INSTITUTE FOR
MEDICAID INNOVATION

2017 Best Practices Submission Form

Step-by-Step Guidance

The 2017 Best Practices Submissions Step-by-Step Guidance Document contains an explanation of the submission form components and advice on how to write a competitive submission. Please note, companion resources, including the submission form and technical assistance webinar, are available on the Institute for Medicaid Innovation (IMI) website here.

Step-by-Step Guidance of the 2017 Best Practices Submission Form:

The following pages provide information for each section and/or specific questions found in the 2017 Best Practices Submission Form. You can download the form here.

Category

For 2017, we are accepting submissions in five areas: children's health, women's health, behavioral health, long-term care and transitions of care, and oral health. Please note that you can only select **one (1)** category for each submission. If your program applies to multiple categories, please select the category that best describes your program. You may want to consider your target population and the problem your program is addressing when making this decision.

Abstract of Initiative

An abstract is a brief paragraph that describes your initiative. The abstract provides a brief overview, offering the reader with the most salient information. While your abstract contains key words and concepts found throughout your submission form, it is original text – not an excerpted passage from other portions of your submission. We recommend drafting your abstract after you have completed the other portions of the submission form. The word limit for this section is **150 words**.

You may want to consider the following questions when drafting the content for your abstract:

Table 1. Tips for Developing Abstracts

Reason for writing	What is the importance of your initiative? Why should Medicaid stakeholders be interested?
Problem	What problem does your initiative attempt to solve? What is the scope?
Methodology	Is there a specific model or approach used in your program?
Results	Do you have specific data that indicates the results of the project? Or can you discuss your findings in a more general way? What is the big take-away that you want the reader to know?
Implications	What changes should be implemented in Medicaid managed care as a result of the findings of the work? What should Medicaid stakeholders learn from your program?

Goal of Implementing Initiative

This question asks for a **list** of the primary goals that your organization identified prior to the implementation of the initiative, including those tied to social determinants of health. The goals should be measurable and written in a way that is clear to someone who only has the abstract as a frame of reference for your project. You may consider using the SMART goals framework (i.e., Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound goals).

Here are some questions that may help you to frame your goals:

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*Table 2. **SMART** Goals*

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Specific	What is it that you want to achieve in your initiative? A good goal statement explains the what, why, who, where and when of a goal. If your goal statement is vague or lofty, you will find it hard to achieve because it will be difficult to define success.
Measurable	It is important to be able to track the progress of your goal and measure the results. What measures will help you to identify if the initiative is achieving the specific goals? What measures will help to track progress in achieving the goals?
Attainable	Realistic and attainable goals are helpful to be successful. When you set an achievable goal, you may be able to identify previously overlooked opportunities or resources. When developing goals for your initiative, you may want to consider the specifics on how the goal can be accomplished. How realistic is the goal? What are the opportunities, resources, and potential constraints, such as financial factors?
Relevant	Your goal should be challenging to achieve but realistic and relevant to the goals of your organization and/or community. In what way do the goals match your organization's efforts in providing care to members enrolled in Medicaid? Are there other product lines and/or programs that are aligned with these goals?
Time-Bound	Goals must have a deadline. A good goal statement will answer the question, when will goal be achieved? As well as a deadline, it is a good idea to set some short-term milestones along the way to help you measure progress. You may have both short- and long-term goals.

A sample SMART goals worksheet that may facilitate the identification of the goals for your initiative can be found on pages 75-76 here. This worksheet was developed using the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service's (CMS) "QAPI Goal Setting Worksheet."

Key Partners and Community Groups

Please **list** the key partners (e.g., community organizations, community health workers, foundations, clinical practices, provider organizations, research institutions) that your organization worked with to implement and sustain your initiative. The word limit for this section is **50 words.**

History of Initiative

Provide a brief overview of the history of your program. When did your organization develop the concept and how long did it take to implement? How long has the initiative been operating? If your organization previously submitted this initiative for consideration in the best practices compendium, please identify what new information is included in the resubmission. Do you have new outcomes data? Has your initiative been adapted for new populations or expanded to new markets? The word limit for this section is **50 words**.

Description of Target Population

This question is requesting that you briefly describe why you focused on the population involved in your initiative. Is this population a high-cost group with poor outcomes? Is your health plan required to establish a performance improvement project in this area? Did your organization create this program in order to be responsive to local, state, or national priorities? Are there statistics on disparities at the local, state, or national level that helped to guide your decision to focus on this population? When you consider the members who are served through the initiative, why did your organization select this population? It is important to include concrete, logical reasons for focusing on the specific population. The word limit for this section is **50 words**.

Significance of Initiative

In the previous section, "Description of Target Population," you established why it is important to serve this population through the initiative. For this question, your organization should explain why the initiative matters for the Medicaid population and Medicaid managed care. Why should Medicaid stakeholders, clinicians, communities, policymakers, legislators, and researchers care about your initiative? It is important to identify any social determinants of health that are significant contributors to the problem that the initiative aims to address. Please cite existing literature that supports the significance of this initiative in the "Key Supporting Evidence" section. The word limit for this section is **100 words**.

Geographic Location

For this question, please provide a **list** of the locations (city and state) in which your initiative has been implemented. If the initiative has been implemented statewide, please **list** only the state(s).

Detailed Description of Initiative

Please provide a narrative that details your program and how it is innovative and unique in its approach to providing care for your members. Identify how this initiative is a departure from "treatment as usual." We encourage you to describe how your approach addresses the unique needs of a particular Medicaid population, including social determinants of health, cultural competence, service coordination, engagement of community partners, and achieving quantifiable outcomes.

Please do not restate your goals or abstract. This is an opportunity to provide more details about the core components of your program, including information around the approach, partnerships, and how the team that worked on this initiative accounted for and adapted to barriers and challenges. The word limit for this section is **300 words**.

Culturally Appropriate Approaches

Culturally appropriate approaches are vital to providing effective, high-quality care for the Medicaid population. Health care disparities are not limited to linguistics, and solutions run much deeper than availability of language interpretive services or educational materials in multiple languages. It is important to consider how disparities impact the way Medicaid beneficiaries view their health and their ability to get their health care needs addressed in a manner which is comfortable for them. For this question, please describe how your organization integrated culturally appropriate approaches within your initiative. The word limit for this section is **50 words**.

Here are some resources that may be helpful in identifying culturally appropriate methods:

- In 2000, The HHS Office of Minority Health released the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health Care to improve health care quality and advance health equity. These standards establish a blueprint for health and health care organizations.
- The SAMHSA, or Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, website is a resource for identifying approaches tailored for behavioral health issues.
- Another source of information is from the National Institute of Health's (NIH) National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities.

Methods

For this section, please provide a summary of how the initiative was implemented, including decisions made during the design phase of your program. This section also provides an opportunity to highlight any unique or innovative approaches that were used in developing, testing, implementing, and evaluating your initiative. This section should not be duplicative of the information your included in your detailed description, but rather, is similar to the methodology section of a research study that you may read in a journal. We encourage you to clearly identify how the project was implemented, explain how you chose your approach, and identify the evidence that supports the selection of the intervention(s). Keep in mind that the way your initiative uniquely reaches the Medicaid population or addresses a salient issue is equally as important as the intervention(s) that were implemented. However, please note, we are not requesting that your organization provide any proprietary information.

The methodology section should also clearly discuss the population sample. The population sample should be richly described with appropriate descriptive language, including the rationale and process for selecting the members. The intervention(s) should also be clearly indicated, including any publicly available resources utilized and identification of partnerships with clinicians, hospitals, and/or community organizations.

The procedures for collecting the data to measure the impact of your initiative must also be clearly explained. Whether using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methodology, it is important for the reader to know how the data was gathered and why it can be used to assess the impact of the interventions. If you are using qualitative techniques to collect data, the information needs to be summarized with individual quotes or stories used to highlight overall themes. However, a collection of anecdotes will not suffice to demonstrate the impact of your initiative. For more information on qualitative methods, please see NIH's Qualitative Methods in Health Research. The word limit for this section is **100 words**.

Outcomes

For the outcomes that you are reporting, it is important to link them to the purpose, goals, and intervention(s) that were implemented. It is important that the outcomes of your initiative capture the impact of your initiative.

The submission form includes categories to report your outcomes specific to the areas of patient/family, clinician, community impact, and cost savings. You may choose one or multiple areas to report outcomes. Each category has a word limit of **100 words**.

When reporting measures that capture outcomes, consider the difference between outcome measures, balance measures, and process measures.

- **Outcome measures**. Outcome measures are high-level clinical or financial outcomes. The World Health organization defines it as a "change in the health of an individual, group of people, or population that is attributable to an intervention." They are the quality and cost targets directly related to your goals for quality improvement. For health plans, these measures are typically reported to federal agencies. Some examples of metrics for outcome measures include mortality rates, readmissions rates, and timeliness of care.

- **Balance measures**. Balance measures are metrics used by a health system to ensure an improvement in one area is not negatively impacting another area. For example, a hospital may want to improve patient satisfaction in the emergency department (ED). For this, length of stay (LOS) in the emergency department (ED) could be an outcome metric. The corresponding balance metrics might be staff satisfaction or the number of patients who leave without being seen. If patients are surveyed or interviewed and express that they feel that they are waiting too long, there might be a negative impact on patient satisfaction even while improving LOS.

- **Process measures**. Process measures represent steps in a process that lead to a particular outcome metric and help to evaluate whether steps in the process of the intervention(s) are performing as planned. Using the previous balance measure example of LOS in the ED, a process metric for that outcome might be the amount of time that passes between when the clinician ordered the discharge and when the patient actually completed the paperwork to be officially discharged. The measure might also be the time required for medications to be discharged with the patient to be delivered to the patient. Understanding process measures, may identify additional opportunities to improve care. For instance, if pharmacy is consistently delayed in getting medications to the patient—there might be an opportunity to find the root cause of the delay and explore opportunities for improving the process.

There is no preference for one type of measure (i.e., outcome, balance, or process) over another. Instead, it is important that the measures you report captures the impact of your intervention(s) and is aligned with your goals.

Sustainability

The sustainability section of the submission form is requesting information regarding your organization's plan to ensure the long-term sustainability of the initiative. While programs may be grant-funded or created as a performance improvement project, your organization may want to continue the program after temporary funding streams end. It is important to provide an understanding of how your organization will accomplish this in the long-term. If your organization is having difficulty with sustainability, please share what barriers you are facing and what resources would be needed to support the initiative in the future. The word limit for this question is **100 words**.

Challenges

Challenges are inherent in any initiative, especially those that are innovative and are being pilot tested. It may be tempting to skip over this section or be hesitant to mention any of the challenges. However, please note that identifying challenges will not lower your score. It is important to acknowledge the challenges and roadblocks that occurred while your organization implemented the initiative. Please also disclose challenges or barriers that are anticipated as the initiative grows or is replicated in other areas.

Furthermore, we want to know how you were able to address those challenges and what processes you developed to overcome them. Innovation often occurs as organizations are revising their programs and trying new approaches to overcome barriers. The word limit for this question is **100 words**.

Successes

Please share the key elements that contributed to the success of your initiative and advice for other plans seeking to replicate a similar initiative in other markets. It is important to provide advice on what worked and areas of caution that could impede success based your lessons learned. Thoughtful advice helps to support innovation among other health plans who are designing and implementing new initiatives as well. The word limit for each of the questions in this section is **100 words**.

Key Supporting Evidence

During the design phase of your initiative, you may have consulted various resources and literature. It is important that your initiatives are based on scientific evidence. Please share the resources and evidence that you referred to during the development, implementation, and evaluation of your initiative. Cite your sources in APA format. You can learn more about APA format here.

Acknowledgement of Funder(s)

For the purposes of transparency and acknowledgement, please identify any sources of funding for your program. If your funders allow, you may provide their logos in a high-resolution .jpg or .eps file to be included with your best practice initiative if it is selected for inclusion in the compendium.

Final Helpful Tips

- Review the entire submission form before you begin completing it.

- Develop a checklist of information needed for the submission form and identify members in your organization who can contribute information and resources. These individuals may also serve as internal reviewers for your submission form. However, please try to have "one voice" by having one writer for your submission.

- Several questions throughout the submission form are related. However, do not copy answers from previous questions and paste them throughout your submission form. Your entire application should work together as a whole, with each answer building on the next to paint a rich and compelling picture that truly reflects the initiative overall − program elements, successes and challenges in planning and implementation, and the program's impact on members, the plan, and other stakeholders.

- Use a clear and concise writing style. Several questions have word limits. Please pay close attention to those limits. Any words exceeding the word count will be redacted from review.

- Please proofread your submission materials. Remember, your submission form may be selected for inclusion in the Annual Best Practices Compendium. Your work will be showcased for policymakers, legislators, clinicians, community organizations, and researchers. Ensure your final form does not contain typographical errors, misspellings, grammatical errors, or sloppy formatting.

- If you have questions, please contact Ashley Gray (agray@medicaidinnovation.org) or Shawnise (sthompson@medicaidinnovation.org).