

Public Health Data Modernization Tribal Implementation Center Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

Updated July 26, 2024

To help organizations respond to the Public Health Data Modernization Tribal Implementation Center Request for Proposals (RFP), the Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG) National Partners offer this Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document.

This FAQ document will be updated periodically. Please submit questions to tribalic@nnphi.org.

Questions and answers are organized by the following categories:

- Proposal Requirements
- Eligibility
- Tribal Engagement
- Implementation Projects
- Project Management and Communications
- Evaluation
- Budget and Contracting

Proposal Requirements

Question:

Who is the point of contact for this RFP?

Answer:

Please send questions on this RFP to tribalic@nnphi.org.

Question:

Do the PHIG Partners require all team members to have a resume/CV submitted as part of the proposal submission?

Answer:

Yes, resumes or CVs should be included for all core team members in the proposal.

Question:

Can you confirm that the due date is Sunday, July 21 and that the deadline does not fall on a business day?

Answer:

The updated due date is Sunday July 28th at 11:59PM Eastern Time. Proposals may be submitted in advance of the due date.

Question:

Should applicants submit the 10 required proposal sections as separate files, or can the proposal be submitted in one file?

Answer:

One file is preferred, but applicants can submit separate files. Applications must be submitted via the RFP's hyperlink to the Tribal DMI Funding Opportunity Application Proposal Submission Form.

Question:

Can proposals include a cover page before the cover letter and, if so, can you confirm the cover page is excluded from the page count?

Answer:

Please limit your proposal to the components described in the RFP.

Question:

Should proposals include a table of contents, table of figures, table of tables, and list of acronyms and, if so, can you confirm these items are outside of the page limits?

Answer:

Proposals may include a table of contents, table of figures, table of tables, and list of acronyms. These items will not be counted toward the page limits of the proposal.

Question:

The RFP states 11-point font as the minimum. Can applicants reduce font size to 9 for graphics, tables, figures, and headers/footers?

Answer:

Yes.

Question:

Regarding the proposal component PDF of an active SAM registration, is there a specific section of the SAM registration PHIG requires? Or is a snapshot of the main registration page showing an active status sufficient?

Answer:

A screenshot of the applicant's SAM registration unique ID and the active status will suffice.

Question:

Regarding the proposal component Letters of Support, those are listed as optional, but the description says, "Applicants must provide...." Can you please confirm whether the letters of support are required or optional?

Answer:

Letters of support are optional but encouraged. The RFP has been updated accordingly. We apologize for the error.

Question:

Regarding the proposal component Status as Women-, Minority-, Disadvantaged-, Veteran-Owned, and/or Small Business, this section indicates that "Candidates interested in providing this information should submit a one-page summary of their organizational status and/or prior work." Can PHIG please clarify what is meant by "...and/or prior work" and how this information may differ relative to the Candidate Profile information?

Answer:

Applicants may describe their prior work with historically underserved and underrepresented entities if they do not formally classify as a Women-, Minority-, Disadvantaged-, Veteran-Owned, and/or Small Business. The page limit for this and all proposal components will be enforced.

Question:

Regarding the proposal component Status as Women-, Minority-, Disadvantaged-, Veteran-Owned, and/or Small Business, does this apply to both prime and subcontractors?

Answer:

Candidates may submit a one-page summary describing the organizational statuses of the prime contractor or any subcontractors as Women-, Minority-, Disadvantaged-, Veteran-Owned, and/or Small Businesses.

Question:

Are you able to provide any further information about the sub-criteria used to evaluate proposals in each evaluation area?

Answer:

No. Please see the descriptions for the proposal components Candidate Profile: Prior Experience and Status as a Native-Owned or Tribal-Serving Organization, Technical Proposal, and Budget Proposal for guidance on what information should be included in those components.

Eligibility

Question:

I work for a Tribal public health authority and I have plans for modernizing my data systems. Should I apply to this RFP?

Answer:

This RFP is for the establishment of a Tribal Implementation Center that will support many Tribes' and Tribal public health authorities' data modernization efforts. As the Tribal Implementation Center is established and announced, please look for opportunities to propose a data modernization implementation project the Tribal Implementation Center might support.

Question:

Are the eligibility requirements only for the prime contractor? Do subcontractors working with prime have to also be a tribal or nonprofit supporting tribal?

Answer:

Eligibility requirements for both prime contractor and subcontractors are each described in the RFP.

Question:

The RFP states a preference for organizations with the experience and capacity to support all federally recognized Tribes. This could be interpreted as a preference for an organization who has a large collective and diverse network of Tribal partners as the prime organization. Could we leverage our subcontractors to fulfill any potential gaps in our Tribal network?

Answer:

Organizations developing a proposal as prime contractor are encouraged to partner with subcontractors to address any gaps in their ability to fulfill all the Tribal Implementation Center objectives and activities described in the RFP.

Question:

A requirement for prime contractors is a track record of successfully managing multi-year federal-funded awards exceeding \$3,000,000 per year. Are the PHIG Partners looking for prime contractors who have managed contracts of this size and scale in general, or specifically performing data modernization?

Answer:

Prime contractors must have experience managing federally funded awards exceeding \$3,000,000 per year. Those contracts do not need to be specific to public health data modernization. The PHIG Partners are looking for applicants with relevant and extensive experience with Tribes, as described in the RFP.

Question:

Through previous employment with other organizations, I managed federally funded awards exceeding \$3,000,000 per year. However, my current organization has not. Is my current organization eligible to be the prime contractor?

Answer:

The criterion for the prime contractor to demonstrate a proven track record of successfully managing multi-year federal-funded awards exceeding \$3,000,000 per year applies to the organization. This experience can be described in the cover letter or candidate profile sections of the proposal. Please indicate whether that experience is based on at least one \$3 million or greater award or a combination of concurrent awards totaling \$3 million or greater.

Question:

Does managing over \$45 million in contracts count as in having managed over \$3 million for this RFP?

Answer:

Candidates serving as Prime contractors must indicate their experience managing multi-year federal-funded awards exceeding \$3,000,000 per year. This can be described in the cover letter or candidate profile sections of the proposal. Please indicate whether that experience is based on at least one \$3 million or greater award or a combination of concurrent awards totaling \$3 million or greater.

Question:

Is a public health university-based research center (SAM.gov registered) eligible to be a prime contractor or a subcontractor?

Answer:

Yes, as long as the organization meets other eligibility criteria for a prime contractor or subcontractor.

Question:

We are not eligible to be the prime contractor, but would you still accept and evaluate a proposal if we were to submit as a subcontractor without a named prime? Asked another way, are you interested in establishing a "vendor pool"?

Answer:

The PHIG National Partners will not consider a proposal that lacks a prime contractor that meets eligibility requirements. In the future, there may be opportunities for organizations that do not meet eligibility requirements to participate in the Implementation Center program.

Question:

Are organizations that have previously been awarded Public Health Infrastructure Grant-funded contracts eligible for this RFP?

Answer:

Yes, those who have been awarded PHIG contracts are eligible to bid, provided they meet other eligibility requirements in the RFP.

Tribal Engagement

Question:

Is the intent for one Tribal Implementation Center to serve all Tribes, or just select Tribes?

Answer:

Through this RFP, the PHIG National Partners will be establishing one Tribal Implementation Center. Through the functions and activities described in the RFP, the Tribal Implementation Center will be expected to create a forum that reflects the strengths, assets, and diversity across Tribal communities. The Tribal Implementation Center will also establish a process for any Tribe or Tribal public health authority to propose a specific implementation project. The Tribal Implementation Center will collaborate with the PHIG National Partners on specifics for selecting implementation projects and determining supporting subawards to implementing partners.

Question:

The RFP references the creation of a "Community Liaison Group" with "Tribal-serving organizations from across Indian Country". Does this mean the applicant should have a deep capability to recruit participants into the Tribal Implementation Center? Can the applicant leverage subcontractors to fulfill this gap?

Answer:

Prime contractors that lack the ability to form and facilitate the community liaison group described in the RFP can partner with a subcontractor that has that ability. Such a partnership must be described with named subcontractors in the proposal.

Question:

Is there a minimum number of representatives that should be included in the Community Liaison Group?

Answer:

No. The specific number of Community Liaison Group members will be determined by the Tribal Implementation Center in collaboration with the PHIG Partners. The intent is to ensure data solutions are co-designed with representatives from Tribes and Tribal-serving organizations while respecting the diversity of Tribes and their priorities.

Question:

If you are selecting one prime contractor, how will you ensure this prime contractor has the capacity to reach out across the US to ensure they are working with a wide variety of partners?

Answer:

Prime contractors are encouraged to partner with subcontractors as necessary to engage with diverse Tribal communities across the US. The Tribal Implementation Center and PHIG National Partners will collaborate to maximize Tribes' and Tribal public health authorities' opportunities for participation.

Question:

How does the Tribal Implementation Center impact those Tribes who have already developed data governance and data use laws and policy?

Answer:

Through its Governance function, the Tribal Implementation Center will ensure data solutions it advances meet requirements for Tribal data sovereignty. As Tribes consider engaging with the Tribal Implementation Center through implementation projects, they can determine how to operationalize their data governance, laws, or policies.

Implementation Projects

Question:

Is the prime contractor expected to have enough subcontractors to support the technical components of the implementation projects or will that support be supplied through some central mechanism?

Answer:

The Tribal Implementation Center, through its prime contractor or subcontracts, must fulfill the activities and deliverables described in the RFP, including the Technology function. Through the Technology function, the Tribal Implementation Center will provide technical assistance to specific implementation projects. Technical assistance can vary given differences among the various implementation projects.

Question:

The RFP indicates that, based on participants' needs, the Technology function will also develop IT tools and infrastructure that can be shared with implementation projects. Shared tools and infrastructure could include synthetic data, FHIR servers, prototype FHIR client applications, and other services. Could the PHIG Partners elaborate more on this requirement?

Answer:

The specific IT tools and infrastructure that could support implementation projects will depend on the projects themselves and the data challenges or opportunities those projects address. While the Tribal Implementation Center will work with the community to identify those specific projects, we anticipate IT tools and infrastructure will utilize modern health IT standards per [CDC's Data Strategy](#).

Question:

Can you clarify the scope of the technical assistance expected from the Tribal Implementation Center? Are there specific types of technical assistance that might be prioritized (e.g., IT infrastructure support, training, policy development, etc.)?

Answer:

The Tribal Implementation Center will provide technical assistance in several ways. Through its Technology function, it will provide technical assistance for IT to implementation projects. See the RFP for examples. Through its People, Governance, and Process functions it will provide technical assistance to implementation projects as well as guidance material to the broader community. The content of the technical assistance and guidance material will be determined by the Tribal Implementation Center and could address workforce training and policy development.

Question:

The RFP references "data access use cases." Do the PHIG Partners have one or more preferred/priority use cases for implementation under this program? Can you please succinctly describe what qualified data modernization efforts would be defined as?

Answer:

Implementation projects, and the data access use cases they reflect, will be identified and prioritized by the Tribal Implementation Center. The PHIG Partners expect these projects and use cases will be consistent with the 3 broader Implementation Center outcomes (see RFP). Implementation projects may include electronic case reporting or adoption of the Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement (TEFCA), when these projects align with Tribes' priorities. The Tribal Implementation Center will also support other projects and use cases that advance adoption of modern health IT standards while respecting Tribal data sovereignty.

Question:

The RFP states "The Tribal Implementation Center will coordinate with the PHIG National Partners on the issuance of subawards to selected implementation projects." What does this coordination entail? Does this involve supporting Tribes to develop estimates and recommendations for funding? Does it also involve the Tribal Implementation Center evaluating proposals submitted from Tribal entities?

Answer:

Details for this coordination will be developed collaboratively by the Tribal Implementation Center and the PHIG National Partners. Through its Technology function, the Tribal Implementation Center will develop an approach to assess implementation project proposals submitted by potential implementation partners. Please see the RFP for additional detail.

Question:

How does the Tribal Implementation Center relate to the Indian Health Service (IHS) Health IT Modernization program?

Answer:

The PHIG National Partners will collaborate with CDC to engage IHS and explore collaboration opportunities.

Question:

Can the National Partners please clarify if the contractor that executes this work will have any direct involvement (e.g., reviewing, recommending, deciding) in the subaward funding that will go directly to the participating Tribal public health authorities? If so, can the National Partners please provide more details on the contractors' involvement in this.

Answer:

The Tribal Implementation Center will be responsible for developing inclusion criteria for implementation projects it supports. In collaboration with CDC and National Partners, it will also develop a process for identifying Tribal public health authorities that will receive subawards from the National Partners.

Question:

Given that the National Partners are looking for a Tribally owned firm, do the National Partners have any rules of engagement currently in place should the contractor's tribal owner want to participate in a data exchange project?

Answer:

The National Partners are seeking a Tribal-serving organization with a national reach. This supports the program goal of providing all federally recognized Tribes and Tribal public health authorities an equitable opportunity to participate in data modernization implementation projects supported by the Tribal Implementation Center. If the Tribal Implementation Center has an affiliation with a specific Tribe or Tribal public health authority, then the National Partners will ensure all other Tribes and Tribal public health authorities have an equitable opportunity to participate in the program.

Project Management and Communications

Question:

The RFP states that the Process function will include "...providing a web-based platform for task tracking and collaboration." Do the PHIG National Partners have a preference for a specific software product? Who will need to have access to the platform outside the Tribal Implementation Center (e.g., PHIG National Partners' Project Management Office? CDC? Other Implementation Centers?). In addition, will

this platform be hosted on PHIG infrastructure, or will the Tribal Implementation Center contractor develop and deploy the platform within their own organizational infrastructure?

Answer:

The PHIG National Partners recommend a cost-effective approach for providing a web-based platform for task tracking and collaboration (i.e., project management). Applicants may consider commercial products that are often used for comparable efforts. Users of this tool will be determined through collaboration between the Tribal Implementation Center and the PHIG National Partners. Those users may include the PHIG National Partners, CDC, and the other partners.

Question:

The RFP states "The Process function will also create a public website supporting communications and partner outreach." Will the website be hosted on PHIG infrastructure, or will the Tribal Implementation Center contractor develop and deploy the website within their own organizational infrastructure?

Answer:

The PHIG National Partners recommend applicants propose a cost-effective approach for hosting a public-facing website.

Question:

Has there been a communications effort to notify the Tribal community about the Tribal Implementation Center?

Answer:

The Tribal Implementation Center will conduct outreach to Tribes and Tribal-serving organizations. The PHIG National Partners conducted some outreach to raise awareness of the RFP, while ensuring a fair and competitive application process.

Evaluation

Question:

Regarding the deliverables listed under "People," would you please clarify if there are specific metrics to measure engagement with Tribes and Tribal-serving organizations? Are there specific metrics or outcomes expected from the engagement with Tribes and Tribal-serving organizations (e.g., number of engagements, types of feedback, etc.)? Are there specific tools or platforms that should be used to measure engagement?

Answer:

Once formed, the Tribal Implementation Center will ensure Tribal representatives' collaboration and input on an evaluation plan. That evaluation plan will include specific metrics, which can include engagement with Tribes and Tribal-serving organizations. The Tribal Implementation Center will provide a web-based platform for task tracking and collaboration, as described in the RFP under the Process function.

Question:

Can you please provide specific metrics or benchmarks for each of the three main outcomes outlined in the RFP?

a) Outcome 1: What specific metrics will be used to evaluate the use of the latest health IT standards? For example, will there be specific data points or benchmarks to meet?

b) Outcome 2: What criteria will determine the feasibility and success of using the TECCA network?

c) Outcome 3: How will the documentation and sharing of findings be evaluated in terms of quality, reach, and impact?

d) Are there any specific timelines associated with achieving these metrics?

Answer:

Once formed, the Tribal Implementation Center will ensure Tribal representatives' collaboration and input on an evaluation plan. That evaluation plan will include specific metrics and timelines, which can address the 3 broad outcomes of the Implementation Center program. Regarding Outcome 2, we recognize TECCA adoption may not be feasible for some Tribal public health authorities.

Question:

How will the success of individual implementation projects be evaluated? Are there predefined milestones or deliverables? Are there any specific tools or frameworks to be used for tracking these milestones and deliverables?

Answer:

Once formed, the Tribal Implementation Center will ensure Tribal representatives' collaboration and input on an evaluation plan. That evaluation plan will include specific metrics, which can address success criteria, milestones and performance criteria for implementation projects. As described in the RFP, the Technology function will be responsible for tracking implementation projects and reporting project status updates.

Question:

How will the overall impact of the Tribal Implementation Center be evaluated in terms of long-term outcomes? Can you provide examples of what constitutes long-term outcomes?

Answer:

Once formed, the Tribal Implementation Center will ensure Tribal representatives' collaboration and input on an evaluation plan. That evaluation plan will include specific metrics, which can address the 3 broad outcomes of the Implementation Center program listed in the RFP. Long-term outcomes from the Tribal Implementation Center will be derived from the 3 broad outcomes stated in the RFP.

Budget and Contracting

Question:

The RFP uses the phrase “selected applicant”. Is this a reference to the prime contractor described in the selected proposal?

Answer:

Yes.

Question:

To confirm, the Tribal Implementation Center will develop a process for selecting proposals submitted by potential implementation partners, but subawards supporting implementation partners are funded separately by the PHIG National Partners?

Answer:

Yes.

Question:

With implementing partners receiving separate subawards from the PHIG National Partners, how do you anticipate the Tribal Implementation Center spending down its award? Is the Tribal Implementation Center prevented from providing additional funds to implementation partners?

Answer:

Proposals should include a budget that supports the Tribal Implementation Center activities and functions described in the RFP. Those activities and functions do not include issuing funds to implementation partners. The PHIG National Partners will issue subawards to implementation partners. Applicants’ proposed budgets must not exceed \$23 million.

Question:

The 'Instructions' and 'Contract Budget' tabs in the required budget template MS Excel file provided with the RFP indicate options under the "II. DIRECT LABOR" section for "Labor hours and hourly rate" and "Fixed Price." Can PHIG confirm that the offeror can propose fully burdened hourly rates to include: direct labor, indirect costs through G&A, and fee/profit, for either a Time and Materials (T&M)/Labor Hour (LH) [Labor hours and hourly rate] or Fixed hourly bill rate and fixed hours, i.e., Firm Fixed Price (FFP) [Fixed Price] contract type?

Answer:

Please calculate direct labor costs by using one of the options described in the budget template instructions. The selected applicant and the PHIG National Partners can contemplate other budgeting approaches and related contract types during the contracting process.

Question:

Please confirm that the contract awardee will be able to submit monthly invoices for hours worked at the proposed hourly rates and any material, travel, or other direct costs incurred each month.

Answer:

Please develop a proposed budget using the budget template and instructions provided. The selected applicant and the PHIG National Partners can resolve details on invoicing during the contracting process.

Question:

Can applicants include an assumptions tab within the budget template MS Excel file?

Answer:

Yes.

Question:

The RFP indicates that "The proposed budget must include honorarium..." Can you provide clarification on the amount and distribution requirements of the honorarium?

Answer:

Specific amounts and distribution requirements for the honoraria will be determined through collaboration between the Tribal Implementation Center and PHIG National Partners. For the budget proposal, please propose a total for honoraria that is consistent with your description of engaging a community liaison group.

Question:

The RFP states that "Some additional travel costs for meetings or conference attendance to collaborate with the Public Health Implementation Center program and its partners are also expected." Does PHIG have a schedule of such meetings with details (e.g., length of meetings, number of attendees) for which offerors can budget? If not, can PHIG please provide a travel "plug" we can use so that offerors proposal a similar amount in their budgets?

Answer:

The PHIG National Partners do not have a pre-determined meeting schedule. We will collaborate with the selected applicant as necessary on a budget that supports both planned and ad-hoc meetings for Implementation Center program coordination.

Question:

Under the proposal requirement Response to Terms and Conditions, the RFP states that the selected applicant will "...enter into contractual agreements with NNPHI and PHAB." Will the selected applicant enter into separate agreements with NNPHI and PHAB, or is this one contractual agreement in which the offeror, NNPHI, and PHAB will all be parties? If separate agreements, what will the scope of work be in each agreement and how will the PHIG partners jointly manage the contracts?

Answer:

Due to the structure of the Public Health Infrastructure Grant, the selected applicant will enter into separate contractual agreements with NNPHI and PHAB. The scope of work for each agreement is to be determined. NNPHI and PHAB will jointly manage the contracts through the project management approach the PHIG National Partners are currently using to successfully manage the broader Implementation Center program.

Question:

Can you please confirm that the intent is to award a contract, not a grant, to the successful applicant?

Answer:

The selected applicant will be engaged via contracts with NNPHI and PHAB, not grants or subawards.

Question:

Are awardees able to apply indirect costs to the funding, and if so, will it have limits?

Answer:

Please see the instructions in the budget template applicants are required to use.

Question:

Can this funding help cover the costs of new or pre-existing software, hardware, licensing, maintenance, or consulting to continue or expand our Tribe's data modernization efforts?

Answer:

This RFP is for the establishment of a Tribal Implementation Center that will support many Tribes' and Tribal public health authorities' data modernization efforts. In collaboration with CDC and the National Partners, the Tribal Implementation Center will determine appropriate uses for the National Partners' subawards to Tribes and Tribal public health authorities for the data modernization projects implemented through this program. The Tribal Implementation Center will not provide direct funding to participating Tribes to cover these and other direct costs related to infrastructure as these expenses will be eligible for subawards from the National Partners.