

Request for Proposals (RFP): Newborn Screening Systems Quality Improvement Projects

Letter of Intent Due Date: July 1, 2019

Application Due Date: August 5, 2019

Technical Assistance Webinar: June 11, 2019

Submit to: [Chenelle Norman](#), Manager, Newborn Screening Quality Improvement, Newborn Screening and Genetics

This project (UG8MC31893) is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$3.3 million dollars. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit [HRSA.gov](https://www.hrsa.gov)

CONTENTS

- Summary 3
- Background 3
- RFP Process Overview 4
- Duration of Awards 5
- Technical Assistance Webinar 5
- Eligible Applicants 5
- Requirements of Funding Requests 5
- Program Expectations 6
- Letter of Intent 6
- Submission of RFP 6
- Travel 6
- Evaluation of Responses 7
 - Initial Review 7
 - Evaluation Team 7
 - Evaluation Criteria 7
- Award 8
- Term of Project 8
- Award Announcement 8
- Conditions of Award Acceptance 8
- RFP Related Questions 9
- Disclaimer and Other General Matters 9
- Response Requirements 9
- Appendix A: Applicant Questions 10
- Appendix B: Project Charter 11
- Appendix C: First Quarter Action Plan 13
- Appendix D: Budget 14
- Appendix E: Readiness Tool 16

SUMMARY

The Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) and Newborn Screening Technical assistance and Evaluation Program ([NewSTEPs](#)) is seeking up to 30 newborn screening (NBS) programs to participate in a continuous quality improvement (CQI) initiative. The Newborn Screening Systems Quality Improvement Project provides tailored support to successful applicants allowing for a customized/collaborative approach to quality improvement and is guided by the following goals:

- **GOAL 1:** Assess needs and engage state newborn screening programs for participation in a multidisciplinary collaborative network focused on newborn screening quality improvement projects.
- **GOAL 2:** Coordinate and facilitate quality improvement projects and data-driven outcome assessments, utilizing evidence-based quality improvement methodologies within each participating state newborn screening program.
- **GOAL 3:** Create a model for replication, sharing and sustainability of continuous newborn screening quality improvement projects.

The Newborn Screening Systems Quality Improvement Project builds on the combined success of previous Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) funded Cooperative Agreements for NewSTEPs, NewSTEPs 360 and the NewSTEPs Timeliness Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network (CoIIN). These programs are a collaboration between APHL and the Colorado School of Public Health (including partners from the Center for Public Health Innovation) and activities remain driven by active partnerships with state and territorial NBS programs, pediatric sub-specialists, and stakeholders from MCHB, HRSA funded programs, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

BACKGROUND

Public health newborn screening (NBS) programs in the US screen approximately four million newborns for critical conditions every year, providing the opportunity for early intervention and averting serious and potentially life-threatening complications. NBS is a comprehensive system that includes laboratory testing, point-of-care screening, diagnosis, follow-up, treatment, education, and evaluation services. NBS systems are complex, and with the ongoing expansion of the Recommended Uniform Screening Panel (RUSP) coupled with the introduction of emerging screening technologies and a spotlight on timeliness and cut-offs, continuous quality improvement (CQI) is necessary.

The Newborn Screening Systems Quality Improvement Project is a program facilitating CQI within the NBS system. Through webinars, in-person meetings, technical assistance, workshops, discussion groups/listservs and data entry, data analysis and data visualization, this initiative provides successful applicants the tools they need to successfully implement, spread, and sustain an NBS CQI project. Examples of possible CQI project proposals may include but are not limited to the following:

- **Meet recommended timeframes identified by ACHDNC with the purpose of improving Newborn Screening Timeliness.** *Potential activities include:* hospital education, introduce or improve the courier system, increase laboratory operating hours, introduce efficiencies in laboratory processes, improve results communication, utilize Health Information Technology (HIT) for results reporting, and midwife education around timeliness.

- **Improve state process for identification of, and follow-up on, out-of-range results.** *Potential activities include:* pursue targeted technical assistance around establishing and reviewing cut-offs, perform method validation, modify cut-offs, pursue training on analytical tools and methods, update newborn screening disorder detection methods, modify screening algorithms, establish a feedback loop to report false negatives and false positives.
- **Improve state process for communication of screening results to providers and families.** *Potential activities include:* incorporate and/or improve electronic reporting, improve messaging for providers and/or parents, improve interpretation of results through electronic messaging.
- **Improve state process for confirming diagnosis.** *Potential activities include:* develop and use case definitions, incorporate sequencing technologies, track of closed out cases, implement refined disorder specific algorithms (i.e., refining Cystic Fibrosis algorithm from IRT/IRT to IRT/DNA, or introducing HPLC MS/MS for x-ALD second tier detection, etc.), follow-up to confirm cases (late onset disorders).
- **Address emerging issues in NBS.** *Potential activities include:* Continuity of Operations Planning, workforce training and succession planning, education on NBS, data analysis.
- **Implementation of New Disorders.**

RFP PROCESS OVERVIEW

June 3, 2019	–	RFP Issued
June 11, 2019	–	Technical Assistance Webinar at 4:00 pm ET (see NewSTEPS listserv for webinar details)
July 1, 2019	–	Letter of intent due by 11:59 pm ET to APHL (see the Letter of Intent section below)
August 5, 2019	–	RFP responses due by 11:59 pm ET to APHL
August 23, 2019	–	Awardees notified
September 23, 2019	–	Contracts ratified between APHL and awardees

PLEASE NOTE: Funding begins September 23, 2019. However, the drafting and ratification of contracts may take longer than planned depending on the NBS program. Any modification to this anticipated schedule will be communicated on APHL’s procurement website (www.aphl.org/rfp) and via an email blast to the NBS Programs and the public health laboratories.

DURATION OF AWARDS

All applicants can request funding for any duration between September 1, 2019 through August 31, 2023. APHL will issue requests for proposals on a bi-annual basis through 2023. As such, please remain mindful of the timeframe required to initiate, execute and sustain the proposed project. There is no limit to the number of applications a program may submit during the 2019 – 2023 project period.

For multi-year proposals, all budgets need to be stratified by year as follows:

September 1, 2019- August 31, 2020

September 1, 2020- August 31, 2021

September 1, 2021- August 31, 2022

September 1, 2022- August 31, 2023

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE WEBINAR

Date: Tuesday, June 11, 2019

Time: 4:00 pm ET

Duration: 1 hour

Dial-In Number(s): U.S. & Canada: 866.740.1260 and U.S. Toll: 303.248.0285

Access Code: 4852701

Registration Link: <https://cc.readytalk.com/r/wi2ktpjimhif&eom>

NOTE: *This webinar will be recorded and posted online along with any questions received.*

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include all U.S. and territorial states including NBS programs and stakeholders who:

- Have identified a quality improvement project of interest.
- Submit a letter of intent demonstrating support from institutional leadership by July 1, 2019.

REQUIREMENTS OF FUNDING REQUESTS

To be considered for this funding request, in addition to the eligibility requirements, applicants must:

1. Describe how your team identified the problem (for example, using root cause analysis vs. the symptoms of the problem) for the proposed CQI project.
2. Identify a project lead who will be the primary point of contact and act as one of the champions for the work of the project throughout the organization.
3. Form a project team that includes newborn screening laboratory and follow-up program representation (required) and other key partners based on the focus of the project (i.e., hospital partners, patients, etc.)
4. Submit all [Quality Indicator data](#) into the NewSTEPS data repository on an annual basis, at minimum, regardless of the project focus. In addition, states must provide baseline data as it relates to their proposed project. Baseline data will be defined and established upon selection of awardees. If you have questions regarding data requirements, please contact Chenelle Norman at Chenelle.Norman@aphl.org

PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS

Successful participants of the Newborn Screening Systems Quality Improvement Project are expected to meet the program expectations outlined below. **NOTE:** Program requirements will be included in the contract Statement of Work and funding will be contingent on meeting deliverables provided in the contract.

1. Attend and participate in all monthly webinars (12) and one annual meeting (pending availability of funds) for the duration of the funding period.
2. Submit quality indicator data to the NewSTEPS data repository and project data to the listed NewSTEPS staff point-of-contact on a monthly basis to measure progress. Additional possible data requirements will be reviewed on a state-by-state basis prior to awarding funding. For example, states working on implementing new disorders will be required to complete the NewSTEPS Readiness Tool.
3. Enter into a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) with Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) for data sharing if your state has not done so already.
4. Sign a contract with APHL for acceptance of funds by September 23, 2019.

LETTER OF INTENT

APHL requires that prospective applicants submit a brief email statement by July 1, 2019 indicating a firm intent to submit a proposal by no later than the RFP Due Date (August 5, 2019). Although a letter of intent is not binding, and does not enter into the review of the RFP, the information that it contains allows APHL to estimate the potential review workload and plan the contract development and review process. Potential applicants must include the name of the organization or individual that will submit the proposal in their email as well as demonstrate support from institutional leadership. Applicants who do not submit a Letter of Intent will not be considered.

The prospective applicants should email a statement reflecting the intent to apply to chenelle.norman@aphl.org using the subject line: LETTER OF INTENT: NEWSTEPS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT. APHL must receive this information by **11:59 pm ET on July 1, 2019**.

SUBMISSION OF RFP

Applications must be received at APHL by 11:59 pm ET on August 5, 2019. Microsoft Word or PDF submissions can be sent to Chenelle Norman at chenelle.norman@aphl.org with a copy to newsteps@aphl.org. APHL will send an email acknowledging the receipt of your application; if you do not receive an acknowledgement within 48 hours, call 240.485.3857 to confirm receipt.

TRAVEL

All awardees will be required to attend an in-person meeting in spring 2020, and two staff members will have travel expenses covered by APHL.

EVALUATION OF RESPONSES

Initial Review

APHL will conduct an initial review of all proposals for completeness. Any application that is incomplete on the RFP Due Date (see [RFP Process Overview](#) above) will not be considered and will not receive a formal evaluation.

Evaluation Team

After the initial review, an evaluation team will convene to evaluate competitive proposals and assess their relative qualities based on the [Evaluation Criteria](#) outlined below and any other factors and sub-factors noted in this RFP. This evaluation team will consist of at least two Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) familiar with quality and continuous improvement implementation and methodologies. The SMEs may consist of APHL members or other external individuals that have expertise in the content area. In addition, the review team may include NewSTEPS staff. APHL’s Chief Program Officer will have final approval over the selected review team’s composition.

APHL will ask proposed review committee members to disclose any potential conflicts of interest and APHL will not place any individual with a conflict of interest on the evaluation team. In the event that a reviewer identifies a conflict of interest (or if APHL staff have reason to believe that a reviewer may not be impartial) after the evaluation team has been assembled, APHL will exclude that reviewer from further participation in the review process and will eliminate that reviewer’s completed reviews from the evaluation process.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on each applicant’s ability to present a quality improvement project with defined outcome and process measures, dedicated staff, leadership buy-in, ability to achieve stated goals within the time and budget, ability to provide data to measure change, sustainability of activities following funding period, and thoroughness of responses. Please complete the Appendices in the RFP to respond fully to all of the requirements in the scoring criteria.

Scoring Criteria and Points		
<i>Project Data</i> – clearly describe how your team identified the problem (i.e. root cause analysis vs. the symptoms of the problem), provide quality indicator data and baseline data for measuring progress, describe any additional data you will be collecting, if that data already exists in your current system or how you will collect data that is not currently gathered, and how long it will take your team to have 10 observations/instances/pieces of data to analyze for trends.	25 pts	Appendix A/B
<i>Project Charter/Action Plan</i> – identify project lead, team includes individuals representing lab and follow-up, and includes other key partners if needed, demonstrate staff and leadership support. Identify changes you will implement and role/responsibility of each team member.	20 pts	Appendix B/C
<i>Budget and Budget Justification</i> – clearly identify funding needs connecting the funding needs to the goals and objectives of the proposed project, and provide justification for funding for each year of funding requested	20 pts	Appendix D

<i>Impact</i> - describe the impact your quality improvement project will have and how the project will improve your newborn screening system and/or the community you serve.	15 pts	Appendix A
<i>Sustainability</i> - Describe how you will sustain the project following completion of the funding cycle and what support you have from your newborn screening system to implement this quality improvement.	15 pts	Appendix A
<i>Readiness Tool</i> - Mandatory ONLY for those implementing new disorders.	5 pts	Appendix E
Maximum Points Attainable (if NOT implementing new disorders)	95	
Maximum Points Attainable (if completing Readiness Tool for new disorders implementation)	100	

AWARD

Up to 30 programs, depending on the strength of applications, will be selected. Each selected site will be eligible for the award amount requested and/or deemed appropriate by the evaluation team for one year (with the option to fund for multiple years) which will be distributed via a contract administered by APHL. The award money can be used, **but is not limited to**, the following costs associated with implementing a CQI project including:

1. Staff time.
2. Travel to quality improvement meetings and trainings.
3. Obtain needed resources to meet project goals and objectives.
4. Development of educational materials and resources (online and hardcopy).
5. Costs associated with hosting in-person sessions and visitors for technical assistance.
6. Laboratory materials and equipment relevant to the project.

TERM OF PROJECT

The project term will begin upon contract execution on **September 23, 2019**, and will finish on August 31, 2020. Programs have the option of applying for a multi-year project for which contracts will be re-initiated each funding year. Each selected program would be notified in advance of any modification to the anticipated scope of work or contract ratification process in the funding year.

AWARD ANNOUNCEMENT

Selected and non-selected applicants will be notified of the award decision by APHL on August 23, 2019. The names of the selected programs will also be posted to APHL’s procurement website, www.aphl.org/rfp on the same day.

All applicants will be entitled to utilize APHL’s RFP Appeals Process to formulate an appeal regarding alleged irregularities or improprieties during the procurement process. Specific details of this policy are located on the procurement website.

CONDITIONS OF AWARD ACCEPTANCE

The eligible applicants must be able to contract directly with APHL or have an existing relationship with a third-party organization that can contract directly with APHL on behalf of the applicant.

RFP RELATED QUESTIONS

All questions should be directed to Chenelle Norman at chenelle.norman@aphl.org. Questions received and associated responses will be posted to APHL's procurement website (www.aphl.org/rfp).

DISCLAIMER AND OTHER GENERAL MATTERS

This RFP is neither an agreement nor an offer to enter into an agreement with any respondent. Once evaluation is complete, APHL may choose to enter into a definitive contract with the selected RFP applicant(s).

APHL must ensure that the selected applicant(s) are neither suspended nor excluded from receiving federal funds and that the applicant(s) meet any other funding eligibility requirement imposed by the Cooperative Agreement. APHL's determination of whether the applicant is eligible to receive Cooperative Agreement funding will be definitive and may not be appealed. In the event that APHL determines that the selected applicant(s) is ineligible to receive Cooperative Agreement funding, APHL will nullify the contract or will cease negotiation of contract terms.

Each applicant will bear its own costs associated with or relating to the preparation and submission of its application. These costs and expenses will remain with the applicant, and APHL will not be liable for these or for any other costs or other expenses incurred by the applicant in preparation or submission of its application, regardless of the conduct or outcome of the response period or the selection process.

RESPONSE REQUIREMENTS

Each complete response packet should include:

1. Appendix A: Applicant Questions
2. Appendix B: Project Charter
3. Appendix C: First Quarter Action Plan
4. Appendix D: Budget and Budget Justification
5. Appendix E: Readiness Tool (if working on a project focused on new disorders)

APPENDIX A: APPLICANT QUESTIONS

Complete the following questions below:

- 1- Provide an overview of your Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) project and the current challenges/barriers your team is facing.

- 2- How did your team become aware of this challenge or barrier? More specifically, explain how your team was able to identify the root cause of the problem.

- 3- What data will your team collect in order to determine if the test of change is having the desired impact or an unintended consequence? Describe any additional data you will be collecting outside of Quality Indicators.

- 4- How will you ensure your team be able to meet all program expectations as it relates to attendance, participation and monthly reporting? Please share potential challenges to meeting program expectations, if any.

- 5- Describe, in detail, the positive impact your CQI project will have on your newborn screening program and/or the communities you serve.

- 6- How will you sustain the efforts of your improvement project, outside of fee increases, following the conclusion of the funding period? Please describe the steps involved to implement your sustainability plan as it relates to your proposed improvement project. Include the time required to implement steps to achieve sustainability, required regulatory approvals, and other steps needed to gain approval for sustainability plan.

APPENDIX B: PROJECT CHARTER

CHARTER: Complete the charter below. Outline the aim of your project, impact measures, quality indicators, team lead and team members. Click the hyperlinks for helpful examples.

<p>Project Aim:</p>
<p>Root Cause Explanation: How do you know this is issue that needs to be addressed?</p>
<p>Process and Baseline Measures:</p> <p>Identify process measures that will enable you to measure progress toward your project goals. Include the baseline (current value) for each measure. Note- you will be expected to work with a NewSTEPs Data Team member, if selected, to further refine your process measures if needed.</p> <p>Please indicate in your response where this data will be stored, if you require a data storage solution and how long you expect it will take to collect 10 instances of data for analysis (i.e., will you collect this data weekly, monthly, etc.)</p> <p>You may establish multiple process measures to track change and improvement over time.</p>
<p>Quality Indicators:</p> <p>Please submit all Quality Indicator data for 2018 in the NewSTEPs Data Repository. For questions related to data submission please contact Chenelle.Norman@aphl.org</p>

Project Team Leader (s):

Name _____ Title/Role _____ Email _____

Name _____ Title/Role _____ Email _____

CQI Team Members (**NOTE:** your team must include at least one laboratory staff and one follow-up staff):

Name	Title/Role	Email
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

If you are including partners outside the state NBS program, how will you ensure they are included in this project?

Please explain why you do not need any partners outside the state NBS program if applicable.

APPENDIX C: FIRST QUARTER ACTION PLAN

ACTION PLAN: Complete the action plan below. Outline actions needed and people required to accomplish the aim (goal) of your CQI project

Expected change	Tasks required to implement the change	Data needed to evaluate whether the change was an improvement	Person(s) responsible	Time Line ('t' = test; 'i' = implement, 's' = spread)		
				Month		
				September 2019	October 2019	November 2019
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						

APPENDIX D: BUDGET

BUDGET: A budget should be presented for completion of activities proposed. The budget should include information detailed in the “Requirements of Funding Request” section above.

Personnel						TOTALS
Name	Position Title	%	Hours per Week	Salary or Stipend	Fringe Benefits	
Equipment (Itemize)						
Supplies/Educational tools and resources (Itemize by category)						
Other Expenses						
TOTAL COSTS						

Budget Justification: Please provide explanation for costs in each category. For personnel please describe staff duties to be covered and experience of staff member.

Personnel:

Equipment:

Supplies:

Other Expenses:

APPENDIX E: READINESS TOOL

All states who are proposing a project to work on statewide implementation of a new disorder (Pompe, MPS I, X-ALD, SMA, as well as any other disorders added to the RUSP during the funding period) are required to initiate Readiness Tool by August 5, 2019 and complete on an on-going basis. Please email Chenelle.Norman@aphl.org to receive necessary log-in information. If you believe the tool is up-to-date please indicate that as well to the email listed above.