



Bureau of Justice Assistance's Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program

Reaching Rural: Advancing Collaborative Solutions

Strengthening cross-sector partnerships to respond to the impact of substance use in rural communities

Initiative Overview and Application

Introduction

The United States is experiencing an epidemic of drug overdose deaths. While no corner of the country has gone untouched by the overdose crisis, it has hit rural America particularly hard. In March 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) noted that drug overdose death rates continue to rise in both rural and urban areas. In five states—California, Connecticut, North Carolina, Vermont, and Virginia—the rate of drug overdose deaths in rural counties was higher than those in urban counties.

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA); the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); the National Association of Counties (NACo); and the State Justice Institute (SJI) are co-sponsoring this initiative. The Institute for Intergovernmental Research (IIR) is releasing this solicitation on their behalf.

BJA, CDC, and SJI are supporting this initiative as part of an ongoing interagency partnership to strengthen public safety and public health collaboration under BJA's [Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program \(COSSAP\)](#). COSSAP provides funding and training and technical assistance (TTA) to state, local, tribal, and territorial partners to support a comprehensive response to illicit substance use and misuse; reduce overdose deaths; promote public safety; and support access to prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery services in the community and justice system.

About the Opportunity

The Reaching Rural initiative is a 1-year initiative designed for rural justice and public safety practitioners; public health and behavioral health practitioners; city, county, and tribal leaders; and community groups. The initiative empowers rural practitioners to build deeper networks, particularly across sectors; adopt bold solutions to the persistent challenge of substance use and misuse in rural communities; and reimagine how diverse systems with different missions can engage with one another to more effectively serve justice-involved individuals with substance use or co-occurring disorders. For purposes of this solicitation, the term "sector" refers to different disciplines, such as judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, probation officers, child welfare workers, tribal court officers, public health workers, behavioral health practitioners, etc.

Rural communities vary in their capacity to commit multiple staff members to a year-long initiative. The Reaching Rural initiative provides two pathways for communities to apply to participate. Applicants may apply to participate in the Reaching Rural initiative as an individual practitioner or as a member of a cross-sector team from the same community or region. Participation is limited to up to 20 individual practitioners and up to 10 cross-sector teams.

All proposed activities supported by this solicitation must exclusively target populations residing in rural communities or rural census tracts in urban or suburban counties as defined by the [Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer](#). The applicant organization does not need to be physically located in a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)-designated rural area. If you believe your community

is rural but it is not identified as such by the HRSA tool, please provide documentation that your community has been designated rural by an alternative state or federal agency.

Benefits of Participating

All attendees, whether they participate as an individual or a team, will:

- ◀ Map local and regional assets that can be leveraged.
- ◀ Assess local or regional opportunities for systemic change.
- ◀ Build leadership skills to facilitate cross-sector collaboration.
- ◀ Explore the implementation of evidence-informed strategies in diverse rural settings.
- ◀ Identify opportunities for different sectors (e.g., law enforcement, child welfare, prosecutors, defense attorneys, probation, judges, public health, behavioral health) to align efforts more effectively.

Cross-sector teams who participate will also:

- ◀ Prioritize opportunities and strategies and commit to action.
- ◀ Build a roadmap for local implementation.
- ◀ Identify resources to support the implementation of the roadmap.

Individuals who participate as a single entity and not as a team will also:

- ◀ Commit to a project or individualized learning opportunity in month 5 of the project and devote a minimum of 3 hours per month during months 6 through 11 to that effort. This portion of the planning initiative will be developed in collaboration with your assigned site liaison.

Participation in the Reaching Rural initiative includes:

- ◀ Travel and per diem costs to participate in an orientation, a field visit to observe the implementation of evidence-informed practices in a rural setting, and a closing session at the end of the 12 months.
- ◀ Monthly mentorship and guidance aimed toward your local needs.
- ◀ Monthly assignments that help you apply core concepts to your local community or region.

- ◀ Access to a diverse network of peers, innovative rural communities to include the [Rural Justice Collaborative's Innovation Sites](#), and technical assistance (TA) providers.
- ◀ Formal recognition for completing the planning initiative.

This is not a grant opportunity. Participants will be reimbursed for their travel expenses when attending sponsored activities, but no additional funding is provided as a result of being selected for the Reaching Rural initiative.

Site Liaison

Each selected applicant will be assigned a site liaison, who will be your primary contact throughout the project. This person will ensure you stay on track to meet your goals, review your project plans, offer guidance and support, and provide you with technical expertise and guidance.

Time Commitment

It is important to review the time commitment associated with participating in this initiative to determine if the Reaching Rural initiative is the right fit for you at this time. A sample overview of planned activities is provided below. Please note the schedule on the next page is provided as an example for applicants to assess the time commitment associated with the Reaching Rural initiative and does not represent the final schedule.

Attendance Requirements

Attendance at all sessions is expected. Excused absences are allowed and should not exceed 10 percent of participation. The in-person orientation session is mandatory as a foundation for the initiative. If the applicant does not attend the orientation session, they may not be eligible to remain in the cohort.

Federal Engagement

BJA, CDC, and SJI are interested in deepening their collective understanding of effective intervention strategies in rural communities. To that end, you will be asked to agree to work closely with these entities as part of this project.

Eligibility

Please make sure you read the appropriate eligibility section based on how you are applying.

Tentative Month	Description of Activity	Estimated Time Commitment
December 2022	Virtual kick-off meeting	1-hour pre-work offline, 2-hour meeting
December 2022/ January 2023	Virtual meeting with site liaison	1.5-hour meeting
January 2023	Pre-work for a face-to-face meeting	3 hours work offline
February 2023	In-person meeting	2.5 days of meetings + travel days
March 2023	Virtual site visit and follow-up work	2-hour meeting/2 hours follow-up work offline
April 2023	Virtual site visit and virtual meeting with site liaison and follow-up work	2-hour meeting/2 hours follow-up work offline and 1-hour meeting/2 hours follow-up work offline
May/June 2023	In-person meeting	2.5 days of meetings + travel days
July 2023	Virtual site visit and follow-up work	2-hour meeting/2 hours follow-up work offline
August 2023	Virtual meeting with site liaison and follow-up work	1-hour meeting/2 hours follow-up work offline
September 2023	Virtual site visit and follow-up work	2-hour meeting/2 hours follow-up work offline
October 2023	Finalize plans/projects	4 hours work offline
November 2023	In-person meeting	2.5 days of meetings + travel days

Optional activity for elected county officials: NACo will establish a network of elected officials from each site to foster peer-to-peer learning and education opportunities. As part of this network, NACo will host up to four virtual peer exchanges and one in-person event at the NACo Annual Conference in July 2023 in Travis County/Austin, Texas, for elected officials from the selected sites. The virtual peer exchanges will allow for elected officials to engage with national experts and a cohort of peers from various-sized counties across the country on innovations and strategies to address substance use disorders (SUDs). The in-person event will allow elected officials to participate in related content at the NACo Annual Conference and offer an opportunity for networking and peer learning. Travel scholarships will be provided.

Cross-Sector Team Applicant Eligibility Requirements

Communities benefit from a comprehensive and coordinated response to substance use and misuse. Over the course of the proposed project, cross-sector teams will have the opportunity to learn from other rural practitioners who are using evidence-based practices or promising

approaches to implement community-based programs that aim to address the challenges of substance use. Cross-sector teams are expected to use the 12 months to identify local opportunities to align agency-level efforts and commit to advancing your community's response to substance use. Up to 10 teams from rural communities or regions will be selected to participate in this initiative.

Cross-Sector Team Composition

Each team must, at a minimum, consist of four people from four different sectors: local or tribal government, justice or public safety, public health, and behavioral health. Applicants are encouraged to include optional team members from additional sectors who bring value to the project. Travel funds will be provided for six people per team and one person per agency. This opportunity is designed for team members who have the capacity to commit to the project for the year and have a working knowledge of how their agency interfaces with individuals with SUDs. This may include agency leaders or mid-level staff members. Team members who are not agency leaders must include a letter of support from their agency director to participate.

Mandatory Team Member 1: An elected or appointed local government representative or tribal leader

Mandatory Team Member 2: A justice or public safety representative (e.g., prosecutor's office, defense organizations/agencies, sheriff's office, police department, community supervision [pretrial or probation], judicial officer)

Mandatory Team Member 3: A public health official

Mandatory Team Member 4: A substance use treatment professional

As mentioned above, optional team members are encouraged from other agencies listed above (e.g., additional public safety, treatment, or government representatives from different agencies) or additional sectors. Additional sectors include, for example, faith-based organizations, transportation agencies, housing agencies, peer recovery support services, child welfare agencies, social services, hospitals, fire departments, harm reduction services, or emergency medical services (EMS).

Optional Team Member 5: To be determined by the applicant

Optional Team Member 6: To be determined by the applicant

Under very rare circumstances, we may consider accepting a team that is missing one of the mandatory team members if appropriate justification is provided. If you are able to assemble a team with all the mandatory team members except one, please feel free to apply, but your application must include a written explanation of why the mandatory team member is not included.

Agencies serving on the cross-sector team may be located in urban or rural areas, but all activities supported by this program must exclusively target populations residing in rural counties or rural census tracts in urban and suburban communities, and the composition of the cross-sector team must, overall, be representative of rural entities within the applicant region.

Our goal is to recruit a diverse group of rural practitioners with different skills and backgrounds who are committed to learning from others and exchanging ideas. We encourage anyone with interest to apply, regardless of their previous level of experience or exposure to this topic. We hope to

engage rural practitioners who do not have prior cross-sector strategic planning experience but are enthusiastic about the opportunity to participate in this effort with other practitioners from their community, as well as practitioners from other rural communities.

Coordinator Role

The Cross-Sector Team Application must be completed by one of the partner agencies. The application should indicate which mandatory team member will serve as the local project coordinator. This individual will serve as the primary point of contact for the initiative and will be responsible for scheduling team meetings with the site liaison.

Individual Applicant Eligibility Requirements

This opportunity is designed for rural practitioners who work for:

- ◀ A local unit of government (city, town, county, parish).
- ◀ A federally recognized Indian tribal government (as determined by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior).
- ◀ A nonprofit agency that works with a local unit of government or federally recognized Indian tribal government to respond to substance use or misuse issues and/or individuals with co-occurring disorders.

Applicants who work for a for-profit company will be considered on a case-by-case basis but will need a letter of support from the local government or tribal entity they work closely with in their current role.

Individuals must have the capacity to commit to the project for the year and have a working knowledge of how their agency and/or their current role interfaces with individuals with SUDs. This opportunity will primarily benefit agency leaders and mid-level staff members. Individual applicants who are not agency leaders must include a letter of support from their agency director.

Our goal is to recruit a diverse group of rural practitioners with different skills and backgrounds who are committed to learning from others and exchanging ideas. We encourage anyone with an interest to apply, regardless of their previous level of experience or exposure to this topic. We hope to engage rural practitioners who do not have prior cross-sector strategic planning experience but are enthusiastic

about the opportunity to participate in this effort with practitioners from other rural communities.

Selection Process

We are committed to ensuring a fair and open process for this initiative. Submitting a project proposal will not guarantee selection to participate in this initiative. The review committee will consist of federal sponsor (BJA, CDC, SJI) representatives, NACo, select rural practitioners, IIR, and the site liaisons. Applications will be reviewed and scored by the project partners, with final review and approval by BJA, CDC, and SJI. All selection decisions are final. BJA, CDC, and SJI will be consulted on all aspects of the project, including site selection.

Application Timeline

Applicant webinar: August 31, 2022, at 2:00 p.m., ET. Please register for the webinar at http://s.iir.com/Reaching_Rural and submit questions in advance of the webinar to COSSAP@iir.com no later than August 30, 2022. Emails containing questions should include the name, agency, and email address of the submitter and the question(s).

Applications due: September 30, 2022

Review of applications: October 1–26, 2022

Notification of selection: November 1, 2022

Project kick-off: December 5, 2022

CROSS-SECTOR TEAM APPLICATION FORM

This application form should be used if your community is interested in applying for this opportunity as a cross-sector team. Please see the Individual Application Form on page 10 if you are applying as an individual and not as a team.

Required Application Materials

- ◀ Completed team application form
- ◀ Completed essay questions
- ◀ Letters of support from each team member and the agency director for each team member (if not the applicant)

Submitting an Application

Please download this application to your computer, complete it, and email the application with all supporting documents to COSSAP@iir.com. Any inquiries regarding this opportunity should also be emailed to COSSAP@iir.com.

Application Due Date

Applications are due September 30, 2022.

APPLICANT ORGANIZATION

Applicant agency/organization:

Street address:

City or county:

State:

Type of applicant:

County agency or entity

Tribal entity

City or township agency or entity

Regional partnership

Geographic area served by your agency:

What is the population size of the community/communities to be served by this project?

Is the community of focus for this application considered rural as defined by the [Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer](#)?

Yes No

If not, please provide justification for why you believe your jurisdiction is rural.

PRIMARY CONTACT FOR APPLICATION

Name: Title:

Office/agency:

Email: Phone:

PROJECT COORDINATOR

This person must be one of the mandatory team members and will be responsible for managing the local project activities related to this initiative, organizing and convening the local team, and ensuring milestones are met for this planning process.

Name: Title:

Office/agency:

Email: Phone:

Does this person have previous experience coordinating cross-sector activities? Yes No

If yes, please explain:

PROJECT PLANNING EXPERIENCE AND FEDERAL FUNDING EXPERIENCE

The following questions are for informational purposes only. Our goal is to recruit a diverse group of rural practitioners with different skills and backgrounds committed to learning from others and exchanging ideas. We hope to engage rural practitioners who do not have prior cross-sector strategic planning experience but are enthusiastic about the opportunity to participate in this effort with other practitioners from their community.

How much experience does your jurisdiction have in cross-sector planning and collaboration?

None Very little Experienced

Do you have an active criminal justice planning body in your community (often called a criminal justice coordinating council)?
Yes No

Has your community received a federal grant in the last 8 years to address substance use? Yes No

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Please use as much space as you would like to respond to each question. However, it is not necessary to write a response that is more than two paragraphs per question unless you have more you would like to share. Our goal is to get to know your team through these questions. There is no specific response we are looking for.

How does substance use impact the agencies serving on your proposed team and your community?

What strengths exist in your community or within your local collaborations that you can draw upon over the course of this project to support your planning process?

What is motivating your jurisdiction's interest in participating in this planning process?

How will this opportunity allow the team to overcome obstacles that have hindered your community's efforts to align in the past?

This initiative represents a collaboration with BJA, CDC, SJI, NACo, their TTA providers, and other partners. The collaborating partners expect to increase the understanding of effective public safety, public health, and behavioral health collaboration strategies in rural communities. Accepting entry into the Reaching Rural initiative signifies your commitment to the same. _____Initial

TEAM COMMITMENT

Each named team member must submit letters that demonstrate cross-sector support of this project and agreement to participate in project activities, including active engagement in the virtual kickoff event, potential peer exchanges, on-site TA, regular communication with the project coordinator and site liaison, and assistance with developing the final comprehensive, cross-sector strategy for achieving the goals and the objectives of the planning process. Letters should respond to the following:

1. How can you, in your role, meaningfully contribute to the team's work over the next year and improve your community's response to substance use? We recognize that each sector plays a different role and that not every role is responsible for direct service delivery.
2. Express commitment to the time requirements.

Important: If a team member is not an elected official, judge, or agency/department director, the individual must also submit a letter from their agency director indicating their support for the team member's engagement in the project.

Mandatory: A local elected official or appointed administrator (e.g., county commissioner, county administrator, deputy county administrator, mayor, city manager, deputy city manager, city council member, tribal leader)

Name: _____ Title: _____

Office/agency: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Mandatory: A local justice or, public safety leader, or mid-level staff person (For purposes of this application, "justice" or "public safety" includes representatives from a prosecutor's office, defense organizations/agencies, sheriff's office, police department, or community supervision [probation], or a judicial officer.)

Name: _____ Title: _____

Office/agency: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Mandatory: A public health director or mid-level staff person

Name: _____ Title: _____

Office/agency: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Mandatory: A substance use treatment agency director or mid-level staff person

Name: _____ Title: _____

Office/agency: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Optional: A cross-sector representative

Name: _____ Title: _____

Office/agency: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Optional: A cross-sector representative

Name: _____ Title: _____

Office/agency: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Application Checklist

- _____ Application form
- _____ Letters of support
- _____ Support letter from the applicant's agency director, if applicable

INDIVIDUAL APPLICATION FORM

This application form should be used if you are applying as an individual and not as a team. If you are applying as a team, please see page 5.

Required Application Materials

- ◀ Completed application form
- ◀ Completed essay questions
- ◀ Letters of support from the applicant and the agency director (if not the applicant)

Submitting an Application

Please download this application to your computer, complete it, and email the application with all supporting documents to COSSAP@iir.com. Any inquiries regarding this opportunity should also be emailed to COSSAP@iir.com.

Application Due Date

Applications are due September 30, 2022.

APPLICANT

Name:

Title:

Office/agency:

Email:

Phone:

APPLICANT'S EMPLOYER

Name of the agency you work for:

Type of agency you work for:

County agency or entity

Nonprofit agency

City or township agency or entity

For-profit agency

Tribal entity

Applicants who work for a for-profit company will be considered on a case-by-case basis and require letters of support from the local governments or tribal entities that they work closely with in their current roles.

Geographic area served by your agency:

What is the population size of the community/communities to be served by this project?

Is the community you work in considered rural as defined by the Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer?

Yes

No

If not, please provide justification for why you believe your jurisdiction is rural.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Please use as much space as you would like to respond to each question. However, it is not necessary to write a response that is more than two paragraphs per question unless you have more you would like to share. Our goal is to get to know your team through these questions. There is no specific response we are looking for.

Please tell us about your job and/or role in your agency. How does substance use in your community impact your role, and what opportunities exist for you to improve your community's response to substance use? We recognize that each sector plays a different role and that not every role is responsible for direct service delivery.

What strengths exist in your community that you can draw upon in this project? What strengths do you possess that you hope to draw upon during this project?

What interests you about this initiative, and why is this a good time in your career to pursue this opportunity?

I have carefully reviewed the time commitments associated with this project and am committed to fully participating in all activities. _____Applicant Initials

This initiative represents a collaboration with BJA, CDC, SJI, NACo, their TTA providers, and other partners. The collaborating partners expect to increase the understanding of effective public safety, public health, and behavioral health collaboration strategies in rural communities. Accepting entry into the Reaching Rural initiative signifies your commitment to the same. _____Applicant Initials

LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM AGENCY DIRECTOR

Important: If you are not an elected official, judge, or agency/department director, you must also submit a letter from your agency director indicating their support for your engagement in the project.

Application Checklist

- _____ Application form
- _____ Essay questions
- _____ Support letter from the applicant's agency director, if applicable

For-Profit Agency Application Item

- _____ If you are employed by a for-profit agency, please include a letter of support from the local government or tribal entity you work closely with in your current role.

Visit the COSSAP Resource Center at www.cossapresources.org.

About BJA

BJA provides leadership and services in grant administration and criminal justice policy development to support local, state, and tribal law enforcement in achieving safer communities. To learn more about BJA, visit www.bja.gov and follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/DOJBJA) and Twitter (@DOJBJA). BJA is part of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs.

About IIR

IIR serves as the connecting point for COSSAP training and technical assistance (TTA) efforts and collaborates with BJA leadership and fellow TTA providers to work directly with COSSAP site-based grantees. IIR's role includes publication production and design; planning, coordination, and delivery of national-level trainings and working group meetings; COSSAP Resource Center website development and maintenance; coordination of distance learning opportunities and resource dissemination; review, distribution, and tracking of TTA requests; coordination of and provision of TTA to five categories of demonstration projects; and coordination of other complementary activities. www.iir.com

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IIR
Institute for Intergovernmental Research