



Request for Applications: Expanding *Project Connect* to Meet New Medicaid Requirements

Summary of Opportunity:

The Virginia Health Care Foundation (VHCF) is issuing this Request for Applications (RFA) to expand its longstanding *Project Connect* program through an 18-month special grant initiative **(January 1, 2027 – June 30, 2028)** focused on increasing access to Medicaid outreach and enrollment assistance as Virginia prepares for new federal requirements.

Learn More: **Pre-Application Webinar** on Monday, September 21, 2026 at 11:00 AM

Key Dates: **Application Due Date:** Thursday, October 15, 2026 at 5:00 PM
 Notice of Awards: Friday, December 18, 2026

Funding for Project Connect, including this RFA, is made possible through the generous support of the Virginia General Assembly and the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS).

BACKGROUND

The Virginia Health Care Foundation (VHCF) is a nonprofit public/private partnership created by the Virginia General Assembly and its Joint Commission on Health Care in 1992 to increase access to primary health care for uninsured and medically underserved Virginians. Since its inception, VHCF's programs and partnerships have helped more than 950,000 Virginians obtain needed health care.

VHCF's work includes health care workforce development; expanding access to affordable prescriptions; grantmaking to increase access to medical, dental, and behavioral health care and strengthen provider capacity; major investments in rural health care technology infrastructure through Virginia's Rural Health Transformation program; and Medicaid outreach and enrollment assistance. **This grant opportunity is specifically focused on expanding VHCF's Medicaid outreach and enrollment program, *Project Connect*.**

For nearly 30 years, VHCF has proudly partnered with DMAS to help eligible Virginians enroll in Medicaid. *Project Connect* is a key part of this work, supporting a statewide network of community-based outreach workers who provide education and application and enrollment assistance. To date, *Project Connect* outreach workers have enrolled more than 170,000 Virginians in Medicaid (Cardinal Care).

Through *Project Connect*, VHCF currently funds approximately **13 community-based Medicaid outreach and enrollment workers** [across Virginia](#). They help with completing Medicaid applications and renewals, navigating eligibility and enrollment processes and issues, and answering questions about Medicaid.

Under this RFA, VHCF will award 18-month grants to **double the *Project Connect* workforce**, adding approximately 13 additional outreach workers to help eligible Virginians navigate new federal requirements, complete enrollment and renewal processes, and maintain coverage.

EXPANDING PROJECT CONNECT TO MEET NEW MEDICAID REQUIREMENTS

Virginia's Medicaid eligibility and enrollment system serves 1.8 million people across the Commonwealth and is supported by a broad network of DMAS, local departments of social services, health care providers, community organizations, and other partners.

For eligible Virginians, successfully navigating enrollment and renewal is an essential first step to accessing health care. A strong, knowledgeable outreach workforce with “boots on the ground” helps people understand requirements, complete applications and renewals, resolve issues, maintain coverage, and ultimately connect to the care they need.

Beginning in late 2026 and early 2027, new federal requirements under H.R. 1 will change certain Medicaid eligibility, enrollment, and renewal processes. For certain adults enrolled in Medicaid, these changes include but are not limited to:

- A new requirement to work, go to school, volunteer, or participate in other community engagement activities for at least 80 hours per month to qualify;
- Verifying compliance with this work requirement (or an applicable exemption) at enrollment, and every six months thereafter;
- Completing a full Medicaid renewal every six months (rather than annually); and
- Certain lawfully present immigrant adults losing Medicaid eligibility, while others in their household, like children, will remain eligible.

These changes will create new responsibilities for Medicaid members and additional demand for accurate information, individualized assistance, and navigation. VHCF's longstanding *Project Connect* initiative is well positioned to help meet this need. *Project Connect* supports outreach workers at health care and community-based organizations across Virginia who provide Medicaid application and enrollment assistance, navigation and case management, and community outreach and education. These outreach workers are trusted local resources with expertise in navigating Medicaid and strong relationships with their communities and local social services agencies.

GRANT GUIDELINES AND DETAILS

VHCF anticipates awarding approximately \$1.5 million under this **18-month special *Project Connect* initiative (January 1, 2027 – June 30, 2028)** with no match or sustainability requirements.

Grant Focus Areas & Requirements:

- Applicants must plan to utilize funds for outreach worker(s) (also known as application assisters) who will provide Medicaid outreach, education, application and enrollment assistance, navigation, and case management.
- Outreach workers funded under this RFA should have a particular focus on helping Virginians navigate the new Medicaid requirements of H.R. 1, including [work requirements](#), [six-month renewals](#), and [changes to immigration status eligibility](#).
- Each full-time outreach worker is expected to assist with ~ 25–30 renewals and enrollments per month.
- A sample job description for an outreach worker is available [here](#).

Grant Amounts & Distribution:

- Grant awards will typically range from \$60,000 to \$85,000 per outreach worker and should cover salary, benefits, and other essential project costs.
- Total amounts vary depending on a variety of factors, like scope of the project and area's cost of living.
- To ensure funds are distributed throughout the state, VHCF is unlikely to fund more than 2 outreach workers at a particular organization, unless there is a significant demonstrated need.

Priority Criteria:

- Given that the majority of the federal changes will go into effect starting in January 2027, the most competitive proposals will demonstrate an organization's strong ability to move quickly to deploy outreach worker(s) to help people navigate the new requirements and connect them with work and community engagement opportunities to help them meet those new requirements.
- As such, particular consideration will be given to proposals that demonstrate experience working with adult populations who will be most affected by H.R. 1 (e.g., [non-pregnant adults ages 19-64/Medicaid Expansion population](#)).

- VHCF will consider applications from throughout the state, with priority given to applications from areas estimated to have higher numbers of impacted residents, as shown on [this map](#), and/or those that do not already have a large-scale outreach and enrollment workforce.

Organization Requirements:

The following entities are eligible to apply:

- Any public agency or private non-profit holding a 501(c)(3) tax-exemption; or
- Any affiliate of a 501(c)3 tax-exempt agency; or
- Any organization with a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt fiscal sponsor.
- *If the applicant is a free clinic or a community health center*, it must be a member in good standing with either the Virginia Association of Free and Charitable Clinics or the Virginia Community Healthcare Association.
- Current *Project Connect* grantees are eligible to apply **only if the existing grant are meeting, or are on track to meet, all stated goals and objectives for the current grant period.**

Grantee Responsibilities: Grantees commit to:

- Hire and/or onboard outreach worker(s) upon notice of grant award
- Cultivate relationships referral sources, community partners, and local social services offices
- Participate in *Project Connect* orientation, *SignUpNow* trainings, and grantee meetings (at least quarterly)
- Promote the availability of outreach and enrollment assistance and provide education and resources on H.R. 1 changes
- Track key enrollment data in VHCF's HIPAA-compliant database
- Sign Letter of Agreement with VHCF outlining performance objectives (*Project Connect* outreach workers are typically required to enroll 25-30 people/month, conduct outreach and education, and provide navigation and case management)
- Submit quarterly narrative and expense reports to VHCF

VHCF Responsibilities: VHCF commits to:

- Provide ongoing technical assistance, capacity building, and support
- Provide detailed orientation for new grantees

- Provide ongoing training, support, and technical assistance to grantees/outreach workers, including but not limited to:
 - Detailed Medicaid/H.R. 1 fundamentals trainings via VHCF's [SignUpNow](#) initiative
 - Quarterly (and more frequent as needed) all-grantee meetings/trainings/peer learning opportunities (virtual and in-person)
 - Regular individual grantee meetings, including traveling to meet grantees at their location at least once during the grant period
 - Medicaid policy clarification/guidance
 - Case escalation support (i.e., troubleshooting difficult applications/cases and escalating for resolution)
- Remitting timely quarterly payments upon receipt and review of quarterly reports

Allowable Use of Funds (see budget template for more information):

- Salary and benefits for outreach worker(s)
- Travel (local mileage to conduct outreach; travel expenses for ~3 meetings during grant period in Richmond)
- Office and outreach supplies/printing
- Telecommunications/tech (all outreach worker(s) should be equipped with work cell phone and laptop)

Grant Period: January 1, 2027 – June 30, 2028 (18 months). Funding availability beyond June 30, 2028 has not yet been determined. Organizations should plan for this initiative to be an 18-month special project and should not assume funding will continue beyond this period.

APPLICATION SPECIFICS

Pre-Application Webinar: VHCF will host a Pre-Application Webinar on September 21 at 11:00 AM to answer questions about these *Project Connect* grants and the application process. VHCF staff will answer questions during the webinar and post the slides and FAQs on our webpage. [Click here to register for the Webinar.](#)

Key Dates:

- **RFA Release Date:** Thursday, September 3, 2026
- **Pre-Application Webinar:** Monday, September 21, 2026 at 11:00 AM
- **Application Due Date:** Thursday, October 15, 2026 at 5:00 PM
- **Notice of Awards:** Friday, December 18, 2026
- **Grants Begin:** Friday, January 1, 2027

Application Submission Notes and Checklist:

Applications should be submitted via VHCF's grants portal no later than Thursday, October 15, 2026 at 5:00 PM.

- [Click here to access the application in VHCF's Blackbaud grant portal](#). If you already have an account, you will need to sign in. If you do not have an account, you will need to create one.
- In the Blackbaud grant portal, create the Contact Information and Application Form and upload a **single PDF** on the second tab that includes the following:
 - Completed [PDF Application checklist and form](#)
 - Completed 18-month budget ([use provided template](#))
 - Marketing and outreach plan to reach target audience ([use provided template](#))
 - Resume(s) of individual(s) who will lead grant and/or supervise outreach worker; resume(s) for outreach worker(s) (if already identified)
 - Most recent audited financials

Following the submission of the applications, VHCF may reach out to applicants with clarifying questions. VHCF will not review incomplete applications, late applications, or those that do not follow VHCF's specifications.

Want to learn more about what's changing with Medicaid?

VHCF's *SignUpNow* (SUN) training workshops cover the ins and outs of the Medicaid programs, with a focus on eligibility and enrollment processes. Get the essential information you need to help Virginians navigate the new H.R. 1 federal changes. **These workshops are open to the public!**

- **Want the quick-hit overview?** Introducing ***SUNLight***, our brand new 90-minute virtual workshop that breaks down the Medicaid fundamentals and the new federal changes. Walk away with a solid grasp of what's changing and a "first aid kit" of resources to help keep Virginians covered.
 - **Target audience:** *SUNLight* is designed for a broad audience, from frontline staff providing direct assistance, to organizational leadership planning for the broader impacts.
- **Ready for a deeper dive?** Our **classic *SignUpNow*** workshops provide an in-depth overview of Medicaid and the new federal changes. We also have a specialized workshop that focuses on Medicaid for older adults and people with disabilities.
 - **Target audience:** These workshops are designed for anyone who wants the full picture, especially if you work directly with individuals and families navigating Medicaid.

Register for a live, virtual workshop or access our on-demand content at vhcf.org/workshops.

Expanding *Project Connect* to Meet New Medicaid Requirements – Funding Application

Contact Information Form Fields:

- Organization Name:
- Organization Address:
- Street address, city, state, zip code

Organization's Tax ID Number:

Organization CEO/Executive Director:

- First name/last name
- Email address
- Best phone number

Name of person completing this application:

- First name/last name
- Job title
- Email address
- Best phone number

Total amount of *Project Connect* budget request to VHCF:

Proposed Project Service Area:

Application Form Fields:

Organization Profile (short answers)

- Services provided by your organization:
- Age range of population currently served by your organization:
- Race/ethnicity demographics of population currently served by your organization:

Baseline and Project Goals	
Number of people served annually by organization	
Estimated number of people served by organization who are currently enrolled in Medicaid	
Number of current Medicaid outreach workers/application assisters at your organization	

Number of new/additional FTE outreach workers requested for this <i>Project Connect</i> grant (NOTE: fractional FTE outreach workers are acceptable)	
Number of individuals for which you expect to enroll/renew Medicaid coverage during the 18-month grant period (expectation is at least 300-350 per year per FTE, or 450-525 per 18-month period per FTE)	

Current Medicaid Outreach and Organizational Capacity (1,400 characters)

1. Describe your organization's current Medicaid outreach and application/enrollment assistance efforts, including how those activities are staffed.
2. If applicable, does your organization currently accept Medicaid for any services? If so, which managed organizations do you participate with?

Community Need (1,000 characters)

3. Describe and quantify the need for expanded/new Medicaid outreach and application/enrollment assistance for the populations and communities your organization serves, particularly with upcoming H.R. 1 changes.

Project Connect Program Description and Strategy (1,800 characters)

4. Describe your proposed overall strategy and model (including staffing structure and locations) for this 18-month outreach and enrollment project.
5. Describe how your *Project Connect*-funded outreach workers will connect people with resources/programs to help them meet the work requirements (e.g., job training/programs, education, volunteering, etc.).

Proposed Timeline (900 characters)

6. Provide a high-level timeline for your proposed project, including goal dates for hiring new staff and/or reallocating existing staff, launching the expanded services, partnership engagement, etc.

Partnerships and Referrals (2,000 characters)

7. Describe your organization's current relationship with your local department of social/human services office(s). If your organization does not have an existing relationship with your local department of social/human services, please describe your thinking on developing that relationship.
8. Describe how your organization will set up (or utilize an existing) referral process for **internal** patients/clients needing assistance with Medicaid.
9. Describe which **current and/or new partnerships/referral partners** you plan to utilize to identify **external** patients/clients needing assistance with enrolling in or keeping their Medicaid coverage. Please describe how you would envision the referral processes working, including if outreach worker(s) would provide onsite assistance at partner location(s).

Staffing and Leadership (900 characters)

10. Who will be responsible for the success of your *Project Connect* grant (day-to-day champion and/or supervision of outreach worker(s))? Briefly describe their role in this project and relevant experience. Please include their resume(s) as an attachment.
11. Do you have someone in mind already for the new position(s)? If so, please include their resume(s) as an attachment.
12. Do you expect *Project Connect*-funded outreach workers to be able to provide services in a language in addition to English? If yes, which language(s)?

Artificial Intelligence Utilization (400 characters)

13. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Utilization: Did you use AI in the preparation of the language/content provided in this application? If so, please describe which tool and version was used and how it was reviewed and incorporated by staff.

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