

COMPETITIVE BID

ASTHO Breastfeeding Learning Community – Sustaining Breastfeeding Innovations Through Programs and Policy

Applications Due: Oct. 29, 2021

1. Summary Information

Purpose: The ASTHO Breastfeeding Learning Community (BLC) Sustaining Breastfeeding Innovations through Programs and Policy grant program will support BLC/SPAN teams who participated in the 2020 *State Innovations to Advance Breastfeeding and Health Equity* grant program in reducing breastfeeding inequities by sustaining, enhancing, or replicating their Innovation projects. Teams will also learn how to leverage policy to bolster their projects by participating in a Policy Academy featuring web-based educational sessions, peer sharing, subject matter experts, access to customized resources, and an applied health policy project.

Proposal Due Date and Time: Friday, Oct. 29, 2021, at 11:59 p.m. ET.

Selection Announcement Date: Friday, Nov. 12, 2021

Maximum Funding Amount: Up to \$25,000 per award

Estimated Period of Performance and Final Report Date: Dec. 1, 2021 – July 31, 2022

Eligibility: CDC SPAN recipients who participated in the 2020 *ASTHO State Innovations to Advance Breastfeeding and Health Equity* (Breastfeeding Innovation) grant program and are in good standing with ASTHO are eligible to apply. Interested SPAN recipients are **required** to select a local entity as a bona fide or fiscal agent to apply for this opportunity on their behalf. The bona fide or fiscal agent will be required to submit a letter from the SPAN recipient designating the local entity as a bona fide or fiscal agent. The designee must also be registered and in good standing with the federal System for Award Management (sam.gov). Preference will be given to applicants and bona fide/fiscal agents who are women-, minority-, disadvantaged-, veteran-owned, or small businesses.

ASTHO Point of Contact: Please send proposals to breastfeeding@astho.org.

2. Description of Bid

Purpose

The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO), is pleased to announce a funding opportunity to support up to nine (9) SPAN recipients who participated in the ASTHO 2020 Breastfeeding Innovation grant program in enhancing, scaling, sustaining, or replicating their 2020 Innovation projects aimed at advancing breastfeeding equity. Additionally, awardees and their partners will participate in a seven-month-long Policy Academy, which will enhance 2020 Breastfeeding Learning Community (BLC) Innovation state teams' capacity to reduce breastfeeding inequities by leveraging health policy.

Background

In 2018, ASTHO, with funding from CDC DNPAO, launched the second cohort of the ASTHO Breastfeeding Learning Community to support states in implementing sustainable, scalable approaches for improving breastfeeding rates and addressing barriers to breastfeeding. States participating in the learning community focus on one or more of the following evidence-based strategies to promote and support breastfeeding in their jurisdictions:

- Enhancing maternity care practices in birthing facilities.
- Improving continuity of care or community support.
- Ensuring workplace compliance with federal lactation accommodation law.

Programmatic Innovation Project

This funding opportunity will support SPAN recipients and their partners in enhancing, sustaining, or replicating their 2020 Breastfeeding Innovation projects.

Policy Academy

In addition to the Programmatic Innovation Project, Breastfeeding Learning Community teams will participate in an ASTHO Policy Academy.

The cornerstone of the Policy Academy learning experience will be completing a strategic, hands-on policy-level action learning project that will support participants' programmatic efforts to sustain or enhance their Innovation projects. ASTHO will support project development through tailored technical assistance and multiple virtual learning opportunities.

As part of the Policy Academy process, participants will:

- Identify an issue or barrier within their selected strategy area. The issue or barrier should be in alignment with the Programmatic Innovation Project.
- Identify and assess various policy options to address the issue.
- Create a policy proposal and determine how to engage stakeholders.
- Identify opportunities for implementation and evaluation to ensure the adoption of the proposed policy.

State teams can choose to focus on legislative, regulatory, or organizational policy. Academy participants will become familiar with and utilize policy development frameworks such as the [CDC Policy Process](#). More information about these policy categories and a list of resources about various types of breastfeeding policies can be found in **Attachment A**.

Policy projects may include a product such as a white paper, policy brief, talking points, testimony, or other work that will provide models for future breastfeeding policy development. Each team will be expected to work toward a policy goal and will develop a presentation to share the progress by the end of the Policy Academy in July 2022.

By the conclusion of the grant period, participants can expect to achieve the following outcomes:

- A.** Participants will increase their self-efficacy in developing strategies to sustain their innovative approaches to health equity.
- B.** Participants will increase their intent to engage in state and local collaboration, bi-directional learning, and communication in breastfeeding equity initiatives.

- C. Participants will report increased knowledge of best and promising practices related to the BLC strategy areas.
- D. Participants will develop new competencies in breastfeeding-related health policy and improve their ability to leverage the policy process to reduce breastfeeding inequities.
- E. Participants will increase their knowledge of emerging and promising breastfeeding-related legislative trends.

Project Activities

The selected applicants will be responsible for completing the following project activities:

- A. Implementing a project to sustain, enhance, replicate, or scale their 2020 Innovation project, such as:
 - a. Providing training in lactation support in a different setting, geographic area, or to a different population compared to the 2020 Innovation project.
 - b. Expanding the 2020 Innovation project to another area of the state.
 - c. Providing lactation support services in multiple settings or to a greater number of new parents.
 - d. Assisting more worksites in becoming compliant with federal lactation accommodation law.
- B. Reporting on project progress via one interim report and one final report.
- C. Attending seven monthly Policy Academy virtual learning sessions of 1-2 hours duration each, occurring between January and July 2022, along with homework assignments such as completing training modules and readings.
- D. Developing a policy action-learning project and presenting their action-learning project to the group during a closing session. Projects may include a white paper, policy brief, talking points, testimony, or other work that will provide models for future breastfeeding policy development.
- E. Working with ASTHO staff and other subject matter experts, who will provide one-on-one technical assistance in completing both the programmatic project and the policy action learning project.
- F. Participating in an evaluation of the effectiveness and relevance of the BLC and Policy Academy to their work.

Technical Support/Technical Assistance: ASTHO will provide technical assistance in the form of check-in calls, ad-hoc technical assistance, and subject matter expertise and resources to help state teams develop, implement, and refine their programmatic and policy action-learning projects.

Health Equity

ASTHO is committed to promoting health equity and eliminating health inequities. Health inequities are reflected by disproportionately high rates of disease, premature death, and a lower quality of life. Health inequities are avoidable and state, federal, and locally funded activities play a key role in helping to solve this problem. Applicants are required to address health inequities within the context of proposed activities.

Applicants are encouraged to incorporate transformational approaches when addressing health equity in their proposals and projects.

	Transactional Approach	Transformative Approach
Definition	Issue-based efforts that help individuals negotiate existing structures. These solutions transact with institutions to get a short-term gain for communities but leave the existing structure in place.	Initiatives that cross multiple institutions that shift efforts towards proactive solutions. These solutions alter the ways institutions operate thereby shifting cultural values and political will to create equity.
Approach	Routine solutions using skills and experience readily available.	Require changes in values, beliefs, roles, relationships, and approaches to work.
People responsible	Often solved by an authority or expert.	Solved by the people with the people.
Changes required	Requires changes in just one or a few places; often contained within organizational boundaries.	Requires changes in numerous places; usually cross organizational boundaries.
Receptivity	People are generally receptive to technical solutions.	People try to avoid the work of “solving” the adaptive challenge.
Timeframe	Can be implemented quickly—even by edict.	“Solutions” can take a long time to implement and require experiments and new discovering; they cannot be implemented by edict.

Source:
 Human Impact Partners: HealthEquityGuide.org. ASTHO Health Equity Workshop Presentation. Oct. 30, 2019; Arlington, VA.
 Content adapted from Ronald A. Heifetz & Donald L. Laurie, “The Work of Leadership,” Harvard Business Review, January-February 1997; and Ronald A. Heifetz & Marty Linsky, Leadership on the Line, Harvard Business School Press, 2002.

ASTHO’s [Guidance for Integrating Health Equity Language Into Funding Announcements](#), a resource for states to incorporate health equity into their operations, provides health equity terms and examples of health equity activities.

Funding

The maximum funding amount is \$25,000. ASTHO intends to award up to nine, 2020 Innovation state teams, grants of up to \$25,000 each. Awards in this category will be made through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a fixed price payment schedule based on satisfactory completion of required deliverables. Please refer to Section 3 for details on allowable expenses. Applicants must indicate how they specifically intend to continue the innovation work.

Evaluators

Each application will be reviewed and rated by a panel consisting of staff from ASTHO, CDC DNPAO, and partner organizations.

3. Requirements for Financial Award

Allowable Expenses

Funds may not be used for equipment purchases. Per HHS requirements, funds awarded under this Competitive Bid are prohibited from being used to pay the direct salary of an individual at a rate exceeding the federal Executive Schedule Level II (currently \$199,300).

Period of Performance

The contract is scheduled to begin Dec. 1, 2021 and will end on July 31, 2022.

Required Grant Activities to be Covered by Award

Project activities will include:

- A. Implementing a project to sustain, enhance, replicate, or scale their 2020 Innovation project. Depending on the focus of the 2020 Innovation project, projects could include:
- B. Reporting on progress in efforts to sustain or enhance Innovation programmatic project work via one interim report and one final report.
- C. Attending seven monthly Policy Academy virtual learning sessions of 1-2 hours duration each occurring between January and July 2022. During these sessions, presenters and expert guest speakers will address the needs and questions of Academy participants related to the policy process and the challenges they face. Participants may be asked to complete 2-5 hours of homework assignments between monthly sessions, such as completing training modules and readings.
- D. Working with ASTHO staff and subject matter experts, who will provide one-on-one technical assistance in completing both the programmatic project and the policy action learning project. Subject matter experts may use one-one technical assistance calls (scheduled as needed), resource recommendations, and virtual learning sessions in support of their policy-level action learning project.
- E. Developing a policy action-learning project and presenting their action-learning project to the group during a closing session. Presentations will include progress made on the continuation of their innovation work, policy product or deliverable, plans for future activities, evaluation considerations, and potential impact on breastfeeding inequities. The projects may include a white paper, policy brief, talking points, testimony, or other work that will provide models for future breastfeeding policy development.
- F. Participating in an evaluation of the effectiveness and relevance of the BLC and Policy Academy to their work, including surveys to evaluate individual BLC and Policy Academy sessions as well as a longer survey to evaluate the BLC and Sustaining Breastfeeding Innovations programs overall.

Reporting Requirements

The selected applicant will be required to participate in monthly conference calls to report on project activities, submit two progress reports (an interim report and final report), and produce final policy deliverables by July 31, 2022.

4. Required Proposal Content and Selection Criteria

Please include the following elements in your submission.

Proposals may not exceed six (6) pages in length, excluding budget and CVs, and should be single-spaced in 11-point font. Appendices are not required but may be submitted, as appropriate, and will not count against the six-page limit. Proposals must include all components listed below to receive consideration.

Note: Each interested SPAN recipient is **required** to select a local entity as a bona fide agent to apply for this opportunity on their behalf. The bona fide agent will be required to submit a letter from the SPAN recipient designating the local entity as a bona fide agent. Preference will be given to women-, minority-, disadvantaged-, veteran-owned, and/or small businesses.

- A. Cover Letter (10 points):** Please provide points of contact details for the programmatic and financial/contract leads (name, title, mailing address, e-mail, and telephone number). The cover letter should not exceed one page but does not count toward the proposal page limit.
 - a. Please also provide points of contact details for the SPAN recipient and any partners that will be participating in the program, including name, job title, organization or agency name, phone number, and email address.
- B. Letter of Support from Community Partner (0 points; will not count toward the page limit):** SPAN participants and their designated bona fide/fiscal agents are encouraged to include letters of support from their project partners.
- C. Proposed Approach (30 points):** Applicants must describe how they plan to sustain or enhance their Innovation project using the Sustaining Breastfeeding Innovations funding and outline a work plan which includes activities, timeline, and milestones to achieve the project deliverables and expectations. Specifically, applications should include:
 - a. **Vision Statement (5 points):** Applicants are encouraged to use the Boundary-Spanning Leadership (BSL) visioning worksheet (**Attachment B**) or a similar tool to help craft their vision. Applicants can include the completed worksheet as an appendix, which will not count toward the page limit.
 - b. **Policy Interests and Relevant Data (5 points):** Describe any specific policy topics of interest, as well as any needs and challenges related to advancing public or organizational policy in your jurisdiction. Include a summary of any available state-level data related to the vision statement, chosen BLC strategy area (maternity care practices, continuity of care/community, and workplace lactation accommodations), and any specific policy topics of interest. Please refer to **Attachment A** for resources on various types of breastfeeding policies. This portion of the proposal should be limited to **250 words**.
 - c. **Inclusion of Transformational Approaches (5 points):** Applicants are encouraged to design equity-focused transformational strategies that increase community participation and involve partnerships with private or public sectors.
 - d. **Work Plan (10 points):** A work plan detailing activities, timeline, goals, and milestones to achieve the deliverables and meet expectations.

- e. **Additional Discussion (5 points):** Discuss anticipated challenges in meeting goals established in the project description and describe why the proposed project has a high probability of success.
- D. **Prior Experience and Performance (10 points):** Describe experience and quality of performance on work completed to advance breastfeeding support and promotion within the state or through participation in the ASTHO Breastfeeding Learning Community and Innovation grant. Include information about familiarity with and understanding of breastfeeding equity initiatives and successes and accomplishments for the year(s) described.
- E. **Organization Capacity (10 points):** Include information about the project team and address the team’s ability and capacity to perform the tasks required within the specified timeframe. Describe staff qualifications and provide CVs for the staff lead and key personnel.
- F. **Budget and Budget Narrative (20 points):** Please provide a detailed fixed price per deliverable budget, including detailed projected costs for the completion of activities in the proposal. The fixed-price budget should include a cost breakdown per task and a proposed payment schedule. If an applicant includes an indirect cost rate of >10% in their budget, they should be prepared to submit a federally approved indirect cost rate letter upon award.

The maximum award is up to \$25,000. **Attachment C** (Contract Budget Template) outlines the general format for a detailed budget. Applicants may use *Attachment C* as a template or simply as a guide to inform the development of the project budget. A budget narrative (*see tab in template*) must accompany the budget and indicate the costs associated with each proposed activity.
- G. **Response to ASTHO Contract Terms and Conditions (10 points):** ASTHO and selected applicant(s) will enter into a fixed-price contractual agreement/MOU. A copy of ASTHO’s general contract terms and conditions is available in **Attachment D**. **Review the terms and conditions with your organization’s contracts officer or legal team and confirm that if selected, you will enter into this agreement; or identify and include any proposed changes to the terms with your proposal application.** ASTHO reserves the right to accept or decline any proposed changes to the terms and conditions. Significant proposed changes, which could affect the agreement’s timely execution, may impact your selection as a successful applicant.
- H. **Status as Women-, Minority-, Disadvantaged-, Veteran-Owned, or Small Business (10 points):** Bona fide or fiscal agents who classify as one of these types of businesses will be given preference.

5. Submission Information

Application Procedure

ASTHO must receive applications on **Friday, Oct. 29, 2021** by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time. Please submit an electronic copy of the application and all attachments to the ASTHO breastfeeding team at breastfeeding@astho.org. Please use the email subject “Breastfeeding Learning Community – Sustaining Breastfeeding Innovations Funding Opportunity.” Incomplete applications or applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

Applicant Questions and Guidance

ASTHO will support interested applicants by offering guidance and addressing specific questions about the Competitive Bid. Interested parties may contact ASTHO staff via e-mail at breastfeeding@astho.org. Applicants can also refer to the FAQ in **Attachment E**.

ASTHO will also hold an informational call for interested applicants on **Oct. 6, 2021, at 4 p.m. ET**.

Join via Zoom video conference:

<https://astho.zoom.us/j/91869123545?pwd=S0pwdTlrSctCLOVxNjVtRHAYeWE1dz09>

Audio: 646 876 9923

Meeting ID: 918 6912 3545

Passcode: 184379

Timeline

- Oct. 4, 2021: Request for Applications (RFA) released.
- Oct. 6, 2021: Bidders' call.
- Oct. 29, 2021: Applications due.
- Nov. 12, 2021: Awardees announced.
- Dec. 1, 2021: Start of the performance period.
- Dec. 1 – 22: Initial one-on-one technical assistance calls; issuing and executing of MOUs.
- January 2021 – July 2022: Implementation of projects and Policy Academy, including monthly Policy Academy virtual learning sessions, technical assistance calls, homework assignments, and development of state policy action-learning projects.
- April 2022: Interim progress report due.
- June 2022: State policy action-learning project deliverables due.
- July 31, 2022: End of the performance period and final progress report due.
- July – August 2022: ASTHO evaluation of Breastfeeding Learning Community and Sustaining Breastfeeding Innovations program.

Disclaimer Notice

This RFA is not binding on ASTHO, nor does it constitute a contractual offer. Without limiting the foregoing, ASTHO reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to reject any or all proposals; to modify, supplement, or cancel the RFA; to waive any deviation from the RFA; to negotiate regarding any proposal; and to negotiate final terms and conditions that may differ from those stated in the RFA. Under no circumstances shall ASTHO be liable for any costs incurred by any person in connection with the preparation and submission of a response to this RFA.