

2025 Cancer and Environment Mini-Grants: Building Community Capacity to Address Unusual Patterns of Cancer and Environmental Concerns

Overview

To help communities build capacity and advance scientific understanding of unusual patterns of cancer or efforts to understand potential relationships with environmental hazards, the National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH) and the Children's Environmental Health Network (CEHN) invite communities to apply for a bundled award of financial and technical support over six months that includes access to technical assistance from a network of **national experts**, opportunities to engage in **peer learning**, and a **\$25,000 grant that may provide funding for unique needs specific to a community or its members when addressing unusual patterns of cancer and environmental concerns.**

Cancer incidence rates have increased over the past several decades. Cancer rates for people younger than 20 have risen 41% since the 1970s. For communities concerned about unusual patterns of cancer, it can be hard to connect with or get help from researchers, health professionals, or other officials to investigate and address environmental contamination and/or environmental hazards. The health and economic burden of cancer is high, especially for disproportionately impacted low-wealth communities and communities of color. Supporting communities in their efforts to investigate and address potential environmental contributions to cancer can help to ease the burdens on individuals and families impacted by cancer and better address concerns they may have about the possible connection between cancer and environmental contamination in their communities.

We are offering these mini-grants to support communities that have concerns about unusual patterns of cancer. Communities will be able to build capacity, make connections with experts who can evaluate cancer data, review existing or new data on environmental hazards, and develop sustainable workplans to facilitate the investigation of cancer and environmental hazards. Grantees will also have opportunities to connect with other communities that have similar concerns.

CDC/ATSDR now uses the term *unusual patterns of cancer* to recognize that some cancers may be similar etiologically (in terms of risk factors, causes, or origin) and presents the revised definition of a *cancer cluster* as "a greater than expected number of the same or etiologically related cancer cases that occurs within a group of people in a geographic area over a defined period of time."

It is possible that not every unusual pattern will meet the definition of a cluster as described above; however, unusual patterns that meet some of the criteria (included in [the 2022 CDC/ATSDR guidelines](#)) and also have plausible environmental concerns still warrant further evaluation or assessment. For example, many of the same cancer cases may be present but may be dependent upon a factor such as a water distribution system rather than a traditional boundary like a census tract or county.

Who is eligible?

Local, regional, U.S. territorial, tribal, or state nonprofit and/or community-based groups or organizations are eligible to apply for this grant opportunity.

Note that groups do not need to be a registered nonprofit or 501(c)(3) to apply.

Organizations must be based in the United States. For-profit organizations are not eligible to apply.

Applicants will be asked to identify their proposal as being in the *development* or *implementation* phase, but their status will not affect scoring or final selection. Communities should clearly state their questions related to unusual patterns of cancer and/or environmental concerns. If a proposed approach has been identified, they should state that in their proposal.

- **Development phase:** Communities should identify their proposal as being in the development phase if they need assistance in identifying or prioritizing promising strategies (e.g. obtaining technical assistance (TA) for help obtaining, analyzing, or understanding cancer statistics or environmental data), convening stakeholders to spark collaboration and dialogue, and/or they are in the early stages of the proposed work.
- **Implementation phase:** Communities should identify their proposal as being in the implementation phase if they have defined priorities (e.g., specific environmental exposure concerns or goals or activities around understanding or engaging with health risk policy or practice) and objectives and/or they have some infrastructure in place to build on to achieve the proposed work.

How many communities will be selected?

We anticipate selecting a minimum of six communities. The National Center for Healthy Housing and the Children’s Environmental Health Network are leading this competitive solicitation, but funding is made possible through a cooperative agreement with the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

What is the project period, and what are some of the key dates?

Table 1: Project Timeline

January 13, 2025	Applications are due no later than 11:59 p.m.	
Early February 2025	Applicants will be notified of their status by early February.	
February 2025	New grantees are assigned to their core coaching teams and will complete their intake coaching calls.	
February 2025	A kickoff webinar for new grantees will occur in mid-February.	
March 2025 2024-July 2025	Monthly coaching calls with core team and other coaching activities will occur as needed.	
July 31, 2024	Final reports are due to NCHH.	
July 2025- August 2025	Finalists will participate in the virtual grantee final convening.	

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What are the benefits of being selected?

The selected communities will receive support to advance their local investigations of unusual patterns of cancer and response efforts. These benefits include but may not be limited to the following:

- **Coaching and support:** Six months of direct support and technical assistance from the Children's Environmental Health Network, the National Center for Healthy Housing, and other national experts/SMEs who will be invited based on the needs and concerns expressed by the selected communities.
- **Peer learning:** Opportunities to interact with and learn from other communities tackling similar issues with shared goals to investigate unusual patterns of cancer, and to share successes and challenges.
- **Grant award:** A \$25,000 grant to support activities.

What is the coaching and support, and are there related grantee expectations to note?

Grantees will receive coaching and support remotely during the project period (February – July 2025). Grantees will have access to on-demand and structured feedback, mentoring, and advice from national experts, including regarding conducting analyses and identifying potential environmental services for investigations. Grantees are required to...

- Participate in a project kick-off webinar.
- Participate in monthly coaching calls with applicable national partners (e.g., SMEs that can help analyze cancer and/or environmental data).
- Submit final-project reporting documentation.

There will also be optional participation in other activities as needed (e.g., other topic-specific, capacity building webinars or coaching calls with peer mentors).

The coaching, support, and SME service activities will be customized to community needs, interests, and capacity. CEHN and NCHH coaches will help communities identify the types of strategies they are interested in pursuing and then help communities assess opportunities and develop paths to action. Examples of strategies or actions may include receiving direct services from an expert (such as obtaining and/or analyzing cancer or environmental data and providing an opinion of health risk), data-sharing initiatives, advocacy efforts, partnership with the healthcare, planning, school, and other sectors, and collaboration with academia. Coaches from ASTHO will also be able to support grantees with any coordination/outreach they may want with state health EH contacts.

Note: An example of outcomes from a previous grantee cohort in one of NCHH's longer responsive, technical support initiatives can [be seen here](#).

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Application Process

Can a community submit more than one application?

A community may submit more than one application; however, a maximum of one application per community will be selected.

What types of activities can be supported?

Funding should be used to build capacity within a community to address cancer and environmental concerns. For this funding opportunity, activities should focus on identifying needs, developing workplans and strategies, and engaging relevant stakeholders and experts to address environmental hazards and unusual patterns of cancer.

We expect that some applicants may be just getting started with this work. They may propose activities such as obtaining the services of SMEs or convening health and medical officials and academia to begin dialogue about conducting environmental hazard assessments and tracking cancer incidence. Other applicants may have been working in this space for a while; they may propose activities that show commitment to ongoing action, such as formation of a coalition representing multiple sectors, sources, and settings or efforts to engage community members in understanding scientific issues. Other applicants may propose work that results in ongoing interventions or sustained systems change, such as adoption of the ATSDR Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education safe siting guidance for childcare facilities. **NCHH and CEHN anticipate considering and funding communities that are at varying levels of needs, capacity, and readiness. There are no specific activities that every applicant must include.**

Communities may plan to use funding for an initiative that is already underway if they can show how this added funding will enhance the impact or reach of the work.

Funding may NOT be used to support attempts to influence legislation through direct or grassroots lobbying. For example, funds cannot be used for signage that endorses pending legislation or an elected official.

Also, funding is not intended to support direct costs of environmental hazard reduction or risk management; however, instances of these activities that are linked to policy, practice, or systems change, with a justification of how the activities further project goals, may be included as part of a proposal.

Note that the awards will be provided in two installments: \$20,000 upon contract execution and \$5,000 upon receipt of final reporting requirements (which will be due on July 31, 2025) after six months of direct SME support and/or technical assistance.

What outcomes will successful applicants be expected to demonstrate?

Given the short project period (six months), we expect each applicant to articulate a long-term goal and measure progress towards that goal, even if the community won't reach the end goal during the project period. A limited number of examples of long-term goals and short-term outcomes that a community might achieve during the project period are included [here](#). This is

not meant to be an exhaustive list, and reviewers are not looking for applications containing only these specific goals/outcomes.

During the project period, communities will develop implementation plans and take initial actions to progress toward having these long-term goals in place.

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Evaluation Criteria

How will communities be selected?

This is a competitive grant award. Applicants will be evaluated based on need, clarity of plan, readiness, potential impact, community partnerships, commitment to equity and justice, and potential for sustained change. Applications must demonstrate and will be scored on the following:

- Demonstrated need as shown by available cancer and/or environmental data, including lived experience and qualitative data, including demonstration of attempts (successful or unsuccessful) to receive cancer data from health officials, or interest in obtaining data (up to 10 points).
- Clear outcomes for the work and a thoughtful plan for achieving them (up to 5 points).
- Demonstrated potential for significant short- and long- term impacts (up to 5 points).
- A demonstrated commitment to advancing equity and justice (up to 5 points).
- A strong, effective plan for meaningfully involving multisector stakeholders, including community members and community-based organizations, private sector interests, policymakers, and other relevant agencies and groups (up to 5 points).

We will seek to produce a geographically balanced cohort. Proposals will be reviewed primarily using the criteria listed above.

Applications will likely be reviewed by a selection committee comprised of staff from the National Center for Healthy Housing, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, the Children's Environmental Health Network, and a community member who is either a cancer patient, survivor, or family member or who represents a community with expressed concerns about unusual patterns of cancer and environmental concerns. This community member would not be eligible to apply for this funding.

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Application Process

What information do I need to apply?

NCHH accepts grant applications ONLY through [online submission](#); it does NOT accept the application in PDF format. Applicants can preview all application questions here ([PDF copy of full application](#)).

We recommend preparing your application responses in advance, as the [online application](#) must be completed and submitted entirely in one session. We recommend using the PDF copy of the full application ([available here](#)) to work offline with your team to pick your answer selections and write your responses to the questions. Developing full text responses in a Word document for the open response sections of the application will allow you to draft, edit, and save your responses as needed, as well as check character counts, before copying/pasting your final responses into the [application on the SurveyMonkey platform](#). NCHH also recommends printing a copy of the completed application before submitting it.

If you know that you will NOT be able to submit your application via SurveyMonkey, please contact sgoodwin@nchh.org no later than January 10, 2025, and we will provide you with a way to send us an application as a Word document.

When are applications due?

We will accept [applications](#) on a rolling basis, but all must be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. ET on Monday, January 13, 2025.

When will the grants be announced?

We expect that successful applicants will be notified in early February.

Where can I get more information?

Contact Sarah Goodwin (sgoodwin@nchh.org) or Ashely Williams (awilliams@nchh.org) with any questions or visit [here](#) for more information. Answers to other submitted questions will also be posted on that webpage. All questions must be received by Friday, January 3, 2025.

Join the [funding announcement listserv](#) to be notified of new developments (e.g., newly posted FAQs) for this grant opportunity.

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*** 1. Information about the primary applicant:**

Agency, Organization, or Group Name:

Website *(if applicable):*

City or County:

State:

*** 2. Please identify a primary contact at your organization or group:**

Name:

Title:

Email:

Phone:

*** 3. Will the grant be used to support an activity or event in the community listed above where the applicant is based?**

- Yes, the grant will be used to support work in the community listed above.
- No, the grant will be used to support work in a different community *(please specify below)*.
- The grant will be used to support work in multiple communities *(please specify below)*.

More details about communities that will benefit from this grant (Limit: 1500 characters or fewer, including spaces):

*** 4. What type of organization or group is applying for this grant?**

- Local, regional, territorial, or state nonprofit, community members or community-based organization.
- Other (please specify below and note eligibility requirements previously outlined)

More or clarifying comments (Limit: 1,000 characters or fewer, including spaces)

*** 5. What is the primary focus of your organization? Select all that apply.**

- Cancer and/or environmental exposures specific to my community
- Healthy housing
- Healthy schools or childcare
- Air pollution
- Water pollution
- Health
- Environmental health
- Public health
- Healthcare
- Environmental concerns and equity
- Community or neighborhood action
- Other (please specify): (Limit: 500 characters or fewer, including spaces):

*** 6. If applicable, what specific environmental hazard exposure prevention need will this grant help your community address? Select all that apply.**

- PFAS in various environmental media (e.g., drinking water, food impacted by biosolids)
- Pesticide drift in agricultural areas
- Arsenic or pesticides in well water
- Industrial HAP emissions
- Traffic related air pollutants
- Superfund or brownfield sites
- Radon in homes/housing, schools/childcare centers
- Asbestos in homes/schools/childcare centers
- I don't know what the specific environmental hazard exposure prevention needs are in my community OR I know there is a problem in my community, but I don't know the specific environmental hazard.

Other (Limit: 500 characters or fewer, including spaces):

*** 7. Tell us more about the population that may be impacted by cancer in your community (if applicable). (Limit: 2,000 characters or fewer, including spaces):**

*** 8. Tell us a little more about your community group or organization. Be sure to include a description of how reducing harmful environmental exposure is relevant or connected to your organization's mission and describe your organizational short- and long-term goals related to this issue. If you don't have an organization and/or a mission statement, that is fine. Please do tell us a little more about your overall plans and how this issue fits into them. (Limit: 2,000 characters or fewer, including spaces):**

*** 9. How does your group or organization reflect the population in your area? You are welcome to answer this in any way that you think is best. Some examples may be by providing information about the makeup of your community members, leadership team, board, or staff. (Limit: 2,000 characters or fewer, including spaces):**

* 10. **Is your proposal in the development or implementation phase?** *This information will not affect the scoring of your application and will only be used only for reviewers to better understand your proposal and put it into context.*

- Development phase** Communities should identify their proposal as being in the development phase (e.g., needs related to the identification and/or support of an SME) if they need assistance in identifying or prioritizing promising strategies, convening stakeholders to spark collaboration and dialogue, and/or they are in the early stages of the proposed work.
- Implementation phase:** Communities should identify their proposal as being in the implementation phase if they have defined priorities (e.g., a desire to have access to cancer rate information, analysis of data to be requested, or a policy or practice) and objectives or they have some infrastructure in place to build on to achieve the proposed work.

* 11. **Respond to the following statements to help us learn more about the landscape for efforts to reduce exposure opportunities related to environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk in your community.** *Note: The selection committee aims to provide grants to a mix of communities with various levels of experience working to address environmental carcinogenic hazards, so please be candid in your rating. If you'd like to elaborate on your ratings (e.g., for instance describe a past project or initiative that failed and your lessons learned), you may use the comment box.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
Local decision-makers are knowledgeable about environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The general public is knowledgeable about environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have established coalitions and partnerships that work on environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our existing coalitions and partnerships are active and function effectively.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have good						

community resources to help residents **identify** environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk related to air quality.

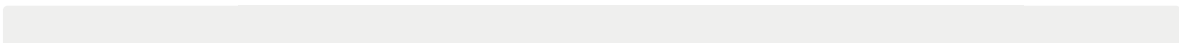
We have good community resources to help residents **identify** environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk related to drinking water.

We have good community resources to help residents **identify** environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk related to soil.

We have good community resources to help residents **identify** environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk related to homes/housing.

We have good community resources to help residents **identify** environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk related to schools/childcare settings.

We have good community resources to help residents **identify** environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk related to occupational settings.



We have good community resources to help residents **reduce exposure** to environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk related to air quality.

We have good community resources to help residents **reduce exposure** to environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk related to drinking water.

We have good community resources to help residents **reduce exposure** to environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk related to soil.

We have good community resources to help residents **reduce exposure** to environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk related to homes/housing.

We have good community resources to help residents **reduce exposure** to environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk related to schools/childcare settings.

We have good community resources to help residents **reduce exposure** to

environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk related to occupational settings.

Residents report barriers to eligibility for services and/or difficulty accessing funding across programs to address environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk.

Our community looks to address environmental hazards that may increase cancer risk comprehensively, rather than by individual carcinogen or exposure pathway.

Other comments (Limit: 2,000 characters or fewer, including spaces):

*** 12. Describe what success looks like for you at the end of the six-month project. What is your specific plan for achieving that goal? How will the technical assistance package advance your progress?** *Note that given the limited project period (of roughly six months), the selection committee will be interested in measuring short-term outcomes that demonstrate progress toward longer term goals. Please describe both the short-term outcomes and long-term impacts, including how you would like to continue this work after the project period, if applicable, as well as any existing or new partnerships that will be part of your work. (Limit: 3,000 characters or fewer, including spaces):*

* 13. **Why does your community need this support?** Respond in a way that makes sense for your community. Possible responses could include quantitative data and/or lived experiences to describe the burden of cancer in your community, any specific populations that are disproportionately burdened, the need for services to address and prevent exposure to environmental carcinogens, existing political will to address the problem, how your community will be affected if you do not receive this funding, et cetera. **(Limit: 2,000 characters or fewer, including spaces).**

* 14. Describe how your community will work with the technical assistance team. *Who will be the main point of contact? What help would be most impactful from the TA team?* **(Limit: 2,000 characters or fewer, including spaces):**

* 15. **Previous Experience:** Describe what you (or others in your community) have done so far to try to investigate or address unusual patterns of cancer or share some of your past activities and experiences. If you are just getting started, feel free to describe how or why you have begun this work. **(Limit: 2,000 characters or fewer, including spaces)**

* 16. **Equity and Justice:** Describe how your organization or group includes, represents, or is led by affected residents or community members, or how you include impacted communities in decision-making and collaboration. How do you think about or consider equity and justice as part of your mission, work, goals, or strategy? **(Limit: 2,000 characters or fewer, including spaces).**

* 17. **Provide a general description/estimate of how the \$25,000 grant funding will be used. Categories that you may choose to use (but are not required to use) include labor, indirect costs (such as office rent or utilities), and other direct costs. Some costs we have seen communities fund include paying for people's time, equipment, travel costs, meeting supplies, and training. There are no required budget categories or required costs.**

We will distribute the awards in two installments: \$20,000 upon contract execution and \$5,000 upon receipt of final reporting requirements (e.g., July - August 2025) after six months of TA. **(Limit: 2,000 characters or fewer, including spaces):**

18. **(Optional) If desired, please upload any supplemental material you'd like to provide to the selection committee to support your community's application for this grant.** (Only PDF, DOC, DOCX, PNG, JPG, JPEG, GIF files are supported. The file size limit is 16 MB.) These answers have logic applied

Choose File

Choose File

No file chosen

*** 19. Please confirm your understanding and agreement that any community selected for funding may not use any portion of the funds for lobbying activities, including, but not limited to those described in the following statement:**

No aspect of grantee activities performed under this award may consist of attempts to influence legislation through direct or grassroots lobbying. For example, funds cannot be used for signage that endorses pending legislation or an elected official.

- Yes, I certify that I understand and agree to the prohibition of using these funds for lobbying activities.
- No, I cannot certify my agreement or understanding of this statement.

20. (Optional) How did you hear about this opportunity?