

External Frequently Asked Questions for the 2024 Essential Health Benefits (EHB)-Benchmark Plan Modernization Grant for States with a Federally-facilitated Exchange (FFE) Grant Program (Funding Opportunity)

The information provided in this resource is only intended to highlight key steps in the EHB-benchmark Plan Modernization Grant for States with a Federally facilitated Exchange Grant Program. This resource *is not* intended to take the place of the requirements, information, statutes, regulations, and other guidance in the funding opportunity that it is based upon.¹

Eligible Applicants

Q1. Who can apply for this funding?

A1. This funding opportunity is open to state government organizations that meet all of the following criteria:

1. Are a state government's executive branch agency;
2. The state regulates the non-grandfathered individual and small group health insurance markets in the state, even if any of the following are true:
 - The state does not have statutory authority to enforce the essential health benefits (EHB) requirements;
 - The state is not otherwise enforcing the EHB requirements,
 - CMS has determined that the state is not substantially enforcing the EHB requirements.
3. Your state must have a Federally-facilitated Exchange (FFE) as of January 1, 2026. The states expected to have an FFE as of January 1, 2026, are: AL, AK, AZ, DE, FL, HI, IN, IA, KS, LA, MI, MS, MO, MT, NE, NH, NC, ND, OH, OK, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, WV, WI, and WY.

Applicants cannot use grant funds for the same grant activities for which you receive other federal grant dollars (for example, grant activities performed under the Expanding Access to Women's Health Grant).

Available Funding

Q2. How much funding is available through this opportunity?

A2. CMS is anticipating up to \$10.5 million will be available for the EHB-Benchmark Plan Modernization Grant for States with a Federally-facilitated Exchange Grant program, pending availability of funds.

¹ This material was produced and disseminated at U.S. tax filer expense.

External Frequently Asked Questions for the 2024 Essential Health Benefits (EHB)-Benchmark Plan Modernization Grant for States with a Federally-facilitated Exchange (FFE) Grant Program (Funding Opportunity)

Q3. How much funding will each FFE state receive?

A3. Each state awarded a grant will receive a minimum baseline amount of \$250,000 for the EHB-Benchmark Plan Modernization Grant for States with a Federally-facilitated Exchange. An additional \$125,000 can be awarded for each applicant that decides to establish an advisory board as part of their project.

Q4. Is it possible that we receive more funding than the baseline amount of \$250,000?

A4. Yes. Total award amounts may increase depending on the number of eligible applications received.

EHB-Benchmark Plan Modernization Grant for States with a FFE Program Overview

Q5. What is the goal of the EHB-benchmark Modernization Grant?

A5. The goal of the EHB-Benchmark Plan Modernization Grant is to help states modernize and change their EHB-Benchmark plans under [45 CFR 156.111](#). Due to various challenges, many states have not considered updating their EHB-benchmark plans. These states include 24 of the 28 states expected to have an FFE as of January 1, 2026.

Covered benefits in the Qualified Health Plans (QHPs) offered through the Exchanges in these states may not reflect recent changes in medical evidence, scientific advancement, and clinical care guidelines. Additionally, people enrolled in these QHPs may have trouble accessing EHB because of cost, claims denials, utilization management, discriminatory benefit design, or other factors. CMS seeks to reduce these challenges through the EHB-Benchmark Plan Modernization Grant.

Q6. What is the length of the period of performance for this funding opportunity?

A6. The grant will have a project and budget period of 3 years from the award date, approximately March 15, 2025 to March 15, 2028.

Application Preparation and Submission

Q7. How do I apply for the EHB-benchmark Modification Grant?

A7. The Grants.gov application package has the forms needed to apply and found online at [Grants.gov](#) and searching for opportunity number CMS-2U2-25-001 or CFDA number 93.679.

External Frequently Asked Questions for the 2024 Essential Health Benefits (EHB)-Benchmark Plan Modernization Grant for States with a Federally-facilitated Exchange (FFE) Grant Program (Funding Opportunity)

You must have an active account with [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) to apply. This includes having a [Unique Entity Identifier \(UEI\)](#). To register, go to [SAM.gov Entity Registration](#) and click Get Started. From the same page, you can also click on the Entity Registration Checklist for the information you will need to register. You will have to maintain your registration throughout the life of any award.

The SAM.gov registration process can take several weeks and should be started as soon as possible to avoid delays with submitting your application.

Q8. Is a Letter of Intent required?

A8. No. A Letter of Intent is not required and is optional. Submitting a Letter of Intent is requested for planning purposes. The signed Letter of Intent should be submitted electronically to PMPolicy@cms.hhs.gov by December 16, 2024.

A Letter of Intent must include: 1. The funding opportunity number and title; 2. The organization's name and address; 3. A contact name, phone number, and email address; 4. An expression of your interest; 5. The proposed regions of participation; and 6. A brief description of your organization.

Q9. If a state submits a Letter of Intent to apply, is the state required to submit an application?

A9. No, states that submit Letters of Intent are not required to submit an application.

Q10. What is the deadline to submit my application?

A10. Applications must be submitted by January 15, 2025 at 11:59pm ET. You must submit your application through Grants.gov. [Grants.gov](#) creates a date and time record when it receives the application. If you submit the same application more than once, we will accept the last on-time submission.

For instructions on how to submit in Grants.gov, see [Quick Start Guide for Applicants](#).

External Frequently Asked Questions for the 2024 Essential Health Benefits (EHB)-Benchmark Plan Modernization Grant for States with a Federally-facilitated Exchange (FFE) Grant Program (Funding Opportunity)

Q11. How do I know if my application has been received?

A11. After submitting your application in Grants.gov, you will receive a confirmation PDF through the Grants.gov user interface, as well as a confirmation email. You may use the tracking number to [check your application status](#).

Make sure that your application passes the Grants.gov validation checks, or CMS may not receive it. Do not encrypt, zip, or password protect any files.

Q12. What if I experience technical issues when trying to submit my application?

A12. The Grants.gov Support Center provides 24/7 support. You can call 1-800-518-4726 or email support@grants.gov. When contacting the Support Center, ensure you hold onto your ticket number.

Please do not email the PMpolicy@cms.hhs.gov inbox with any Grants.gov submission issues, as we cannot assist with resolving these. We also cannot accept any application submissions via email.

We highly recommend that you submit your application at least 48 to 72 hours prior to the deadline to allow sufficient time to address any technical issues that may arise.

Application Review and Award Selections

Q13. What does the application review process entail?

A13. We review each application to make sure it is eligible, complete, and responsive to the funding opportunity as part of the initial review. We will not review any pages that exceed the page limit.

A panel reviews all applications that pass the initial review. The panel members use the criteria outlined in the *Merit Review* section of the funding opportunity to review and score each application. For more information, see the [Merit Review and Selection Process](#) on our website.

Q14. When will the award announcements be made?

A14. The expected first EHB-Benchmark Plan Modernization Grant in Spring 2025.

External Frequently Asked Questions for the 2024 Essential Health Benefits (EHB)-Benchmark Plan Modernization Grant for States with a Federally-facilitated Exchange (FFE) Grant Program (Funding Opportunity)

Q15. How will applicants be notified that they've been selected for funding?

A15. If you are successful, your authorized official will receive an email notification from [GrantSolutions](#). You can then retrieve your Notice of Award (NoA). We will notify you if your application is disqualified or successful within 30 days of the award date.

The NoA is the only official award document. The NoA tells you about the amount of the award, important dates, and the terms and conditions you need to follow. Until you receive the NoA, you don't have permission to start work.