

Request for Information
(2010-01)

**Third-party Vendor Qualifications for the
Submission of Laboratory Data**

**Pennsylvania Health Care Cost
Containment Council**

June 2010

The PA Health Care Cost Containment Council

Request for Information (RFI)

Third-party Vendor Qualifications for the Submission of Laboratory Data

Purpose of the Request for Information

The PA Health Care Cost Containment Council (PHC4) is issuing this Request for Information (RFI) to identify potential vendors that may be chosen by PA hospitals for the purposes of submitting laboratory data to PHC4.

PHC4 is an independent state agency charged with collecting, analyzing and publicly reporting information that can be used to improve the quality and restrain the cost of health care in Pennsylvania. A critical component to PHC4's work is the ability to appropriately and adequately risk adjust the health care outcome data included in its public reports. Risk adjusting patient care data enables a better assessment of the performance of health care providers in treating patients, particularly those who are more seriously ill.

Changes imposed by the Council's reauthorizing legislation (Act 3 of 2009) call for a transition in how PHC4 will collect data for risk adjustment. As such, the Council recently voted to collect laboratory data from PA hospitals to be used as part of its risk-adjustment methodology. This decision was based on detailed statistical analyses that demonstrated the superiority of using lab data for risk-adjustment purposes.

While PA hospitals may choose to develop their own internal mechanisms to submit the required lab data to PHC4, it is expected that at least some hospitals will engage the services of a third-party vendor for this purpose. A specific provision of Act 3 states that "*the council shall maintain a vendor list of at least two vendors that may be chosen by any data source for submission of any specific data elements.*" The Council is releasing this RFI to satisfy this provision, with the intent of identifying vendors that hospitals may choose for the submission of the lab data to PHC4. Hospitals will be provided with data and file specifications. Hospitals and vendors will be required to comply with these specifications so that PHC4 receives the laboratory data in a standardized format.

About PHC4

The PA Health Care Cost Containment Council is an independent state agency formed under Pennsylvania statute (Act 89 of 1986, as amended by Act 3 of 2009). Among other responsibilities, Act 3 specifically charges the Council with collecting, analyzing and making available to the public data about the cost and quality of health care in Pennsylvania. In meeting this assignment, the Council currently collects over 4.5 million inpatient hospital discharge and ambulatory/outpatient procedure records each year from hospitals and freestanding ambulatory surgery centers in Pennsylvania.

Interested parties can find the full text of Act 3 at PHC4's website, www.phc4.org.

The Council is governed by 25 Council members, who serve voluntarily. Twenty-two members are appointed by the Governor and/or legislative leaders of the State Senate and the State House of Representatives. The remaining three members are the state Secretary of Health, state Secretary of Public Welfare, and the state Insurance Commissioner. A staff of 27 professionals supports the Council's activities.

Lab Data Submission Requirements

PHC4 intends to collect lab data from Pennsylvania general acute care and specialty general acute care hospitals (approximately 170 facilities) starting with the Quarter 1, 2011 collection period, which includes discharge data from January 1, 2011 through March 31, 2011. While PHC4 will begin accepting this data on April 1, 2011, it is not due to the Council until June 30, 2011. These facilities will be required to submit to PHC4 lab data for the lab tests as shown on the attached table.

Lab Data to be Submitted

The attached table contains a list of 29 lab tests. For ten of these tests, hospitals are to submit a maximum of two values; that is, the highest value and the lowest value recorded within the defined time period of admission. For 15 of the tests, hospitals will submit the highest lab value recorded, and for four of the tests, hospitals will submit the lowest lab value recorded. Not all records will have lab values for all 29 tests.

In addition to submitting the actual lab value (result) for each test as appropriate, hospitals will also be required to submit the date and time the lab sample was drawn and the unit of measure (standard units of measure will be used and will be specified by PHC4).

Hospitals will submit only those lab values collected within a defined time period of admission, depending on the time the patient was admitted to the hospital. For patients admitted prior to 6:00 p.m., hospitals submit appropriate lab values for tests administered on that same day (Day 1); for patients admitted on or after 6:00 p.m., hospitals submit appropriate values for tests administered on that same day (Day 1) and the following day (Day 2) of admission.

Multiple lab tests can be taken during these time parameters, so vendors must have the capability to extract the highest and/or the lowest values for each patient record from among multiple values. While hospitals might wish to submit all of their lab data to PHC4 via an electronic upload rather than send particular lab values for each of the lab tests, current PHC4 resources, including staff time, data storage and processing, would **NOT** permit such an approach. Therefore, it is vital that vendors be able to extract particular lab values from hospitals' lab collection systems.

Hospitals will be required to submit lab data for particular records as currently identified by a list of 35 diseases, procedures, and medical conditions defined by MS-DRGs (Medicare Severity Diagnosis-Related Groups) and/or ICD.9.CM diagnosis codes. This list is updated annually (about October 1st of each year) and, as required by Act 3, cannot exceed 50 percent of the total number of hospital discharges based upon the previous year's hospital discharge data. In 2008, these records totaled approximately 970,000 statewide. The average number of records requiring this data was approximately 5,700 per hospital. The list of the 35 diseases, procedures, and medical conditions for which hospitals currently supply lab data can be downloaded from PHC4's website at www.phc4.org/dept/dc/list35.htm.

Lab Data Submission Process and Criteria

In submitting the lab data, hospitals will have a choice to develop their own internal mechanisms/processes to submit lab data or to engage in the services of a third-party vendor of their choice to submit the lab data.

The following steps will be necessary:

- The data file format for the laboratory data will be a fixed-width delimited flat text file. In addition, data file specifications will be developed.

- The data file specifications include technical details such as the file encoding, line width, column widths, data element names, data types and ranges, specifications for linking data elements, definitions of the data validations and Web-based data submission instructions.
- ***The data file specifications are expected to be available on September 1, 2010.***
- The lab data submission process will require each hospital to extract lab test results from its lab information system, if available, in a pre-defined fixed-width delimited flat text file format. If a lab information system is unavailable, the hospital will be responsible for preparing lab test results in a pre-defined fixed-width delimited flat text file format using another method.
- The pre-defined fixed-width delimited flat text file format will need to follow the data file specifications. Note that this will include data elements that are needed to link the lab data with the administrative data already collected by PHC4. The linking data elements may or may not be integrated between a hospital's lab information system and its billing system, if the systems are separate. The hospital will be responsible for providing matching data in the linking data elements.
- Once the pre-defined fixed-width delimited flat text file is created, the hospital will transmit the file along with the current administrative data submission to PHC4's secure portal.

The hospital may choose a vendor to do all, part or none of the aforementioned steps. This RFI is intended to allow vendors an opportunity to identify themselves to PHC4 for inclusion on a list of vendors to assist hospitals with the appropriate lab data submission.

The following minimum criteria are required for a vendor to be included on the list. Please describe in as much detail as necessary your capabilities in the following areas:

- Ability to interpret data file specifications.
- Ability to extract lab data and related billing data elements from hospital information systems in accordance with data file specifications.
- Ability to format extracted lab data and related billing data elements into a fixed-width delimited flat text file in accordance with data file specifications.
- Ability to transmit a fixed-width delimited flat text file over the Internet.

Submission and Review Procedures

Respondents who would like to be considered for inclusion on the list of potential vendors that may be chosen by PA hospitals for the purposes of submitting laboratory data to PHC4 must submit information to PHC4 that supports their qualifications to meet the criteria as noted above.

All materials submitted in response to this Request for Information will be the property of the PA Health Care Cost Containment Council and may be returned only at the Council's option.

Disclaimer

This RFI is issued solely for information and planning purposes and does not constitute a procurement solicitation. Responses to this RFI are not offers and cannot be accepted by PHC4 or the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to form a binding contract.

Respondents are solely responsible for all expenses associated with responding to this RFI. Respondents needing confidential treatment for any proprietary information they furnish must clearly identify that fact in their respective responses. Respondents to this RFI shall not provide recommendations as to specific courses of action and shall not be deemed to be an advisor or consultant to the Commonwealth. PHC4 will evaluate the information presented and determine any subsequent course of action.

Questions about this Request for Information

Questions regarding this Request for Information *must be in writing* and will be accepted by mail or email until June 23, 2010. Answers will be provided in writing either through the mail or email.

All correspondence should include a statement indicating that it is in reference to RFI #2010-01 and be addressed to:

Third-party Vendor Qualifications for Submission of Laboratory Data - RFI Response
Attention: Reneé Greenawalt
Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council
225 Market Street, Suite 400
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Email: rgreenawalt@phc4.org
PHC4 website: www.phc4.org

Final Responses to this Request for Information

Final responses to this RFI must be in writing and must be delivered by **mail**, electronic or otherwise, or by **hand delivery** to the address listed above. Deadline for submission is July 6, 2010, 5 p.m. ET.

Vendor Information

Provide a cover sheet with the following information, on letterhead if applicable:

- Name of organization
- Name and titles of contact person(s) with appropriate signatures
- Address
- Phone number
- Fax number
- Email address
- Website

Attachment

List of 29 Lab Tests for Which Hospitals Will Submit Lab Data to PHC4

(lab data to include the lab value/result, date and time sample was drawn, and unit of measure)

Lab Tests for which hospitals are to submit a maximum of two values (highest and lowest):	
1	Base Units Deficit/Excess
2	Bicarbonate (HCO ₃) Arterial
3	Calcium
4	Glucose
5	Hemoglobin
6	pCO ₂ Arterial
7	pH Arterial
8	Potassium
9	Sodium
10	White Blood Count
Lab Tests for which hospitals are to submit the highest value:	
11	Alkaline Phosphatase
12	Aspartate Aminotransferase AST (SGOT)
13	beta Naturetic Peptide (BNP)
14	Bilirubin Total
15	Creatine Kinase (CPK)
16	Creatine Kinase MB
17	Creatinine Serum
18	INR
19	Neutrophils (Bands)
20	Partial Thromboplastin Time (PTT)
21	pro-BNP
22	Prothrombin Time (PT)
23	Troponin I
24	Troponin T
25	Urea Nitrogen Blood (BUN)
Lab tests for which hospitals are to submit the lowest value:	
26	Albumin
27	O ₂ Saturation Arterial
28	Platelet Count
29	pO ₂ Arterial