**University of Minnesota Project REACH - Rural Experts Advancing Community Health**

Request for Applications

**Key dates**

RFA Released: Monday March 1, 2021

Interest Forms Due: Wednesday, March 31, 2021

Eligible Applicants Notified: Friday, April 9, 2021

Applications Due: Monday May 3, 2021

Applicants Notified: Tuesday June 1, 2021

Program Begins: Monday July 19, 2021

**Summary**

The University of Minnesota’s Project REACH (Rural Experts Advancing Community Health) provides diverse community leaders in rural Minnesota with health policy and leadership training that will help them build necessary skills to successfully advocate to improve health in their communities.

**Who Should Apply?**

Individuals (ages 18 and older) working or living in rural Minnesota who want to improve health in their community by building skills in health policy problem framing and effective communication with state legislators and other policymakers. The strongest applicants will be those who are committed to racial equity and social justice in rural Minnesota communities. For this program, we consider rural communities to be places with smaller towns (<50,000 people), and more remote, less-populated areas of the state, including tribal communities.

**Program Benefits**

Upon completion of the program, participants will receive a $1,200 stipend and a certificate of completion. Travel costs up to $500 are covered for costs to attend trainings and/or meetings at the state legislature. Participants will also receive program materials, including books and a laptop or iPad. Throughout the program, participants may have opportunities to have their work published or present their work, and may also be able to earn continuing education credits (as applicable).

**Goals for Program Participants**

* Identify a local challenge related to health and well-being, and develop communication skills to address it
* Build leadership skills in equity, diversity, and inclusion to improve health equity
* Connect with issue- or skills-specific mentors, experts at the University of Minnesota, and other partners in Minnesota related to the local problem of focus for each participant
* Engage in effective problem framing and policy communication related to a health problem in a local community by developing a policy proposal and sharing it with relevant decision-makers

**Program Requirements & Schedule**

Participants will identify a local health problem to focus on throughout the program. Project REACH will connect participants with faculty, staff, and students at the University of Minnesota (UMN) as well as with other rural advocates and organizations across the state. Together, this team will work to address the local health problem that the participants identify.

Hour long program sessions will take place virtually twice a month at a time/date that work for participants and program staff/leadership. Technical assistance and other opportunities for communication with University mentors and program contacts will be available throughout the year. Work outside of program sessions will take about 5-8 hours a month. Total time commitment is approximately 8-10 hours a month. To accomplish the goals of the program, the full participation of each individual selected is required.

**Program Structure**

* Throughout the year, participants will be paired with a University-based team and receive training and technical assistance in gathering relevant data and research, problem framing, and understanding the health policy process.
* In the first six months (July-December), participants will develop a data-driven policy proposal based on locally-relevant data, and written with the guidance and support of their mentorship team, including University experts and other state health policy experts
* In the second half the program (January-June), participants will develop skills in policy communication and advocacy, sharing their policy proposal with their state legislators and/or other relevant decision makers at the state and local levels
* Throughout the program, participants will have access to mentorship from UMN faculty and staff.

**Application Requirements**

Those interested in applying to the program must first complete the [interest form](https://redcap.ahc.umn.edu/surveys/?s=Y97L8HKRXJ).

**Completion of the interest form is required by March 31, 2021 at 5pm CT. Those who are selected to apply will be informed by April 9, 2021 at 5pm CT and will receive a link to the full application. Using this link, applicants can complete the application form and upload required materials (including a letter of interest, resume, and one letter of recommendation).**

**The completed application is due on May 3, 2021 at 5pm CT. Any questions about the application process can be directed to Katie Rydberg at** [**reedx472@umn.edu**](mailto:reedx472@umn.edu)**. Applications will be evaluated based on geographic distribution, policy relevance, and potential to enhance racial and social justice. Top candidates may be invited for brief (15 minute) interviews in early May. Final selections will be made by June 1, 2021 at 5pm CT.**

**Funding**

This is a joint initiative of the University of Minnesota Rural Health Program through the Office of Academic Clinical Affairs and the Clinical and Translational Science Institute.