

ACL Social Care Referrals Challenge Competition

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Version 1 – August 4, 2020

This document will be updated with responses to any additional questions ACL receives. Questions are divided into categories. This version includes specific questions from the July 28th webinar. For more information about this Challenge please visit the [Challenge.gov](https://www.challenge.gov) website.

General Questions

1. **Question:** What is a Challenge?

Response: A challenge (also referred to as "prize challenge," "competition," "prize competition," "incentive prize" or any combination thereof) allows the public to solve problems presented by federal agencies and receive awards for the best solutions.

2. **Question:** What is the total prize amounts?

Response: The total prize award available is \$500,000. The Challenge will occur in three competitive phases with cash prizes awarded in each phase, as described below. Winners of phase 1 will move onto phase 2 and winners of phase 2 will move onto phase 3.

Phase 1: Concept & Design Submission (July – December 2020)

- Up to six prize winners at \$30,000 each

Phase 2: Proof of Concept & Demonstration (January 2021 – June 2021)

- Up to three prize winners at \$60,000 each

Phase 3: Implementation & Testing (July – December 2021)

- One final prize winner at \$140,000 or more

3. **Question:** Who is eligible for the Social Care Referrals Challenge?

Response: To be eligible to win a prize under this challenge, an individual or entity may participate as part of one or more teams. Team formation is strongly encouraged, and teams are not limited in the number of members. Each team must designate a captain who must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident who is responsible for all correspondence regarding this Challenge. [Please review additional terms and conditions here.](#)

4. **Question:** How are the funds awarded?

Response: The funds for this Challenge will be awarded after the judging period of each phase and is a direct payment to one individual (the designated lead or captain) on the team.

5. **Question:** Would an award go directly to the lead applicant, who would then decide how to share among its team members/partners?

Response: Yes, that is correct. The prize money will be awarded to one individual (the designated team lead/captain) and then it is up to the team members to decide how that would be split.

6. **Question:** How soon after each phase is completed do you anticipate awarding and distributing funds?

Response: We anticipate the judging and technical review process to take no more than a month.

Therefore, we hope to announce and award funds at each phase within that timeframe.

7. **Question:** What is the prize money or the funding intended to cover?

Response: This is ultimately up to the team. The unique thing with Challenge competitions is that there are no specific activities outlined the way that a typical grant would be. So once the prize is awarded it is up to the team lead and the team members to determine use.

8. **Question:** How do I register for the Social Care Referrals Challenge?

Response: Registration for Phase 1 (i.e. the letter of intent) will be due December 14, 2020. A new website is in development where participants can register, interact with other participants or interested stakeholders, and submit their solutions. Please stay tuned for website information. The challenge.gov posting will be updated with this information.

9. **Question:** Where do I send questions about the Challenge?

Response: Questions concerning this Challenge should be sent by email to ami.patel@acl.hhs.gov.

Technical Questions

10. **Question:** Does this have to be the creation of a new platform or can it be enhancing or modernizing an existing online platform? Could an applicant/coalition that has a pilot underway still apply?

Response: This Challenge promotes the enhancement of existing technology platforms or the creation of new. We recognize that there are many existing systems that are used by States, local CBOs, hospitals, etc. so we encourage enhancements or to systems already in use or technology already developed or piloted.

11. **Question:** Is it possible that proposals can be successful and parsimonious or, in other words, can applicants focus on a specific piece of the puzzle and/or submit designs or processes and institutional arrangements rather than a “new technology” per se?

Response: The unique thing with challenge competitions is we have the opportunity to at least encourage discussions, collaborations on these ideas. We propose this problem and we are certainly aware that all of it may not be addressed at one time. Or some solutions will address some pieces versus others. As we move along and we work with participants we hope to promote collaboration and help the teams talk to each other so we can continue the conversation beyond this competition.

An example of how pieces of a puzzle can be enhanced: It could be existing solutions built from an HIE or existing referral platform but, they want to adopt the Gravity Project standards that are being tested and perhaps be part of the open referral initiative for human services data specifications. So taking their platforms to the next level, perhaps with a different partner is what we are encouraging.

12. **Question:** The concern is that the amount of funding isn't enough to assemble a team that can achieve the various objectives (technical, legal, organizational, and ethical) that "closed-loop referrals" entail, so can we build off the capacity of an existing effort?

Response: Yes, we see this as an opportunity to modernize and improve upon existing technology solutions that the networks are already using. We fully recognize that states have

already invested in technology platforms and likewise hospitals/health systems have as well. The idea is to promote some sort of synergy between the two and ensure data and information can easily be shared and to reduce the burden of CBOs having to manage multiple platforms to send/receive referrals and get people connected to critical resources.

13. **Question:** Will the submissions remain the property of the groups who submit? If selected or not selected?

Response: the Federal government has the authority to promote the ideas, solutions, and lessons learned beyond this Challenge, but in general the ultimate goal is national attention on this topic and working with the valued solutions on how it can be replicated. We would be willing to promote the solutions even for those that are not awarded.

As the federal agency, ACL has the right to ask solvers/participants to participate in some aspect of a public announcement or publicity, though not necessarily to share the intimate details of the work. However, contestants to this Challenge competition must agree to be bound by the rules of the, agree that the decision of the judges for this Challenge are final and binding, and acknowledge that their submission may be the subject of a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request and that they are responsible for identifying and marking all business confidential and proprietary information in their submission.

14. **Question:** Are there any other relevant standards that applicants should consider aside from Gravity and bi-directional services and referrals?

Response: The IT 360X has been mentioned which is another standard that uses CDA. However, when talking about standards, you have to consider two workstreams, the terminology and technical workstream, as the Gravity Project does.

15. **Question:** Is the Gravity Project an applicant to this or is the structure of other applicants need to be working within?

Response: Gravity is a project for developing a FHIR implementation guide and a data definition so it is the structure. So, as you are incorporating, closed-loop referrals or e-referrals and looking at how you represent that content, that is going to be exchange that is represented in a standardized way and that is where Gravity's guidance will come in. Gravity will provide that information or that guidance for data definitions as well as using FHIR based open APIs.

16. **Question:** What referral platforms participated in the Gravity Project session for the compilation of referral components? Did they articulate a willingness for interoperability and are they going to be meeting again?

Response: We had several referral platforms that participated in the session including UniteUs, Aunt Bertha, NowPow, Open /city Labs. They did articulate willingness for interoperability and did request we convene another session. We plan to do so on behalf of FHIR Technical build activities.

Team Formation/Stakeholders Questions

17. **Question:** Can an individual or entity participate on more than one team?

Response: Yes, an individual and/or entity can participate on more than one team. Multiple entries are permitted. Each solution must be sufficiently novel and unique and not be a minor

modification of a prior submission.

18. **Question:** Is participation on the team by State leaders required?

Response: We believe that state health and human service leaders play a big role in successful health and social care integration, including the technical/IT component. However, we also know that state leaders are stretched in resources given the current COVID environment. Therefore, we would like to see that State leaders are at least involved, but do not expect them to be leading the team. This decision is ultimately up to the team leader.

Phase 1 Questions

19. **Question:** Will Phase 1 prizes will be given out as proposals are submitted on a rolling basis or is ACL going to be waiting until that December date to review all proposals at the same time?

Response: Proposals can be submitted at any time. However, the evaluation and the judging of all submissions will happen at once. We will evaluate any submissions that we receive after the December 14th date and plan to announce the award winners in January.

Phase 2 Questions

20. **Question:** What kind of demo are you expecting Challenge participants to deliver in phase 2? For example, a demo could be as simple as a slide deck with animation and team members role playing, or it could be an actual software demo.

Response: We generally anticipate the demo being a little bit of both, so actual software demos (with the assumption that most of the solutions submitted will build off of existing technology platforms, so there would be some portion to visually demo) and a presentation of any other technical details that would be added to enhance the project. Challenge competitions are very flexible in that we will be able to collaboratively work with the teams that move forward to Phase 2 to identify what is practical.

21. **Question:** For the phase 2 demo, are you looking for demos that are more about the technology, use of standards, etc. or about the end user workflows, without regard to the technology. I ask this question because a key purpose of the Challenge is to promote the development of standards-based solutions.

Response: The standards-based adoption and use will be a key component of Phase 2, you can learn more about this from the July 28th webinar. However, we fully understand that standards use does not happen overnight, so we anticipate providing some technical assistance to the teams that move forward to Phase 2. We would ideally also like to see a demo or presentation of the user workflows and overall technology enhancements in Phase 2.

22. **Question:** When we get to Phase 2 is it required that at the earliest date of January 2021 that the technology be at a pre-pilot, demo stage?

Response: No, a demo will not be required until the end of Phase 2, which is June of 2021, so the five month period for phase 2 can be used to develop the system for demonstration and the five month period in Phase 3 will be to prepare for implementation and testing.