



Improving the state of
New York's health

November 2022

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Request for Proposals

Deadline:
February 3, 2023, at 1 p.m.

From Good to Great: Improving Access to and Use of Patient Visit Notes in Non-Hospital Systems

Applicants must submit an online proposal. The online proposal application and instructions are posted in the [Apply for Funding section](#) of the NYHealth website. Applications must be completed and submitted by Friday, February 3, 2023, at 1 p.m.

I. About the Foundation

The New York Health Foundation (NYHealth) has a broad mission to improve the health of all New Yorkers, especially people of color and others who have been historically marginalized. To achieve meaningful impact, the Foundation makes grants, informs health care policy and practice, and spreads effective programs that work to improve New York's health system and make it more equitable. The Foundation's grantmaking is focused on three priority areas: Empowering Health Care Consumers; Healthy Food, Healthy Lives; and Veterans' Health. We also engage in responsive grantmaking through a Special Projects Fund. In 2023, NYHealth will wind down its Empowering Health Care Consumers priority area and transition to a new Primary Care priority area.

The intersection between Empowering Health Care Consumers and Primary Care provides the framework for this Request for Proposals (RFP). Through our Empowering Health Care Consumers priority area, NYHealth promotes greater information transparency and supports patients in engaging as partners in their care. Through our new Primary Care priority area, NYHealth will increase primary care access and capacity, build the primary care workforce, and advance racial health equity. Please visit our website to find more information about our [Consumer Empowerment](#) priority area and our [Primary Care](#) priority area, launching in 2023.

II. Background and Vision

Empowering health care consumers—including in the primary care setting—means ensuring that they have the tools and information to manage their own care, advocate for themselves, engage in shared decision-making, and make choices. However, studies show that patients generally remember only 40% of what is said in a doctor's office—and half of that is quickly forgotten.

Established in 2010, [OpenNotes](#) is a national effort to give patients access to the visit notes written by

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their doctors, nurses, or other clinicians. Visit notes are far more comprehensive than a traditional visit summary. When patients have access to their shared visit notes (often referred to as “open notes”), they better remember what was discussed during the visit; stay up to date on future visits; are more likely to take medications as prescribed; are more confident in their treatment plans; and can share notes with family and caregivers.

For example, more than 60% of patients in an OpenNotes study reported improvements with taking medications as prescribed, and more than 77% of patients reported that they felt more in control of their care. Sharing open notes also does not result in significant provider burden: In the same study, fewer than 20% of doctors reported taking more time to write notes, and fewer than 8% of doctors reported taking more time to address patients' questions outside of visits.

Through our [signature open notes initiative](#), NYHealth has long supported the spread of open notes throughout New York State to promote patients' access to their own information, transparency, and patient engagement. From 2016 to 2020, NYHealth—in partnership with the OpenNotes national program office—supported [10 hospital systems](#) and [6 federally qualified health centers \(FQHCs\) and other non-hospital systems](#) to effectively implement open notes. Through these efforts, health care providers across the State have made great strides, sharing notes with more than 1 million patients and using innovative strategies to engage them. These efforts have helped New York State to go from among the worst in the nation to among the best in terms of open notes adoption.

The [21st Century Cures Act](#), which went into effect in 2021, has helped to accelerate this work. It requires health care providers in both inpatient and ambulatory care settings to make visit notes available to patients electronically and at no charge. Providers ranging from large hospital systems to FQHC networks and independent physician practices must comply.

Many non-hospital systems are complying with the law to some extent. However, the level of compliance and, most importantly, the proactive use of open notes to improve care varies. For some systems, note-sharing is embedded into their practice, and they are ready to test innovative ways to increase patient engagement. For others, note-sharing is new territory, and they can benefit from adapting proven tools and learning best practices from more experienced systems.

The federal mandate is an excellent opportunity for providers not only to comply with information-sharing requirements, but also to use open notes to spark a culture change and more meaningfully engage patients. NYHealth is currently providing 16 hospitals with funding, technical assistance, and peer-learning opportunities to implement open notes more effectively—helping them to go from good

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to great in their note-sharing and associated patient engagement. However, FQHCs, physician practices, and other non-hospital systems—which are key providers of primary care and other services for marginalized communities—also need support to deepen their efforts to share visit notes with patients.

III. Funding and Technical Assistance Opportunity

Through this RFP, NYHealth—in partnership with the OpenNotes national program office—will provide FQHCs, physician practices, and other non-hospital systems throughout New York State with funding, tools, and technical assistance over 12 months to implement and share open notes effectively. The goal is not merely to support providers in complying with the recent federal mandate to share notes with patients, but also to equip them with the tools to help patients access and use these notes for more informed and engaged care.

Project Overview

Selected applicants will be required to engage a project team of 3–4 members. Potential team roles to consider include: patient experience/engagement leaders; clinical leaders; electronic health record (EHR) implementation or IT leaders; staff and patient educators; and patients and/or patient advisors. NYHealth strongly encourages organizations to include at least one patient partner and/or advisor on their teams.

Applicants selected for funding will also be required to participate in a 12-month technical assistance and learning network led by the OpenNotes national program office. This program will allow non-hospital systems to learn from experts and each other, and it will focus on strategies to ensure that (1) providers are equipped with the tools to make note-sharing easy and useful; and (2) patients know how to access and use their visit notes productively. Diverse experts will lead monthly technical assistance sessions. Topics covered will include, but not be limited to:

- Understanding the recent federal mandate, including the regulation's intersection with federal and State laws on patient privacy and confidentiality.
- Addressing issues with EHR and patient portal functionality.
- Communicating with providers and staff about open notes, addressing clinician concerns, and identifying staff champions.
- Using multidisciplinary care teams to integrate open notes into workflows.

- Supporting patients in accessing and reviewing their notes through marketing, navigation, and other engagement activities.
- Educating patients and caregivers on how to use notes to manage care.
- Providing notes in plain language, language that reduces bias, and languages other than English.
- Sharing notes in the context of adolescent, pediatric, and behavioral health care.

In addition to monthly technical assistance sessions, project teams will also have access to individualized coaching sessions with experts from the OpenNotes national program office.

Award Amount

NYHealth awards will supplement the costs associated with implementing and sharing open notes, including—but not limited to—patient education and engagement; staff support and training; EHR configuration; and/or marketing. Given the recent federal rule, it is expected that applicants are already making some level of financial investment to implement open notes within their facilities.

Non-hospital systems can request \$50,000 per site for up to two sites (for a total of \$100,000), pending funding availability. The expectation is that at least one representative from each site will be involved in the project team and participate in the monthly learning collaborative sessions. Regardless of award amount, grantees are welcome to engage more sites across their system in the project and in the learning and technical assistance network.

IV. Eligibility and Selection Criteria

This RFP is open to FQHCs, multispecialty group practices, hospital-affiliated physician groups, independent physician practices, and other non-hospital systems in New York State that are implementing and sharing open notes in compliance with federal rules and seeking to move beyond compliance by meaningfully engaging with patients. Sole proprietorships and single member LLCs are not eligible to apply. NYHealth anticipates awarding grants to up to 16 non-hospital systems and seeks to maximize the number of systems participating across the State.

Priority will be given to applicants that are in the early phases of open notes adoption. Providers that are seeking to optimize their early implementation and more meaningfully engage patients are also eligible to apply.

Applicants should clearly and concisely answer the specific questions listed in the [application instructions](#), including a description of their patient population; progress to date in adopting open notes; plans for open notes implementation, including patient engagement; anticipated obstacles; and demonstrated executive leadership support.

Proposals that include the following elements will be the most competitive during the review process:

- A focus on marginalized patient populations (e.g., people of color, people with low incomes, patients who are uninsured, rural residents, those who speak a primary language other than English, older adults).
- A commitment to robust patient engagement (e.g., patients or patient advisors on the project team, routine engagement of Patient and Family Advisory Councils, patient surveys and/or focus groups, patient navigation).
- A project team that includes staff and/or leadership in clinical care, information technology, patient experience/engagement, and, where possible, patients or patient advisors.
- Demonstrated support from clinical leadership and senior management.
- Demonstrated efforts to comply with the 21st Century Cures Act mandate.

NYHealth is committed to funding a diverse cohort of projects in communities across New York State. Proposals will be assessed by both Foundation staff and a panel of external reviewers.

V. Application Process

The deadline for proposals is Friday, **February 3, 2023**, at 1 p.m., with proposals submitted through NYHealth's online application system. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their applications by **the end of the first quarter of 2023**.

NOTE: All updates and notifications will come from noreply@salesforce.com. Please make sure to check your junk/spam folders and edit your filters, as these e-mails often get redirected.

Programmatic questions about this funding opportunity should be e-mailed to OpenNotesRFP@nyhealthfoundation.org. Technical questions regarding the online application system should be e-mailed to the NYHealth Grants Management Department at gm@nyhealthfoundation.org.