



Improving the state of  
New York's health.

November 2021

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# Request for Proposals

**Deadline:**  
December 17, 2021, at 1 p.m..

## From Good to Great: Improving Access to and Use of Patient Visit Notes

Applicants must submit an online proposal. The online proposal application and instructions are posted in the [Apply for Funding section](#) of the NYSHealth website. Applications must be completed and submitted by Friday, December 17, 2021, at 1 p.m.

### I. About the Foundation

The New York State Health Foundation (NYSHealth) has a broad mission to improve the health of all New Yorkers, especially the most vulnerable. 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. 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 the Empowering Health Care Consumers priority area, NYSHealth promotes greater information transparency and engages with patients as partners, which provides the framework for this Request for Proposals (RFP). More information about the Consumer Empowerment priority area is available [here](#).

### II. Background and Vision

Empowering health care consumers 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, important information conveyed orally during a health care visit may be forgotten or misremembered by patients and families. Studies show that patients generally remember only 40% of what is said in a doctor's office—and half of that is quickly forgotten.

Clinical visit notes are an important resource for helping patients and families remember and act on information discussed during a visit. Visit notes are far more comprehensive than a traditional visit summary and may include commentary, such as what the patient and doctor talked about during the visit; the treatment plan; why the provider prescribed a certain medication; information to aid care coordination or directives for caregivers; and what needs to be done after the visit (e.g., additional tests or follow-up appointments).

*NYSHealth Request for Proposals—From Good to Great: Improving Access to and Use of Patient Visit Notes*

Shared visit notes, often referred to as "open notes," are an important way to help consumers become active participants in their own care. Established in 2010, [OpenNotes](#) is a national effort to give patients access to the visit notes written by their doctors, nurses, or other clinicians. Evaluations of open notes have found that:

- Up to 92% of patients in an OpenNotes study opened their notes;
- More than 60% of patients reported improvements with taking medications as prescribed because of open notes;
- More than 77% of patients reported that open notes helped them feel more in control of their care;
- More than 86% of patients agreed that open notes would be an important factor in choosing a future doctor or health plan;
- Fewer than 8% of doctors reported taking more time to address patients' questions outside of visits;
- Fewer than 20% of doctors reported taking more time writing notes; and
- 99% of patients wanted open notes to continue.

A growing number of health systems have adopted open notes over time. The groundbreaking [21st Century Cures Act](#) has rapidly accelerated open notes even further. The law and its accompanying regulation (the Information Blocking Rule) **require** all health care providers that maintain electronic medical records to make clinical notes and other health care information available to patients. It mandates that patients will be able to access their clinical notes quickly and conveniently in electronic formats and at no charge.

Most hospitals and health 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, note-sharing is embedded into their practice, and they are ready to expand the types of notes and information they share and to test out innovative ways to meaningfully engage patients. For others, note-sharing is new territory, and they can benefit from adapting proven tools to their own settings and learning best practices from more experienced hospitals.

NYSHealth has long supported the spread of open notes throughout New York State. Since 2017, NYSHealth has supported 10 [hospital systems](#) and 6 [federally qualified health centers and other non-](#)

[hospital settings](#) across the State to implement open notes. These efforts offer lessons for future work. See some [examples](#) of successful projects

### III. Funding and Technical Assistance Opportunity

The new federal law is an exceptional opportunity to build transparent communication for enhancing shared decision-making and mutual trust among patients, care partners, and health professionals. Through this RFP, NYSHealth—in partnership with the OpenNotes national program office—will provide hospitals throughout New York State with funding, tools, and technical assistance to implement and share open notes effectively. The goal is to support hospitals in not merely complying with the new federal mandate, but in using open notes to spark a culture change that more meaningfully engages patients.

NYSHealth will award grants of \$30,000 per selected hospital to supplement the costs associated with implementing and sharing open notes, including—but not limited to—staff support, training, education, electronic health record (EHR) configuration, and/or patient marketing and engagement. Given the new federal rule, it is expected that applicants are already making some level of financial investment to implement open notes within their facilities.

Hospitals selected for funding will also participate in a 12-month OpenNotes technical assistance and learning network program. This program will allow hospitals 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 the program, which includes monthly technical assistance sessions as well as access to individual support from the OpenNotes team. Topics covered will include, but not be limited to:

- Understanding the new federal mandate.
- Addressing clinician concerns and apprehension, identifying staff champions, and sustaining clinician engagement.
- Using effective approaches for writing notes that will be shared with patients and communication strategies to introduce open notes to providers and staff as well as patients and caregivers.
- Sharing notes in the context of adolescent, pediatric, inpatient, and behavioral health settings, and

promoting best practices for maintaining patient privacy and confidentiality when sharing notes within various care settings.

- Helping clinicians, patients, and caregivers (including patients and caregivers from marginalized populations) make the most of clinical notes (e.g., managing treatment plans, medications, and additional tests).
- Engaging and educating patients on their rights and how to access and review their notes (e.g., patient portal navigation, health literacy tools), and using notes as an ongoing patient engagement strategy.
- Overcoming and addressing issues with EHR and patient portal functionality.

#### **IV. Eligibility and Selection Criteria**

This RFP is open to any hospital facility in New York State that is implementing and sharing open notes in compliance with new federal rules and is seeking to move beyond compliance by meaningfully engaging with patients. NYSHHealth anticipates awarding grants to up to 25–30 hospitals.

Both hospital facilities that are in the initial phases of implementing open notes and those that are seeking to optimize their early implementation to make sure it works well for clinicians and patients are eligible and encouraged to apply.

Applicants should clearly and concisely answer the specific questions listed in the application instructions, including a description of their progress to date in adopting open notes; demonstrated executive leadership support; a focus on marginalized patient populations; and efforts to meaningfully engage patients in their implementation efforts.

Hospitals will be required to engage a project team of 3–4 members for participation. Potential roles to consider include: patient experience/engagement leaders; physician leaders; EHR implementation or IT leads; and staff and patient educators. NYSHHealth strongly encourages organizations to include at least one patient partner and/or advisor on their teams.

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

- Serve marginalized populations (e.g., older adults, non-English speakers, patients who are uninsured, patients of color);

- Show compliance with the 21st Century Cures Act mandate; and
- Demonstrate creative patient engagement approaches and/or include at least one patient representative as part of the program team.

Project durations may vary depending on the readiness and size of the organization and implementation plan, but should be a maximum of two years. The Foundation expects implementation to be well underway by the end of the grant period, with patients accessing their notes.

NYSHealth 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, December 17, 2021, at 1 p.m., with proposals submitted through NYSHealth's online application system. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their applications by early 2022.

*NOTE:* All updates and notifications will come from [noreply@salesforce.com](mailto: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@NYSHealth.org](mailto:OpenNotesRFP@NYSHealth.org). Technical questions regarding the online application system should be e-mailed to Grants Assisant Kennen Willis at [Willis@NYSHealth.org](mailto:Willis@NYSHealth.org).