

Anchor questions for CMS on Regional Learning Collaborative Plan

ANCHOR COMMENT/QUESTIONS RELATED TO LEARNING COLLABORATIVE AND APPENDIX A:

Q: CMS has indicated that RHP 17 must submit a revised learning collaborative plan to CMS outlining a learning collaborative to the level of detail in Appendix A of the RHP Planning Protocol. During the original planning stages, questions were posed related to these learning collaboratives during some of the anchor calls and it was indicated that these could be general in nature as the state was seeking input from CMS on some of the guidelines in Appendix A and the state was still developing what the statewide learning collaborative would look like. In addition, we used up our entire page allotment in Sections I-IV of the plan. We are happy to draft and submit a more detailed learning collaborative plan; however, some of the questions/issues raised with the Appendix A guidelines are as follows – mostly related to the intent as it relates to a regional collaborative:

1. How does the RHP (namely, the Anchor) review and respond (testing new solutions and ideas) to data every week? A regional learning collaborative, even with breakout groups, will be very wide spread and we are not sure what the intent of testing new solutions every week is at the regional level? How does the anchor implement this and ensure it is being done?

CMS: First two things to consider are whether participants will be expected to report data every week (that could be a bit much) and whether the RHP must be the one to respond. In a true collaborative, everyone is communicating with each other (multi-directional communication) and the organizing entity is not responding to everything (bi-directional or uni-directional). Testing new solutions every week is likely not feasible and I would be cautious about setting such expectations. However, testing every week using small-scale, rapid-cycle tests is very feasible but the approach may be testing one idea multiple times, different ways to learn what works best.

2. Holding a biweekly call or webinar is not a problem. However, performing providers who are implementing wide arrays of projects and working to institute projects have expressed concerns about being required to test a new idea each week throughout the life of the waiver.

CMS: As noted above, I would not set an expectation or requirement to test a new idea each week.

3. Who in the RHP is expected to set these quantifiable, project-level goals related to outcomes? The Anchor is not the technical expert and is not deemed appropriate to set or enforce project-level goals on the Performing Providers when they are the subject-matter experts in their areas of work. Can these goals be the same as their outcome measures since they will be actively managing toward those goals over the course of the work and those goals would have been chosen by the providers?

CMS: In a collaborative model, the answer to this is “it depends”. In some collaboratives, all participants enroll to work on the same thing and thus the goals are set at the collaborative level with all measuring the same thing. In such cases, consultation with subject matter

experts is essential. The IHI model for collaboratives starts with an expert meeting for this very purpose and some experts are then brought into the collaborative team as faculty. In other collaboratives, there may be a common context for the work, such as the chronic care model or the “Triple Aim” but where each participating organization/team selects its own outcome measures and goals within that context. Subject matter experts generally should still be available to offer feedback and coaching on these.

4. What is the intent of investing in the learning by getting out into the field and supporting learning? Is the Anchor expected to perform site visits? Or are performing providers expected to visit each other’s facilities to exchange ideas at the “front line”?

CMS: In the collaboratives I have seen there have not been site visits by collaborative organizers to participants much. Generally there are structured in-person events to bring all collaborative participants together and visiting each other is definitely encouraged. It depends on how the collaborative is designed.

5. What kind of/where do you find portals that are designed for improvement work and allow you to rent space? What does this website look like if it is rented space not managed by the Anchor team or participating providers? Is this expense reimbursable under the 50/50 administrative match? If we already work on an established network with internal IT support and are maintaining an 1115 website for dissemination of information, why can we not create a page or portal on our own website from scratch to support a regional learning collaborative?

CMS: I know of one web-based option and can provide info.

6. What kind of measurement systems are intended here, and who sets the parameters for the measurement? The providers who are self-reporting?

CMS: In a collaborative, this is another one of the “it depends”. Generally improvement collaboratives include a requirement of participants to measure outcomes and processes and often balancing measures as well. The actual measures depend on the goals of the collaborative. When there is a common topic all work on with common goals, then there should be a common measurement plan – i.e., all participants should have certain measures that they are required to use. Additional measures are optional and generally encouraged. In a collaborative where there is common context but each organization selects its own topic and goals, then each must develop a measurement plan. Collaborative organizers may provide a list of measures from which to choose if appropriate (i.e., there are established measures).

7. Are these “regional innovators” intended to be employees of the Anchor for a regional learning collaborative? Or the performing providers? Or both? Are you able to use existing employees? Or is the intent here to hire someone dedicated to this alone –and, if so, who covers this additional expense? How is the travel reimbursed, especially in wide-spread rural regions? What skill level or training do they need to be able to answer questions about implementation of ideas for various project improvements? Is the State organizing this initial training in improvement tools and skills, and will the state provide periodic continuing education? When will that take place so regional collaboratives can start to be implemented?

CMS: These do not need to be employees of the anchor, but could be. This is just one option to consider.

8. Setting up face-to-face meetings quarterly or semi-annually is not a problem.
9. Not sure how success should be celebrated, but question here would be can it be celebrated biweekly instead of weekly if calls are set for biweekly intervals?

CMS: There are many ways to celebrate success and it seems that the frequency should be based on how often success occurs. I would recommend celebrate as often as possible.

10. Who is mandating improvements and how are they determined? Is the Anchor supposed to be the organizer of the collaborative? Or are these collaboratives intended to be a majority vote type structure or have a steering committee, etc., that would suggest and mandate improvements? The concern, again, is related to the Anchor not being the subject-matter experts in the projects implemented by performing providers in the region. Also, what happens when you have projects that no one else in a region is doing but one provider?

CMS: Mandating improvement may not be wise in a collaborative as it is rather counter to the general idea. Expectations for participation are generally set – such as attendance at events (webinars or in-person) and reporting. There are many factors that affect success when working towards improvement and it depends on whether the collaborative is focused on content where the changes have already been tested and proven elsewhere.

11. How are some of these metrics (like questions per day) being tracked? Is that the intent of the website?

CMS: The website could be a vehicle for this. The data collection shouldn't be overly burdensome – the goal is to focus primarily on improvement.