

June 2023 Request for Interest – Medicolegal Death Investigation Novel Data Modernization Initiatives

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

The CDC Foundation is announcing a Request for Interest (RFI) for organizations to propose novel data modernization initiatives for medicolegal death investigation (MDI) data systems. Funding requests of up to \$250,000 over a two-year period will be considered. The project period for this funding is September 30, 2023, to September 30, 2025.

Please Note: Projects focused on using FHIR-enabled interoperability to exchange data with a single external data partner should apply to the [Request for Application \(RFA\) called Medicolegal Death Investigation FHIR® Implementation Collaborative \(MDI FIC\) Cohort 2](#) and are not eligible for this funding opportunity.

This funding opportunity is open to State Medical Examiner’s Offices, publicly funded regional forensic science centers, publicly funded regional autopsy facilities or other MDI affiliated agencies (government or non-profit) applicants in Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. These states are designated due to their involvement in the [Bloomberg Overdose Prevention Initiative](#).

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

To combat the urgent drug overdose epidemic in the United States, timely, comprehensive, and high-quality data are needed to detect signals in the evolving epidemic, and drive evidence-based prevention and response strategies. Recognizing the important role medical examiners and coroners have in this public health crisis, [CDC Foundation](#) and the [CDC Collaborating Office for Medical Examiners and Coroners \(COMEC\)](#) will support MDI data modernization efforts to combat the drug overdose epidemic.

The existing patchwork of systems used to store and exchange MDI data is hampering the ability of MDI offices to provide the data needed to those working on preventing drug overdose deaths. In some cases, data are trapped in databases impeding the ability of the MDI offices to monitor and visualize it for quality and consistency. Manual efforts to retrieve data creates reporting delays, as well as burden and frustration for MDI office staff since it diverts attention away from their duty to determine the cause and manner of death.

Many public health and public safety systems rely on MDI data. The challenges that need to be addressed include improving access to MDI data, automating data exchange and assuring high-quality data. There are many approaches to addressing MDI data challenges, for which only a few examples of potential solutions are listed here. The use of standards-based data exchange could help facilitate data sharing to improve the timeliness of the data received.

A coordinated state or regional approach may provide efficiencies in data modernization and alleviate barriers faced by smaller offices who may be resourced challenged. MDI data quality could be improved through a variety of means such as the reduction of duplicative data entry when interoperability is achieved. Another example of an approach to improve data quality is to include data quality review systems during the entering, processing or exchange of data.

For more background on the overall MDI data modernization efforts, visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/comec/modernizing-mec-data-systems.htm>. CDC Foundation recently supported its first cohort of [MDI Offices](#) to design, build and test electronic data exchange solutions that use FHIR®-based interoperability between MDI case management systems and identified data sharing partner and their data system. The MDI FHIR® Implementation Guide, the document describing these data standards, is available here: <http://hl7.org/fhir/us/mdi/>.

WHO CAN APPLY

- State or sub-state (regional or district) applicants in Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.
- State Medical Examiner’s Offices, publicly funded regional forensic science centers, publicly funded regional autopsy facilities or other MDI affiliated agencies (government or non-profit) who serve to promote the consistency of high-quality medicolegal death investigations across multiple MDI offices.

WHAT WE WILL FUND

The CDC Foundation will fund strategies and activities that:

- Address the Challenge Statement (above) using novel approaches, such as:
 - Further the development of FHIR-based data exchange in MDI offices for supporting data exchange with electronic death registration systems (EDRS), toxicology or forensic science laboratories, or public health and public safety data systems that are unique or broader than the opportunity described in the [MDI FIC](#), such as working with multiple MDI offices in a coordinated manner.
 - Improve data quality assurance procedures using novel informatics approaches, such as initiating new or automating existing data quality review processes during the input, processing or exchange of data.
 - Enhances the ability to visualize data in order to provide detailed views showing where data quality or investigative techniques are inconsistent.
- Are scaled to be specific, innovative and achievable by September 30, 2025.
- Use the funding for staff, consultants, innovative electronic case management system enhancements, funding support of data sharing partner, other data infrastructure needs (e.g., FHIR® server), training, travel and accommodations required to participate in proposed project activities.

WHAT WE WILL NOT FUND

- Ongoing operating costs, unrelated to supporting focus areas activities
- Capital Improvements, unrelated to furthering focus areas activities
- Single jurisdiction or office with projects focused on using FHIR®-enabled interoperability to exchange data with a single external data partner (apply to [Request for Application \(RFA\) called Medicolegal Death Investigation FHIR® Implementation Collaborative \(MDI FIC\) Cohort 2](#)).

INSTRUCTIONS

Responses should be submitted no later than 11:59PM Eastern on September 1, 2023, 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, so long as such fonts are clearly legible. Agencies receiving funding 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 proposing projects to this RFI, using the following URL: [APPLICATION](#). **Note, the Smartsheet online form and attachments must be completed in one session.**

Smartsheet Section 1: Submit via online form

- 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

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

Appendix A: Project Narrative

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

- Describe your vision for this project. Some prompts you may wish to address include:
 - Why are you applying?
 - What are some of the anticipated outcomes/impacts that you would expect upon the completion of this project?
 - What capacity will be enabled, and for which partners?
 - How will this project improve data modernization and efficiency for the participating MDI offices?
- Describe the project goals, activities, deliverables and timeline.
- Describe what you plan to create or achieve by the end of the project.
- Describe how your office provides a coordinating function (centralizing/regionalizing) for other MDI offices in your state, region, etc. Describe your partners (e.g., entities you will be engaging in the project), vendors and other stakeholders that will support successful implementation of your project.

- Does the proposed approach leverage activities already planned or in progress, through other funding sources? For example, are you receiving OD2A (Overdose to Action) or state opioid settlement funding for data modernization or data quality efforts?

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Appendix B: Use Case and Technical Capacity

Purpose: To describe the data system/s and technical capacity that is being leveraged by respective partners (listed in Appendix A) to implement the project. This narrative may be developed by your IT or technical partner/s and vendors.

- Describe your novel data modernization project. Some prompts you may wish to address include:
 - Desired end state and/or impact.
 - How relevant data will be accessed, utilized or shared for the project.
 - What data systems or IT infrastructure will be utilized (e.g., will you build, buy or update existing data systems or IT infrastructure? Please describe).
 - Any additional information you wish to share about the technology and tools necessary for successful IT development and implementation.
 - Anticipated challenges and address how they will be overcome.

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Appendix C: Key Personnel and Partner/s Roles

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

- Identify staff (job title and role on project to be involved in the project)
 - Optional attachment: CVs for primary personnel and/or partners, vendors or other subcontractors.
- Describe the experience of staff, partners, vendors or other subcontractors with significant project implementation and management roles.

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Appendix D: Budget/Budget Narrative

- Describe your typical/preferred pricing methodology for providing the services identified in this RFI (e.g., Cost Reimbursable, Fixed-Price, Time & Materials/Labor Hour).
- Provide proposed budget and budget narrative.
- Provide existing pricing schedule(s) applicable to services areas identified in this RFI (if applicable). Note: Actual pricing/cost data is not required in response to this RFI.

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Any questions should be directed to mdi_datasystems@cdcfoundation.org

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applicant entity must be:

- A State Medical Examiner's Office, publicly funded regional forensic science center, publicly funded regional autopsy facility or other MDI affiliated agency (government or non-profit) who serve to promote the consistency of high-quality medicolegal death investigations across multiple MDI offices.
- A State or sub-state (regional or district) applicant in Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, or Wisconsin.

Further, applicant must:

- Have sustainable operations, be in good financial standing; and
- Be an equal opportunity employer with all-inclusive membership that does not discriminate on the basis of 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.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applicants will be evaluated in the following areas:

Organizational Capacity

- Does the applicant demonstrate ability to staff and carry out project as described in application narrative?
- Does the applicant have adequate Information Technology resources from all project stakeholders identified?
- Does the applicant describe the coordinating or centralizing function(s) of their MDI office and how the proposed project will leverage this relationship?

Approach

- Does the applicant clearly and concisely describe how they will complete the proposed project and or provide a written workplan?
- Is the request compelling, innovative and evidence-informed?
- Does the collaboration create synergies and eliminate or avoid duplication of effort?
- Does the approach include reasonable methods for the organization to assess its impact and learn from its work? Are there measurable goals identified? Are there clearly stated methods for evaluation and results dissemination?

Timeline

- Is it feasible to implement strategies, complete activities/outputs and demonstrate progress towards intended outcomes as proposed, within the term of the grant period and amount of funding requested?

GRANT DELIVERABLES

Grant recipients must submit quarterly and final financial and narrative report(s) in a template provided by the CDC Foundation, by the date(s) indicated in their Letter of Award.

During the first quarter of the project, grantees will be required to:

1. Create a workplan and timeline that includes activities, outputs and roles and responsibilities for all entities involved in the project.
2. In some cases, this may include the scope of work for Information Technology and/or other subcontractors.
3. Develop two - three anticipated project deliverables that are reviewed and approved by the CDC Foundation.

ADDITIONAL PROJECT EXPECTATIONS

Recipients of the award will also be required to:

1. Participate in quarterly collaborative all-site calls. During these meetings, share progress made to date, challenges and lessons learned.
2. Participate in monthly 30-minute site check-in calls.
3. Attend a one and one-half-day meeting, in-person during the first week of December 2023; location is TBD. Based on the project type, additional site personnel may be required to attend (e.g., IT personnel, project manager, data sharing partner, etc.).
4. Provide input into communications documents that support the work of MDI data modernization.
5. Submit timely project deliverables and invoices to the CDC Foundation.
6. Present learnings/accomplishments of project to peers or wider audience through written, virtual or in-person communication or dissemination activities.

DISCLAIMER

This RFI is being issued solely for informational/planning purposes only 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.

PROPOSED TIMELINE

- Application Period: June 16th- September 1, 2023
- Award Decision Notification: September 15, 2023
- Letter of Intent to Accept Funding Award: September 22, 2023
- Project Activities and Funding Expended: September 30, 2023, through September 30, 2025