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# Data Modernization Workforce Acceleration Initiative (WAI)

## Request for Application (RFA) – Cohort 3

*Date Issued: August 18, 2025*

***Due Date:***

*Please complete the written application no later than Friday, October 17, 11:59 PM PST (Pacific Time)*

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### CDC FOUNDATION CONTACT

Workforce Acceleration Initiative

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## About the CDC Foundation

The CDC Foundation helps CDC save and improve lives by unleashing the power of collaboration between CDC, philanthropies, corporations, organizations and individuals to protect the health, safety and security of America and the world. The CDC Foundation is the go-to nonprofit authorized by Congress to mobilize philanthropic partners and private-sector resources to support CDC's critical health protection mission. The CDC Foundation manages hundreds of programs each year impacting a variety of health threats from chronic disease conditions including cardiovascular disease and cancer, to infectious diseases like rotavirus and HIV, to emergency responses, including COVID-19 and Ebola. Visit [www.cdcfoundation.org](http://www.cdcfoundation.org) for more information.

## Program Description

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is committed to equitably protecting the health, safety and security of all people across the nation. CDC's efforts to improve the

availability and use of public health data to inform decision making and action requires modern systems, tools and technology across the public health ecosystem and investments in capacity building.

In February 2024, the CDC Foundation was awarded federal funds from CDC, through the Association of Public Health Laboratories, to launch the Workforce Acceleration Initiative (WAI). The goal of WAI is to strengthen public health agencies'/authorities' (PHA) capacity to deliver information system improvements that are of top priority to each PHA by adding technology and data experts to their teams. The WAI's support of diverse PHAs in improving their information systems is anticipated to also accelerate progress toward the CDC's [Public Health Data Strategy](#) (PHDS) goals. This initiative aims to increase the ability of PHAs serving state, Tribal, local or territorial jurisdictions to leverage modern technology and interoperable data for public health action.

In this initiative, the CDC Foundation will focus its efforts on a select number of PHAs that exhibit a strong willingness to both participate in the work and maximize the impact of currently funded programming by rapidly receiving additional staff. Across all cohorts, the WAI will place and provide salary for additional technology and data staff members in approximately 58 PHAs. The CDC Foundation anticipates this third cohort will include approximately 18 PHAs that show **a strong need for workforce to accelerate the ability of their information systems to provide on- demand, real-time health data insights and to enhance their infrastructure for improving the public's health**, consistent with the PHDS goals. For cohort three, the CDC Foundation will support WAI Placements through June 30, 2027. The initiative is being developed in coordination with PHAs and national agencies to ensure it complements other national information systems improvement and data modernization efforts.

The CDC Foundation will offer selected PHAs streamlined procedures to support the Placement, development and activities of technology and data staff members within the larger PHA information systems team. In addition, the CDC Foundation will establish collaborative platforms and peer mentorship programs to foster engagement, knowledge sharing and troubleshooting among WAI Placements as well as the existing PHA staff where those individuals are placed. The CDC Foundation will develop information sharing resources, job aids and processes to support continual development and contribution of WAI Placements and of existing PHA staff to meet the strategic information systems improvement and data sharing goals of PHAs.

## Expectations of Selected Public Health Agencies/Authorities (PHAs)

The PHAs selected for WAI Placements will be expected to take part in all WAI program components, including but not limited to the following.

**Note to applicants:** Before accepting selection into WAI, all selected applicants will be required to attest that they understand and agree to each of the expectations outlined below.

- **Finalizing Job Descriptions:** Collaborating with the CDC Foundation team and partners to ensure the job descriptions, postings, recruitment materials and workplan for WAI Placements align with PHA needs and maximize the fit of final candidates to the PHA.

(Note: this application defines several roles at a high level. The CDC Foundation team will collaborate with selected PHAs to define the full job descriptions after the PHAs are selected).

- **Supporting Hiring:** Participating in candidate interviews and selection processes. This may include timely feedback and engagement in candidate interviews, reference checks, selection discussions to ensure that the identified candidates fit the PHA's needs.
- **Facilitating Onboarding:** Providing new WAI Placements an onboarding experience that integrates the individuals into the PHA team. This may include required PHA trainings, meet and greet sessions with PHA teammates, reviewing responsibilities and deliverables, establishing ongoing meetings with the PHA supervisor and ensuring timely access to needed equipment and data.
  - WAI supervisors will collaborate with PHA teams to create an integrated onboarding experience across the two organizations. WAI onboarding activities will include: WAI welcome call (day 1), completion of the WAI Core Training Curriculum (within 90 days) and meetings with the WAI supervisor.
- **Fostering Placement Success:** Creating a structure at the PHA which supports the Placement's development and project progress, including supporting Placements from outside public health navigate working in a PHA.
- **Managing Placements:** Ensuring existing PHA staff have the capacity and are prepared to work closely with and supervise WAI Placements. This includes meeting regularly (i.e., weekly) with the Placement to guide their work and to assist in navigating organizational procedures, practices and barriers to project completion.
- **Providing Mentorship:** Providing at least one mentor to advise each WAI Placement about the PHA's culture and dynamics, and to stimulate the Placements' interest and success in a public health career.
- **Providing Time for Professional Development:** Allowing WAI Placements dedicated time to attend required WAI communities of practice as well as optional trainings and learning opportunities addressing technical skillsets and public health.
- **Checking in with CDC Foundation:** Joining regular check-in meetings with CDC Foundation Placement supervisor (e.g., monthly) to discuss Placement performance, success stories, challenges and emerging opportunities related to the WAI Placements' workplans.
- **Reporting on Progress:** Submitting quarterly surveys regarding WAI Placements' progress and areas for potential improvement in WAI implementation.
- **Contributing to Thought Leadership:** Participating in WAI-facilitated discussions around the implementation and impact of WAI (up to once quarterly).

## Eligibility Criteria

### Three Proposal Categories

WAI Cohort 3 PHA criteria describe three proposal categories.

- **Tribal PHA Proposals:** Proposals from Tribal public health authorities or Tribal Epidemiology Centers (TECs).
- **State, Territorial, or Local (STL) PHA Proposals:** Proposals from state, territorial or local public health authorities.

- **Multiple-PHA Proposals:** Proposals from sets of PHAs for work that will support the information needs of more than one PHA. One PHA within the set must be designated as the applicant PHA, and would become the agreement holder.

## Cohort 3 PHA General Eligibility Criteria

These criteria apply to all three proposal categories.

WAI Cohort 3 seeks to support a national cohort of PHAs across jurisdiction types and including rural, suburban, or urban PHAs that will benefit most from WAI Placements (for example, PHAs that do not have an information systems improvement plan or roadmap, PHAs that are trying to identify information system leadership and/or PHAs that have made limited progress in modernizing their information systems due to insufficient workforce).

Within WAI Cohort 3, the CDC Foundation will rapidly fill information system improvement roles within state, territorial, local and Tribal PHAs that:

- Individual PHA applicants cannot be direct recipients of Placements in WAI Cohorts 1 or 2. Note: This criterion does not apply to PHAs that are part of a Multiple-PHA proposal.
- Are state, Tribal, local or territorial (PHAs) currently conducting routine public health functions. To be eligible, Tribal PHAs must be vested with authority from the Tribal Nation(s) they serve to receive and send health data.
  - Eligible applicants include:
    1. State governments (includes the District of Columbia)
    2. Local governments or their bona fide agents
    3. Territorial governments or their bona fide agents in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau
    4. County governments
    5. City or township governments
    6. Special district governments
    7. Tribal Nations (Federally recognized)
    8. Tribal Organizations (Other than federally recognized Tribal governments)
    9. Tribal Epidemiology Centers, Tribes and Tribal Organizations participating in the Indian Health Service Tribal Self-Governance Program (that have public health authority)
    10. American Indian or Alaska Native Tribal governments (Federally recognized)
    11. American Indian or Alaska Native tribally designated organizations
    12. Tribal nonprofit organizations that apply will be required to include a letter of support from the Tribal Nation(s) they represent along with their application submission.
  - Ineligible organizations include:
    - LLCs and other business entities, even if they have Tribal public health authority.

- Urban Indian Organizations that do not have public health authority.
- Applicants meeting eligibility criteria 1 through 6 above will be eligible for the STL PHA application category. Applicants meeting criteria 7 through 12 will be eligible for the Tribal PHA application category. Applicants meeting any of the 12 criteria will be eligible for the Multiple-PHA application category.
- Are prepared to immediately onboard new staff to the PHA for the roles outlined in the “Request for WAI Informatics Placements” section of this application. PHAs must be willing to accept Placements who will work remotely, and not be physically located at the PHA.
- Have the infrastructure, policies and procedures to ensure Placements (including remote Placements) will be granted timely access to necessary equipment and data to complete job responsibilities. PHAs should understand whether their policies require that the WAI Placements use PHA computers or other equipment and should prepare appropriately. The CDC Foundation can provide computers and other office equipment to Placements; however, we have found that many PHAs have policies or systems that require that a Placement’s work be conducted using computers provided by the PHA. When that is the case, the PHA must provide Placements with those computers.
- Have budget for non-personnel expenses related to the information systems improvement project(s) and/or activities the requested WAI Placements will support (e.g., system acquisition or other purchases).
- Already have or can quickly establish any approvals or agreements required for the proposed work, such as budget approval, legal agreements (e.g., data use agreements), contracts or resource approvals (e.g., IT staff time). Note that this includes any agreements necessary for Multiple-PHA proposals. Due to the short timeframe of this initiative, work that may be delayed for several months should not be included.
- Can fully participate in required activities ([above](#)), such as scope refinement, job description development, interviews with strong candidates and post-Placement check-ins with the CDC Foundation team.
- Implement improvements to data infrastructure that are sustainable and can be used effectively to advance the PHA’s public health mission.

## PHA Eligibility Criteria Specific to Each Proposal Category

### **Tribal PHA Proposals (individual PHA application)**

In addition to the General Eligibility Criteria, above, PHAs eligible to submit Tribal PHA Proposals must:

- Have existing information infrastructure or resources to create information infrastructure within two years.
- Has the immediate need for staff to develop or execute plans to improve that infrastructure.

### **STL PHA Proposals (individual PHA application)**

In addition to the General Eligibility Criteria, above, PHAs eligible to submit STL PHA Proposals must:

- Have significant need for technical workforce to improve the PHA's information infrastructure, relative to most PHAs.
- Has existing information infrastructure and planned information infrastructure improvement project(s) and/or activities consistent the [Public Health Data Strategy](#) (PHDS) goals that immediately need at least one, full-time, additional staff to execute.
- Serve a population size of 100,000 or more, unless the PHA is a Territorial government or their bona fide agent as described in item 3, above.

### **Multiple-PHA Proposals (multiple PHA application)**

In addition to the General Eligibility Criteria, above, PHAs eligible to submit Multiple-PHA Proposals must:

- Have existing agreements or activities through which resources are or will be shared across PHAs to support their information needs. WAI will only support Multiple-PHA proposals that build upon efforts already under development or in progress.
- Have a process through with the supported PHAs periodically approve and prioritize the development and use of the shared resources.

## **Instructions for All Applicants**

### **Application Support:**

To support your PHA in completing this application, see the **Frequently Asked Questions** available along with this form on [the CDC Foundation Request for Proposals webpage](#).

The CDC Foundation will hold three **information sessions** to discuss the Cohort 3 application and review criteria and answer questions. **Registration is required.** You can register for the webinars below The CDC Foundation will update the Frequently Asked Questions following the webinar.

Information Session #1, September 12, 2025: [Registration Link](#)

Information Session #2: TBD

Information Session #3- September 22, 2025: [Registration Link](#)

**Questions:** If you have questions about this Request for Applications outside of the information session, please send them to [WAI@cdcfoundation.org](mailto:WAI@cdcfoundation.org) **no later than Friday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 11:59 PM PST**. The CDC Foundation team members will respond to your question within one business day.

**1:1 Working Sessions:** *For applicants wanting additional assistance in developing their application, CDC Foundation will be offering one on one support through scheduled working sessions. Those interested in this opportunity must provide a letter of intent that is approved by their PHA leadership when requesting such a session. The letter should include a brief description of the proposed work. More details will be included in the FAQ.*

### **The selection process will include two steps:**



1. Complete a written application
2. Participate in a 30-minute interview

The following describes these two steps.

### Step 1. Complete a written application

Please complete the written application **by no later than Friday, October 17, 11:59 pm PST (Pacific Time)**,

Written application submissions must be made through the:

[APPLICATION SUBMISSION LINK](#).

Please note that the online form cannot be saved and revisited. Therefore, please review ["Application Template, Written Application Questions and Attachments" \(below\)](#) to prepare your application in advance of entering it into the online system.

If you have any difficulties submitting your application through this form, you may reach Desiree Smith, CDC Foundation Senior Program Service Coordinator, at [desireesmith@cdcfoundation.org](mailto:desireesmith@cdcfoundation.org).

### Step 2. Participate in a 30-minute interview

The CDC Foundation team will review your written application to ensure your PHA meets the key requirements, provides justification of need and clarity on the intended use of proposed WAI placement roles and shows readiness to rapidly onboard new WAI placements. If your PHA is selected for an interview, a CDC Foundation team member will contact the Application Contact to schedule a session. The CDC Foundation will complete all interviews for Cohort 3 by no later than November 4, 2025.

The interview will be scheduled for 30 minutes and is intended to include the following:

- Key attendees from the PHA, including the individual overseeing the PHA's systems improvement efforts (if applicable), and any other team members identified by the PHA.
- Up to 30 minutes for the CDC Foundation team members to ask questions about aspects of your written application.

**After applying the Review Criteria, final selections are anticipated to be announced no later than Friday, November 7<sup>th</sup>**

### Cohort 3 Timeline for All Applicant Types

Below is a summary of initial activities for Cohort 3.

Activity	Timeline
RFA Live on CDC Foundation website	August 18, 2025
Respond to RFA Questions; Update FAQ as appropriate	August 19 – October 21, 2025
Information Session #1	September 12, 2025
Information Session #2 – Tribal Specific	TBD – Week of September 15, 2025



Information Session #3	September 22, 2025
Host 1:1 Working Sessions (letter of intent required)	September 2 – October 10, 2025
Written applications due.	October 17, 2025 11:59 PM PST
30-minute interview sessions.	October 28 – November 4, 2025
Selected PHA applicants notified.	No later than November 7, 2025
PHA Kickoff Calls	November 14 – 21, 2025
Scope and Position Refinement Calls	November 21 – December 11, 2025
Active Recruitment PHA Interviews with high caliber candidates (Selected PHAs will join interviews for their selected Placement positions).	December 5 – March 30, 2025. Can begin as soon as onboarding meetings are completed.
WAI Placements begin tenures at selected PHAs	As soon as mid-December.

### Review Criteria for All Applicant Types

The CDC Foundation team will use the following criteria to select approximately 18 PHAs for inclusion in WAI Cohort 3.

Category	Considerations	Weight
Meets key requirements	Agrees to the “Expectations of Selected Public Health Agencies/Authorities (PHAs)” and conforms to the eligibility criteria listed above.	Required
PHA organizational level of need for technology and data team members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current personnel available for information systems planning, support and improvement, and the need for additional workforce and skillsets to support that work.</li> <li>Current status regarding: system improvement strategic plan or roadmap (if one exists), data system documentation and the use of public health data.</li> <li>Applicant provides a clear statement on why the proposed work and requested position(s) are needed to advance the information systems infrastructure and the ability to support the health of their jurisdiction(s).</li> </ul>	35%
PHA readiness to support new staff	Applicant ability and commitment to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide sufficient PHA staff time and resources to assure the success of the system improvement project(s) and/or activities.</li> <li>The PHA(s) has (have) sufficient funds available for the proposed work.</li> <li>The PHA(s) has (have) capacity to meet all expectations <a href="#">delineated above</a>.</li> </ul>	25%
Workplan(s) for proposed positions	The workplan(s) for all proposed work is/are practical and achievable as are the delineated roles, responsibilities and deliverables for <u>each position requested</u> . The applicant sufficiently describes a series of activities and deliverables that can feasibly be completed within the Placement’s tenure(through June 30, 2027).	20%

Category	Considerations	Weight
Strategic and sustainable systems improvements aligned with PHDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Strategic Improvements</u>: Applicant clearly demonstrates how proposed work will lead to foundational improvements in information systems that will: (a) contribute to longer-term PHA-wide system maturity and capacity and (b) improve the ability to effectively use public health data. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Applicants proposing a data systems assessment and/or developing a systems improvement strategic plan or roadmap as part of their proposed work describe how the assessment or plan will be used.</li> <li>○ Applicants that already have a systems improvement strategic plan or roadmap describe how the proposed work moves the plan forward.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>Sustainable Improvements</u>: Applicant describes their plans to maintain the deliverables from WAI after the program ends.</li> <li>• <u>Aligned with PHDS</u>: Applicants explain how their proposed work aligns with any of the four (4) PHDS goals related to improved access to quality data and increased system automation and interoperability (<a href="#">please refer to details here</a>).</li> </ul>	20%

**Pre-Award Risk Assessment:** The CDC Foundation reserves the right to conduct financial and due diligence reviews. As a public entity, the CDC Foundation has a responsibility to the public to ensure that the organizations that benefit from grant funds are financially stable and to evaluate each applicant's risk of noncompliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the agreement for purposes of determining the appropriate method of monitoring.

## Application Templates

WAI Cohort 3 PHA criteria describe three proposal categories. Applicants in each category should use a specific application from the two application templates: an individual PHA application, or a multiple-PHA application. Which template to use depends on the proposal category.

- **Tribal PHA Proposals:** Proposals from Tribal public health authorities or Tribal Epidemiology Centers (TECs). Please submit these proposals using the individual PHA application.
- **STL PHA Proposals:** Proposals from state, territorial or local public health authorities. Please submit these proposals using the individual PHA application.
- **Multiple-PHA Proposals:** Proposals from sets of PHAs for work that will support the information needs of more than one PHA. One PHA within the set must be designated

as the applicant PHA and would become the agreement holder. Please submit these proposals using the multiple-PHA application.

[Supplement A: Individual PHA Application Template](#)

[Supplement B: Multiple-PHA Application Template](#)