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STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

DCT 04/22 PM 1:28 RCVD
DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

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October 3, 2022

The Honorable Karen Umberger, Chairman
Fiscal Committee of the General Court and

His Excellency, Governor Christopher T. Sununu
and the Honorable Council
State House
Concord, NH 03301

REQUESTED ACTION

Pursuant to the provisions of RSA 14:30-a, VI, authorize the Department of Health and Human Services, New Hampshire Hospital, to accept and expend federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF), in the amount of \$8,883,875 to ensure New Hampshire communities have safe and consistent access to emergency and routine healthcare services, such as COVID-19 vaccinations and testing services, by supporting healthcare organizational infrastructure during the anticipated COVID-19 winter surge of 2022-23, effective upon approval by the Fiscal Committee and Governor and Council through June 30, 2023, and further authorize the allocation of these funds in the accounts below. This is an allowable use of ARPA SFRF funds under Section 602(c)(1)(A), to respond to the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) or its negative economic impacts. **100% Federal Funds.**

¹ All direct program costs will be accounted for using activity 00FRF602PH9533A and 00FRF602PH9534A and all administrative and indirect costs will be accounted for using activity 00FRF602PH9533Z and 00FRF602PH9534Z. Accounting classifications may be subject to technical changes at the discretion of the Department of Administrative Services' Division of Accounting Services.

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05-95-94-940010-2465 HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES, DEPT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, HHS: NEW HAMPSHIRE HOSPITAL, ARPA DHHS FISCAL RECOVERY FUND

CLASS OBJ	CLASS TITLE	Current Modified Budget	Increase/(Decrease) Amount	Revised Modified Budget
000-400338-16	Federal Funds	\$ 69,038,168	\$ 8,883,875	\$ 77,922,043
	General Fund	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	Total Revenue	\$ 69,038,168	\$ 8,883,875	\$ 77,922,043
010-500100	Personal Services Perm Class	\$ 122,104		\$ 122,104
020-500200	Current Expenses	\$ 250,001		\$ 250,001
022-500255	Rents-Leases other than State	\$ 3,891,727		\$ 3,891,727
030-500301	Equipment New/Replacement	\$ 1		\$ 1
040-500800	Indirect Costs	\$ 2,123,973		\$ 2,123,973
041-500801	Audit Fund Set Aside	\$ 62,805	\$ 8,875	\$ 71,680
042-500620	Additional Fringe Benefits	\$ 8,733		\$ 8,733
046-500462	Consultants	\$ 1		\$ 1
047-500240	Own Forces Maintenance (Bldg-Grnd)	\$ 1		\$ 1
048-500226	Contract Repairs: Bldg, Grounds	\$ 1		\$ 1
050-500109	Personal Services Temp	\$ -		\$ -
059-500117	Temp Full Time	\$ 98,133		\$ 98,133
060-500601	Benefits	\$ 119,996		\$ 119,996
072-502683	Grants Federal	\$ 250,000		\$ 250,000
102-500731	Contracts for Program Services	\$ 50,364,360	\$ -	\$ 50,364,360
103-502507	Contracts for Operational Services	\$ 11,746,332	\$ 8,875,000	\$ 20,621,332
	Total Expenses	\$ 69,038,168	\$ 8,883,875	\$ 77,922,043

EXPLANATION

The Department is requesting to accept and expend \$8,883,875 for the purpose of ensuring New Hampshire communities have safe and consistent access to emergency and routine healthcare service, such as COVID-19 vaccine and testing services, by supporting healthcare organizations' infrastructure during a potential winter 2022-23 COVID-19 surge. At the height of the COVID-19 surge in January 2022, more than 3,000 individuals a day tested positive for COVID-19 and hospitals exceeded their capacity, with more than 300 individuals hospitalized per day. Hospitals and Long Term Care Facilities (LTCFs) experienced significant staffing shortages that further decreased capacity. The Department remains committed to a nimble response to the continued impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In anticipation of a potential winter 2022-23 surge in COVID-19 cases, the Department seeks to accept funds to prepare to support the healthcare system to reduce severe morbidity and mortality and ensure efficient, equitable access to necessary services.

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The Department plans to use this funding to support a multifaceted dynamic response to respond to a COVID-19 winter surge that includes: (1) a Healthcare Organization Vaccine Rebate Program; (2) Municipal Staffing Contract; (3) Support to Hospitals & County Nursing Homes; and (4) a Telehealth Therapeutics Program. Funds for many of these activities will be held in reserve and deployed only if there is a strain on the healthcare system that threatens the provision of efficient, safe care for New Hampshire residents. Estimated amounts for each sub-initiative are included in the table below followed by detailed descriptions on the subsequent page.

DHHS Winter 2022 COVID-19 Programs	
Program	Amount*
Vaccination Services	
Healthcare Organization Vaccine Rebate Program	\$2,500,000
Municipal Staffing Contract (staffing for RPHN/State-sponsored vaccine clinics)	\$500,000
Healthcare Infrastructure Support	
Support to Hospitals & County Nursing Homes	\$2,500,000
Telehealth Therapeutics Program	\$3,375,000

* Amounts are estimated and would be adjusted to respond to emerging needs.

The Department will monitor the New Hampshire Hospital Association's (NHHA) COVID-19 Hospital Risk Assessment reports to project strains on the healthcare system. The NHHA's Hospital Risk Assessment Report incorporates the hospitals' bed availability and staffing level metrics to monitor for impending strain on the healthcare system.

Vaccination and Testing Services

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS) recommends that all persons 6 months of age or older complete the COVID-19 primary series and booster vaccination (when eligible). A reformulated booster, which is currently available to individuals 12 years of age and older, will offer enhanced protection against COVID-19.

Currently, COVID-19 testing is available through traditional access points such as hospitals, urgent care centers, and medical practices. Additionally, antigen tests are currently available through commercial vendors. NH DHHS anticipates that over-the-counter antigen testing will become the predominant method for testing outside of a medical institution which helps decrease the burden on the healthcare system. NH DHHS currently has over 700,000 over-the-counter antigen tests which support schools, healthcare facilities, first responders, the Regional Public Health Networks (RPHN), and correctional facilities. However, a supply chain disruption could place a strain on the healthcare system during surge periods. One individual may need to test multiple times over the course of several days following the onset of symptoms or in the event of an exposure, which could exhaust the existing stockpile rapidly in the event of a supply chain disruption.

This request will augment anticipated mobile vaccine efforts and the healthcare system in meeting the demand for services during a surge in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations.

- (1) **Healthcare Vaccine Rebate Program - \$2,500,000:** NH DHHS seeks to remove financial barriers for individuals interested in vaccination and incentivize healthcare organizations to offer vaccine clinics. The Department proposes implementing a rebate program whereby healthcare organizations may bill NH DHHS at the CMS-approved vaccine administration rate for **uninsured or under-insured individuals**. Reducing financial barriers supports individuals who want access to a COVID-19 vaccine without incurring expenses.

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The proposed rebate program supports healthcare organizations' ability to maintain financial stability in order to operate the vaccine clinics.

- (2) Municipality Contract - \$500,000:** NH DHHS proposes reserving the option to support municipality contracts so first responders are immediately available if RPHN or State-sponsored, community-based vaccine clinics are required. In emergency and time sensitive situations, NH DHHS relies on first responders (law enforcement, medical providers, and administrative staff) to support the RPHN community-based clinics and State-sponsored vaccine clinics. Municipalities require reimbursement for staff time. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response, NH DHHS has contracted with municipalities to provide staffing for these clinics.

Healthcare Infrastructure Support

- (3) Support to Hospitals & County Nursing Homes - \$2,500,000:** The Department continues to monitor surges and demands within the hospital and long term care facilities (LTCF) systems due to COVID-19 impacts. The Department plans to allocate funds to support hospitals and the ten (10) county nursing homes to cover expenses associated with hiring and retaining clinical and non-clinical staff. Proposed activities include 1) supporting employee recruitment and retention efforts and 2) supporting staff training and education needs. These activities ensure staffing levels remain sufficient to maintain a robust healthcare system, load-balancing critical patients across the State occurs quickly, and patients are transferred from hospitals to LTCF in an appropriate timeframe
- (4) Telehealth Therapeutics Program- \$3,375,000:** Non-hospitalized individuals at risk for progressing to severe COVID-19 disease should receive a therapeutic such as the antiviral Paxlovid. Paxlovid utilization reduces hospitalization which reduces the strain on the healthcare system. Currently, community members struggle to access Paxlovid because: (1) primary care providers lack clinical staff to perform the required eligibility screening, (2) providers are not familiar with Paxlovid (or other antivirals), or (3) individuals do not have a primary care physician.

The Department plans to implement a Telehealth Therapeutics Program to increase access to antivirals such as Paxlovid across New Hampshire. The proposed program offers telehealth eligibility screening for all New Hampshire residents, seven days per week. Via a third party vendor, DHHS will offer individuals in New Hampshire remote access to a qualified provider for a consultation regarding their symptoms and other relevant health details to see if they would benefit from COVID-19 antiviral treatment. The vendor will be responsible for clinical management, customer support, and operations of the telehealth hotline seven days a week. This service will help ensure that New Hampshire residents can efficiently engage with a provider to assess their health status and eligibility for antiviral treatment. Those who are clinically eligible to receive Paxlovid will be prescribed the antiviral prior to the conclusion of the telehealth consultation. The prescription will be fulfilled at a local retail pharmacy or via an overnight prescription mail service for individuals who are unable to access a local retail pharmacy. The proposed Telehealth Therapeutics Program increases access for rural and isolated residents and reduces the strain on the healthcare system by reducing emergency room and urgent care visits and hospital admissions.

Supporting a robust healthcare system has immediate and long-term impacts. Increasing access to COVID-19 vaccines and testing and creating a sustainable healthcare infrastructure supports individuals, families, and communities by creating access to healthcare services that may not otherwise be available and by alleviating strain on New Hampshire's healthcare system. Additionally, investing in the healthcare infrastructure supports long-term vaccination needs and helps ensure a sustainable workforce for the healthcare industry. Healthy individuals help maintain essential services in New Hampshire, keep the economy open, and create a resilient community.

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If these initiatives are not funded, the limited and strained public health infrastructure in the State will not be able to efficiently provide access to COVID-19 vaccines to New Hampshire residents nor support routine or emergency care in the event of a large surge of COVID-19 cases. This would tax local and regional healthcare capabilities requiring State and potentially Federal assistance. The Federal government has not indicated that they plan to support a winter surge or make resources available to the State.

Funds are budgeted as follows:

Class 041 – RSA 124:16 requires .1% to be budgeted to pay for financial and compliance audits.

Class 103 – The funds will be used to pay for contracted services.

Source of Funds: These funds are 100% Federal Funds.

Respectfully submitted,



Lori A. Shibinette
Commissioner