



## **SUMMARY OF ONC REQUEST FOR PUBLIC COMMENT ON REGIONAL CENTER APPLICATION CRITERIA**

Report submitted by Jonathan French, Manager, Federal Affairs

### **Background on Regional Centers**

- The HI-TECH Act within ARRA provides for \$2 billion in discretionary funding to complement the CMS incentive program designed to promote meaningful use and adoption of EHR's.
- Part or all of the \$2 billion dollars will be used to develop a National Health Information Technology Research Center (HITRC) and Regional Extension Centers
- The purpose of establishing these centers are to
  - Help providers assess their EHR needs
  - Select and negotiate with a system vendor
  - Implement workflow changes to improve clinical performance and outcomes
  - Provide technical assistance
  - Priority access will be given to underserved populations via special provisions in HITRC and regional center awards for locations that serve:
    - American Indian
    - Alaska Native
    - Non-English-speaking
    - Other historically underserved populations
    - Patients with maternal, child, long-term care, and behavioral health needs
- The goals of the program are to:
  - Encourage EHR adoption (help select and implement “certified EHR’s”)
  - Provide technical assistance to providers who have already adopted EHR’s
  - Help new adopters and current owners of certified EHR’s achieve “Meaningful User” status
  - Actively disseminate best practices and research for implementation and use of EHR’s

### **Proposal for Regional Centers**

- Establish regional centers that offer regional access to information and technical assistance
  - Regional centers will be part of a consortium coordinated and facilitated by the HITRC (HITRC will conduct the research and analysis of best practices, regional centers will share the information)
  - A regional center will provide technical assistance within a defined geographic area.
  - Centers will be periodically evaluated to ensure they are meeting the needs of the providers within the region
  - Regional Centers will give priority access to:



- Public or not-for-profit hospitals
- Critical-access hospitals
- Federally qualified health centers
- Rural facilities
- Facilities that serve uninsured, underserved, and underinsured populations
- Minimal levels of support will be accessible to all providers nationwide. The support will include
  - Information on statutory and regulatory requirements
  - Information to support effective integration of HIE activities

### **Criteria for Determining Qualified Regional Health Center Applicants**

- By law (Section 3012c Public Health Service Act-HITECH) Regional Centers must be affiliated with any “United States-recognized non-profit organization that is awarded financial assistance under this section”
- Proposed requirements by ONC requiring public comments (applicants must define the following in the application process to become a Regional Center and receive funding)
  - Define the geographic region and the provider population within the region that your center will serve
  - Describe proposed levels and approaches of support for the prioritized providers (described above)
  - Describe your business model (organization and staffing of “extension agents”)
  - Demonstrate capacity to facilitate and support cooperation amongst regional stakeholders (providers, health systems, communities, and HIE’s)
  - Demonstrate that the applicant can meet the needs of the prioritized providers (see above)
  - Propose an effective strategy to provide deep specialized expertise on:
    - Organizational development
    - Legal issues/Liability
    - Privacy and Security
    - Financing and economic challenges
    - Evaluation
  - Preference to applicants in identifying viable sources of matching funds (via state grants, non profit foundations, and payment for services from providers) however matching funds are NOT REQUIRED
  - Preference will be given to applicants who propose organizational plans incorporating multi-stakeholder collaborations including:
    - Universities with health professions, informatics, and allied health programs
    - State/Regional professional medical societies



- Federally recognized state primary care associations
  - State/regional hospital organizations
  - Large health centers and networks of community health centers
  - State Area Health Education Centers
  - HIE's
  - Medicare QIO's
  - Public health agencies
  - Libraries/Information centers with health professional and community outreach programs
  - Consumer/patient organizations
- ARRA funding for two-year awards to be made in FY10
  - Average award value of \$1-2 million per center, max will be \$10 million
  - ONC will release an RFP for applicants following consideration of public comments on this draft.
  - Initial awards will be made in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of FY10 through the last quarter of FY10.

**Request for Public Comment on Applicant Criteria**

- All comments on draft plan are due at 5:00PM, June 11, 2009 and are to be submitted electronically to [HealthIT-comments@hhs.gov](mailto:HealthIT-comments@hhs.gov)
- The letter attachment should be addressed to: The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, 200 Independence Ave, SW Suite 729D, Washington, DC 20201