



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices Policy Academy to Strengthen Benefits Systems through Innovative Technology

Purpose:	To collaborate with cross-functional state health and human services teams from up to six states and territories to advance SNAP and Medicaid system modernization through technology, operational, and governance improvements that support governors' H.R. 1 response and preserve benefits access for eligible consumers.
Eligibility:	All U.S. states, commonwealths, and territories in good standing with NGA are welcome to apply.
Applications Due:	Please email a single PDF document with application materials to Jess Kirchner at jkirchner@nga.org by 8pm EST on 6/12/26
Project Period:	July 2026 – July 2027
Informational Call for Applicants:	May 18th from 2-3pm EST (Register here)
NGA Contacts	Jess Kirchner, Children and Families Senior Policy Analyst Anna Heard, Health Senior Policy Analyst Brittney Roy, Health Program Director

OVERVIEW:

States and territories are actively preparing for significant changes to SNAP and Medicaid administration required under the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act”, or H.R. 1, enacted in July of 2025. New statutory provisions - including the SNAP benefit and administrative cost-sharing, changes to SNAP work requirements, new Medicaid work requirements, and more frequent eligibility redeterminations - may pose operational, fiscal and administrative challenges for state and territorial agencies. In response to this moment, the NGA Center for Best Practices is offering a flexible technical assistance opportunity designed to support governors’ offices as they navigate and implement these requirements.

Through the Center for Best Practices, NGA has been proactively supporting governors’ offices with webinars, in person convenings, and written resources to help states prepare for these changes to take effect. Building on this foundation, NGA is rolling out a year-long Policy Academy to provide states and territories with in-depth technical assistance, connections to peers, and valuable relationships with leading subject matter experts. Selected teams will receive coordination, technical and strategic advice and will be supported by at least one technical

assistance provider selected by NGA that can help the state or territory achieve their Policy Academy goals (as noted in their application and in discussions with NGA). Selected teams will also receive support on communications related to their work from a separate technical assistance provider.

The purpose of this technical assistance opportunity is to help governors' offices effectively implement the requirements included in H.R. 1 by improving program quality, streamlining benefits delivery, and preserving access to benefits for eligible individuals and families. This opportunity is to provide states and territories the flexibility to determine their own agenda based on needs of their individual state or territory—and specifically to help them make measurable progress in benefit delivery and program integrity; NGA values that not every vendor solution or policy will be applicable to every state or territory.

Applicants can focus on SNAP, Medicaid, or explore the intersection between the SNAP and Medicaid, but applicants are required to demonstrate a connection to the governors' H.R. 1 response. Attendees are welcome to use NGA support to bolster existing efforts or create new ones.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- Development of a ready-to-implement action plan geared towards achieving your governors' H.R. 1 policy priorities related to SNAP and Medicaid.
- Concrete, measurable policy and systems change that support SNAP and/or Medicaid benefit access and integrity as demonstrated by improved delivery and quality (such as reduced staff time burden, higher payment accuracy, improved consumer outreach, etc.)
- Stronger H.R. 1 response governance structure: Increased inter-agency collaboration among relevant stakeholders; momentum toward achieving the governor's vision for H.R. 1 response.
- Stronger understanding and documentation related to H.R. 1 requirements, implementation timeline, state and territory policy options, and short- and long-term potential impacts.
- Engagement with peer states through NGA Center-facilitated opportunities designed to help states and territories advance policy priorities and action plans.
- Stronger strategic communications tools and deliverables, supported by NGA's strategic communications advisor.
- Establish relationships with subject matter experts and technical assistance providers to help inform state and territory policy priorities and action plans.

POLICY ACADEMY ACTIVITIES AND ASSISTANCE:

Through the Policy Academy, competitively selected states and territories will:

- Convene stakeholders across the state or territory's health, human services, technology and/or other relevant systems to inform and further the governor's goals and H.R. 1 response.

- Work with a technical assistance provider sourced in partnership with NGA to help support and guide the specific state and territory efforts.
- Participate in:
 - Two in-person convenings (Kickoff and Closing) attended by other Policy Academy teams, state and national policymakers, and other subject matter experts.
 - Peer learning opportunities with fellow Policy Academy teams, including webinars every other month.
 - Monthly project 1:1 check-ins with the NGA team.
 - In-state/territory site visits with NGA and technical assistance staff if and when needed.
- Submit a brief final report to NGA that details the progress made toward achieving your goals and your next steps to implement H.R. 1 changes to SNAP and/or Medicaid.

POLICY ACADEMY TIMELINE:

Date	Activity
May 11, 2026	Application period opens
May 18, 2026	Informational call for prospective applicants #1
June 12, 2026	Application period closes
July 2026 – July 2027	Period of bimonthly virtual meetings, monthly NGA meetings, site visits, and technical assistance
August 2026 (tentative)	In-person kickoff convening
June 2027 (tentative)	In-person culminating convening

REQUIRED APPLICATION CONTENT AND SELECTION CRITERIA:

Applications may receive up to 100 points, should not exceed six (6) pages, and must include each of the following items:

- **Contact Information:** Name, title, organization, and email address of the state team lead.
- **Letter of Support from the governor:** A letter of support from the governor is required and should not exceed two (2) pages. The letter should state the governor’s interest in and desired outcomes for the state or territory’s participation in the Policy Academy.
- **Statement of Interest:** Briefly describe why your state is interested in participating in the Policy Academy and what your team hopes to gain from participation.
- **State Team (“Tiger Team”) Leadership and Membership:** List the name, title, organization, and email address for up to five (5) individuals on your proposed state team and indicate who will serve as the team lead/primary liaison. If the governor has already

designated a “Tiger Team” or a working group to respond to H.R. 1, applicants can call out or utilize that existing body or a subset of that group. State teams should be comprised of staff who can drive activities required to make tangible progress on policy goals related to H.R. 1 response related to technology and policy changes that result in measurable progress in benefit delivery or program integrity.

- Required core team members:
 - H.R. 1 Response Coordinator (if applicable)
 - Governor’s Health and/or Human Services Advisor
 - SNAP Director if applicable to the project (or delegate)
 - Medicaid director if applicable to the project (or delegate)
 - Representative from state information or technology agency, or digital services team
- Optional core team members:
 - Other governor’s advisors
 - State Medicaid advisor if not already included
 - State SNAP advisor if not already included
 - State Labor or Workforce Representative
- **Current Policy Landscape:** Briefly describe any current or pending policy initiatives on H.R. 1 response related to benefit delivery or program integrity in your state or territory relevant to the focus of the application; any relevant working groups or task forces; strategic planning efforts; partnerships with national organizations; any recent successes as well as the biggest challenges your state is facing in this policy area.
- **Goals and Strategies:** Outline 3-5 policy or measurable quality/access goals on which your state or territory would like to make progress on during the 12-month project period in regards to benefit delivery or program integrity; the steps necessary to achieve these goals; how these goals fit into the governor’s priorities; and the role NGA Center or external technical assistance may play in achieving these goals. Priority will be given to state teams that outline an achievable scope of work and the capacity to enact policy or programmatic change in the 12-month project period.

Potential state or territory goals could include but are not limited to one or more of the following:

- The creation, strengthening, or codification of a cross-agency Tiger Team, or strategic working group, focused on SNAP or Medicaid H.R. 1 response.
- Modification of policies, practices, or systems to improve SNAP or Medicaid benefit delivery or program integrity.
- Development of performance metrics related to H.R. 1 implementation and long-term goals related to SNAP or Medicaid program improvements.
- Planning, development, and messaging around SNAP, Medicaid, or H.R. 1 budget or legislative priorities regarding improvements to SNAP or Medicaid benefit delivery or program integrity.

- Evaluation and redesign of health and/or human services-related procurement processes to support the state in implementing H.R. 1 provisions.
- Conduct qualitative and/or quantitative research around a specific research question, such as: what are the root causes of SNAP payment errors in our state? What is the applicant experience of the new Medicaid application / redetermination process? What are the major pain points for case workers in processing Medicaid and/or SNAP applications?
- Gain a stronger understanding of how to evaluate and manage vendor performance around software delivery, especially as it relates to H.R. 1 software implementation.

Priority will also be given to states or territories who:

- Propose tangible outcomes for the project.
- Clearly call out the role of technology in the project, which could include topics like the adoption of AI, the refinement of procurement processes, revising benefit approval or review processes, integrating new data sources to improve benefit delivery or integrity, using technology to improve beneficiary communications, or tracking and evaluating the effects of H.R. 1. in the state on benefit delivery or program integrity.
- Demonstrate a sustainability plan for the project, if the state or territory is approaching a gubernatorial election.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION:

All applications must be received by **6/12/2026** with the subject line Policy Academy Application - [STATE OR TERRITORY]. Applications **should not exceed 8 pages**.

Please combine all application materials into a single document and email **Jess Kirchner** at jkirchner@nga.org. Following submission, applicants will receive a confirmation email from the NGA Center verifying receipt of your application.

All questions about this policy academy and the Request for Applications process should be directed to Jess Kirchner at jkirchner@nga.org.

This request for applications (RFA) is not binding on the NGA Center, nor does it constitute a contractual offer. Without limiting the foregoing, the NGA Center reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to reject any or all applications; to modify, supplement, or cancel the RFA; to waive any deviation from the RFA; to negotiate regarding any proposal; and to negotiate final terms and conditions that may differ from those stated in the RFA. Under no circumstances shall NGA be liable for any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a response to this RFA.