

## Public Health Initiatives Receive More Attention

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The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently announced **\$270 million** will be allocated to information technology support for public health infrastructure and research. The funding comes from the Affordable Care Act's \$750 million investment in public health. The funding is expected to empower communities with tools and resources for local health initiatives. Overarching goals from the grant include disease prevention, early disease detection, and managing conditions before they become severe. Public health initiatives are starting to receive more attention on the state and local side as health officials realize the importance of disease surveillance and immunization systems. The data captured in these types of systems is critical in deriving information about population and health. This new focus on prevention will inherently cut down health care costs as a whole.

A handful of states are currently involved in public health initiatives. For instance, **South Carolina's** Information Technology Management Office (ITMO) recently released a request for qualifications (RFQ) for integrating its electronic disease surveillance system. Responses are due by March 1, 2011. The department is interested in purchasing a modular disease surveillance system with capabilities such as Web-based interfacing, dynamic data collection, master patient indexing, electronic laboratory reporting, and case notification messaging.

The state of **Maine** recently solicited support on its ImmPact2 immunization information system (IIS). opp link The effort is headed by Maine's Department of Health and Human Services. Its objectives include decreasing operational hosting costs of the ImmPact2 registry, managing life cycle maintenance to keep technology components within their support life cycles, and consolidating onto virtual dedicated Windows server environments.

**North Dakota** is another state that may procure support services for its statewide public health information system. The state was interested in establishing an information management application to be used by all local public health units for the purpose of tracking client information. Additionally, the **Nevada** Department of Health and Human Services released a request for information (RFI) in October 2010 for offsite immunization registry hosting services. The state is looking to make its WebIZ (the state's immunization system) highly functional in a way that is equitable to the state and the user community it serves. RFI responses were due in December 2010 and the department is still in the procurement planning phase.

Other states that may have public health initiatives include:

**Wisconsin**- The Wisconsin Department of Health Services may release a request for proposals (RFP) to replace its Health Alert Network (HAN).

**Oregon**- The Oregon Department of Human Services may rebid its immunization information system. Its contract with HP Enterprise Services is set to expire in February 2015.

**Michigan**- The Michigan Department of Information Technology may rebid its disease surveillance system. The contract is currently held by Altarum Institute and is set to expire August 2011.

**Arizona**- Maricopa County's Department of Public Health recently released an RFP for public health policy initiatives. Proposals are due February 25, 2011. The department may release an RFP for public health policy system implementation services as well.

**Delaware**- The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services recently released an RFP to provide technical assistance for a division-wide performance improvement initiative (PII) to achieve quality improvement in public health policies, programs, or infrastructure. Proposals are due April 18, 2011.

**Arkansas**- The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Medical Services (DMS) has included the procurement of a Public Health Electronic Health Record (EHR) System in its proposed Arkansas Medicaid Enterprise (AME) to be used by DMS for Medicaid patients' medical information determined through services provided in public health clinics.

**GovWin's Take:**

With more focus placed on improving care delivery and cutting health care spending through more preventative strategies, more money is expected to be released for related initiatives such as disease surveillance, public health information systems, health registries and immunization information systems. States will procure public health IT services with the help of HHS funds. Additionally, a considerable amount of states may be rebidding contracts related to these types of systems. These procurements will most likely entail modernization or enhancements to current systems. For that, vendors should pay close attention to states soliciting planning and assessment services for their public health IT systems, in addition to states with contracts expiring in the near future.