

MDI Connect Planning Grant: Building Readiness for Data Exchange Between Medicolegal Death Investigation (MDI) Case Management Systems (CMS) and Electronic Death Registration Systems (EDRS)

BACKGROUND

Medical examiner and coroner offices conduct medicolegal death investigations (MDIs) to determine the cause and manner of sudden unexpected deaths. These offices play a crucial role in monitoring emergent and routine public health issues and collecting data that contributes to saving lives.

Many public health and public safety systems rely on MDI data to do their work, but there are challenges as increasing deaths from drug overdoses, suicides, homicides and more have resulted in record caseloads. Current methods of sharing information such as faxing and paper-based systems are inefficient and resource-intensive. Manual data entry and abstraction at each agency may lead to errors and delay public health's ability to use the data for response.

MDI Connect, a joint initiative of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Collaborating Office for Medical Examiners and Coroners (COMEC) and the CDC Foundation, is dedicated to advancing solutions that simplify data sharing between MDI offices and their partners.

Through *MDI Connect*, medical examiner and coroner offices work together to enhance data sharing using standards-based data exchange which allows for information sharing across partners from public health, public safety, toxicology, health systems and others. Scalable solutions reduce inefficiencies, decrease staff time needed in an MDI office to respond to data requests and minimize duplicative reporting processes.

CDC Foundation recently supported two cohorts of MDI offices to design, build and test electronic data exchange solutions. Information about these projects is available at <https://www.cdcfoundation.org/MDI-Connect>.

Drawing upon the insights from these cohorts, COMEC and CDC Foundation recognize that some medical examiner and coroner offices need dedicated time and resources to prepare for the design and implementation of data modernization projects.

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

The CDC Foundation is announcing a Request for Interest (RFI) for MDI offices to build readiness to successfully design and implement data modernization projects. These projects will prepare offices to plan for future design and implementation of electronic data exchange between MDI Case Management Systems (CMS) and Electronic Death Registration Systems (EDRS) using the data standard Health Level 7 (HL7[®]) [Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources \(FHIR[®]\)](#). FHIR[®] pronounced "fire", is a defined set of data exchange standards.

Please note: This opportunity is for planning and design only, not for implementation.

Selected recipients will be asked to become familiar with the Medicolegal Death Investigation FHIR[®] Implementation Guide (MDI FHIR[®] IG). The MDI FHIR[®] IG is available here: <http://hl7.org/fhir/us/md/>.

CDC Foundation will select six - eight awardees, contingent on funding availability. Funding requests of up to \$30,000 for a six (6) month period will be considered. The project period is September 1, 2024, to February 28, 2025.

Technical assistance and support for planning-grant recipients will be provided through virtual workshops, monthly check-in calls and office hours. More information about the program expectations, activities and estimated hours of participation are outlined in Appendix 1.

Recipients of this grant will have an opportunity to apply learnings from previous cohorts as they create their implementation plan and receive feedback on its design. The shared learning, interactive activities and workshops will better position MDI offices for success and expedite their ability to navigate common pitfalls and roadblocks experienced by other sites.

Recent modernization projects using the HL7® FHIR® MDI IG have demonstrated interoperability between CMS and EDRS. Most projects have focused on electronic filing of death certificates replacing manual entry of the information into the EDRS. Other workflows have included medical examiner, coroner or staff reviews of deaths designated for cremation which in turn, creates a feedback loop to the Vital Records Office (VRO) for certification concerns.

Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/comec/modernizing-mec-data-systems.htm> for additional background on the MDI data modernization efforts.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

This funding and technical assistance opportunity is open to:

- State, regional or county-based medical examiner's or coroner's offices
- Publicly funded regional forensic science centers, autopsy facilities or other MDI affiliated agencies (government or non-profit)

Please note:

- Preference will be given to applicants from Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin due to their designation as focus states in the [Bloomberg Overdose Prevention Initiative](#).
- Offices that have previously received funding from CDC Foundation to work on a FHIR® data exchange implementation project are not eligible for this opportunity.
- Additional consideration will be given to applicants representing three (3) or more coroner or medical examiner offices in the same state that plan to work with the same VRO and CMS vendor, are committed to collaborating and can provide rationale for how the grant will benefit each office individually.

Further, the applicant must:

- Have sustainable operations, be in good financial standing; and
- Be an equal opportunity employer with all-inclusive membership that does not discriminate based on gender, race/ethnicity, color, sex, sexual orientation, country of national origin or nationality, age, religion, intellectual or physical disabilities and military or veteran status in its activities or operations.

GRANT DETAILS

Selected MDI offices and their identified Project Manager will be expected to establish a collaborative project team, including the MDI office, CMS vendor and VRO and EDRS vendor to work together for the duration of the project period. Project teams will be expected to:

- Participate in monthly 60-90-minute educational and interactive workshops with other MDI offices.
- Participate in 30-minute monthly check-in calls. During meetings, the project manager shares progress made to date, challenges and lessons learned.

- Project managers must attend at least 80 percent of virtual meetings and check-in calls.
- Participate in monthly 60-minute technical assistance (TA) calls with Georgia Technical Research Institute related to information technology (IT).
- Create a high-level workflow diagram and narrative of “Current/as is” and “Future/to be” data flows after attending and participating in the Current and Future Workflow workshop*. Additionally, data flow could include:
 - a. Identifying additional data that are currently captured within the death certification process or the EDRS such as disaster related deaths, deaths which are linked by incidents (e.g., traffic related deaths) that are not identified in the current MDI FHIR® IG.
 - b. Identifying possible enhancements to the current workflows either directly related to deaths that are certified by the local MDI jurisdiction or by physicians such as indicators that the death might be an MDI case.
- Create an implementation plan with input from the project team for a future project connecting CMS with EDRS. The implementation plan should include:
 - a. Timeline, budget and scope of work. Project teams will be guided in completing these requirements during the scheduled virtual workshops.*
 - b. A technical scope of work (e.g., development, deployment, testing, production) from the IT teams. IT and developers will work with CDC Foundation’s technical contractor to define their EDRS use case for FHIR® and provide detailed use case information, such as state specific data items not in the current MDI FHIR® IG.
- Complete activities outlined in the assignment table.
- Submit a final financial and narrative report including accomplishments, barriers and lessons learned. A template will be provided by CDC Foundation.

*See Appendix 1 for a more detailed description of the activities, workshops and assignments.

INSTRUCTIONS

Responses should be submitted no later than 11:59PM Eastern on August 12, 2024, via the application link below. Information requested in Section 1 should be entered directly into the online form. Information requested in the Appendices should be attached to the online application as Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) file with your name clearly identified in the header or footer of each page. Respondents should use 12-point Arial or Calibri font and 1-inch margins on 8.5 by 11-inch pages. Lesser font sizes may be used in tables and charts, if fonts are clearly legible.

Please note: Grant recipients should be able to accept ACH payment or wire transfer of funds. If this is a barrier, it must be disclosed in the application process.

REQUESTED INFORMATION

The CDC Foundation seeks the following information from interested parties applying for this RFI, using the following URL: [APPLICATION](#). **Note, the Smartsheet online form and attachments must be completed in one session. If you experience any issues with your submission, you must email mdiconnect@cdcfoundation.org by Wednesday, August 7, 2024 at 11:59 p.m. Provide a description of your issue with screenshots so we can better assist.** The information you will need to complete the online form include:

Smartsheet Section 1: Submit online:

- Legal Organization Name
- Street Address, City, State, Zip Code
- Year Established
- Web Address

- Federal Tax Identification (ID) Number/Employer Identification Number (EIN)
- Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number (if applicable)
- Organization Type (Corporation, Government, Non-Profit, Foundation, Organization)
- Primary Point of Contact: Name, Title, Organization, Email address, Phone number
- Number of Employees
- Verification that the agency receiving funding can accept ACH payment or wire transfer of funds. If this is a barrier, it must be disclosed in the application process.
- Points of contact (Program, Financial, and Signatory)
 - Name
 - Title
 - Phone
 - Email
- How you heard about this funding opportunity

The following Appendices should be submitted as attachments to the online form.

Appendix A: Project Narrative (Page Limit: Two pages)

Purpose: To provide a narrative of the lead applicant's organizational capacity, partners, and project goals

- Describe your vision for this project. Some prompts you may wish to address include:
 - Why are you applying? What need/s are you hoping to address?
 - How will a planning grant impact your office's ability to move forward with data sharing, FHIR® data exchange and/or data modernization?
 - Are you planning to work on the cremation certification data exchange processes?
 - Are you applying as a single office or as the lead office for a consortium of offices who are working with the same VRO, EDRS vendor and CMS vendor?

Appendix B: Capacity of Partners and Roles (Page Limit: Two pages, excluding letters of support)

Purpose: To describe the capability of the lead applicant and participating partner organizations to collaborate on the planning project identified in this RFI, from staffing and management perspectives.

- Identify staff from each organization on project (job title and role on project)
 - Letters of support and commitment to participate from the VRO, CMS vendor, EDRS vendor are recommended and do not count towards the page limit.
- Describe the history of the relationship between the partners and vendors and how you anticipate working together to implement this planning grant. If relevant, briefly describe past/current projects led by any of the partners. This may include a brief description of any previous/current projects you have engaged in with any of the partners.

Appendix C: Budget/Budget Narrative (Page Limit: Two pages)

- Provide a proposed budget. Use the enclosed budget template to submit your budget.
- Provide a budget narrative of at least one paragraph describing if and how funds will be split and shared with data sharing partners and vendors to support and ensure their participation in workshops and development of the implementation plan.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applicants will be evaluated in the following areas:

Organizational Capacity and Approach

- Does the applicant describe their relationship with partners and vendors, demonstrate organizational capacity to serve as a lead partner, and clearly and concisely describe the ability to create a collaborative project team to work together on project objectives?
- Does the applicant describe their ability to administer the contract and create subcontracts with partners?
- Does the applicant describe a vision for their project and how it will impact their office going forward?
- Does the applicant have adequate IT resources from all project partners identified?

Partners

- Have the identified partners and vendors provided letters of support and commitment to participate on the project team?
- Have the identified partners and vendors demonstrated an understanding of what their commitment and participation requires (time, products, etc.)?

DELIVERABLES AND PAYMENT SCHEDULE

- Implementation Plan
- All workshops, activities and assignments noted in Appendix 1
- Final financial and narrative report(s)

Grant recipients will receive two (2) payments of 50% upon establishing the project team (month 1) and 50% at the completion of the project, upon receipt of final deliverables.

DISCLAIMER

This RFI is being issued solely for informational and planning purposes and is not a solicitation. Responses to the notice are not considered offers and cannot be accepted to form a binding contract. Respondents are solely responsible for all expenses associated with responding to this RFI. All information received in response to this notice that is marked as proprietary will be handled accordingly.

**The CDC Foundation will not provide debrief sessions for those not awarded.*

PROPOSED TIMELINE

- Application Period: June 28 - August 12, 2024
- Award Decision Notification: August 19, 2024
- Project Activities and Funding Expended: September 1, 2024, through February 28, 2025

Any questions should be directed to mdiconnect@cdcfoundation.org

Funding for these awards is made possible through a grant to CDC Foundation from Bloomberg Philanthropies. Visit mdiconnecthub.org to learn more.

APPENDIX 1: List of Activities, Workshops and Project Assignment Products

Month	Program Expectations / Required Activities Anticipated 10 hours per month	Session Date and Time	Assignments Due before date of next monthly Workshop
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick-off Meeting- Establishing project expectations; Identifying data modernization team roles and responsibilities; Creating a value case for EDRS/CMS data exchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kickoff meeting – September 11, 2024, 1-3 pm ET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DMI Team Document • Value Proposition Template
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop #1 –Diagramming current and future workflow; Understanding fundamental standards for data exchange • Project check-in call • Monthly TA call 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop #1- October 9, 2024, 1-2:30 pm ET • Project Check-in Call – TBD by site • Monthly TA call- October 17, 2024, 4-5 pm ET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Workflow Diagram and Narrative
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop #2- Introduction to the MDI data standard and the MDI FHIR implementation guide; Reading and using the guide • Project check-in call • Monthly TA call 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop #2- November 13, 2024, 1-2:30 pm ET • Project Check-in Call – TBD by site • Monthly TA Call- November 21, 2024, 4-5 pm ET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Guide Assessment
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop #3- Creating a project implementation plan and budget; Developing memorandums of understanding and data use agreements; and becoming familiar with the federal grant process • Project Check-in call • Monthly TA call 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop #3- December 11, 2024, 1-2:30 pm ET • Project Check-in Call – TBD by site • Monthly TA Call- December 19, 2024, 4-5 pm ET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDRS Project Implementation Plan and Budget (First draft)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop #4- Understanding system integration; Mapping data elements (variables) using FHIR; the development process and version control; authoring a FHIR IG and use of FHIR shorthand • Project check-in call • Monthly TA call 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop #4- January 8, 2025, 1-2:30 pm ET • Project Check-in Call – TBD by site • Monthly TA Call- January 16, 2025, 4-5 pm ET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System Integration Assessment • Draft Project Implementation Plan and Budget
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop #5- Emerging needs and demonstration projects; Review of proposed projects • Project check-in call • Monthly TA call 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop #5- February 12, 2025, 1-2:30 pm ET • Project Check-in Call – TBD by site • Monthly TA Call- February 20, 2025, 4-5 pm ET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Design and Implementation Plan

**Workshop schedule and activities subject to change. Adequate notice of changes will be provided to participants.*