



February 28, 2023

Dear Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Colleagues,

The voices of people with HIV and their communities have been the cornerstone of the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) since its enactment by Congress in 1990. The Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) HIV/AIDS Bureau (HAB) supports community engagement efforts through a range of activities including hosting community engagement listening sessions,¹ developing tools and providing leadership training to people with HIV, elevating the voices of people with lived experience², and funding initiatives to engage communities and address unmet needs. Additionally, RWHAP recipients and subrecipients engage community through Planning Councils,³ Planning Bodies, consortia, integrated planning groups, community advisory boards, and community involvement in clinical quality management activities. RWHAP recipients and subrecipients are also involved in community engagement activities via outreach, education, and collaboration with both traditional and non-traditional partners.

Because HRSA HAB recognizes the value of people with lived experience and the ways their input and expertise contribute to the delivery of services that are tailored to the needs of people with HIV, this letter articulates three mechanisms that RWHAP recipients and subrecipients can utilize to maximize community input.

1. While the RWHAP statute prohibits recipients from making cash payments to people with HIV, RWHAP recipients can support the meaningful participation of people with HIV by providing incentives, such as store gift cards, vouchers, coupons, or tickets that can be exchanged for a specific service or commodity. As outlined in [HRSA HAB Policy Clarification Notice \(PCN\) 16-02: Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Services: Eligible Individuals & Allowable Uses of Funds](#), RWHAP recipients and subrecipients are advised to administer vouchers and store gift cards in a manner that assures they cannot be exchanged for cash or used for anything other than allowable goods or services. RWHAP recipients and subrecipients should develop a tracking system for the purchase and disbursement of incentives and establish policies and procedures that outline the criteria for offering incentives that include but are not limited to the type and amount of the incentive; the criteria for determining who receives an incentive; and the frequency of distributing the incentives.

¹ Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S. Initiative 2021 Community Engagement Listening Sessions <https://ryanwhite.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/ryanwhite/resources/hrsa-ehe-exec-summary-2021.pdf>

² Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program's *Life Beyond HIV*. <https://ryanwhite.hrsa.gov/resources/videos>

³ RWHAP Part A Planning Council and Planning Body Letter - Supporting People With Lived Experience <https://ryanwhite.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/ryanwhite/grants/rwhap-part-letter-support-lived-experience.pdf>

2. Community engagement activities are allowable costs under the *HRSA HAB Outreach Services*⁴ support category. The purpose of Outreach Services is to identify people with HIV who either do not know their status, or who know their status but are not currently in care. Outreach Services may be provided through community and public awareness activities (e.g., posters, social media, TV or radio announcements, etc.) as per HRSA HAB PCN 16-02. In addition, peer navigators and community health workers are uniquely positioned to help build trust between the community and health care system by serving as a liaison between health and social services and the community. They facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery and build individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through their ties to people with HIV and health care providers and systems. Moreover, HAB Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S. (EHE) initiative recipients may also fund innovative community engagement activities to drive and focus their jurisdictional planning for EHE implementation.
3. Lastly, non-RWHAP funding sources⁵ that are not similarly restricted can be utilized for a variety of purposes, including to compensate people with lived experience for their contributions. RWHAP recipients and subrecipients can collaborate and utilize different funding streams and braid them together⁶ to strengthen or expand an existing program or initiative to achieve a common community engagement goal, being careful to ensure that all applicable laws and regulations follow each stream of funding. RWHAP recipients and subrecipients are encouraged to partner broadly with both public health and non-public health entities and apply for grant awards beyond HRSA HAB to fund community engagement activities. Other federal agencies, state and local governments, foundations, and non-profit organizations should all be considered potential community engagement funding opportunities.

Community engagement is an essential component for planning comprehensive, effective HIV care and treatment programs. We appreciate your efforts to continue to expand community engagement activities and strategies in ways that create inclusive, sustainable solutions and build trust among people with HIV.

Sincerely,
/Laura W. Cheever/

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⁴ HRSA HAB Policy Clarification Notice (PCN) 16-02: Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Services: Eligible Individuals & Allowable Uses of Funds <https://ryanwhite.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/ryanwhite/grants/service-category-pcn-16-02-final.pdf>

⁵ Note: All program income generated as a result of awarded funds must be used for approved project-related activities. All pharmaceutical rebates collected as a result of awarded funds must be used for approved project-related activities, with a preference that they be used for the purchase of HIV-related medication.

⁶ HRSA and CDC Status Neutral Approach Framework Program Letter <https://ryanwhite.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/ryanwhite/grants/cdchrsastatusneutralapproachletter-508.pdf>