

University of Minnesota Project REACH - Rural Experts Advancing Community Health

Request for Applications

Key dates

RFA Released: Monday January 8, 2024

Interest Forms Due: Monday, March 4, 2024

Eligible Applicants Notified: Friday, March 8, 2024

Applications Due: Monday April 8, 2024

Applicants Notified: Friday April 12, 2024

Program Begins: Thursday August 1, 2024

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. Costs up to \$500 are covered for costs to attend trainings, and travel costs up to \$500 are covered for an optional (strongly encouraged) in-person Twin Cities-based meeting and/or meetings at the state legislature. Participants will also receive program materials, including books and a laptop or iPad (if needed). Throughout the program, participants may have opportunities to have their work published or present their work (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.

Ninety minute 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. We also expect to offer an one in-person session in the Twin Cities in the spring when participants meet with some learning partners, program staff, and potentially also state legislators or advocates. Travel costs will be covered, and attendance is strongly encouraged.

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, participants will develop a data-driven policy proposal based on locally-relevant data, and written with the guidance and support of their learning partner team, including University experts and other state health policy experts.
- In the second half the program, 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, rural community advocates, and health policy leaders.

Application Requirements

Those interested in applying to the program must first complete the [interest form](#).

Completion of the interest form is required by March 4, 2024 at 5pm CT. Those who are selected to apply will be informed by March 8, 2024 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 contact information for 3 references).

The completed application is due on April 8, 2024 at 5pm CT. Any questions about the application process can be directed to Katie Rydberg at 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 April. Final selections will be made by April 12, 2024 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.