

## Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA) Funding Opportunity: Measure Development for the Quality Payment Program

### **Q: What is CMS announcing today?**

**A:** On March 2, 2018, CMS published the “Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA) Funding Opportunity: Measure Development for the Quality Payment Program” (Notice of Funding Opportunity) on Grants.gov. The purpose of this Notice of Funding Opportunity was to provide funding assistance in the form of cooperative agreements to entities to develop, improve, update, or expand quality measures for use in the Quality Payment Program. Today, CMS is announcing the awardees for this Notice of Funding Opportunity.

### **Q: What are Cooperative Agreements?**

**A:** Cooperative agreements are a type of federal financial assistance. For more information, see <https://www.grants.gov/> and search under the tab ‘Learn Grants’ for additional resources on grants and cooperative agreements.

### **Q: How were the awardees selected?**

**A:** Applications were screened for eligibility using the criteria outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (Section C. Eligibility Information, and Section D. Application and Submission Information, with cross reference to Appendix II). The Funding Opportunity was open to organizations with quality measure development expertise, such as clinical specialty societies, clinical professional organizations, patient advocacy organizations, educational institutions, independent research organizations, health systems, and other entities engaged in quality measure development. An Objective Review Committee (ORC) of subject matter experts evaluated each valid grant proposal on its merits to result in quality measures for consideration in the Quality Payment Program (QPP). In addition to the review panel, CMS assessed the applicant’s proposed measures and readiness to develop new quality measures for QPP in accordance with the review and selection process outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

### **Q: Will another Funding Opportunity be posted in the future?**

**A:** Please continue to check back with CMS via our website [MACRA: MIPS & APMs - Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#) for more ways to help improve quality.



**Q: How many cooperative agreements is CMS awarding through this opportunity? What are the award amounts?**

**A:** The total amount of federal funds available for all award recipients is \$30 million for three years, subject to the availability of funds. While the Funding Opportunity estimated that up to 20 cooperative agreements would be awarded, the actual number of awards depends upon how the total available funding is distributed per agreement/per year. There are seven awards. CMS did not weight applications based on the amount of funding. Instead, each application was scored against the criteria outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. CMS anticipates awarding as many cooperative agreements as the \$30 million over three years will allow.

**Q: Were applicants who met all of the grant application requirements and requested less than \$6 million in funding over a three-year period (for example, due to partial development already completed) more likely to receive funding (i.e., was there any advantage to submitting applications for less funding)?**

**A:** No, CMS did not weight applications based on the amount of funding requested or where the measure is in the development process. For this Funding Opportunity there must be, at a minimum, an existing measure concept based on evidence of a demonstrated quality gap, variation in performance across clinicians, and opportunity for improvement. Each application was scored against the criteria outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity and no preference was given based on the amount of requested funding. This Funding Opportunity requires that measures be developed under generally accepted measure development and scientific principles in order to meet the following technical requirements:

- Impact, Opportunity, Evidence, Importance to Measure and Report
- Reliability and Validity
- Feasibility
- Usability and Use
- Harmonization
- Stakeholder Engagement

**Q: How soon will these measures be adopted for use under QPP?**

**A:** Upon completion of measure development, measures may be submitted to the next Measures Under Consideration (MUC) list by June 1. Following completion of the pre-rulemaking process, including consideration by the Measures Application Partnership (MAP), measures will be eligible for inclusion in QPP.

**Q: How will CMS address the remaining gaps in measurement under QPP?**

**A:** The funding opportunity announcement (FOA) for these cooperative agreements identified seven specialty gap areas (Orthopedic Surgery, Pathology, Radiology, Mental Health and Substance Use, Oncology, Palliative Medicine, and Emergency Medicine) that are underrepresented in the QPP, limiting the relevant measures available for clinicians to report that are also strong indicators of the quality of patient care. While we anticipate that these cooperative agreements will address some of the identified specialty gap areas, we recognize



that some may remain. In order to address this, CMS is taking a multi-pronged approach. This approach will include some measure development by CMS, and adoption of externally developed measures through the MUC/MAP process. The agency's overarching strategy in measure development is to eliminate measures that add limited value and potentially add others when the overall impact is less provider burden and improved patient care. CMS plans to evaluate the success of the cooperative agreements and may consider future awards supporting measure development, subject to funding availability.

**Q: Are there other opportunities to partner with CMS to adopt measures under QPP?**

**A:** CMS continues to accept measures for the MUC/MAP pre-rulemaking process. We also have a process for adopting measures for use in the Quality Clinical Data Registries (QCDR). CMS plans to evaluate the success of the cooperative agreements and may consider future awards supporting development, subject to funding availability.

**Q: Who do I contact if I have further questions?**

**A:** Please contact CMS at [MACRA-Measure-Funding@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:MACRA-Measure-Funding@cms.hhs.gov) if you have any further questions about the application process.

**Q: How does this Funding Opportunity fit with the Meaningful Measures Initiative?**

**A:** This project will help ensure that a more appropriate selection of quality measures is applicable to certain clinical specialties that are underrepresented in the current measure set. Across all programs involving quality measurement, CMS seeks to remove measures that offer limited value and potentially add others that minimize provider burden while improving care in ways that patients consider the most meaningful. Most importantly, this work will allow us to focus on a more outcomes-driven approach to quality measurement. Several of the cooperative agreements will focus on converting existing registry-based measures into electronic clinical quality measures (eCQMs), which will ultimately reduce the burden of data collection.