

Public University Partnership Opportunity Announcement

Overview

Participating Organization(s)	Louisiana Department of Health, Bureau of Health Services Financing (LDH)
Funding Opportunity Purpose	The purpose of this opportunity is to encourage applications from public colleges/universities in Louisiana to conduct research and evaluation projects to further the proper and efficient administration of the Louisiana Medicaid program to promote delivery of evidence-based, high-quality, accessible, and cost-effective care to Louisiana Medicaid members.

Key Dates – Please note that key dates have changed in response to Hurricane Ida

Posted Date	July 1, 2021	
Q&A Online Session	August 19, 2021 2:00 – 3:30 pm (Registration for online Zoom session will be available in early August 2021)	
Application Due Date(s)	September 17, 2021	October 15, 2021 at 11:59pm
Application Review	October, 2021	November, 2021
Clarifications and Budget Negotiations	October, 2021	November, 2021
Announcement of Awardees	November, 2021	December, 2021
Anticipated Start Date(s)	January 1, 2022	March 1, 2022

This document is organized by section:

- I. Opportunity Description
- II. Funding Information
- III. Application and Submission Information
- IV. Application Review Criteria
- V. Award Administration Information
- VI. Frequently Asked Questions

I. Opportunity Description

This opportunity is issued by the Louisiana Department of Health, Bureau of Health Services Financing (LDH) to support research and evaluation projects that further the proper and efficient administration of the Louisiana Medicaid program to promote delivery of evidence-based, high-quality, accessible, and cost-effective care to Louisiana Medicaid members.

This opportunity spans multiple research disciplines, including health services and health policy research, epidemiology, economic research, prevention and treatment research, community-based research, and the behavioral and social sciences. This opportunity can support new projects as well as expansion of existing projects. Developmental and exploratory projects that can inform the Medicaid program are also welcomed.

Through this opportunity, public colleges/universities in Louisiana will partner with LDH on awarded projects. LDH will draw down federal funding to match the public college/university's share of expenditures in support of the project, subject to the terms and conditions described herein.

Scope and Objectives

This opportunity is intended to support a wide range of research methodologies, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, as well as primary data collection or secondary data analysis of existing data such as Medicaid claims data. While projects may analyze historical data or trends, they should be developed and implemented using methods and frameworks that can identify and support future interventions. This opportunity encompasses a range of topics across multiple priority areas of the Louisiana Medicaid program, including, but not limited to, the priority areas and issues described below:

- **Improving maternal and neonatal outcomes**

Louisiana has some of the lowest ranked outcomes related to maternal morbidity and mortality. Furthermore, health and wellbeing of mothers directly impacts that of their newborns.

- **Improving early childhood health and development**

Common early childhood conditions include uncontrolled asthma, dental problems, and certain untreated developmental and behavioral problems.

- **Improving health outcomes from the most common causes of morbidity and mortality with an emphasis on preventive health**

Common preventable causes of morbidity and mortality include cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes mellitus, tobacco use, and infectious diseases.

- **Improving outcomes related to mental health and substance use disorders**

Medicaid is generally the largest and most important insurer for people with mental health and substance use disorders. Screening, diagnosis, and effective treatment of mental health and substance use disorders improves functioning, quality of life, and can positively impact many other areas of health.

- **Understanding and reducing health disparities and improving health equity**

Disparate poor health outcomes experienced by many Louisianans are the result of social determinants, such as low income, generational poverty, food insecurity, and substandard housing. In addition, often unequal care and resources are available to address diseases that affect marginalized groups of people.

- **Increasing uptake of evidence-based care and reduce utilization of low-value care**

Health technology and services are rapidly changing. Ensuring that Louisiana Medicaid members receive high-value, evidence-based care (e.g., services, drugs, and devices), and do not receive low-value care, is essential.

II. Funding Information

Funding Instrument	Collaborative Endeavor Agreement between LDH and the public college/university
Funds Available and Anticipated Number of Projects	Up to \$1.5 million in federal financial participation for up to 7 projects
Project Period	Awards are issued for 1- or 2-year project periods

Eligible Organizations

- Any public institution of postsecondary education in Louisiana governed by the Board of Regents, the Board of Supervisors of Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, the Board of Supervisors of Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, the Board of Supervisors for the University of Louisiana System, or the Board of Supervisors of Community and Technical Colleges that is engaged in health sciences research.

Eligible Individuals (Program Director/Principal Investigator)

Any individual(s) with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the proposed research as the Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) is invited to work with their public college/university to develop an application. Individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups as well as individuals with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply.

Cost Sharing

This opportunity involves cost sharing between the public college/university and LDH. For a given project, the public college/university will report its actual allowable costs and certify its share of expenditures on the project and LDH will draw down the federal share at the Medicaid administrative match rate (50%).

Public colleges/universities must ensure and certify that the source of their share of the expenditures is allowable for the purposes of claiming Medicaid match (i.e., federal financial participation), as specified in 42 CFR, Part 433, Subpart B. For example, other federal funding (e.g., National Institutes of Health (NIH) or Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) grant funding) cannot generally be used as the basis for claiming federal financial participation. Eligible sources of the public college/university's share include, but are not limited to, general institutional funds (e.g., deriving from state general funds), private foundation funding, and other sources that meet the requirements of 42 CFR, Part 433, Subpart B. Applications without an identified appropriate source of the public college/university's share may be delayed or not accepted for review.

Funding Restrictions

All awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations, as determined by LDH. All projects must be reviewed and approved, or determined to be exempt from review, by the Institutional Review Board of the public college/university followed by the LDH Institutional Review Board. Pre-award costs are not allowed as part of this opportunity.

III. Application and Submission Information

Applicants must complete the application as outlined below. For spacing, font, font size and other formatting considerations, applicants should adhere to NIH formatting guidelines, available at: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/format-and-write/format-attachments.htm>

Applicant organizations or PDs/PIs may submit more than one application, provided that each application is distinct.

Conformance to all requirements is required and strictly enforced. Applicants must read and follow all application instructions in this announcement. Applications that do not comply with these instructions may be delayed or not accepted for review. Upon receipt, applications will be evaluated for completeness. Applications that are incomplete will not be reviewed.

Section of Application	Components	Page Limits
Project Abstract (Summary)	Provide a clear and concise description of the project	30 lines of text
Specific Aims	Describes the issue(s) or the gap in knowledge and the objective(s) of the project to address the issue	1
Research Strategy	Describes the significance of the issue, the innovation in the project, and the project approach, including how the findings of the project will directly contribute to the proper and efficient administration of the Louisiana Medicaid program	5
Budget and Budget Justification	A document listing costs of personnel, fringe benefits, other direct costs, and indirect costs including the amount and source of the public college/university's funding and the amount of federal financial participation requested	Template provided by LDH (no page limit)
Biographical sketches	Biographical Sketch of the PD/PI (NIH format, non-fellowship) and other key personnel	5 pages each

Submission Dates and Times

The Key Dates are set forth in the Overview. Applicants are encouraged to submit in advance of the deadline to ensure they have time to make any application corrections that might be necessary for successful submission. Applications, including all attachments, will be accepted by email (PUPP@LA.gov) prior to the noted deadline.

IV. Application Review Criteria

Only the review criteria described below, adapted from criteria used by NIH, will be considered in the review process. The overall impact/priority and all individual criteria are given a score from 1 (exceptional) to 9 (poor) in whole numbers (no decimals).

Overall Impact Score

Reviewers will provide an overall impact/priority score to reflect their assessment of the degree to which the project will directly improve the proper and efficient administration of the Louisiana Medicaid program. It is assessed independently from scores provided for the individual criteria listed below

Individual Scored Criteria

Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria below in the determination of scientific merit, and give a separate score for each. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major impact. For example, a project that by its nature is not innovative may be essential to improve the Louisiana Medicaid program.

- **Significance**

In assessing a Significance score, reviewers will consider the following questions: Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier? Does the project address an LDH priority topic? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will the Louisiana Medicaid program be improved? How will successful completion of the aims change the technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions of the Louisiana Medicaid program?

- **Investigator(s)**

In assessing a score for Investigator(s), reviewers will consider the following questions: Are the PD(s)/PI(s), collaborators, and other researchers well suited to the project? Do they have appropriate experience and training? How have they demonstrated an ongoing record of accomplishments? Does this project provide opportunities for students and junior researchers?

- **Innovation**

In assessing an Innovation score, reviewers will consider the following question: Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches, or methodologies?

- **Approach**

In assessing an Approach score, reviewers will consider the following questions: Is the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility, and will particularly risky aspects be managed?

If the project involves clinical research, are there plans for 1) protection of human subjects from research risks, and 2) inclusion of minorities and members of both sexes/genders, as well as the inclusion of children, as appropriate, justified in terms of the scientific goals and research strategy proposed?

Additional Review Criteria

As applicable for the project proposed, reviewers will evaluate the following additional items while determining scientific and technical merit, and in providing an overall impact/priority score, but will not give separate scores for these items.

- **Protections for Human Subjects**

For research that involves human subjects but does not involve one of the six categories of research that are exempt under 45 CFR Part 46, the committee will evaluate the justification for involvement of human subjects and the proposed protections from research risk relating to their participation according to the following five review criteria: 1) risk to subjects, 2) adequacy of protection against risks, 3) potential benefits to the subjects and others, 4) importance of the knowledge to be gained, and 5) data and safety monitoring for clinical trials.

For research that involves human subjects and meets the criteria for one or more of the six categories of research that are exempt under 45 CFR Part 46, the committee will evaluate: 1) the justification for the exemption, 2) human subjects involvement and characteristics, and 3) sources of materials.

- **Inclusion of Women, Minorities, and Children**

When the proposed project involves clinical research, reviewers will evaluate the proposed plans for inclusion of minorities and members of both sexes/genders, as well as the inclusion of children, as appropriate.

- **Inclusion of Community Partners**

When the proposed project involves community-based research, reviewers will evaluate the depth, scope, and rigor of engagement with community partners such as community-based organizations and community members.

Additional Review Considerations

As applicable for the project proposed, reviewers will consider each of the following items, but will not give scores for these items, and should not consider them in providing an overall impact/priority score.

- **Budget, Budget Justification, and Period of Support**

Reviewers will consider whether the budget and the requested period of support are fully justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed research.

Review and Selection Process

Applications will be evaluated for merit by an appropriate group of reviewers. Final selection of projects will be at the sole determination of LDH.

V. Award Administration Information

Award Notices

A formal notification will be provided to the applicant organization for successful applications. With notification, the public college/university and LDH must begin the process of executing the relevant agreements.

Reporting

Applicants will be expected to participate in required reporting and meetings as determined by LDH.

Agency Contacts

We encourage inquiries concerning this funding opportunity and welcome the opportunity to answer questions from potential applicants. Please send all inquiries to PUPP@LA.gov.

VI. Frequently Asked Questions

The questions and responses below represent important information to provide guidance on this opportunity. Potential applicants should contact LDH with any other questions not covered below at: PUPP@LA.gov.

1. What types of projects can be funded through this opportunity?

All projects funded through this opportunity must directly advance the proper and efficient administration of the Louisiana Medicaid program to promote delivery of evidence-based, high-quality, accessible, and cost-effective care. This opportunity is meant to support diverse research disciplines and methodologies. LDH has identified several priority areas listed in the description of the opportunity; however, projects addressing other important topics will be considered.

2. What cost sharing is involved in this opportunity?

Cost sharing is a requirement of this opportunity. For each awarded project, the public college/university submits its actual allowable costs and certifies its share of expenditures on the project. LDH then draws down the Medicaid match (i.e., federal financial participation) to reimburse the public college/university for project costs. Federal financial participation is drawn down at the Medicaid administrative match rate (50%). Therefore, the amount of federal financial participation is limited to the lesser of: 1) the public college/university's share of project expenditures from eligible sources, or 2) the difference between the public college/university's share and the total project costs.

Example 1:

Dr. Smith is conducting a project to improve the quality of care of Louisiana Medicaid members with high blood pressure. The total budget of the 1-year project is \$500,000 and the public college/university is providing \$250,000 from an eligible source for its share. Each quarter, the public college/university submits an invoice to LDH showing \$125,000 in total quarterly project costs and certifying that the public college/university spent \$62,500 on the project from an eligible source. LDH uses this invoice as the basis to draw down federal financial participation equal to the public college/university's share (\$62,500 per quarter) which is reimbursed to the public college/university. The total expenditures of the 1-year project will therefore consist of 50% public college/university funding (\$250,000) and 50% federal financial participation (\$250,000), corresponding to the Medicaid administrative match rate of 50%.

Example 2:

Dr. Silva is conducting a project to improve the quality of care for Louisiana Medicaid members with epilepsy. The total budget of the 1-year project is \$600,000, and the public college/university will fund \$400,000 through an eligible source. Each quarter, the public college/university submits an invoice to LDH showing \$150,000 in total quarterly project costs and certifying that the public college/university spent \$100,000 for its share from an eligible source. LDH uses this invoice as the basis to draw down \$50,000 in federal financial participation per quarter and reimburses the public college/university. The amount of federal financial participation is the difference between the public college/university's share and the total project costs which, in this case, results in a match rate less than 50%.

3. What are the eligible sources of the public college/university's share?

Requirements for the public college/university's share are specified in federal regulations (42 CFR, Part 433, Subpart B). Generally, federal funding (e.g., NIH or AHRQ grants) may not be used by the public college/university for its share. Potentially eligible sources may include, but are not limited to, general institutional funds (e.g., derived from state general funds), private foundation funding, and other sources that meet the requirements in 42 CFR, Part 433, Subpart B. It is the public college/university's responsibility to certify that any reported expenditures comply with 42 CFR, Part 433, Subpart B and have not been utilized as match for any other program. Potential applicants are encouraged to contact LDH with any questions.

Example 1:

Dr. Chen received an NIH grant for a project on improving treatment of substance use disorders. Because this is federal funding not eligible for Medicaid match, it is not an eligible source for this opportunity.

Example 2:

Dr. Garcia is conducting a project examining utilization of diagnostic radiology among Louisiana Medicaid members. The total budget of the 1-year project is \$700,000 (direct and indirect) and she received a grant from AHRQ for \$500,000 (direct and indirect). Dr. Garcia also has \$100,000 in funding from an eligible source. This project would therefore be eligible for up to \$100,000 in federal financial participation from this opportunity.

4. Can this opportunity support projects on health topics outside of Medicaid?

No. Through this opportunity, LDH can only support projects that directly further the proper and efficient administration of the Louisiana Medicaid program. Any project that has non-Medicaid-related activities must be cost allocated so that the only project costs reported to LDH are those that directly contribute to the proper and efficient administration of the Louisiana Medicaid program.

5. Can this opportunity support the expansion of existing projects?

Yes; however, the public college/university must cost allocate the Medicaid and non-Medicaid portions of the project, if applicable, so that the only project costs reported to LDH are those that directly contribute to the proper and efficient administration of the Louisiana Medicaid program. In addition, only costs incurred during the project period and expenditures from an eligible source during the project period are eligible for federal financial participation (i.e., historical and future projected costs and expenditures are not allowable).

Example 1:

Dr. Williams is funded by an eligible source to conduct research on the experience of Louisiana Medicaid members receiving prenatal care. This funding is in the amount of \$400,000 and so the public college/university is eligible for up to \$400,000 in federal financial participation, resulting in a total project budget of \$800,000. In this instance, the project consists entirely of activities directed toward furthering the proper and efficient administration of the Louisiana Medicaid program.

Example 2:

Dr. Nguyen is funded by an eligible source to conduct research on cardiovascular outcomes among people with disabilities. This research does not have an exclusive focus on Medicaid and includes data from both Medicaid-enrolled and non-Medicaid-enrolled individuals. When considering the total project budget of \$500,000, 20% of costs are directly related to Medicaid (\$100,000). The public college/university is therefore eligible for up to \$50,000 in federal financial participation (50% of \$100,000). In this instance, cost allocating the project is required since it involves activities that do not directly advance the proper and efficient administration of the Louisiana Medicaid program.

6. Can this opportunity support indirect costs?

Yes. Public college/universities are limited to the federally negotiated indirect cost rate. Indirect costs must be included in the total project budget and are not considered separately. It is the responsibility of the public college/university to select the most appropriate federally negotiated indirect cost rate for the proposed project and provide documentation of the indirect cost rate to LDH, if awarded.

For example, Dr. Patel is conducting a project to examine complications of diabetes mellitus among Louisiana Medicaid members. The direct costs of the project are \$500,000 and the federally negotiated indirect cost rate requested by the public college/university is 40%, resulting in a total project budget of

\$700,000. The public college/university supports 50% of the project (\$350,000) through an eligible source and is therefore eligible for \$350,000 in federal financial participation for the project.

7. How will public colleges/universities access Medicaid claims data, if applicable?

Public colleges/universities are encouraged to use data to which they already have access. If additional data are needed or requested, potential applicants should contact LDH well in advance of applying to ensure that the relevant data can be provided, and that the project budget supports such activities. Datasets requested must be comprehensively specified by the public college/university, including data source(s), elements, definitions of variables (including diagnosis codes, procedure codes, or both as applicable), and table structure. Disclosure of Medicaid claims data other than a Limited Data Set is not generally possible under this opportunity.

8. Will LDH assist with or conduct data analysis for projects?

No. While LDH can potentially provide datasets for projects and general guidance on the data, as described above, data cleaning and data analysis are the sole responsibility of the public college/university. Public colleges/universities are encouraged to use data to which they already have access and to conduct projects involving primary data collection with Medicaid members. Applications must comprehensively describe the source of any data described and specify how the public college/university will conduct any data analysis necessary. Any activities expected to be performed by LDH must be clearly described.

9. What data can LDH provide to public colleges/universities for the purpose of preparing an application?

Prior to the start of a project award, LDH cannot provide any data that is not already available to the public. Public colleges/universities are encouraged to use publicly available reports and data sources to estimate the relevant population sizes and other factors, as needed. Descriptive analyses such as identifying the population with a certain condition and the characteristics of that population can be included as part of the proposed project. Applications will be reviewed without the expectation that public colleges/universities had access to LDH data in the preparation stage.

10. For projects involving primary data collection, will LDH provide a list of Medicaid members eligible to participate?

No. Under this opportunity, LDH cannot provide data for the purpose of identifying Medicaid members that are potentially eligible for participation in projects. Public colleges/universities are encouraged to partner with provider organizations, community-based organizations, or other organizations that serve Medicaid members to recruit participants.

11. What coordination with LDH will be required if a project is awarded?

Upon receipt of a notice of award, the public college/university and LDH must begin working toward execution of relevant agreements for funding. Public colleges/universities (i.e., the PD/PI or designee) will be expected to participate in regular meetings with LDH to review progress. In addition, public colleges/universities must present findings at an annual meeting.

12. Do projects need to be reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board?

Yes. All projects must be reviewed and approved, or determined to be exempt from review, by the Institutional Review Board of the public college/university followed by the LDH Institutional Review Board.

13. Can the public college/university publish its findings in peer-reviewed journals?

Yes. Where appropriate, it is encouraged that the public college/university collaborate scientifically with LDH staff, if applicable. While the public college/university retains scientific independence, it also must provide LDH the opportunity to review all dissemination materials in advance of dissemination. LDH can provide the public college/university guidance on analysis and interpretation of findings and can also help to identify issues with the data.