

Program Improvement – Meeting the 2023 National Standards Program-Specific Budget Considerations

This guidance provides budget development considerations specific to Program Improvement awards. Unlike NCA's Allowable and Unallowable Costs document which lists specific cost items, this program-specific guidance focuses on strategic budget planning principles and best practices for this award type.

Use this guidance alongside NCA's [Allowable and Unallowable Costs](#) list when developing your budget. While the Allowable and Unallowable Costs list tells you **what** costs are permissible, this document helps you determine **how** to structure your budget effectively for program success and compliance with award requirements.

Consider these guidelines as you make budget decisions to ensure your proposed costs align with program objectives and funding priorities.

Important - All Budget Categories

Program Improvement

Please note that all budget items must be program related expenses required to IMPROVE your services to the standard(s) selected in your application, NOT to maintain what your CAC already provides.

Personnel and Fringe

Program Improvement Personnel

Personnel costs should directly support the Program Improvement standard(s) identified in your application, meaning personnel included in your budget must work directly on the goals and objectives of the project.

Supervisory Positions

Supervisory roles are generally not allowable unless the position also works directly on the goals and objectives of the project, which must align with their Job Description. When including supervisory positions, budget allocation must reflect only the portion of time spent working on this project, not general administrative or supervisory functions.

Budget Efficiency

Applicants should avoid including numerous personnel positions budgeted at minimal funding levels (typically less than 10% of a position). Such fragmented funding creates an administrative burden for both the CAC and NCA while failing to provide meaningful support for program implementation. Instead, focus on fewer positions with more substantial funding allocations that enable effective service delivery.

Fringe Expenses

Applicants should thoroughly review documentation requirements and carefully consider which fringe benefits to assign to this grant. This is especially important for larger CACs or those who work under the umbrella of large organizations such as hospitals, universities, or municipalities,

where obtaining detailed invoices and proof of payment for fringe expenses may be challenging. All requested benefits must be identified in the applicant's written policies.

Cost Calculation

Personnel costs should be calculated based on the actual percentage of time each position will dedicate to grant-funded activities, ensuring accurate reflection of effort and appropriate use of federal funds. Approved reimbursement is calculated using actual hours worked on the project, as documented on timesheets, and applied to the corresponding pay period and employer-paid benefits for each pay period.

Travel

Grant-Funded Personnel

In most cases, travel costs should be limited to personnel funded through this grant award.

Allowable Travel and Training Requirements

Common travel expenses include local mileage for providing direct services to CAC clients and travel expenses for training activities. Training travel must relate directly to the standard(s) and be a requirement of the essential component(s) identified in your application.

Service-Specific Focus

All travel costs must align with and support the standard(s) identified in your grant application. The name and location of training should be filled out completely within the budget form and avoid using "to be determined (TBD)" if possible.

Equipment

General Restriction

Equipment costs are for technology and other items that cost over \$10,000 and have a useful life of more than one year. If it does not meet these criteria, it should be categorized under the Supplies line. Equipment is rarely funded on this grant.

Alternative Funding

If your CAC is in need of equipment, please review the Equipment and Technology Support RFP for appropriate funding opportunities that specifically address equipment needs.

Supplies

Budget Allocation

Supplies and materials purchased must be necessary to support the *improvement* of the standard(s) selected in the application.

Office Supplies

General office supplies should not be included unless they are necessary to implement your project and specifically tied to an objective within your application.

Computing Equipment

Computing equipment is allowable when necessary for grant-funded positions. Costs should be allocated based on the relative benefit to this program. For example, if a Family Advocate

position is budgeted at 30% effort on this project and requires a computer, only 30% of the computer cost should be allocated to this grant.

Consultant

Service Alignment

Consultant costs must directly support the Program Improvement standard(s) identified in your application.

Contract Agreements

Consultant activities must align with your goals and objectives and be provided under a signed, written agreement detailing the work to be performed and outline all expenses the CAC may reimburse the contracted entity. The contract should be reviewed by your Program Associate prior to being signed.

Other Costs

Accreditation Requirements

Other costs must directly support the accreditation standard(s) and be a requirement of the essential components identified in your application.

Annual Fees

Do not include any ongoing annual subscriptions, service fees, software support, audit or insurance costs etc. for existing subscriptions in your proposed budget. These types of expenses should only be included in your budget for NEW or UPGRADED features that are necessary in order to advance you in meeting the standard(s) selected in your application.