

## **Expanding Access to Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention Services Across Wisconsin Counties, Municipalities and Native Nations: Opioid Settlement Fund Matching Request for Proposals**

### **PURPOSE**

This project will leverage opioid settlement funds to increase access to evidence-based harm reduction and overdose prevention services within rural counties, municipalities and Native nations. It will also seek to strengthen community engagement around the opioid settlements, particularly with people who have lived or living experience of drug use.

In a brief survey conducted by the Wisconsin Counties Association in early 2025, less than half of Wisconsin's counties had spent more than 25% of the settlement funds that they had received. In many cases, counties had not utilized any of the funds received since 2022. Additionally, less than half of the responding counties had established a mechanism to gather input from the community or people impacted by the overdose crisis, either through advisory committee bodies or community surveys/focus groups.

Opioid settlement funds provide an important opportunity to improve access to evidence-based harm reduction and overdose prevention services. To expand these evidence-based services, Vital Strategies will match county/municipality/Tribal opioid settlement funding directed towards evidence-based harm reduction and overdose prevention interventions up to \$100,000.00 for one year. Neighboring counties can also decide to submit one joint application.

Counties with fewer than 500,000 residents are eligible for a 1:1 matching grant up to \$100,000. Native nations are eligible for a 1:3 matching grant up to \$100,000. There is no limit to the number of eligible grantees that can be awarded.

### **BACKGROUND**

Overdose deaths in the United States have significantly increased in the past several decades. From 1999 to 2022, the national overdose death rate increased by ten times, with over 107,000 overdose deaths reported in 2023 alone. While overdose impacts all communities, disparities have widened particularly for Black and Indigenous communities, despite the fact that all groups use drugs at similar rates.

Wisconsin's overdose crisis mirrors national trends. In 2022, the number of opioid-involved overdose deaths in the state was 12 times higher than in 2000. However, there is a glimmer of progress. In 2024, the U.S. saw a notable 24% reduction in overdose deaths and early data indicates Wisconsin experienced a similar decline in overdose deaths. This is a hopeful sign that efforts to address the crisis are starting to take effect.



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Harm reduction and overdose prevention approaches are essential to addressing the overdose crisis. Harm reduction is a practical and justice-centered strategy that focuses on reducing the negative consequences of drug use and which emphasizes the dignity and autonomy of people who use drugs. Harm reduction utilizes a range of strategies, including safer use, meeting people who use drugs “where they’re at,” and addressing the conditions of use along with the use itself.

Many Indigenous communities are also drawing from the strength of their cultures to "Indigenize harm reduction," which the National Harm Reduction Coalition's Native Harm Reduction Toolkit defines as “creating and supporting policies, programs, and practices that are grounded in cultural traditions, Indigenous knowledge, ceremonies, land, and languages.” For Indigenous communities, even the very act of practicing and revitalizing culture can be harm reduction.

Harm reduction is a critical and necessary framework to combat the overdose crisis, reduce harm, and address the underlying social determinants of health that disproportionately impact certain communities.

## **FUNDER**

Vital Strategies is a global health organization that believes every person should be protected by a strong public health system. Our overdose prevention program works to strengthen and scale evidence-based, data-driven policies and interventions to create equitable and sustainable reductions in overdose deaths. Work across seven U.S. states is supported by funding from the Bloomberg Philanthropies Overdose Prevention Initiative, launched in 2018, and by targeted investments from other partners.

## **GRANT OPPORTUNITY**

This request for applications aims to support counties, municipalities and Native nations in leveraging Opioid Settlement Funds. Vital Strategies will provide matching funds for a one-year period for evidence-based harm reduction and overdose prevention programming funded with Opioid Settlement dollars. Counties with fewer than 500,000 residents and municipalities within those counties who also received settlement funds are eligible for a 1:1 matching grant up to \$100,000. Please note that neighboring counties can submit one joint application.

Native nations are eligible for a 1:3 matching grant up to \$100,000.

Recipients will be responsible for continued funding of these community-based initiatives after the one-year match from Vital Strategies ends. While strategies may evolve through the duration of the settlement funding availability, recipients that indicate sustained funding for the program beyond the period of the match will be given priority.

Throughout the one-year grant period, technical assistance from Vital Strategies will be available to all recipients.

*Please note that this project will match funds allocated directly to counties, cities and Tribes from the Opioid Settlements Agreements, but does not apply to the 30% portion received and distributed by the state.*

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

### ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

1. Local county governments, health departments, health and human services departments and other relevant departments in counties with fewer than 500,000 residents who manage opioid settlement funds are eligible to apply. Municipalities within those counties that manage opioid settlement funds are also eligible to apply.
2. Tribal governments and Tribally designated entities managing opioid settlement funds are eligible to apply.

Applicants will need to submit proof of the county/municipality/Native nation's commitment to earmark a matching portion of Opioid Settlement Funds to this initiative. Such proof may be either a formal recorded budget discussion and/or a letter of commitment supplied by the county/municipality/Native nation. If additional support and/or templates are needed from Vital Strategies, please use the email below to request them. Counties/municipalities/Native nations should also demonstrate commitment to sustainability of the harm reduction/overdose prevention initiative beyond the match.

*Tribal governments or Tribally designated entities managing Tribal opioid settlement funds that need additional time or alternative arrangements to demonstrate commitment to earmark a matching portion of Tribal Opioid Settlement Funds should contact Giavana Margo, at [gmargo@vitalstrategies.org](mailto:gmargo@vitalstrategies.org), to discuss possible alternative arrangements.*

*Because this RFP provides a match for opioid settlement funds, state recognized Tribes and Native-led/Native-serving nonprofits, companies, and other organizations are not eligible to apply as they are not included in the Tribal Opioid Settlements. However, state recognized Tribes and Native organizations seeking funding for overdose prevention/harm reduction services are strongly encouraged to reach out to Skye Hart, Technical Advisor for Indigenous Health and Drug Use Initiatives at Vital Strategies, at [skyehart@vitalstrategies.org](mailto:skyehart@vitalstrategies.org) to discuss other possible funding and technical assistance opportunities.*

### TYPES OF SERVICES TO BE SUPPORTED

Services and interventions described in the proposal must align with Vital Strategies' technical interventions and must be allowable expenses under the applicable settlement agreements (e.g., the uses listed in [Exhibit E](#) of the distributor and Janssen settlement agreements, the uses listed in [Schedule B](#) of the Purdue Tribal Opioid Settlement Agreement).

**Lobbying:** Funds provided through this RFP may not be used towards lobbying for or against specific legislation. Entities receiving this grant remain free to conduct lobbying activities, however such activities must be supported entirely through funds other than those provided by Vital Strategies.

### Vital Strategies Technical Interventions

- Expand low-barrier access to treatment medications in community settings
- Expand treatment medication access in institutional settings
- Expand community-based harm reduction services
- Mobilize communities through media campaigns and power-building
- Promote systemic change to support, not punish, people who use drugs
- Support and advise on systems planning, reform, and capacity building
- Establish legal aid services that specifically focus on the needs of people who use or used drugs.

### Examples of Eligible Services

*Please note that these are just examples, and eligible evidence-based harm reduction and overdose prevention services are not limited to this list.*

1. Distribution of harm reduction supplies (safer drug-use supplies, wound care kits, fentanyl test strips and xylazine test strips, naloxone and hygiene products) to unhoused populations and at encampments.
2. Culturally-based programs including ceremony, language classes, traditional healing, drum circles, talking circles, traditional singing and dancing, storytelling, cultural arts such as beading and basketmaking, traditional foods/food sovereignty programs, (youth) culture camps, etc. that aim to provide healing for people who use drugs and/or prevent future drug use.
3. Increasing access to agonist medications for opioid use disorder to people in contexts where their vulnerability to overdose is heightened, including jails, prisons, and hospital emergency departments.
4. Providing no-cost civil legal aid or legal intervention for possible violations to the Americans with Disabilities Act (which covers substance use disorders) to people who use drugs and or people with a history of drug use.
5. Establish or expand supportive housing with integrated social, harm reduction and support services.
6. Invest in supports for families vulnerable to child removal due to involvement with substance use, with the goal of reducing the rate of children removed from family homes and supporting family recovery and family reunification.
7. Incorporating harm reduction, treatment, and overdose prevention messaging into appropriate cultural practices.
8. Media campaigns that shift the narrative around harm reduction and reduce the stigma of drug use.
9. Peer support navigators assisting individuals in navigating access to evidence-based treatment, healthcare systems, social services, etc.
10. Conducting a needs assessment and strategic planning activities specific to one of Vital Strategies technical interventions.



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Questions about eligibility or proposal details can be submitted via email to Giavana Margo at [gmargo@vitalstrategies.org](mailto:gmargo@vitalstrategies.org).

The maximum allowable funding request per applicant is \$100,000 over the one-year grant period. The one-year grant period is anticipated to begin on July 21, 2025, and funding is non-renewable beyond the grant period; this is a one-time-only award. Funding must be matched with county/municipal/Tribal Opioid Settlement dollars. **Full application is due to [overdose@vitalstrategies.org](mailto:overdose@vitalstrategies.org) by 11:59pm EST on June 30, 2025.**

## PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

### I. Cover Page

1. Applicant name
2. Applicant mailing address
3. Applicant shipping address, if different from mailing address (cannot be a PO box)
4. Signature and typed name(s) of relevant leadership.
5. Name, title, email address, and phone number of contact person for the application
7. Total budget amount being requested (the budget template allows to calculate the entire budget and then calculate the match requested) (Appendix B)
8. Proposed project focus and evidence-based harm reduction or overdose prevention intervention from the list of Vital Strategies technical interventions.

#### Technical Interventions

- Expand low-barrier access to treatment medications in community settings
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### II. Project Narrative

- 1. Executive Summary:** What are the main expected results and activities of your project? Please provide a brief summary of what your project will be achieving and how. (less than 250 words)
- 2. Background:** What are the key problems related to overdose in your county/municipality/Native nation that you are proposing to address? Please provide data (if available) and description of existing programs, and describe barriers to accessing services for people who use drugs. (less than 500 words)
- 3. Project Description and Outcomes:** What are the specific results that your proposed program will seek to achieve (please use indicators such as unique numbers of individuals served, number of people reached through media campaign, civil-legal cases resolved, etc.) and through what interventions? (less than 500 words)
- 4. Project Implementation:** Will your agency implement the program or will you direct opioid settlement funds towards another organization for implementation? If granting to another organization, describe the process and timeframe for this. (less than 500 words).
- 5. Community Engagement:** Describe what structures or processes are in place in your county/municipality/Native nation to engage people with lived or living experience and the community on

how opioid settlement funds are to be utilized (e.g. advisory committee, community survey, focus groups, etc.).

Please indicate whether your county/municipality/Native nation would be interested in receiving technical assistance to strengthen these structures or processes. *Receiving this technical assistance is not a requirement of funding, but will strengthen the application.* (less than 350 words)

**6. Overdose Disparities:** Please describe the demographics of the county/municipality, and how you will ensure outreach to populations disproportionately impacted by overdose death. *This question does not need to be answered by Native nations applying for matching funds.* (less than 350 words).

**7. Agency and Partner Capacity:** Please describe agency and/or community-based organization partner capacity in performing this work. If neighboring counties are submitting one joint application, please indicate how the cross-county collaboration will operate. (less than 250 words)

**8. Sustainability:** Please describe how opioid settlement funding and/or other funding sources will be leveraged to provide for the sustainability of this program after the period of the matching grant. (less than 250 words)

### III. Letter of Commitment for Match

Please submit either county/municipality/Tribal government budget discussions and/or letter of commitment describing county/municipality/Tribal government commitment to provide funds for the harm reduction intervention for the year of the match.

*Note: Tribal governments or Tribally designated entities managing Tribal opioid settlement funds that need additional time or alternative arrangements to demonstrate commitment to earmark a matching portion of Tribal Opioid Settlement Funds should contact Giavana Margo, at [gmargo@vitalstrategies.org](mailto:gmargo@vitalstrategies.org), to discuss possible alternative arrangements.*

### IV. Budget

Please use the budget template provided (Appendix B) to articulate a detailed funding request for the proposed project. The template proposes to calculate the entire budget and then supports calculations of a match. Please note the total match amount cannot exceed \$100,000 over a one-year period anticipated to begin July 21, 2025.

- The budget narrative should explain how the numbers in the budget were calculated and how each expense is related to the proposed project.
- Be sure to determine if the cost in the contract is reasonable and justifiable.
- It is recommended that the match funding cover non-reoccurring costs (costs needed to start the project, but won't be required to keep the project going beyond the funding period)

*Note that funds cannot be used for lobbying as defined in Section 4911 of the U.S. Code.*

## **V. Reporting Requirements**

The grant administrator will distribute grant funds to recipients. 50% of funds will be received at the start of the project period, with further installments to be provided upon receipt of quarterly reports.

Quarterly reports will be sent to the grant administrator and will include both a brief narrative and financial report.

## **VI. Technical Assistance**

Technical assistance will be made available for applicants throughout the application period and to awardees during project implementation.

Awardees that have indicated interest in establishing or strengthening settlement advisory committees and/or increasing community engagement and input on settlement spending in their jurisdiction will also receive support from Vital Strategies in this area.





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## Appendix B – Budget Template

Please download the budget template from [this link](#).