

CMSP COVID-19 Emergency Response Grant (CERG)

CERG Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Updated June 3, 2020

This informational resource was created to assist counties in preparing CERG applications and may be updated. Questions and responses are grouped in the following categories:

- A) Allowable Expenditures
- B) Applicant Eligibility and Scoring
- C) Budget and Budget Request
- D) Formatting
- E) Partnerships
- F) Project Implementation
- G) Reporting
- H) Target Population

Please email Anna Allard, Grants Manager, at allard@cmspcounties.org to ask additional questions not addressed in the FAQ, to discuss unique situations, or to inquire about any proposed expenditures not specifically listed in *Appendix B*.

A) Allowable Expenditures

AQ1) What expenses are allowable?

AR1) Please reference *RFA Appendix B: Allowable Use of Grant Funds* to view allowable and unallowable expenditures.

AQ2) Please explain how the \$15 food allowance in Appendix B works.

AR2) Food allowance up to \$15 per person per meal is allowable under *Appendix B*. Examples of acceptable food expense may include refreshments for workers or snacks during training meetings.

AQ3) May bulk food be purchased to support the target population?

AR3) Bulk food purchases to feed individuals under supportive quarantine services are allowable as long as the breakdown for the food distributed is no more than \$15/per person per meal.

AQ4) May CERG funds be used for reverse isolation in motels? Our county is considering keeping our identified cases in their homes and the confirmed contacts who test negative in motels for the period of the recommended isolation (two weeks).

AR4) If those being isolated in the hotel or those confirmed positive are members of the target population and this isolation is a county COVID-19 response effort, then funds may be used for reverse isolation.

AQ5) May Counties use CERG funds to pay for damages and repairs to hotels/motels if they are the result client time in quarantine? Similarly, may CERG funds be used to pay for cleaning/sanitation fees after a client vacates the premise?

AR5) Per *Appendix B: Use of Grant Funds*, CMSP will not cover fines or penalties, which includes damage costs that clients may incur while being housed in a hotel. Both of the above scenarios are considered fines and penalties and therefore would be unacceptable use of CERG grant funds.

AQ6) May CERG funds be used to pay for hotel retainers during the process of contracting with hotels for supportive quarantine services in response to the pandemic?

AR6) Yes. CERG funds may be used for hotel retainers. Please be certain the retainer amount matches the estimated number of individuals to be served.

AQ7) Does public information outreach also cover staff time to provide these services?

AR7) Staff time, and/or consultant time, spent developing and disseminating public messaging regarding COVID-19 services and emergency response may be claimed under CERG.

AQ8) May eligibility workers be paid for under CERG?

AR8) Eligibility workers may be paid for under CERG if for publicly supported health care services in response to the pandemic, such as eligibility for COVID-19 testing, medical services, behavioral health, or supportive services to the homeless provided by the county or a contracted entity.

AQ9) Would laptops, webcams, and Zoom services be considered healthcare equipment if used to provide telehealth services or allow staff to telecommute and continue to provide services to clients?

AR9) If these items are to be used in the county's COVID-19 response, they may be requested under Healthcare Equipment and their use should be detailed in *Appendix D: Request Form, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Healthcare Equipment and Supplies*.

AQ10) May CERG funds be used to purchase laptops?

AR10) Yes. CERG funds may be used to purchase laptops if the laptops are purchased for the purpose of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and will be utilized in project implementation.

AQ11) Will the grant cover expenses already purchased, but within the timeframe of the emergency response?

AR11) No, prior expenses will not be considered. CERG grant expenses should only be incurred on or after the effective date of the CERG Grant Agreement.

AQ12) Are there limits to fund amounts allotted per household/person and is there a maximum time on rental assistance and hotel vouchers?

AR12) CMSP has not set a limit on these items but expects all expenses to be reasonable and necessary.

AQ13) Are prescription and over the counter (OTC) medications covered?

AR13) Prescriptions and OTC medications utilized in COVID-19 response may be covered under CERG funds if the medications are not otherwise covered under other payers such as private health insurance, Medi-Cal, Medicare, CMSP or Path to Health coverage.

AQ14) May funding be used to cover sub-contractors?

AR14) Subcontractors responding to the COVID-19 pandemic are an allowable expense.

AQ15) May CERG funds be used to purchase a motor vehicle, such as an RV?

AR15) No, CERG funds may not be used to purchase a motor vehicle.

AQ16) May CERG funds be used to rent a vehicle used to transport COVID-19 patients?

AR16) Please refer to *Appendix B: Allowable Use of Grant Funds*, vehicle purchases or expenses are not allowed under the grant.

AQ17) Are there any restrictions on IT supplies that may be purchased?

AR17) Please refer to *Appendix B: Allowable Use of Grant Funds*. Currently, there are no restrictions on IT supplies so long as the grantee can demonstrate that the IT supplies are in direct relation to the county's COVID-19 response.

AQ18) May CERG funds be used to supplement programs that are being partially funded by FEMA or other state/federal resources?

AR18) Yes; however, CERG funds that will be used to supplement local efforts need to fall in line with the required CERG categories and cannot be outside these categories. The CERG program will not cover operating expenses or program funding that does not directly pertain to the COVID-19 response. Please elaborate on any other funds the county has received or anticipates receiving in *Appendix D: Request Form (4B)*, which specifically asks for a description of other anticipated COVID-19 funding sources, identified gaps, and how CERG funds will be coordinated with other efforts. Furthermore, applicants should take all appropriate and necessary steps to coordinate the use and expenditure of awarded grant funds with other funds the applicant receives through federal, state, or other allocations.

AQ19) Are we allowed to use CERG funds to pay for our environmental health employees who are responsible for the logistics in the COVID response?

AR19) Yes. CERG funds may be used for employees who are responding to the COVID pandemic.

AQ20) May CERG funds be used to cover hotel costs for employees?

AR20) No. Per *Appendix B: Allowable Use of Grant Funds*, no per diems for meals or lodging shall be included.

AQ21) May CERG funds be used to pay for any equipment/supplies to help augment the Public Health's Laboratory COVID-19 testing capabilities to include test kits or lab equipment/supplies needed to run tests?

AR21) Yes, testing kits and supplies needed to assist public employees, local health care providers, nonprofit human services providers, and first-responders in responding to the COVID19 pandemic are allowable expenses.

B) Applicant Eligibility & Scoring

BQ1) Who may apply for this grant?

BR1) The CMSP Governing Board will accept proposals only from the following CMSP county agencies: County Health and Human Services Agency, County Health Department, County Public Health Department, and County Office of Emergency Services.

BQ2) Does submission of an application constitute a 100% commitment, or is there an opportunity to decline funds if awarded?

BR2) Awardees have the option to decline the CERG award.

BQ3) Does the receipt of a different CMSP Grant (such as LICN, HSG, or Wellness & Prevention) exclude our county from applying for or receiving a CERG grant?

BR3) No, this initiative is separate from other granting efforts and proposals will be reviewed independently. Applicants awarded under other CMSP granting efforts will not have any advantage or disadvantage over other applicants.

BQ4) Will there be redistribution of total funds if a county does not expend their entire allocation and another county overspends?

BR4) Currently, no redistributions are planned. This matter would require future consideration and action by the CMSP Governing Board.

BQ5) Will there be more funding rounds for the CERG Program?

BR5) Currently, only one round of funding has been approved by the Governing Board. A subsequent CERG funding round may be considered by the Governing Board in the future depending on the trajectory of the disease, availability of resources, and local needs.

BQ6) Is scoring impacted if the applicant is not working with a local non-profit?

BR6) No, scoring is not impacted by the presence of a non-profit partnership.

BQ7) Would you provide an estimated timeline for scoring, application approval and release of funding?

BR7) Due to the evolving nature of the pandemic, CMSP's intent is to score and approve applications as quickly as possible. The timeline for Grant Agreement implementation varies by County as signatures are required during this step of the process. 50% of the award will be paid upon agreement inception. 40% will be paid following receipt and approval of Interim Reports and the remaining 10% will be paid upon receipt and approval of Final Reports.

C) Budget and Budget Request

CQ1) How many projects will be funded under the CERG Program?

CR1) Per the *RFA*, only **one** award may be granted per CMSP county, making the maximum number of awards equal to thirty-five (35). The CMSP Governing Board has budgeted up to \$10,145,976 in total. Please refer to *Appendix A* for each counties' maximum award amount.

CQ2) Can funds be moved between the six categories post-award if the county determines a greater need in a different area?

CR2) CMSP requests that applicants provide their best estimate of expenses and related categories at the time of application. As the situation with COVID-19 is fluid, CMSP will consider budget adjustments and category movement on a case by case basis.

CQ3) How does the funding for staffing work in relation to FEMA funds?

CR3) The CERG grant is independent of FEMA funds, although each Grantee shall take appropriate and necessary steps to coordinate the use and expenditure of Grant Funds with other funds Grantee may receive through federal, state, or other allocations provided to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Applicants should describe any other anticipated COVID-19 funding sources, (such as FEMA), identified gaps, and how CERG funds will be coordinated with other efforts in *Appendix D, Section 4B*.

CQ4) May a grantee expend all funds in less than 12 months?

CR4) Grantees may expend funds in less than 12 months, but grantees are cautioned to make sure that all spending complies with CERG categories and requirements.

CQ5) In what time frame do funds have to be expended?

CR5) CERG funds must be expended within the 12 month grant period.

CQ6) Are there limits on stipends for non-salaried employees?

CR6) CMSP has not set limits on stipends for non-salaried employees but expects these expenses to be reasonable and necessary. Please note that CERG funds cannot be used to fund bonuses, recruitment, or retention funds.

CQ7) Does the CERG program require match or in-kind funds?

CR7) No, the CERG Program does not require matching or in-kind funds.

CQ8) In Appendix D: Request Form, 4b reads “Describe other anticipated COVID-19 funding sources, identified gaps, and how CERG funds will be coordinated with other efforts.” Is CMSP looking for a specific or generalized response?

CR8) CMSP would like applicants be as specific as possible when describing identified gaps and fund coordination efforts.

CQ9) Once awarded, do grantees need to invoice for their allocations?

CR9) Yes. Grantees will invoice for allocations upon grant implementation and following each report.

D) Formatting

DQ1) Are there any line spacing requirements for the application?

DR1) No, there are not any line spacing requirements.

DQ2) May applicants submit Appendix C: CERG Coversheet with an electronic signature?

DR2) Yes, Appendix C: CERG Coversheet may be submitted with either a wet or electronic signature.

E) Partnership

EQ1) May an applicant submit more than one proposal and get more than one award if other applicants don’t use up the money?

ER1) No, applicants may not submit more than one proposal. Only **one** CERG grant will be awarded per county.

EQ2) There is more than one organization applying for funding in our county. Will only one be awarded?

ER2) Yes, only **one** CERG grant will be awarded per county.

EQ3) Does the lead agency (once approved) receive the grant funding?

ER3) The lead agency will be the designated recipient of the award.

F) Project Implementation

FQ1) We are not sure if our project idea is in alignment with the intent of the COVID-19 Emergency Response Grant (CERG) Request for Application (RFA). May we contact CMSP to obtain feedback on the appropriateness of our proposed target population, proposed intervention, etc.?

FR1) Yes, please send an email to aallard@cmspcounties.org to arrange a time to discuss your ideas. Staff will not review entire draft proposals, only project ideas.

FQ2) Can the contract be retroactive to the date services began?

FR2) No, retroactive services will not be considered.

FQ3) Does the 12 month timeframe to spend the funding start upon execution of grant agreement, or upon notice of award?

FR3) Expenditures should begin upon execution of the grant agreement.

G) Reporting

GQ1) What are the grant reporting requirements?

GR1) Awarded CERG Projects will be required to complete one (1) Interim Progress and Expenditure Report detailing progress and program expenditures during the first six (6) months of project implementation, and one (1) Final Project and Expenditure Report detailing progress and expenditures during the final six (6) months of program implementation and the overall results of the project and associated outcomes.

GQ2) What documentation or data will applicants be required to produce regarding individuals served?

GR2) Each applicant is required to identify the data that will be collected for their project, as specified in *Appendix D, Request Form, 5) Data Collection and Reporting*.

GQ3) Will there be a template for the required reports?

GR3) Yes. CMSP staff will provide report templates.

H) Target Population

HQ1) Do program participants need to be COVID-19 positive or can they be part of the at-risk groups identified by the CDC?

HR1) CERG funding is not limited to COVID-19 positive patients. Please reference the accepted target populations listed in the *RFA, Section II*.

HQ2) Are there any restrictions on supporting individuals that were formerly incarcerated or transitioning out of the judicial system?

HR2) CERG funding supports all underserved and uninsured adults affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including but not limited to formerly incarcerated individuals and individuals transitioning out of the judicial system. Please reference the accepted target populations listed in the *RFA, Section II*.

HQ3) Do CERG efforts have to be focused on CMSP members and CMSP eligible applicants only? Or, may CERG efforts address other low-income populations such as adults receiving or eligible for Medi-Cal?

HR3) The target population for CERG is not restricted to CMSP members or CMSP eligible populations. Please see *RFA Section III: Target Populations* for qualifying target population characteristics.

HQ4) Would a project targeted towards children be considered for funding?

HR4) No, the CERG Program is intended to address the emergent needs of low-income uninsured and under-insured adults as it pertains to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is acceptable for a child to benefit from the services an adult receives. For example, an entire family staying under the adult's hotel voucher would be acceptable.

HQ5) May we include undocumented persons in the target population?

HR5) Yes, undocumented adults who meet the target population requirements listed in *RFA Section III: Target Populations*, are an allowable part of the proposed project's intended target population.