Opioid Settlement Sample Emerging Needs Fund Process

Michigan Association of Counties

Emerging Needs Fund Rationale:

As new drug threats, overdose spikes, funding cuts and other service disruptions take place, some local governments have identified the need to ensure flexible and timely access to opioid settlement funds. The creation of this fund would provide a way to access funding outside of the traditional annual or biannual request-for-proposal cycles, offering an alternative method for distributing funds. This fund could be used to:

- Maintaining programming during service disruptions, such as unanticipated funding cuts.
- Supply community-based organizations and peer recovery networks with resources during overdose spikes.
- Respond rapidly to emerging drug trends.

1. Emerging Needs Identification and Prioritization

1.1 Assess Urgent and Unforeseen Needs

- Monitor community indicators (e.g., overdose spikes, emerging drug trends, mental health crises, service disruptions).

- Gather input from service providers, first responders, and affected community members.

- Review and integrate:

    o Real-time data from public health and law enforcement

    o Information from existing needs assessments or ongoing program monitoring

    o Community reports and news media

- Define priority areas for rapid-response funding.

1.2 Define Funding Objectives

- Establish clear, flexible funding objectives that support:

    o Rapid mobilization of services or supplies

- o Gap-filling for unforeseen needs

- o Short-term pilot efforts to address urgent issues

- Set expectations around:

  - o Duration of funding (e.g., up to 6 months or 1 year)

  - o Simplicity of reporting

  - o Alignment with allowable uses under opioid settlement or local guidance

2. Governance and Oversight Structure

2.1 Emerging Needs Fund Oversight Committee

- Designate a subcommittee of the broader fund governance body to oversee emerging needs requests (e.g., Oversight and Request for Proposal Review Committee).

- Define scope and authority (e.g., recommend use of funds for a specific activity to the full steering committee/advisory panel).

2.2 Conflict of Interest and Transparency

- Require disclosure of conflicts of interest for all reviewers.

- Document decision-making process/rationale for each award.

- Ensure that oversight is aligned with county-level transparency standards.

3. Application and Review Process

3.1 Streamlined Application

- Develop a short application form focused on:

  - o Immediate need and proposed response

  - o Impact and target population

  - o Budget and timeline

3.2 Rolling or Off-Cycle Review

- Accept applications on a rolling basis or at scheduled intervals (e.g., monthly reviews).

- Ensure flexibility to respond to emergencies within days or weeks.

- Clearly outline:

  - Eligibility criteria

  - Allowable uses

  - Decision timeframe

  - Evaluation process (e.g., scoring rubric or simplified review guide)

4. Funding Decisions and Communication

4.1 Review and Approval

- Oversight and Request for Proposal Review Committee scores or evaluates proposals quickly using a simplified framework.

- Recommend awards based on:

  - Urgency and severity of need

  - Equity and reach into priority populations

  - Capacity to implement rapidly

- Legal review may be required for alignment with funding requirements.

4.2 Notification and Public Communication

- Notify applicants promptly.

- Publish funded initiatives publicly to maintain transparency.

- Share rationale for funding decisions and basic summaries of funded projects.

5. Contracting and Launch

5.1 Simplified Agreements

- Use short-form Vendor Agreements tailored for time-sensitive or short-term funding.

- Define:

  - Scope of work

  - Payment schedule

  - Basic reporting and accountability expectations

5.2 Rapid Implementation

- Publicize launch of services where appropriate.

- Connect funded projects with broader community response efforts.

6. Monitoring, Adjustment, and Learning

6.1 Reporting and Impact Tracking

- Require brief, outcome-focused reports using a simplified form.

- Track:

  o   Number of people served

  o   Immediate outcomes (e.g., naloxone distributed, crisis beds filled)

  o   Lessons learned or barriers encountered

6.2 Flexibility and Amendments

- Allow grantees to request:

  o   Timeline extensions

  o   Reallocations due to evolving needs

- Ensure changes are documented and approved by the Oversight and Request for Proposal Review Committee.

6.3 Public Transparency and Feedback

- Publish periodic updates on how emerging needs funds are used.

- Consider community forums or other feedback tools to gather public input on urgent issues.