# PREPARING TO PURSUE TELEMEDICINE GRANT FUNDING

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Over the last several years, technology and medicine have joined forces to provide additional levels of care for short-staffed facilities and homebound patients. Since the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, and with health insurance challenges faced by many people, the need for innovation in patient care has become overwhelming. People seeking medical attention while minimizing exposure to COVID-19 – and providers with a shortage of staff, space, and budget – are looking to telemedicine as the most viable solution.

While almost all providers could benefit from the use of technology to manage their patient load and maintain patient safety, it costs money to implement a telemedicine program. Fortunately, the federal government has picked up on the 154% increase in telemedicine visits over the last year. In response, Congress has released a new wave of funding support. The Federal Communications Commission has announced $249 million in grant funding for telemedicine programs, and the USDA is making $42.3 million available for distance learning and training.

Telemedicine grant funds are made available to meet a variety of provider needs, from health screenings to patient care and distance learning. Grant funding can be used to support infrastructure of a telemedicine program, including audio/video equipment, hardware, software, networking, instructional programming, and technical support. In other words, whether offering telemedicine is new to you or you want to update or expand your program, you can pursue the funds your facility needs.

## THE GRANT – ARE YOU THE RIGHT FIT?

To pursue the best funding opportunities, you need to be clear on what your program is and what it needs. Working with a telemedicine solution expert like IDS can help you figure out the services you want your program to offer, and the infrastructure needed to bring your program to life. Once you understand exactly what you want to offer, IDS can also help you figure out which opportunities are best for you.

As you explore opportunities to pursue, conducting a self-assessment will help decide if your program meets the grant's qualifications. Here are a few questions to start with:

- Would our telemedicine program be eligible for this grant/funding opportunity?
- Will this grant help us offer the services we want to provide?
- Will we be able to comply with the award's requirements?
- Is our program sustainable after funding expires?

Answering questions like these can be challenging, especially as they relate to grant funding. Engaging with IDS early in the process will help you to put your team in place and get your application ready.

# THE TEAM – CHOOSING THE PLAYERS

Grant applications help funding providers identify the most eligible and viable programs to which they should award funds. And though we have all filled out a variety of forms, applying for a grant requires involving more than one person. Even the most knowledgeable person in your facility won't likely have all the answers. You will give yourself the best chance by assembling a team of subject matter experts. Although the grant's requirements will help you determine the best people on your team, most proposal teams will require some primary players:

- Proposal Coordinator – leads administrative tasks including scheduling, resource allocation, and application submission
- Clinical staff – provides expertise on patient care and staff needs
- Program staff – to advise on the implementation, maintenance, and support of telemedicine programs
- Senior management – make decisions about programming, funding needs, legal and compliance requirements, provide sign-off
- Budget/finance officer – capture detailed account of how funds will be allocated and reported

With your team assembled, enlisting the help of proposal support will ensure your information is as well presented as possible. A proposal manager and/or grant writer can help you extract the information from your experts and turn that into the compelling responses that will make your qualifications stand out.  If you don't have a grant writer or have never applied for a grant before, IDS can help you find professional services to assist you along the way.

# APPLYING – TAKING THE NEXT STEP

With your self-assessment questions answered and your team in place, it's time to get to work. Grant funding is there, but the window is closing, and the competition is stiff. Starting early and submitting on time are critical. You will need to establish yourself in the grants space, which you can do through grants.gov, a comprehensive database of grants and the place where you will submit your application. Grants can be searched by a variety of criteria and creating an account in advance will save time during the application process.

Telemedicine funding has created new opportunities for healthcare providers to expand services to more patients, manage tight budgets, and give clinical staff much needed support.

**Ready to go for a grant but need help getting started? <u>Let IDS help you throughout the process.</u>**

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