National Data Coordinator Service Portal (NDCSP) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: Who should grantees reach out to with questions about portal access and technical issues with the portal?

Technical Issues: submit all questions regarding access to the portal and any technical issues you are experiencing with the portal via the online "Request Portal Access" option. This is located on the main login page of the portal. Technical assistance will be provided to you as soon as possible.

Annual Progress Report (APR) and Interim Report: inquiries about specific APR questions should be submitted to your Area Project Officer (APO). Your APO can help with any project issues or questions you have about the reports.

Q: Why does Indian Health Service (IHS) Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) use the National Data Coordinator Service Portal (NDCSP) to collect Annual Progress Report (APR) data from Tribes who are awarded grants?

In response to interests outlined by Tribes and Tribal Epidemiology Centers (TECs), the Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) has improved its capacity to manage the effectiveness of grant-funded behavioral health programs by updating its methods of data collections, data analyses, and program evaluations. The Portal enables Tribes, as program-specific grantees, to conveniently collect, store, and extract their own data from a secure project-specific account. As the data is kept in a format that is ready for analysis, the aggregate, non-identifying national data is available for sharing with the TECs and Tribes, at-large. The data collection training and templates are readily available at the Portal, without requiring a login to the accounts, thus enabling Tribes and TECs the ability to review the content and methods, and pursue technical assistance as needed. With these data, DBH is able to perform annual evaluations of the programs, and provide timely responses and adjustments within programs and projects, as warranted by the evidence.

Q: What is the protocol for TEC access to the Portal if the grantee wants TEC assistance with the data entry?

Ideally, the grantee user enters the data into the portal for the APR. However, if the grantee wants the TEC to enter their APR data into the portal, the protocol is the following: The IHS DBH Area Project Officer (APO) receives an email from the grantee Authorizing Officer (AO) stating that if the respective TEC is approved for each grant under the AO. The APO enters the AO's decision(s) in the Portal form that records the TEC status per project. APO collects the TEC analyst(s) information (name and email) and enters those into the Portal with the specific corresponding grant number(s). The TEC analyst receives an automated email from the system, providing directions for login to the project account(s). Each TEC analyst that is in the system can access the assigned project(s) and submit support tickets per such project(s). In order to remain compliant to HIPPA, neither the TEC analysts nor the grantee users can share login names or passwords. The protocol ensures that the grantee has control over their project APR data, both data entry and data output. Any agreement between the AO or Tribe and the TEC regarding other data or technical matters is outside the scope of the Portal operation, and is formed according to the discretion of the Tribe.

Q: How do grantees know if their APR has been successfully submitted?

When a grantee updates a project report the Portal status changes to “Resubmitted for Review” and the Portal sends the user an email confirming that the submission was made.

Q: Will the APR templates look similar subsequent grant years?

Generally, the report template will be consistent each year. The template is supported by an integrated data dictionary that covers the scope of multiple programs, where specific items (questions) can be visibly turned on or off, as the program is refined. Based on feedback from users, DBH will refine the wording of items, headers, or instructions, but the content and template will remain consistent over the grant period. DBH will notify grantees of notable changes to the APR template.

Q: If a project does not have data for every question because it is not within their project scope, should it be left blank?

Yes, the project may record a zero, not-applicable, or none where such a response is warranted by the scope and practice of the project. While some items may not be used by the project initially, it is possible that a grantee sees new client demands or adds new practices or techniques, and there is space for recording such data over time.

Q: What constitutes a partner in the data collection items?

Partners are those service entities that support the purposes of the grantee in an official way. They are entities that are either facilitated or funded by grant resources. Two base measures define the partners in each project in a given year: “What is the planned count of service partner agreements needed for the success of your program?” and “How many of the planned service partner agreements (Memorandum of Understanding/Agreements) are established, to date?” Subsequent question assume that the partners are among those in the two base measures.

Q: Do the questions about service outputs performed by partner organizations pertain only to their work through this grant, or should we provide data if the partner did this work separately from the grant?

If the other entity is neither facilitated nor funded by grant resources, then they may not be a partner to the project. It may be that the partners’ services are funded through the grant, such as a sub-contract or sub-grant directly through the MOA. Or, that the strategic plan calls for a split of work and the project funds were used by the grantee to form and sustain the cooperative work, thus facilitate by the grant. The goal is to record the work of partners that is formally enabled because of the grant to the grantee, whether this is a funded service or funded facilitation.

Q: How should we approach the data entry for catchment areas, where the areas may be statewide, local, and specific villages or towns?

If there is more than one geographic space that defines the catchment area, as is possible with different types and scopes of services (e.g., local, regional, network), then for purposes of reporting, combine the areas to report on all the actions that are associated with the project funds. The grantee is asked to define the catchment area according to where they serve clients, which can be non-contiguous places and inconsistent scales per the services provided.

Q: Can the TEC change any data the grantee has entered? Or enter data on the grantee's behalf?

We advise the TEC analysts to confer with the grantee users of the Portal, as IHS will assume that the responses represent the reporting of the grantee. The final APR data is assumed to be the response of the AO for the grantee.

Q: Does the grantee need to submit a PDF copy of the completed/final APR to GrantSolutions?

Yes, after the APR is complete, please download a PDF version of the report and submit that PDF record to GrantSolutions to confirm that the grantee has completed this grant requirement. GrantSolutions serves the purpose of grant agreement compliance, whereas the Portal is for APR data collection in support of project and program analyses.

Q: Can the grantee upload PDF documents to be included with their completed APR?

Please provide any additional documentation to your respective APO, who will include that information with the official grantee file. During the program evaluation, the IHS evaluators will ask the grantees and the APOs for their feedback on specific projects and activities, and this may be a reason to review the official grantee file where those documents are stored.

Q: Will the grantee have an opportunity to provide further information on the responses given where there is not a space for a narrative? For example: Project's successes/accomplishments.

Please provide any additional documentation to your respective APO, who will include that information with the official grantee file. The Portal manages concise data for analyses. Through the program evaluation process, which can include interviews or a short survey, the grantee may be asked to elaborate on specific items in the APR.

Q: Do grantees report only the number of inpatient and outpatient clients served by their project or do they include all clients served within their tribal nation/organization?

There are two sets of questions that relate to the number of inpatient and outpatient clients. One section is priority monitoring of the status of the client population in the catchment area, and based on that definition, the grantee may report on the clients served by a larger entity, such as the Tribe. The other sections asks about services to clients that are funded (e.g., sub-contract) or facilitated (e.g., strategic plan) by the project, and these may be a subset of the larger entity.

Q: What constitutes a volunteer?

A volunteer is someone who contributes service time to a project or the project's clients, but is not employed by the entity. A volunteer can receive some benefits, as listed in the question to the grantee. Due to the value of community reinforcement approaches, volunteers can play a significant role in risk reduction and full recovery from injurious events or behaviors.

Q: What constitutes a client? Are students who attend prevention classes considered clients?

A client is someone who can be provided services to address a behavioral health risk, recovery, or treatment requirement. If a class is designed to mitigate risk in a group of participants, such as self-care, they are clients. However, if a class is designed to prepare persons to help others with behavioral health risk, recovery, or treatment requirement those persons are either volunteers or employed staff (either with the project or another service entity).

Q: Are grantees required to have a strategic plan?

Yes, the program design requires that each project adopt a strategic plan. However, that plan may not be authored directly by the grantee, as they may adopt a plan that was written by a Tribe, community consortium, or other relevant entity. Nevertheless, the grantee's project should be guided by a strategic plan that reflects the intentions, interests, and expected outcomes of those in the community that is being served.

Q: If an organization has multiple grant funded programs and those programs collaborate on an activity, do they need to split up the claim to those participants?

Any activity that a grant pays for will get credit for the service, including the count of people involved, including clients, volunteers, employees, and others affected by the project. IHS encourages blended grant programs, so we anticipate that more than one grant can affect the same persons. The total count of persons affected by the grant are counted in both the project APRs, so there is no need to determine a proportion of persons or services for each grant-funded project.

Q: What constitutes a "unique participant?" It that an unduplicated count?

The term unique participant is used to remind the Portal user that the count of persons is the data element, not the event or service.

Q: If a student dropped out of traditional school but attained their GED, should that count as a drop out?

Completing a GED does not count as a drop-out from high school.

Q: What if a grantee does not comply with APR or interim report submission (no submission, late submission beyond due date)?

All grantees are required, per the grant notice of award (NoA), to complete the APR/interim report as part of the grant requirement. Grantees will have the full project year to submit data and should submit data as an ongoing part of this requirement. Failure to submit the reports will put the grantee in non-compliance with their grant.