

Public Health Informatics and Technology (PHIT) Workforce Development Program

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<https://www.healthit.gov/topic/onc-funding-opportunities/public-health-informatics-technology-phit-workforce-development>

Summary

1. Thirty (30) cooperative agreement awards for a four (4)-year period of performance.
2. Application Due Date: August 11, 2021
3. Anticipated Award Date: September 14, 2021

Introduction

The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) received \$80 million in funding to implement or expand public health informatics and data science training, certification and degree programs at minority serving institutions (MSIs) and other colleges and universities. The specific objective of the Public Health Informatics & Technology (PHIT) Workforce Development Program is to train at least 4,000 individuals in these specialties through certification and degree programs, ensuring a pipeline of diverse and sustainable informatics workforce supporting modern public health.

Community Health Centers and NACHC's Role in Supporting the PHIT Workforce Development Program

Community health centers deliver comprehensive primary and preventive health care to more than 30 million patients, including over 330,000 veterans, about 1 in every 12 Americans and 1 in 6 Medicaid patients through 1,400 federally qualified health centers (FQHCs). Federally qualified health centers have been in the forefront of community-based public health programs, providing affordable healthcare access to the underserved, under-resourced and most vulnerable populations across the US. Community health centers are located and serve areas where geographic, economic, and cultural barriers limit access to affordable health care. They serve as a critical safety net for these vulnerable populations who are at a higher risk for morbidity and mortality from chronic diseases and public health emergencies such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. These populations include ethnic and racial minority groups, migrant and agricultural workers, and low-income, financially unstable households. Community health centers have previously played a front-line role in helping communities address public health emergencies like the Zika virus in Texas and Puerto Rico, the contaminated water crisis in Flint, Michigan, and the devastating opioid epidemic.

Throughout its 50-year history of community partnerships and collaboration with government and non-profit public health organizations, the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) would work closely within its network of community health centers (CHCs), primary care associations (PCAs) and health center-controlled networks (HCCNs) to support the vision, mission and objectives of the PHIT workforce development program to promote modern, data-driven, comprehensive health care that is accessible, culturally and linguistically competent, community directed, and patient-centered for all.

NACHC has worked with partners who frequently report that they have difficulty finding experienced or adequately trained informatics staff, particularly those who come from the communities they represent. The attrition rate is high in these roles mostly because they report that other, high-resourced organizations in health informatics offer more attractive compensation. The opportunity, however, is ripe for NACHC to link educational and professional organizations, particularly those promoting equity in health IT, with opportunities at their partner organizations, be they of a training or a professional nature.

NACHC Formal Training Programs

1. ATSU PA formal training programs
2. In support of underserved / workforce placement in low-resource settings

Formal Proposal for a Public Health Informatics / Community Health Informatics Training Program

1. Program supports training a workforce with topics covering and supporting the development of a public health informatics infrastructure
2. HCCNs have indicated interest in participating
3. NE PCA with CyncHealth (NEHII)
4. NACHC and members has the ability to support or engage our partners within the PHII (public health informatics institute) program with AT Stills or other orgs.
5. Informatics curriculum tailored to supporting public health informatics education tailored and geared to support low-resource health settings
 - a. Piloted in the Philippines
 - b. Offer training at NACHC meetings
 - c. Engage Minority Serving Institutions (needed to apply or be in a consortium led by one or more MSI).

Through a four year cooperative agreement, NACHC will work with the PHIT Workforce Development Program consortium members and recipients

1. Development of Program Curriculum

- a. NACHC has created a public health informatics curriculum, guided by the ONC's existing health IT curriculum² and the American Medical Informatics Association's 10x10 virtual informatics course³, specifically catering to the underserved, low-resource, and minority population that community health centers serve. NACHC will further develop the curriculum in close collaboration with members of the consortium.

2. Recruitment and Training of Participants

- a. Through NACHC's network of CHCs, PCAs and HCCNs across the nation, outreach to eligible and interested participants and trainees can be recruited within their communities with the goal of ensuring localized workforce development and insights.

3. Development of Internship Opportunities

- a. NACHC's history of supporting community health center workforce development has led to partnerships with multiple community and public health-supporting organizations such as The Public Health Informatics Institute (PHII). Connecting participants with these organizations or within NACHC for internship opportunities would enable a smooth transition from formal curricular activities to on-the-job training or "on the ground" field experiences.

4. Career Placement

- a. Within NACHC's existing job board, a public health informatics-specific board or filter will be added to help match PHIT program participants to various government, industry, or non-profit public health agencies for permanent placement opportunities. NACHC will also develop a public health informatics fellowship and informatics training board for participants intending to further their knowledge of the specialty.

NACHC welcomes partner organizations who are leading efforts to train the next generation of public health informatics experts to work with us and connect these young professionals to informatics careers in public and community health.

Contact

Please reach out to Dr. Julia Skapik (JSkapik@nachc.org) or Dr. Ron Yee (Ryee@nachc.org) if your organization is interested in partnering with NACHC to connect your educational or professional organization to community and public health informatics training and professional opportunities.