction Programs	No limit
Form SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	No limit
Budget Narrative	No limit
Letters of Support or Commitment	No limit

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Project Abstract

- Recipients shall include a one-page abstract that is no more than 500 words. This abstract is often distributed to the public and Congress and represents a high-level summary of the project.

- Applicants should prepare a clear, accurate, concise abstract that can be understood without reference to other parts of the application and that provides a description of the proposed project, including: the project's goal(s), objectives, overall approach, anticipated outcomes, products, and duration.

- Format:
  - o Not more than 500 words double-spaced
  - o Project title
  - o Applicant name
  - o Physical address
  - o Contact name
  - o Contact phone numbers (voice, fax)
  - o Email address
  - o Website address, if applicable

Project Narrative

- The Project Narrative must address the elements articulated in the Program Description/ Purpose sections of this NOFO.

- The project narrative must also factor in and align with the Performance Activities/Program Milestones and Merit Review Evaluation criteria presented in the NOFO.

- The Project narrative must be double-spaced, formatted to 8 ½" x 11" (letter-size) pages, 1" or larger margins on all sides, and a Times New Roman or Cambria font size of not less than 11 point.

- The maximum length allowed for the Project Narrative is [25] pages. A project narrative that exceeds the [25] page limit will not be reviewed past the requested number of pages.

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Project Narrative (cont.)

The project narrative must follow the outline provided below and include the information required under each section. These components will be counted as part of the page limit. The suggested lengths of the sections, given below, are guidelines to help recipients create a balanced document, and not mandatory restrictions.

- Section 1: Purpose and Impact – 1 page

- Section 2: Approach, Work Plan, and Program Activities – 10 pages

- Section 3: Organizational and Technical Capabilities – 4 pages

- Section 4: Collaborator Involvement and Partnerships – 5 pages

- Section 5: Budget, Level of Effort, and Justification – 4 pages

- Section 6: Sustainability and/or Replicability of Proposed Project – 1 page

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Section 1: Purpose and Impact

- This section must demonstrate an understanding of health information exchange and public health data needs, requirements, and capacities.

- It must reflect requirements in Section A. of the NOFO, "Program Description/Purpose of the Funding Opportunity," particularly the sections "Background" and "Purpose."

- This section must set out an important, coherent, issue or set of issues related to the project's purpose, and an overall approach and strategy for how to address the issue or issues.

Section 2: Approach, Work Plan, and Program Activities

- This section must set out the approach, work plan, and program activities. It must reflect requirements in Section A of the NOFO, "Program Description/Purpose of the Funding Opportunity," particularly the sections "Program Activities" and "Milestones and Performance Activities."

- This section must demonstrate the applicant's ability to bring together all resources, including leveraging other's existing infrastructure and capabilities required to perform the proposed work within a two-year time frame.

- This section must also include a clear description of the project approach and activities and how they will provide a solution to addressing a particular problem in line with the NOFO's purpose.

- The project description must describe the technical activities required to achieve a successful project. Where applicable, it must also describe the policy and legal activities, and other related necessary activities (e.g., education, outreach, etc.).

Section 3: Organizational and Technical Capabilities

This section must clearly demonstrate that the organizational and personnel capabilities of the applicant support its ability to implement the project. This section must include:

- The organization's overall capabilities relevant to the proposed project(s).

- Technical Capabilities

- A description of qualified key staff

- The capabilities of the applicant not included in other portions of the project narrative, such as any current or previous relevant experience and/or the record of the project team in conducting the proposed activities.

- Where applicable, description of applicant's experience and capabilities to create new modifications or upgrades to existing technical or policy infrastructure to accomplish programmatic goals.

Section 4: Collaborator Involvement, Partnerships, and Sub-recipients

This section should provide a description of the following:

- Planned efforts to partner with state, tribal, local, or territorial public health agency (ies). Letters of support/commitment from such entities are required.

- Planned efforts to partner with other relevant public and/or private stakeholders. For example, laboratories, Medicaid agencies, providers (e.g., ambulatory providers, hospitals, behavioral health providers, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) or others). Letters of support are encouraged.

- How the approach will involve collaboration with those that represent underserved, vulnerable, at-risk, racial and ethnic minorities, and relevant health care entities.

- How the applicant, if entering any sub-award relationship as the prime recipient, addresses the sub recipient arrangements for meeting the programmatic, administrative, financial, and reporting requirements of the grant, including those necessary to ensure compliance with all applicable Federal regulations and policies.

Section 5: Budget, Level of Effort, and Justification

This section must provide the proposed levels of effort of the project manager, key personnel, and consultants and describe how they are adequate and appropriate to advance the project in accordance with the timelines.

- An explanation of how the proposed budget supports the proposed project and is reasonable to meet the project's needs and is as cost-efficient as possible.

- An outline of the proposed costs that support all project activities and how they support them.

- A description of how the proposed expenditures align with the project plan at a high level. No expenditures are allowed until the start date listed on the Notice of Grant Award for the approved projects.

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Section 6: Sustainability and/or Replicability of Proposed Project

- Potential strategies the organization may employ to sustain a plan to ensure the success of the project beyond the period of performance of the project timeframe.

- This section must fully describe the ways in which the project could be applicable to and/or relevant to other communities, states and/or territories.

- Explain how lessons learned, challenges, successes, outcomes will be shared (e.g., via news articles, journals, presentations, communities of practice, traditional and non-traditional media outlets, etc.) with state, tribal, local, territorial, as well as national stakeholders.

Budget Narrative and Budget Forms

Complete the following budget forms to document costs of proposed project activities:

- Budget Narrative on how the proposed budget aligns with the applicant's project narrative.

- Application for Federal Assistance, Form SF-424.

- Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs, Form SF-424A.

- Assurances for Non-Construction Programs, Form SF-424B.

- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, Form SF-LLL.

- Detailed budget instructions are provided in the NOFO.

Letters of Commitment or Support

- Applicants must include letters of support or commitment from essential collaborators. Essential collaborators include STLT public health agency(ies).

- Any organization that is specifically named to have a significant role in carrying out the project should be considered an essential collaborator such as interstate, intrastate, and regional partners.

- Applicants are encouraged to include letters of support or commitment confirming support for the project (should it be funded) made by other collaborating organizations and agencies.

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Application Responsiveness and Merit Review Criteria

Application Review Process

- Submit all application materials electronically through Grants.gov.

- Grants.gov issues an email receipt upon successful submission.

- Applications are reviewed for responsiveness and categorized as pass/fail.

- All applications that pass the review for responsiveness are forwarded for Merit Review.

- Once the Merit Review is complete, ONC may make an award.

- ONC is not obligated to make an award if none of the applications meet the intent of program requirements or if there is a change in funding levels or availability of funds.

Application Responsiveness Criteria

- All applicants **must** meet the following completeness criteria, or they will be administratively eliminated and not sent forward for merit review:

  - The applicant must meet the eligibility criteria.

  - The application must be received by the deadline of Tuesday, September 1st at 5:00p.m. ET through http://www.grants.gov.

  - The application must contain all required components (e.g., Program Narrative, SF-424, etc.).

  - The application must meet all formatting and length requirements.

  - Appendices and attachments are not used as a mechanism to exceed page limits of the Project Narrative.

Merit Review Criteria

- Responsive applications are forwarded for merit review.

- Merit review is conducted by experts in their field from academic institutions, nonprofits, and local and Federal Government agencies.

- Applications can receive a maximum of 100 points, using the following scale:

MERIT REVIEW CRITERIA	POINTS
Understanding of Project Purpose and Potential for Impact	10
Approach, Work Plan, and Program Activities	25
Organizational and Technical Capabilities	30
Collaborator Involvement and Partnerships	20
Budget, Level of Effort and Justification	10
Sustainability and/or Replicability of Proposed Project	5
Total	100

Questions

- All questions must be submitted in writing either via the Q&A function during this Webinar or emailed to STARHIENOFO@hhs.gov
  - o Questions submitted in the Q&A function will not be answered today.

- All questions will be answered and made publicly available each Friday until the application close date on September 1st at https://www.healthit.gov/topic/onc-funding-opportunities/strengthening-technical-advancement-and-readiness-public-health.

Q&As

- Thank you for attending!

- We will remain online for 5 minutes – please submit any remaining questions via the Q&A function on this webinar page

- To see the STAR HIE NOFO on Grants.gov or to apply, go to http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view

- For assistance with submitting applications in Grants.gov, please contact the Grants.gov Helpdesk at support@grants.gov or call at (800) 518-4726

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Please submit your questions.

5 Minutes Remaining

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Please submit your questions.

3 Minutes Remaining

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Please submit your questions.

1 Minutes Remaining

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STAR HIE Program
Dates to remember:

- Release Date: August 12, 2020

- Informational Session: August 19, 2020

- Notice of Intent: August 21, 2020

- Application Deadline: September 1, 2020

- Target Award Date: September 30, 2020

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The moderator will now end this session.

Thank you for attending.