

AARP Quality Measure Innovation Grant: FAQ

Thank you for your interest in the 2021 AARP Quality Measure Innovation Grant. Please use this list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and email us with any additional questions not addressed in this document.



Questions and Answers

Grant proposal logistics

Q1: Who is eligible to apply for the AARP Quality Measure Innovation Grant?

This funding opportunity is open to the public — any organization may submit a proposal. Access to data supporting this grant requires collaborating with an OptumLabs partner organization. Teaming with an OptumLabs partner organization to draft the proposal is strongly recommended so your efforts are informed by knowing what questions the data can best answer. See **Q5–Q8** for more information about OptumLabs partner organizations.

Q2: How many projects will be funded through this opportunity?

Two one-year (12 months) grants will be awarded in the 2021 cycle. AARP reserves the right to withhold awards or sponsor additional projects at its discretion. Grantees will receive up to \$150,000 in funding for direct and indirect costs limited to no more than 10% of direct costs. Additionally, the grant includes one year of access to the OptumLabs Data Warehouse and necessary analytic software* for project support. All terms of any awarded grant will be determined by OptumLabs and AARP. Please see below for further information on data access.

Q3: Is it okay for a party to submit multiple proposals for measures as a primary applicant under this opportunity?

Yes. We encourage parties to submit multiple brief proposals for meaningful measures or measurement projects or outline multiple new measures or measurement projects within a single proposal if feasible within the timeline and budget of the award.

* Software licensing is for one SAS Server user license or other similar analytical software.

Q4: Is there guidance on what must be included in the proposal?

Yes. There are two stages in the application process; the first stage involves completing a brief proposal template to summarize your idea(s) and other key information about your proposed project. The template will be provided when the Request for Proposals (RFP) cycle officially opens, on June 30, 2021. If your brief proposal is selected as a finalist, the second stage involves completing a detailed proposal template that will be provided directly to finalists.

Q5: What is an OptumLabs partner for the purposes of this opportunity and who are OptumLabs partners?

OptumLabs partners are external organizations (unaffiliated with Optum/United Health Group). Their relationship with OptumLabs is governed by a Master License Agreement (MLA), which includes a variety of terms about the partner relationship, and often includes detailed data use terms, obligating partners to protect the privacy and security of information contained in the OptumLabs Data Warehouse (OLDW). Partner organizations include academic institutions, as well as patient/consumer advocates, providers and measure developers with expertise in OptumLabs data and/or quality measurement. Please visit the partner page on the [OptumLabs website](#) for a list of current OptumLabs partner organizations, or [email us](#) to inquire about current partners.

Q6: My organization is not an OptumLabs partner. Can I become one through this grant?

No, applicants that are not legally affiliated with an active OptumLabs partner organization are required to collaborate with one to use OptumLabs data under this award. We encourage you to seek out contacts in your network who are affiliated with these institutions. Many OptumLabs partner organizations may be open to considering collaborations related to this award; however, decisions to participate in collaborative (teaming) engagements are at the sole discretion of the OptumLabs partner institution. If you need assistance connecting with partners, contact the [grant support team](#).

Q7: Will OptumLabs support identification of OptumLabs partner organizations for grant collaboration? When will this recommendation occur?

Applicants should reach out to OptumLabs partner organizations directly; however, you may contact the [grant support team](#), and we will refer you to a list of partner contacts upon inquiry. Many OptumLabs partner organizations may be open to considering collaborations related to this award; however, decisions to participate in collaborative (teaming) engagements are at the sole discretion of the OptumLabs partner institution.

Q8: If my organization is not an OptumLabs partner and collaborates with one as required, will my organization have access to the OptumLabs Data Warehouse directly?

No, under this award, only organizations under an active MLA with OptumLabs will be permitted direct access to the data environment. For clarity, parties who are not under an active MLA with OptumLabs will not have access to any raw data. However, all grant team members will be able to review aggregated, summary output derived from OptumLabs data throughout the course of their project.

OptumLabs Data Warehouse (OLDW)

Q9: If our proposal is selected, how long will project team members (covered under an MLA) have access to the OLDW?

This grant opportunity funds access to the OLDW for a one-year (12 months) project. The one-year timeline begins when data are first made available to project analysts on the grant team.

Q10: If our proposal is accepted, will we have unrestricted access to the OLDW or only the data we specify in the proposal?

Data within the OLDW are provided in statistically certified, de-identified “views” accessible only to OptumLabs partners with an active MLA for data access. A data “view” is a pre-selected subset of certain data elements in OLDW. Grant finalists will indicate the data view that best suits their measure project during the second, detailed proposal stage. That data view may contain more elements than are required to support the measure, as outlined in the detailed proposal. Once a statistically certified, de-identified data view is provisioned for the project, data are limited to the pre-selected fields available in that view.

Q11: How do OptumLabs partners access the data in the OLDW? Would we be able to export data for analysis?

OptumLabs provisions a Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) for accessing the OLDW in a secure environment open for the duration of the grant. The VDI is loaded with software for analyzing the raw data. Only aggregate results meeting OptumLabs privacy and security policy standards may be exported from the environment for grant team use.

Q12: What kinds of data are available in the OLDW?

Without a confidentiality agreement with OptumLabs, we are unable to share details about the data, but can offer the information below and refer you to one of our partner organizations to consider data feasibility and teaming on your measure project. The OLDW includes:

- De-identified claims data (linkable to electronic health record (EHR)-derived and Lifestyle/Socioeconomic status (SES) data)
 - Commercial (e.g., employer-sponsored) and Medicare Advantage plan claims data are consistent with standard claims for medical, surgical, lab tests and Rx services. A portion of lab test claims under these plans are linked to an associated lab test result (or value). A portion of enrollees may also have data in the other primary sources listed below.
 - Medicare Parts A, B and D claims data are consistent with Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) research identifiable files (RIFs); however some fields may not be available to ensure de-identification and protect patient privacy. A portion of enrollees may also have data in the other primary sources listed below. Use of these data is subject to CMS approval.
- De-identified EHR-derived data
 - EHR-derived data in OLDW, similarly, contain standard International Classification of Diseases (ICD) diagnosis and Current Procedural Terminology (CPT)/Health Care Common Coding Procedure System (HCPCS) procedure codes from clinical encounters, as well as many clinical observations (e.g., vitals, etc.), lab results, prescribed medications and some pre-processed, structured data derived from clinical notes using natural language processing (NLP).
- Consumer lifestyle and SES data
 - All data views include age, sex and race/ethnicity. Some of the data views also include fields such as income, education and more.

Q13: What skill level does one need to access and query OLDW data? Do you have various user types, e.g., SQL expertise vs. Excel users?

The OLDW does require technical expertise (e.g., medical coding, data analysis, programming). Applications for R and SQL are included in the environment. SAS, Stata and other applications may be provisioned in the environment with appropriate licensing, as needed. A strong understanding of OptumLabs data tables and variables is necessary for efficient and effective use of the data for any project. Only OptumLabs partners will have access to raw data in OLDW and many OptumLabs partners have such expertise.

Project support

Q14: If our proposal is selected, can we collaborate with the OptumLabs team for data analysis?

No — AARP and OptumLabs staffs are ineligible to participate on proposed grant teams for this award. Teams should identify resources affiliated with OptumLabs partner organizations with expertise in performing the programming and analysis required for the scope of the measure development and/or testing or the approach to advance measurement science. See **Q5–Q8** for additional information.

Q15: If our proposal is selected, will we have access to a data support expert?

There are a few ways to learn more about OptumLabs data:

1. Join our 90 minute webinar on July 8, 2021 (register on the grant webpage) in which we will review the data in OLDW (as well as provide more information on AARP 2021 grant priorities, grant selection criteria, and more) .
2. Engage an OptumLabs partner organization to collaborate on your proposal and determine project feasibility. Most partners have access to OLDW, allowing them to explore the data in OLDW in support of grant applications. Note: OptumLabs partners may collaborate or not at their sole discretion.
3. OptumLabs will provide basic data support, throughout the request for proposals, as needed and at OptumLabs' discretion, to support questions of data availability, completeness and quality. [Email us](#) with any questions or to schedule a meeting.

Q16: Can you provide examples of prior proposals that were awarded grants?

AARP has awarded seven grants over three funding cycles (2016, 2017, 2019):

1. *American Academy of Hospice & Palliative Medicine (AAHPM), in collaboration with AMGA (2016)*
 - **Measure project:** Measuring pain treatment among those with serious illness
 - **Goal:** Define “serious illness” using administrative claims and clinical data from electronic health records to help improve pain treatment strategies and access to palliative care for the right individuals.
2. *Mayo Clinic (2016)*
 - **Measure project:** Appropriate glucose lowering therapy for diabetes measure
 - **Goal:** Define a measure of appropriate glucose therapy (i.e., treatment intensity) that balances the risks and benefits associated with oral medications and insulin treatment, while carefully examining patients’ clinical complexity and HbA1c levels.
3. *Pharmacy Quality Alliance (PQA), in collaboration with University of Maryland, Baltimore (2016, 2017)*
 - **Measure project:** Bleeding events associated with anti-coagulant use
 - **Goal:** Measure bleeding event rates in the hospital, ED and urgent care, associated with use of anti-coagulants. A key priority in Health and Human Services’ (HHS’) Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion’s *National Action Plan for Adverse Drug Event (ADE) Prevention*.
 - **Measure project:** Hypoglycemic events associated with hyperglycemic medications
 - **Goal:** Measure hypoglycemia event rates in the hospital, ED and urgent care, associated with use of hypoglycemic medications. A key priority in Health and Human Services’ (HHS’) Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion’s *National Action Plan for Adverse Drug Event (ADE) Prevention*.

4. *Tufts Medical Center (2017)*
 - **Measure project:** Measuring cancer trigger event rates (i.e., cancer treatment-related adverse events)
 - **Goal:** Define a measure of cancer treatment-related adverse events (i.e., triggers) and demonstrate associations with outcomes of mortality, readmissions and health care resource utilization. The work may result in an automated, electronic “trigger” tool for understanding risk and identifying treatment related injuries among breast, colorectal, lung and prostate cancer patients. Triggers are clinical indicators that suggest the possibility of an adverse event.
5. *National Quality Forum (NQF), in collaboration with NCQA (2019)*
 - **Measure project:** Kidney health evaluation for adults with diabetes mellitus
 - **Goal:** Measure levels of kidney function and damage for patients with diabetes to assist with early detection, monitoring and prediction of patient risk levels for chronic kidney disease (CKD).
6. *Johns Hopkins University (2019)*
 - **Measure project:** Further maturation of a partially developed performance measure of stroke misdiagnosis in hospital emergency departments
 - **Goal:** Measure stroke misdiagnosis in hospital emergency rooms. Focuses on patients who experience a poor outcome (e.g., a stroke) when their symptoms are not correctly diagnosed at an emergency room visit.



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