The New Jersey Integrated Population Health Data (iPHD) Project
Request for Applications (RFA)

Key Dates:

Deadline for Letter of Intent: June 5, 2024

Deadline for Application Submission: July 3, 2024

Earliest Anticipated Award Date: December 2024

Overview and Goals:

Enacted through state legislation in 2016, the New Jersey Integrated Population Health Data (iPHD) Project is designed to enable and promote population health research that leads to improvements in the health, safety, security, and well-being of New Jersey residents as well as improvements in the cost-efficiency of state government programs in these areas. The overarching concept of the iPHD is that programmatic data are much more informative when they are linked across program areas (e.g., health, social services) than when they remain in isolation from one another. Under the direction of a ten-member Governing Board, the iPHD Project is in, but not of, the New Jersey Department of Health. The Project is administered by Rutgers Center for State Health Policy.

This Request for Applications (RFA) seeks proposals from research institutions for use of data from the Integrated Population Health Data Project (iPHD) for projects that advance the purpose of the iPHD and its research priorities.

Research Priorities:

The iPHD Governing Board adopted five (5) research priorities based on input from representatives from New Jersey's research universities, state agencies, and other organizations for the purpose of advancing population health and the efficiency of government programs in New Jersey. The Governing Board will accept for review, and consider for approval, high-quality research applications that: (1) advance the purpose of the iPHD to improve public health, safety, security, and well-being of New Jersey residents and the overall cost-efficiency of government assistance programs, (2) address one or more of the research priorities described below, (3) use valid research methods, and (4) comply with the provisions of the applicable statutes.

Research Priority #1: Informing New Jersey's integrated approach to addressing the opioid epidemic

Combating the opioid misuse epidemic is one of New Jersey's highest policy priorities, involving multiple state programs and agencies. Analysis of integrated data within the iPHD can contribute to addressing the epidemic by illuminating patterns of opioid prescribing, examining other drivers of opioid misuse and overdoses, identifying potential policy solutions, and recommendations, and evaluating prevention and treatment program outcomes, including addressing disparities in care.

Research Priority #2: Improving maternal and infant health

Improving infant and maternal related outcomes and reducing rates of infant and maternal mortality and disparities are very high priorities for New Jersey. Analyses of health system, community, and

other factors influencing infant and maternal outcomes can inform and support improved intervention strategies and public policy. Research projects that assess opportunities to improve infant and maternal outcomes by adapting best practices from other states or countries are encouraged.

Research Priority #3: Assuring access to physical and behavioral health services and addressing social determinants of health

New Jersey devotes extensive resources across multiple state programs, including Medicaid and charity care, to provide access to vital physical and behavioral health services (mental health and substance use disorders) for underserved populations across the lifespan. Coordination of services across sectors of the delivery system, especially medical and behavioral health as well as care at the end of life, are challenges that can be informed by analysis of services across programs. Further, deeper understanding of how social and physical environments impact health and of the relationships between health-related and other publicly supported services, such as housing assistance, criminal justice, and public transit, can inform more efficient and effective use of state supported healthcare services.

Research Priority #4: Supporting New Jersey's response to COVID-19 and other public health emergencies

On March 9, 2020, Governor Phil Murphy declared a public health emergency in New Jersey as part of the state's coordinated response to contain the spread of COVID-19. Data-driven insights are essential to better understand the impact of COVID-19, prevent future public health emergencies, and enable preparedness for early action should they occur. iPHD can support these efforts by facilitating analyses of linked data across a range of topics including, but not limited to, disparities and inequities across race, ethnicity and socio-economic status, access to and utilization of healthcare, and the impact of technologies on health outcomes.

Research Priority #5: Promoting equitable access to high-value health services

Ensuring equitable access to high-value health services, which refers to delivering high-quality care at a reasonable cost while minimizing unnecessary and low-value services, remains a persistent challenge in the healthcare system. We encourage the analysis of iPHD data to drive innovations in healthcare financing and delivery, as well as provide clinical recommendations to enhance access to high-value care and identify opportunities for reducing unnecessary and low-value services.

For more information about the iPHD Project please visit iphd.rutgers.edu.

Eligibility:

All academic and non-academic research institutions are eligible to apply for data access, and students with appropriate faculty supervision are eligible to apply. Only projects with research aims that align with the purpose and research priorities of the iPHD will be approved. The iPHD project seeks a diverse pool of applicants; researchers from underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply.

The Governing Board, in limited circumstances, will also consider proposals that fall outside the approved research priorities provided they: (1) serve the purpose of the iPHD, (2) draw on the datasets assembled for the purpose of addressing the iPHD research priorities, and (3) are deemed by the Governing Board to be of high priority to New Jersey.

Letter of Intent (LOI):

LOIs are **required** and should include the following information:

1. Project title;

2. A <u>brief</u> description of the proposed research and specific aims (no more than four sentences);

3. List iPHD research priorities addressed by proposed research;

4. Data set(s) requested for research; and

5. Name, title, institution and contact information of the principal investigator (PI; if multiple PIs are designated, note a single individual who will serve as the contact PI).

LOIs should generally be limited to one page and submitted in a PDF format. The LOI is not binding and is not considered in the application review process. However, applications without prior LOI submissions will not be considered. LOIs should be submitted via email to iphd@ifh.rutgers.edu.

Guidelines for Preparing and Submitting Application:

The full application consists of the Application and Data Request Form, Research Abstract and Narrative, and curricula vitae of the PI and all co-investigators. **All forms and templates described below are available on the iPHD website. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.**

1. *Application & Data Request Form:*

   Please complete the Application and Data Request Form.

2. *Abstract & Research Narrative Template:*

   Please use the Abstract & Research Narrative template. The guideline described here can also be found on the template. Use 11-point Arial font, 1.5 line spacing, and no less than 0.5" margins.

   Abstract: Briefly describe the proposed research project in layman's terms (250 words or fewer).

   Research proposal: Limit the narrative to five (5) pages, including figures & tables, but excluding references. Appendix material will not be accepted. Include the following sections (page lengths are suggested):

   1) **Overall project goal and specific research aims** (0.5 page)

   2) **Background and significance** (0.5 to 1 page):

      a) Scientific and public health importance for New Jersey or the field at large

      b) Alignment with the purpose of the iPHD

      c) Fit with iPHD research priority(ies); no more than one paragraph

   3) **Research design and methods** (2.5 to 3 pages):

      a) Describe **analyses** to be used to accomplish research aims

      b) Describe how access to the requested **data** (including linkages) is integral to addressing your **research question(s)**

   4) **Study limitations and how they will be addressed** (0.5 page)

   5) **Post research plans** including reports, briefings, publications and future grant proposals (0.5 page)

6) **If this is a resubmitted application:** Describe how the proposed project differs from your last submission (up to 1 page)

3. *Curricula vitae (CVs):*

   Include the CVs of the project principal investigator (PI) and all co-investigators. Please limit the length of each CV to five pages.

4. *IRB approval:*

   IRB notice of approval will be required prior to data release (but not required at the time of application). Indicate the governing IRB on the Data Request Form.

5. *Submission:*

   Applications should be submitted electronically via the iPHD website (iphd.rutgers.edu/application-process). Upon submission, you will be redirected to a "thank you" page acknowledging receipt. Please contact us (iphd@ifh.rutgers.edu) if you have any questions in the process.

Proposal Review Criteria:

Applications will be reviewed by the iPHD Research Advisory Committee (RAC), which will make recommendations to the iPHD Governing Board. The iPHD Governing Board will make final approval decisions. The RAC will evaluate the proposals based on the following review criteria:

Significance: Will the project advance the purpose of the iPHD and address one or more of the approved iPHD research priorities? Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in addressing one or more of the iPHD research priorities? Will successful completion of the project aims directly inform population health concerns and priorities in New Jersey or lead to important new knowledge that has potential to inform existing or future population health priorities, including projects that generate preliminary studies with a high likelihood of leading to larger term projects of significance? Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions proposed?

Investigator(s): Are the PIs, collaborators, and other researchers well suited to the project? If the PI is a student or in the early stage of an independent research career, do they have appropriate experience and training and sufficient support from experienced investigators? If the PI is an established investigator, have they demonstrated an ongoing record of accomplishments that have advanced their field(s)? If the project is collaborative or multi-PD/PI, do the investigators have complementary and integrated expertise; are their leadership approach, governance, and organizational structure appropriate for the project?

Approach: Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the project's specific aims? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? Does the approach include an effective strategy to solicit input from subject matter experts? If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility, and will particularly risky aspects be managed?

Approval of Data Release:

In accordance with NJSA: 52:14B-3(3), all applications will be deliberated upon by the Governing Board in public session and voted on by the Governing Board in public session except for any legal advice from counsel, which will be discussed in executive/closed session. The applications and reviews will be subject to the provisions of the NJ Open Public Records Act.

Please note the NJ iPHD Governing Board reserves the right to reject, in whole or in part, any or all applications, to advertise for new applications, to abandon the need for such services, and to cancel this request for applications (RFA) if it is in the best interest of the iPHD, as determined by the Governing Board.

Applications may be rejected for any of the reasons listed:

- Application submitted in a manner other than specified in the RFA;

- Application received after the deadline;

- Applicant failed to include required information;

- Applicant provided misleading or inaccurate answers; and/or

- Applicant failed to respond to Board's request for additional information.

Because there is no statutory or constitutional right to access the iPHD data, there is no right to a contested hearing if your request for data is denied. This is a final agency decision. You have the right to appeal this final agency decision within 45 days of receipt of denial letter to the New Jersey Superior Court, Appellate Division, Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex, P.O. Box 006, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0006.

Data Release Requirements:

All approved applicants are required to comply with the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Subjects Protection guidelines for conduct of research with human subjects (i.e., has a Federalwide Assurance Number, or FWA). Additionally, payment for applicable data fees will be required before data transfer.

Reporting Requirement:

Progress report if a project extension is requested and approved:

If a project extension is approved, a full progress report including the following is required:

- A summary of progress and findings to date;

- A bibliography of all reports, publications, and presentations under development and made using iPHD data; and

- Copies of all publications, reports, and presentations.

Final Report:

Authorized Data Users must submit a final report to the CSHP within 60 days of the conclusion of the research project. The iPHD Project will provide guidance on the content of the report, which will include, but may not be limited to:

- A summary of project findings;

- A bibliography of all reports, publications, and presentations under development and made using iPHD data; and

- Copies of all publications, reports, and presentations.

Appendix: Project Requirements Checklist

Application documents to complete and submit

Complete all required documents in full by deadline

- ☐ Letter of intent (submitted via email to iphd@ifh.rutgers.edu)
- ☐ Application & Data Request Form
- ☐ Abstract & Research Narrative
- ☐ CVs of PI(s) and all co-investigators

Upload completed documents to the iPHD website (https://iphd.rutgers.edu/application-process). Submitted materials will be reviewed by the iPHD Governing Board.

Requirements post iPHD Governing Board approval

Upon project approval, the following documents will be required prior to data transfer:

- ☐ Executed Data Use Agreement (DUA)
- ☐ Copies of all IRB documentation, including initial and continuing review approvals with FWA#
- ☐ Data fee payment

Proposal review criteria

All proposals will be evaluated by the iPHD Governing Board for the following criteria:

- ☐ Completeness of application information;
- ☐ Adequate qualifications of the researcher;
- ☐ Scientific merit and methodologic rigor as assessed by the iPHD Research Advisory Committee;
- ☐ A research aim(s) consistent with the NJ iPHD legislation, i.e.,
  - To improve the public health, safety, security, and well-being of NJ residents
  - To improve the cost efficiency of government assistance programs

Obligations of authorized iPHD data users

Following approval by the Governing Board, all authorized data users must agree to the following:

- ☐ Compliance with security requirements;
- ☐ Compliance with all applicable conflict of interest rules;
- ☐ Compliance with state/federal/privacy laws;
- ☐ Approval by an IRB and data use in accordance with the IRB;
- ☐ Execution of, and adherence to, all applicable DUAs;
- ☐ Adherence to iPHD data policies; and
- ☐ Adherence to acceptable use restrictions

Reporting requirement

- ☐ Progress report (if a project extension is requested and approved)
- ☐ Final report