

Draft Program Solicitation: Health care Rewards to Achieve Improved Outcomes (HEROES)

February 20, 2024

FABBS Comments on HEROES Draft Program Solicitation ATTN: ARPA-H-SN-24-04,
submitted by email

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the HEROES draft solicitation. The Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences (FABBS) is a coalition of 29 scientific societies that come together to advance the impact, rigor, inclusivity, and accessibility of our disciplines. Our members have a depth of expertise in a wide range of areas including many central to supporting the mission of ARPA-H: Health promotion, disease prevention, implementation science, and behavior change. We offer this feedback in service of maximizing the success of the HEROES program.

Target Outcomes - Selecting Two of the Four Target Outcomes

Recognizing that HEROES will be selecting two of the four target outcomes, FABBS encourages HEROES to start with 1) Heart Attack and Stroke Risk and 2) Opioid Overdose. Based on feedback from our members, much is known about how to prevent these health crises that are not adequately incorporated into our current health care systems and practices. FABBS sees tremendous potential for HEROES to make significant progress in these areas.

Overarching Comments

FABBS applauds the HEROES program and strongly supports the innovative approach to incentivizing and rewarding prevention.

- **Timeline** - While FABBS shares the ARPA-H sense of urgency to make progress, FABBS is concerned that the three-year timeline might not be enough to see the value or return on investment of addressing upstream factors.
- **Not far enough upstream** - In addition, FABBS questions if the cost savings metrics such as reducing hospitalizations and fatal overdoses might not go far enough upstream. These measures risk leading health accelerators to be more narrowly focused on individuals already deep in crises. Current metrics fall short of supporting programs that reach individuals earlier in health cycles when they have greater opportunities to avoid opioid addiction or develop healthy habits rather than changing long established unhealthy ones.
- **Interventions** - The solicitation often refers to 'innovative and evidence-based technologies'. FABBS encourages broadening this language to include 'interventions'. As currently written, the solicitation is limited to individual health and does not appear to invite social and community support.

1.5 Program Structure - 1.5.4 Improving Health Outcomes for All

FABBS strongly supports the inclusion of Health Equity Resource Statements and encourages HEROES to develop an evidenced-based process for evaluating and, when necessary, strengthening the statement plan to ensure equitable outcomes. FABBS members have substantial experience in studying and addressing health disparities. Our members have noted the importance of paying close attention to population-level health outcomes.

5.0 Evaluation of Proposal - 5.2 Review and Selection Process

FABBS encourages HEROES to consider the disciplinary diversity of reviewers during the selection process. Behavior change and maintaining healthy behaviors is not only extremely complex and challenging but also essential to effective prevention. Given the ambitious goals of HEROES, FABBS recommends incorporating behavioral expertise to review and strengthen proposed interventions.

Appendix A: Health Outcome Details

FABBS suggests that HEROES broaden the current language in 'Potential Enabling Technologies and Innovative Approaches Reported or Proposed to Have Beneficial Impact' to include interventions and implementation of effective strategies and promotion of preventative behaviors - or discontinuation of behaviors that increase risk.

Heart Attack and Stroke Risk

The American Heart Association (AHA) 'Life's Essential 8' offers key measures for improving and maintaining cardiovascular health including sleep, exercise, nicotine avoidance, balanced diet, healthy weight maintenance, and tracking of lipids, blood pressure, and blood glucose. FABBS recommends expanding the examples of uses for home-based technologies to include promoting a healthy lifestyle, not just medication adherence.

Opioid Overdose

FABBS encourages expanding this target metric to include reducing abuse disorders. Limiting efforts to focus on abuse risks missing opportunities to reduce abuse that can be devastating to individuals, families, and communities even without resulting in an overdose event.