

# Question and Answer NOFO Informational Meeting

CDC-RFA-IP-26-0102: Network of Influenza Modeling and Forecasting Centers

*(adapted from a transcript of the informational call held June 5, 2026)*

Note: For some responses, clarifications and additional information have been added to transcriptions from the call. Frequently asked questions via email are also included.

## Funding

**Question:** Will groups be penalized for being involved in other modeling and forecasting collaborations, e.g., being an Insight Net site or a CSTE funded forecasting site? **Answer:** These are distinct funding opportunities. There is no cross eligibility between any supplemental funding, other modeling and forecasting funding, and this NOFO. Sites wouldn't be given extra credit or have points deducted just for being part of Insight Net since these are distinct networks. This is a new five-year cooperative agreement being hosted in the Influenza Division to directly support flu forecasting and modeling, and applications should approach these as independent. If you are proposing similar activities for multiple funding opportunities, please review the overlap section in the NOFO.

**Question:** Is the \$475k budget/year inclusive of indirect costs? **Answer:** Yes, indirect costs should be included in the \$475k budget.

**Question:** Are standard inflationary increases for personnel costs paid for other years? **Answer:** \$475k is a flat budget over the five-year period. If there are increases in costs, they will still have to fit within the \$475k budget.

**Question:** Is there a minimum effort for the PI? **Answer:** No. Some amount of the total funding should support the Principal Investigator (PI).

**Question:** What would be the start date for successful applications? **Answer:** September 30, 2026. Expected award date is September 15, 2026.

**Question:** For profit organizations other than small businesses is listed on the grants.gov page, but not in the PDF version of the announcement. Can you please clarify? **Answer:** We apologize for the discrepancy. Eligible institutions are those that are included in the PDF version of the announcement. The eligibility list on grants.gov has been updated.

**Question:** Are Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) e.g., LANL, eligible to be prime awardees or included as a subaward? **Answer:** FFRDCs do not fall in one of the categories listed as eligible to be a prime awardee. Primary awardee institutions are responsible for distributing subaward funds.

**Question:** Will it be possible to add subawards at a later date, given the short application timeline? **Answer:** It may be possible in year 1. It would be helpful to provide materials to address what the proposed sub award would be like, including supporting documentation, letters of intent, draft CVs of people who might be serving in those positions. It should be possible to add in year 2. If you haven't identified the subawardee, then they can't start to work, but you can list them in the application, yes.

**Question:** Are there restrictions on sub awards? **Answer:** No.

**Question:** Would subawards be funded directly or through the lead institution? **Answer:** Through the lead institution.

**Question:** Has the money been appropriated for the full funding opportunity? **Answer:** Support beyond the first budget year will depend on appropriation of funds, satisfactory progress in meeting your project's objectives, and a decision that continued funding is in the government's best interest.

**Question:** Do all 5 years need to be included in the budget narrative? **Answer:** Only details for Year 1 are requested to be included in the budget narrative.

## Program

**Question:** What do you expect for the readiness of the "network"? Are new collaborations encouraged? What would be recognized as evidence of a "good network?" **Answer:** Desired qualities of the network are those described in the evaluation criteria of the Merit Review section (p53-58). There are not specific criteria about readiness. We are expecting members of this network to contribute to real-time modeling and forecasting activities. Make sure you have the capacity and organizational ability to support that work. If you're applying for forecasting activities, you should demonstrate that you can support real-time forecasting of 50 states, each week. If you're going more for the modeling route, you can consider supporting multi-modeling hubs. Please make sure that you are not relying on any CDC institutional memory to support your application. The only thing people can bring to the review is what is written in your application. So, whatever you are trying to demonstrate, to meet the evaluation criteria, please include it in your written proposal, because that is all that will be considered.

**Question:** Are new or existing collaborations preferred? **Answer:** We can't speak to whether a new or existing collaboration would be preferred. Please refer to the evaluation criteria (p53-58). These are the criteria that panelists will use to evaluate your application. Also, please refer to the Collaborations section on p42, for guidelines on describing previous and planned collaborations. For proposing new collaborations, make sure that you demonstrate that they are feasible. All of the partners should be aware that you are proposing this collaboration, and we do expect new collaborations to build through the network between funded institutions.

**Question:** Can you describe the types of CDC data sources (especially those that span all 50 states) that we can tap into for our modeling efforts? **Answer:** We'd suggest looking at Flu View, which is the weekly surveillance report that is published each week to capture core data systems that included ED visit data, virologic data, hospitalization data, and mortality data. The datasets covered in FluSight forecasting efforts are good examples and include laboratory-confirmed influenza hospital admissions (NHSN) and weekly percentage of emergency department visits due to influenza (NSSP). There are also additional data sources that CDC relies on in the respiratory data channel, which also includes wastewater.

**Question:** What are the approaches being used in FluSight? **Answer:** We recommend checking the FluSight website. There are evaluation pages there that include the type of methods that are being used to support real-time forecasting across the network. They include statistical, mechanistic, combinations, and machine learning/AI approaches.

**Question:** While Strategy 5 is clearly about participating in FluSight, Strategy 4 is less clear (Generate national and, where appropriate sub-national model projections). Are you also required to forecast hospitalizations, or do you envision other types of forecasting being possible? **Answer:** Strategy 4 includes generating national model projections. You would not be required to forecast hospitalizations for this strategy. We don't have specific forecasting requirements for Strategy 4, but examples would include Scenario Modeling Hub, multi-model papers, where a question is being addressed about the impact of a vaccine, for example. You should demonstrate the ability to contribute to these sort of networks and also address modeling specific questions.

**Question:** Is the network the 7 teams that are potentially to be funded or will it be a larger CDC network, that will collaborate as a "network"? **Answer:** This network will be composed of up to 7 funded sites, which will include collaborating partners.

**Question:** Are the non-required outcomes on the logic table examples, or specific outcomes to choose from? **Answer:** Only the required outcomes (those with asterisks in

the logic model) are required to be addressed. Although, you should address outcome measures for all the strategies and activities you are proposing (see p35). Outcomes in the logic model that are not required can be taken as examples or are broader outcomes that we would not expect each site to report on separately, particularly during the award. You should plan to include at least one outcome for the strategies you are applying for. So, for example, if you are applying to Strategy 6, you might want to consider the outcome there as a possible example. We realize there is limited space in the application and would advise you to use the space as you think would be most valuable. Reviewers will review the whole application, so if you are addressing something somewhere that's not in the outcome section, that should possibly help address the optional outcome.

**Question:** Is partnering with a hospital system appreciated? Or is there a preference more for federal / state / local public health departments? **Answer:** There is no stated preference for partnering with a hospital system. Federal, state, and local health departments are provided as examples of public health partners.

**Question:** Can you clarify the definition of a network site? **Answer:** For the purpose of this NOFO, the definition would be all of the people working for your site. This could span across institutions, but anyone which is included as having a role in your site, especially that would be receiving funding from the award.

**Question:** Who would be considered eligible partners? **Answer:** We do not have limits on who would be eligible to be part of your network, as long as there are no funding restrictions.

**Question:** Are the criteria listed in the performance measurement plan the only possible criteria? **Answer:** The criteria listed in the announcement are examples and you are more than welcome to add your own criteria. Applicants are encouraged to consider both process measures that may be used to demonstrate progress on the strategies and activities (p30-34) and outcome measures that may be used to demonstrate progress towards the outcomes (p35-39), where feasible.

**Question:** The announcement says that the level of effort should be provided by key personnel on projects. Does this mean for the responsible party column that you want the time and calendar months dedicated to each task even for the non-key personnel?

**Answer:** For anyone that is being funded at all, you would need to put the level of effort and the number of months associated with their participation. Yes, you should document the level of effort, especially if there is a dollar amount associated with their participation.

**Question:** Can Co-PIs participate in more than one proposal? **Answer:** Yes, we don't have anything saying that's not possible, but please make sure that you are not doing the same

thing that you are proposing in your primary application. Make sure there are distinct contributions.

**Question:** Can a network site be within a single institution? **Answer:** Yes, there are no restrictions for having multiple institutions being listed as part of the site. If having multiple institutions makes it a better application, with respect to the review criteria, then that would be considered.

**Question:** Are there particular data types or streams that would be of most interest?

**Answer:** No, other than the data streams that are used as forecast targets for FluSight. We wouldn't comment on a preference for novel data sets over utilizing public sources. There is an optional activity for Strategy 5 (p21) involving identifying data sources that increase forecast accuracy. However, there is not a preference for this optional activity over other optional activities.

## Formatting

**Note:** Please pay attention to the formatting requirements. Applicants have been disqualified in the past for failing to meet the formatting requirements.

**Question:** Is there a suggested format or page limit for the CVs? **Answer:** No.

**Question:** Is there flexibility with the work plan template? **Answer:** Work plans should follow the formatting of the template on page 29. Rows should be added for the activities corresponding to other strategies being proposed.

**Question:** Do the citations count toward the 20-page limit? **Answer:** There is a separate references attachment for including citations. That attachment will not count toward the 20-page limit.

**Question:** For the font requirements, the announcement mentions that we can use 10pt font for footnotes and text in graphics. Can we also use 10pt font for captions under tables or figures, or for tables in general? **Answer:** It is not specified that tables or captions can be 10pt font.

## Letters of Support

**Question:** Can more than two letters of support be included in the application? **Answer:** No.

**Question:** Is it ok to have a verbal agreement without a Letter of Support? For example, various health departments that would not be paid? Given only two letters of support can be submitted? **Answer:** You should provide evidence in your application supporting both previous and planned collaborations, including any with public health partners (see Collaborations section on p42-43).

**Question:** Can a public health partner be an international partner? **Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** Can we have multiple public health agencies on one letter of support since we can only have two letters of support and we have more than two partners? **Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** Will it be possible for any team to get a letter of support from FluSight? **Answer:** Given our direct involvement in the NOFO, FluSight coordinators (e.g., Matthew Biggerstaff and Rebecca Borchering) are unable to provide letters of support from FluSight.

**Question:** Can we clarify that at least one letter of support should be from a public health partner? **Answer:** Yes, at least one letter of support should be from a public health partner since this is part of the evaluation criteria. A partner can be a state, county, local health department. Even if the prime applicant is from a public health agency, a letter of support should still be provided from a public health partner.

**Question:** Is a public health partner required to be within a network site, or can they just submit a letter? **Answer:** It can go either way, either the partner can be part of the site, or they can just submit a letter on the site's behalf.

## Other

**Question:** How many PIs should be included per application? **Answer:** One.

**Question:** Can multiple PIs from the same institution apply for the NOFO? **Answer:** No, only one application can be submitted per UEI institutional number.

**Question:** Will it be possible for NOFO program staff to have individual meetings with applicants? **Answer:** No.

**Question:** Are letters of intent required? **Answer:** No.