Request For Applications – 2026
Overview of Real World Data Scholars Program



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NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing



Elizabeth White, APRN, PhD
Brown University School of Public Health

Objectives

- Introduce IMPACT Collaboratory, NEXT STEPs Network, & LTC Data Cooperative
- Learn about the RFA for Real World Data Scholars
  - Determine if grant mechanism fits your research & career development goals
  - Scientific rationale and components
  - Administrative components
  - Application and review processes
- Questions



Organizational Overview & Background

Collaborative Initiative

- IMPACT Collaboratory, NEXT STEPS, & LTC Data Cooperative – 3 national efforts funded by the National Institute on Aging
- Building capacity for rigorous, data-driven research to improve care for people living in nursing homes and assisted living communities, including people living with dementia







Our missions

NIA IMPACT COLLABORATORY
TRANSFORMING DEMENTIA CARE

Build national capacity to conduct ePCTs for people living with dementia (PLWD) and their care partners

NEXT STEPs
Advancing Nursing Home Care Through Research

Build research capacity for high-quality, high-impact clinical trials in Nursing Homes (NHs)

Long-Term Care
DATA COOPERATIVE

Compile data on NH and assisted living residents nationwide and translate these data into accessible and actionable information designed to help clinicians, managers and policy makers improve care.

Program Committee

NIA IMPACT COLLABORATORY
TRANSFORMING DEMENTIA CARE

NEXT STEPs
Advancing Nursing Home Care Through Research

Long-Term Care DATA COOPERATIVE

Training Core



Tina Sadarangani, PhD, RN

Methods, Measures, & Data Core



Andrew Zullo, PharmD, ScM, PhD



Susan Hickman, PhD, FAHPM, FGSA

Executive Committee & LaunchPad



Elizabeth White, APRN, PhD



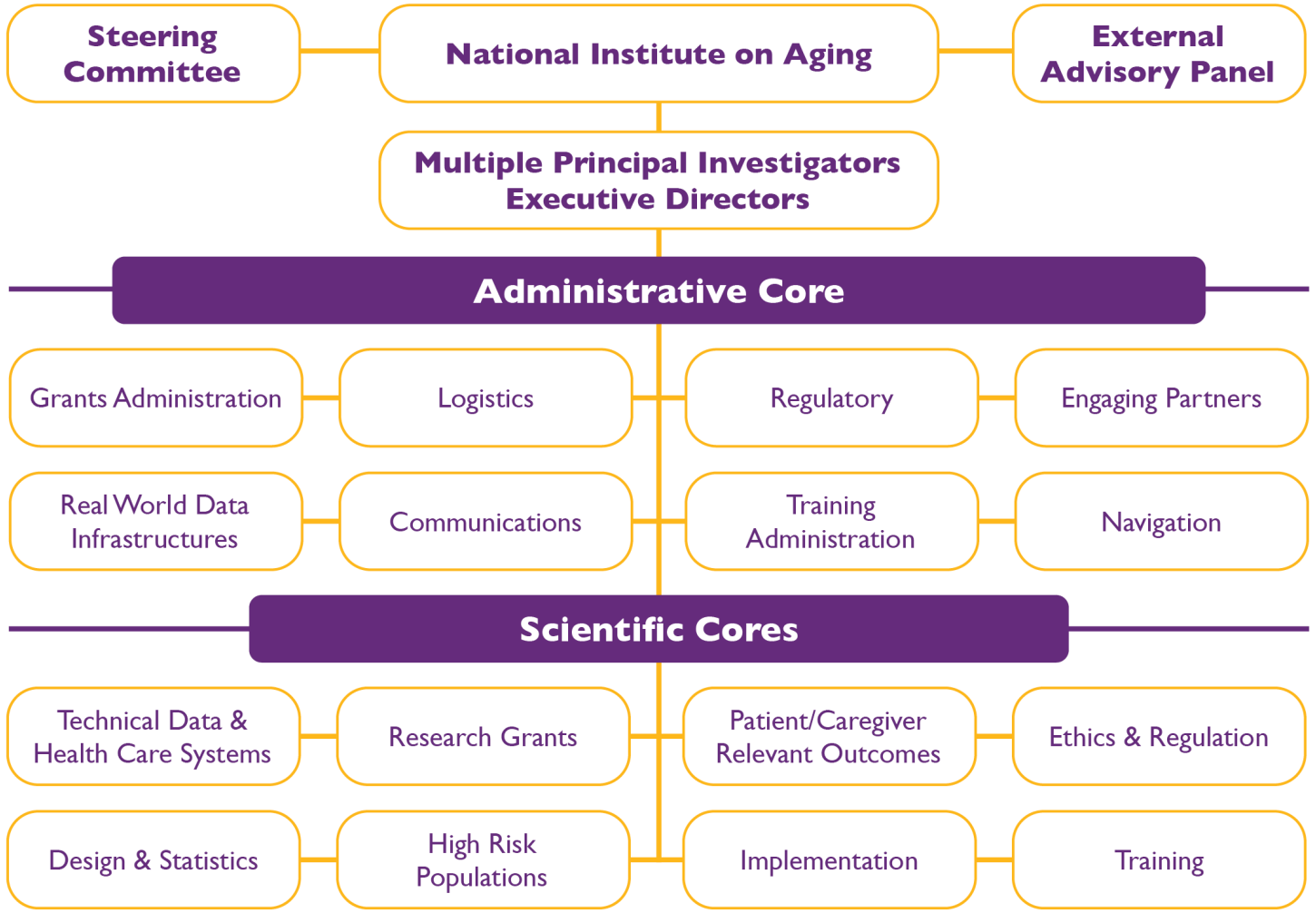
Stephanie Kissam, MPH



Amy Recker, MPH

Overview of NIA IMPACT Collaboratory

NIA IMPACT COLLABORATORY
TRANSFORMING DEMENTIA CARE



Overview of IMPACT Training Core

To build capacity of investigators to design and implement ePCTs in dementia care within in real-world healthcare settings.

Curricula development & dissemination

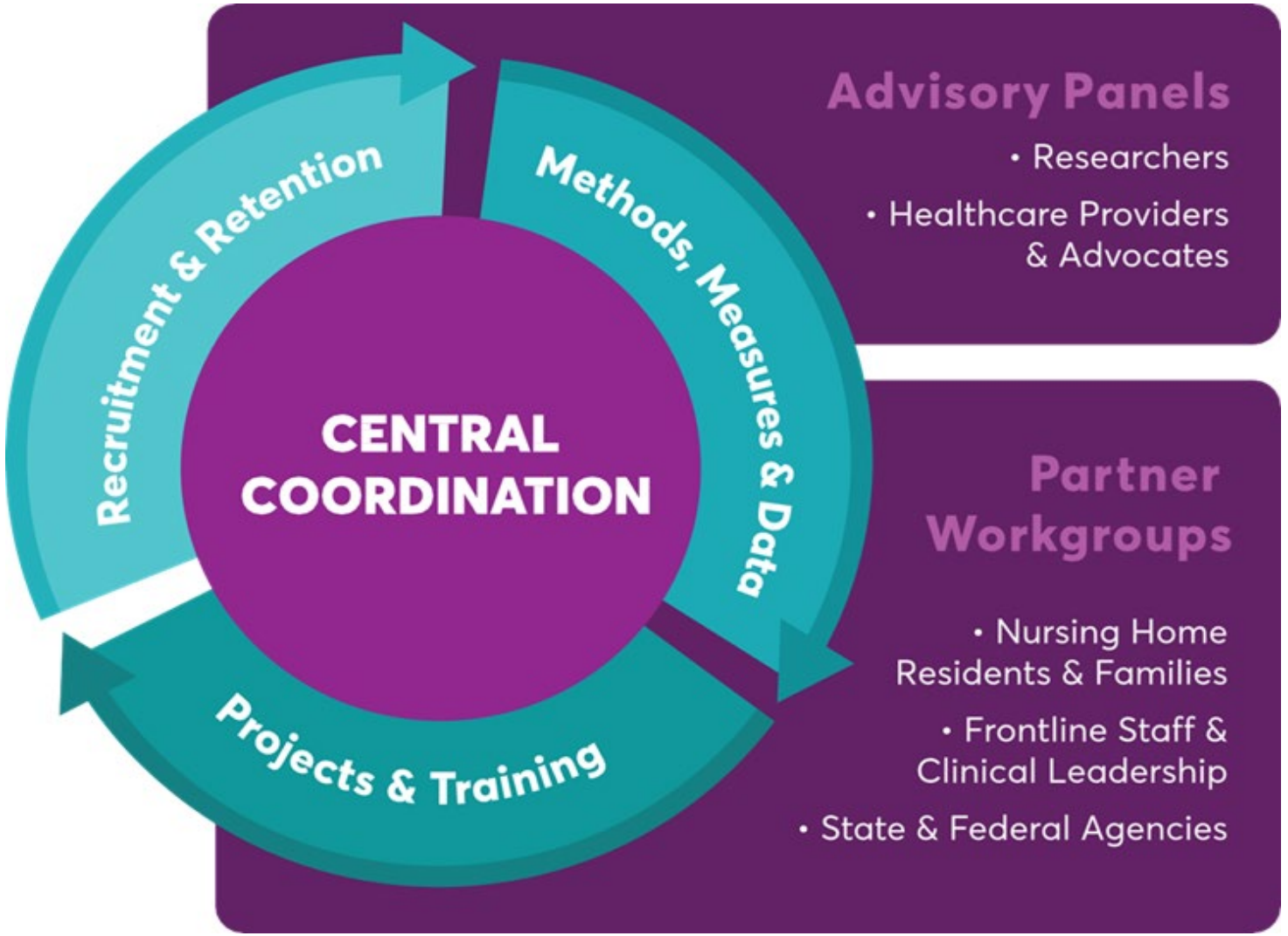
Foster a national network to train investigators

Oversee Training Programs:

- Career Development Awards
- HCS Scholars
- RWD Scholars
- Faculty Scholars
- Postdoctoral Fellows

NEXT STEPs Overview

NEXT STEPs
Advancing Nursing Home Care Through Research



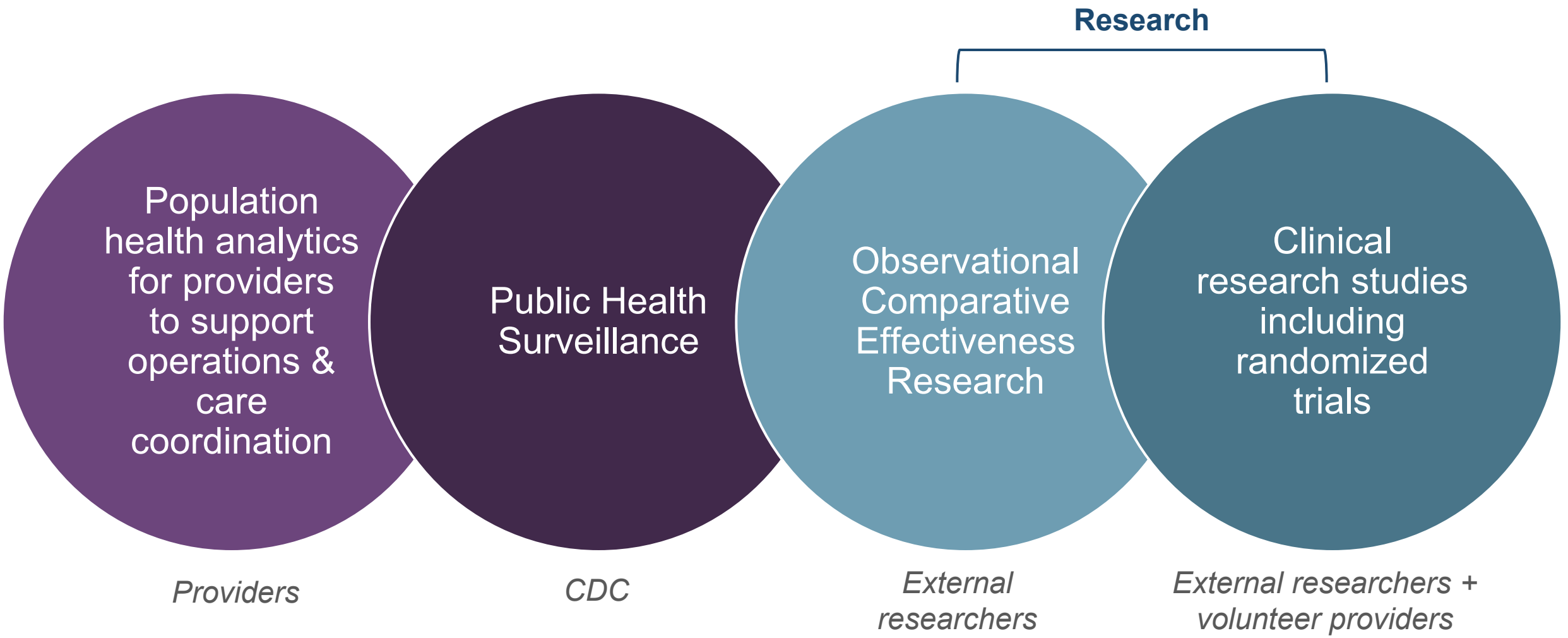
Overview of LTC Data Cooperative



https://www.ltcdatacooperative.org/

Key Purposes

Long-Term Care DATA COOPERATIVE





Real World Data Scholars Program Overview

Real World Data (RWD) Scholars Program

- Fund 3 RWD Scholars (2 funded by IMPACT; 1 funded by NEXT STEPs)
  - 12-month awards at $60,000 direct costs, indirect costs may not exceed 8%
  - Only 1 application per person
- Support career development **using real-world data** to improve care **in nursing homes (NH)** and **assisted living communities (ALC)**
- Mentored research project focused on **developing and/or validating measures capable of being applied to clinical trials** within NH or ALCs
- Effort should reflect the requirement that candidates conduct the work themselves (i.e., 25 - 50%)

RWD Scholars Objectives

- Build methodological expertise in real-world data research
- Enhance analytic proficiency using EHR data, administrative, and health care claims to generate valid, practice-informed evidence
- Foster interdisciplinary collaboration by engaging scholars with mentors and peers across various fields
- Promote ethical and responsible practices in using real-world data
- Support career development and dissemination skills to enable scholars to communicate findings effectively

Eligibility: Institutions

- Academic institutions, nonprofit research organizations, and other fiscally responsible organizations within the United States
- Foreign institutions are **not eligible**
  - No research may be conducted outside of the United States

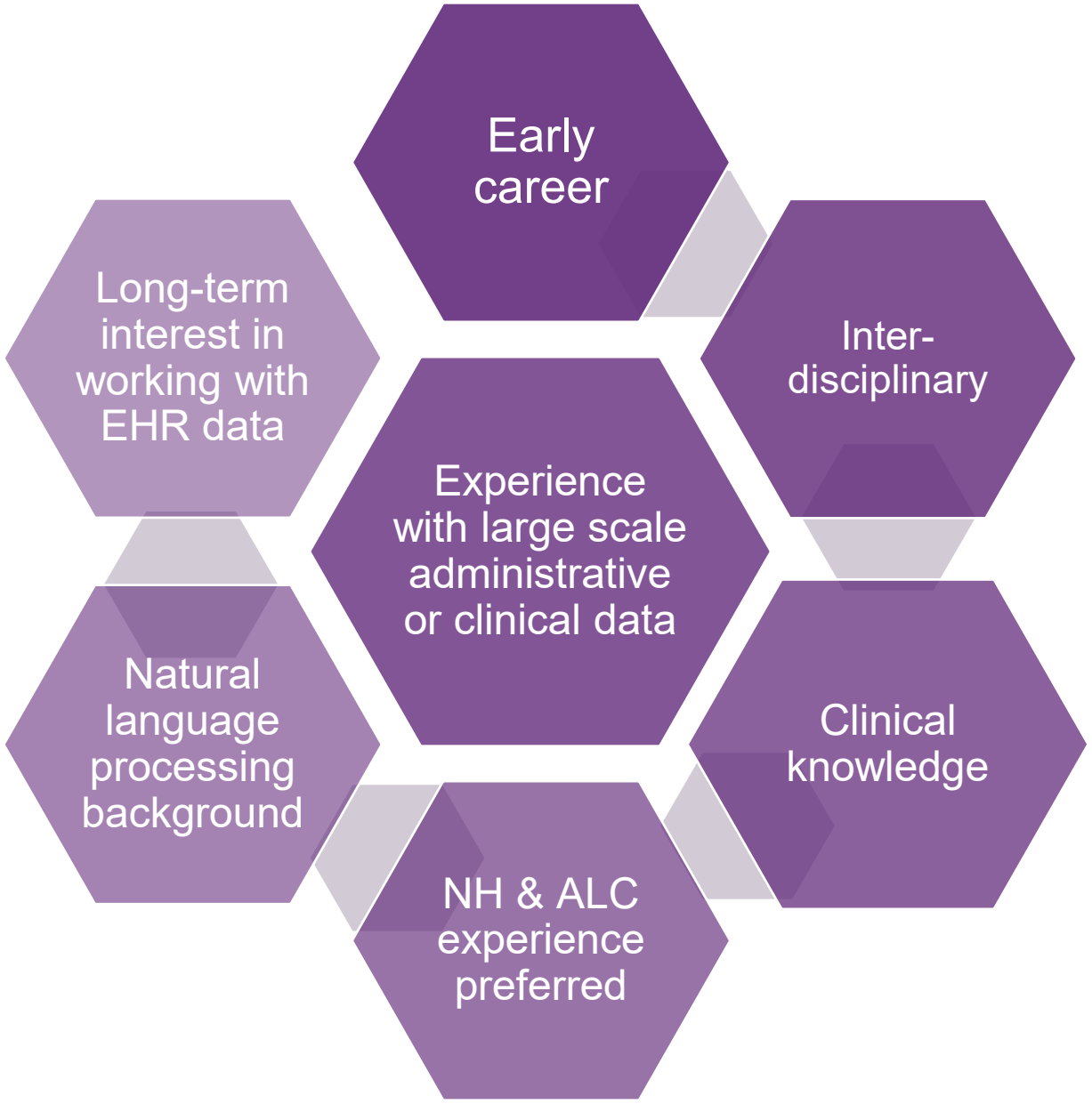
Eligibility: Individuals

- Postdoctoral fellows, advanced graduate students, and early-career investigators up to assistant professor **seeking to expand expertise with EHR and real-world data**
  - Postdocs & graduate students must have a faculty sponsor from their local institution
- Must be citizen, non-citizen national of the US, or lawfully admitted permanent resident (e.g., current Permanent Resident Card)

Eligibility: Background & Experience

- Strong hands-on experience using large-scale administrative or clinical data (e.g., EHR data, Medicare claims or encounter data, Minimum Data Set, registry datasets)
  - Preference given to candidates with experience in NH or ALC research
- Background in health services research, pharmacoepidemiology, natural language processing, or clinical investigations are **encouraged to apply**

Characteristics of Competitive Applicants



2025 Real World Data Scholars



Laura Block, PhD, RN
Postdoctoral Fellow
University of Utah

Evaluating Nursing Home EHR Data for Emerging Palliative Care Needs



Taylor Bucy, PhD, MPH
Assistant Professor
University of Kansas School of Medicine

Validating a Measure of Emergency Department Use Leveraging LTC EHR Data



Gabrielle Gussin, PhD, MS
Postdoctoral Researcher
UC Irvine School of Medicine

Impact of Data Source for Benchmarking Antibiotic Usage in U.S. Nursing Homes



Mary Louise Pomeroy, PhD, MPH
Research Associate
Johns Hopkins School of Nursing

Developing a Measure of Unrepresented Status Among NH Residents with Dementia

https://impactcollaboratory.org/training-grants-overview/ltc-real-world-data-scholars-program/rwd-scholars-awardees/

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NEXT STEPs
Advancing Nursing Home Care Through Research

Long-Term Care DATA COOPERATIVE

2025 Real World Data Scholars



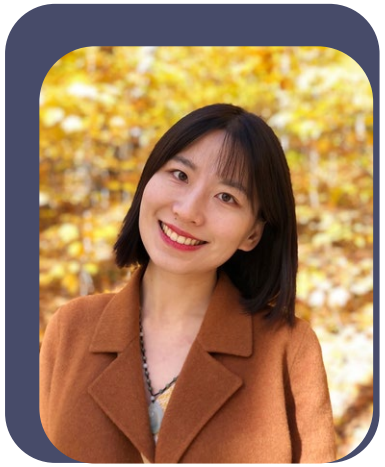
Rachel Prusynski, DPT, PhD
Assistant Professor
University of Washington

Establishing Data Infrastructure for a Home Health and Hospice Data Cooperative



Minzhi Ye, PhD
Assistant Professor
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Measuring Sleep Disturbance in Dementia Using EHR Data in Long-Term Care



Yiyang Yuan, PhD, MPH, MS
Assistant Professor
UMass Chan Medical School

Advancing Malnutrition Measurement Using Linked EHR and MDS Data

https://impactcollaboratory.org/training-grants-overview/ltc-real-world-data-scholars-program/rwd-scholars-awardees/

NIA IMPACT COLLABORATORY SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

NEXT STEPs Advancing Nursing Home Care Through Research

Long-Term Care DATA COOPERATIVE

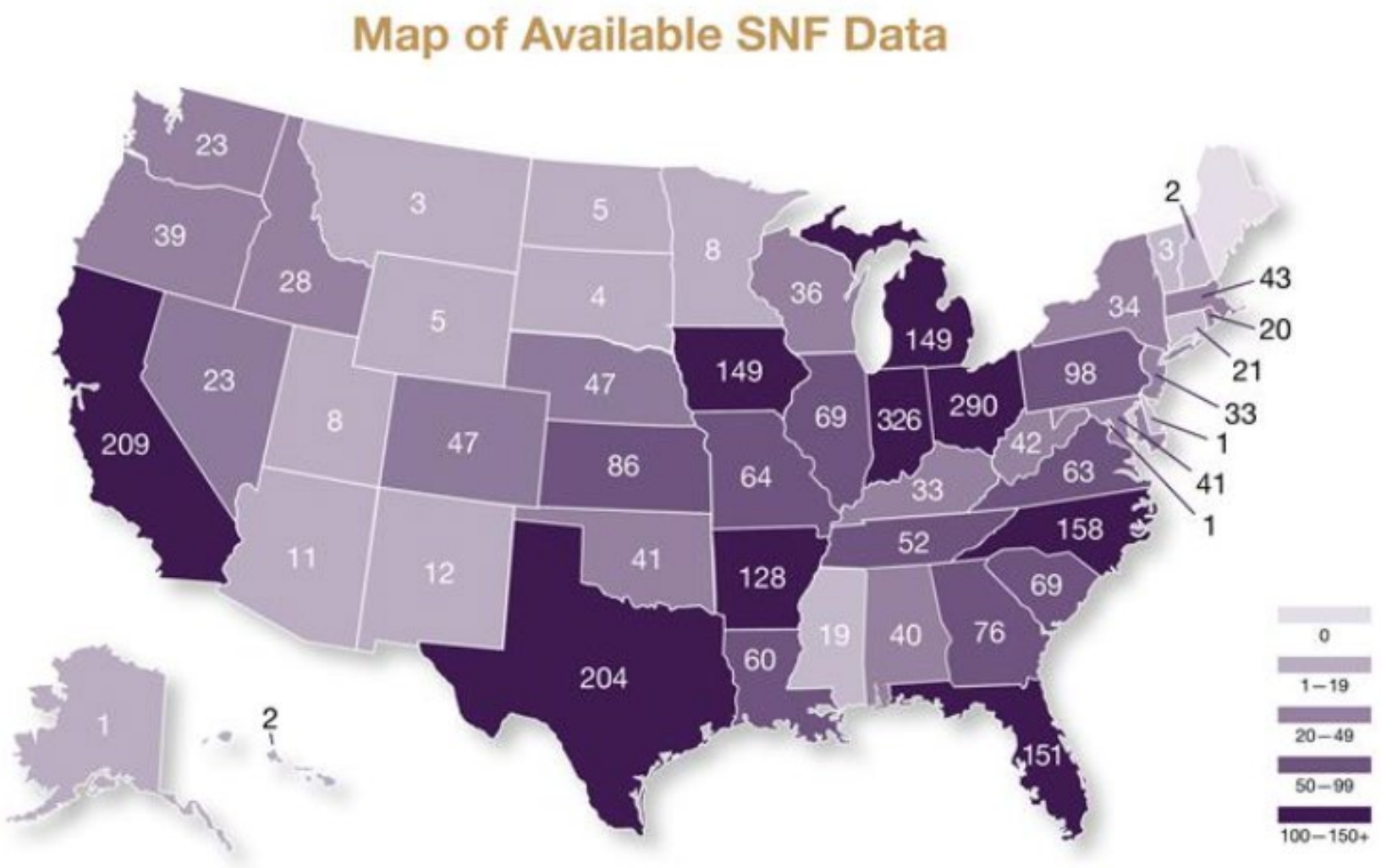


Available Data

Long-Term Care
DATA COOPERATIVE

3,149 SNFs participating
4,463,502 unique residents

as of October 2026

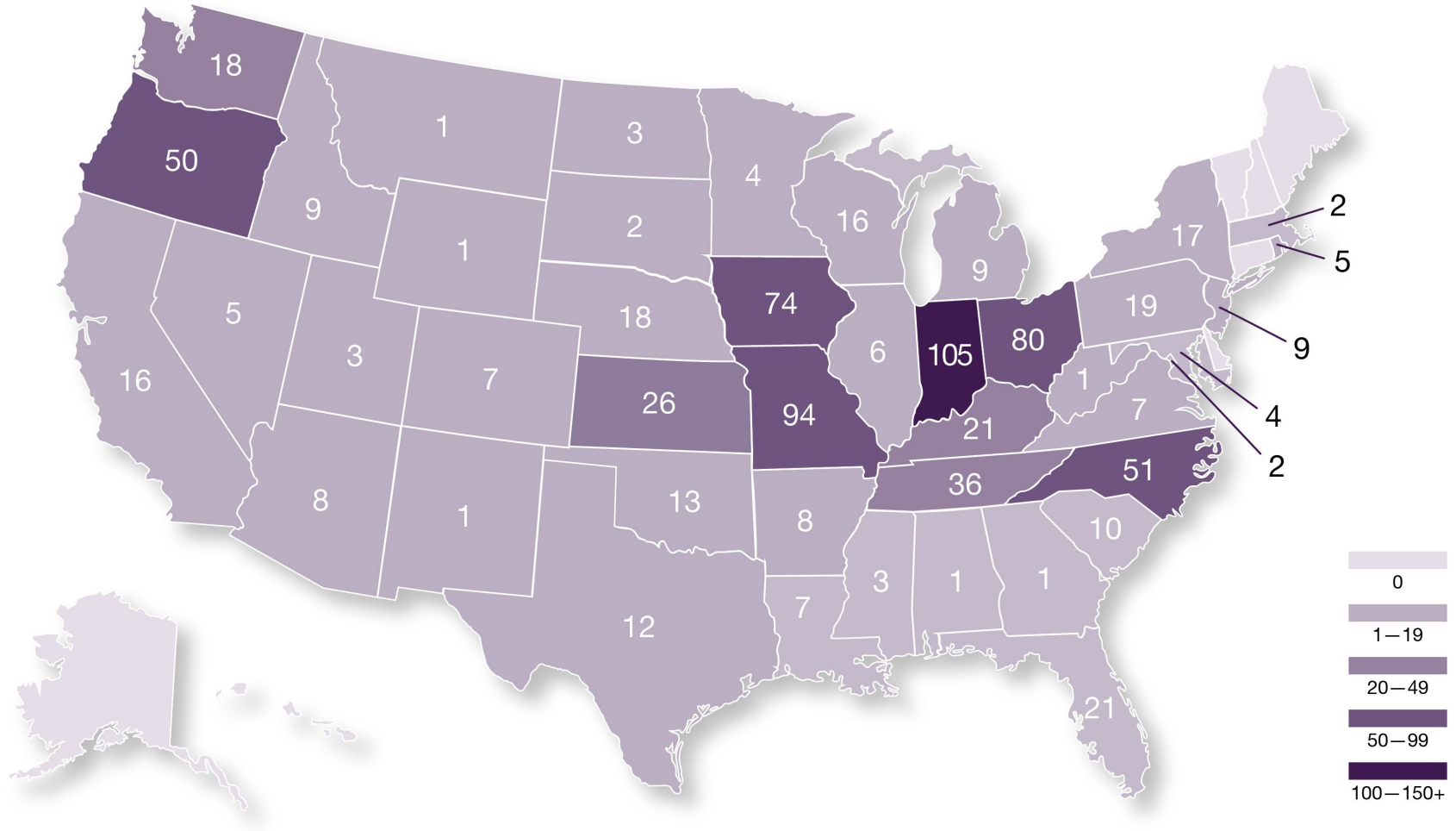


Long-Term Care
DATA COOPERATIVE

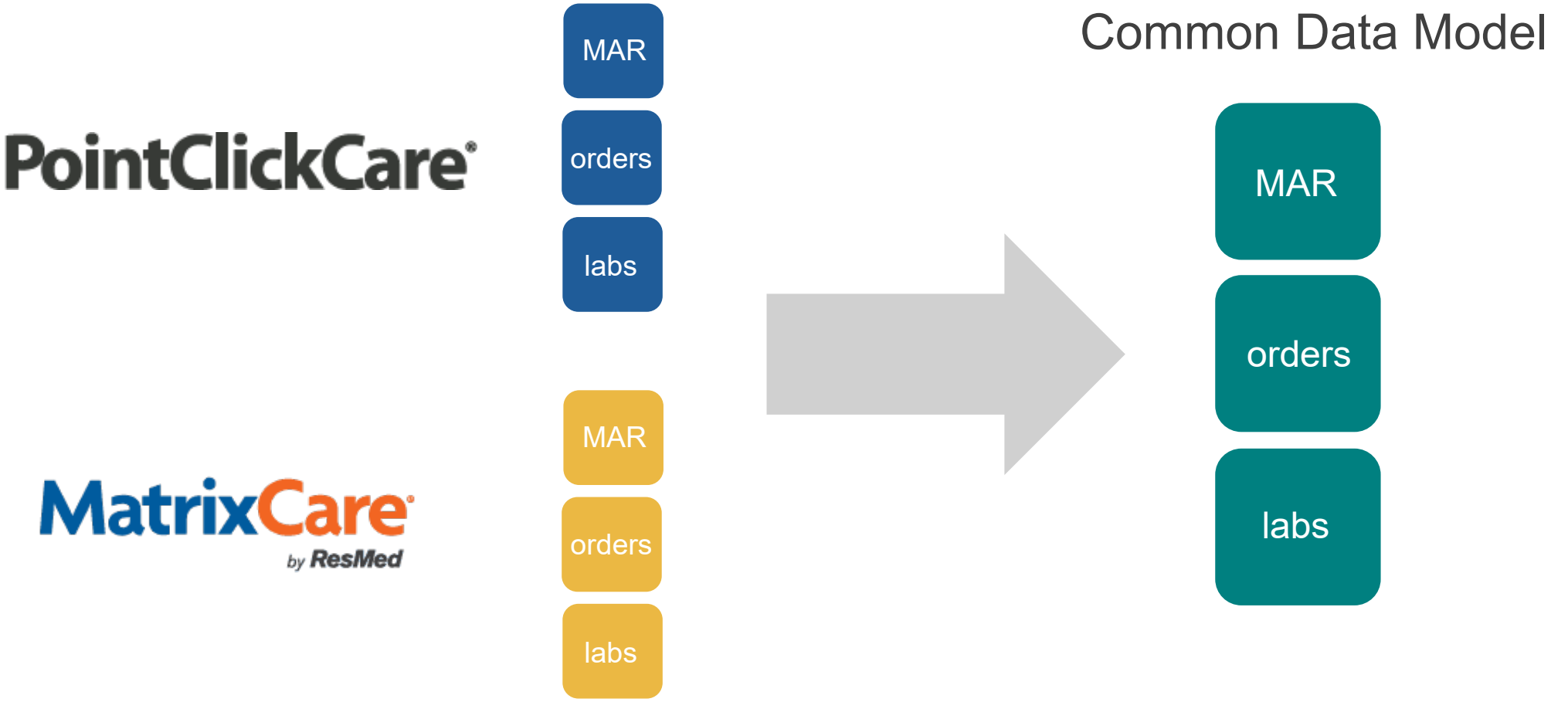
868 ALCs participating
218,532 unique ALC residents

as of October 2026

Map of Available Assisted Living Community Data



Common Data Model



What's available in EHR data that isn't available in Minimum Dataset (MDS) or Claims?

Long-Term Care DATA COOPERATIVE

- EHR resident census data
- Vital signs
- Blood glucose checks
- Height & weight
- Labs
  - Point-of-care & external lab results
- Immunization records
- Medication administration records
- Allergies
- Medical orders
  - Includes advance directive orders (as recorded in the EHR, *not* PDF documents)

More data elements to be added in the future
Progress notes and PDF documents are not currently available

What's available in CMS data via NIA LINKAGE?

Long-Term Care DATA COOPERATIVE

Medicare claims & encounters

- **Parts A & B: 1991–2025**
  - Inpatient hospital and skilled nursing facility stays
  - Outpatient and professional services
  - Home health and hospice
  - Durable medical equipment
  - Diagnoses, procedures, service dates, providers, and costs
- **Part C | Medicare Advantage: 2015–2025**
  - Inpatient, SNF, outpatient, professional, home health, and DME encounter data
- **Part D: 2006–2024**
  - Prescription drug events and related drug utilization information

- **Medicare Assessment Data: 1999–2024**
  - **MDS**, **OASIS**, and inpatient rehabilitation assessments
  - Functional, cognitive, clinical, and health-status measures
- **Medicare Enrollment Data: 1991–2024**
  - Demographics, Medicare eligibility and enrollment
  - Chronic condition and utilization information
- **Medicaid Data: 1999–2024**
  - Claims and enrollment data, including inpatient, long-term care, other services, and prescription drugs

Two options for data access

Long-Term Care DATA COOPERATIVE

EHR Data Only

Apply to LTC Data Coop

DUA with LTC Data Coop

Access data via Acumen-hosted virtual enclave

ACUMEN

EHR + CMS Data

Apply to LTC Data Coop

DUA with LTC Data Coop

DUA with NIA LINKAGE

Access data via Acumen-hosted virtual enclave

EHR + CMS Data

Review both data dictionaries <u>prior to</u> developing applications

- **EHR Data Dictionary:** Available under the downloads section of https://www.ltcdatacooperative.org/Data/Pages/default.aspx

- **LINKAGE CMS Data Dictionary**: Available at https://www.nia.nih.gov/research/dbsr/nia-data-linkage-program-linkage/available-data

97.7% of SNF residents age 65+ with EHR data match to CMS data.



Research Plan

Project Feasibility

Proposed projects must be both:

1. **Feasible:** Proposals must describe how the study requires use of available EHR data from the LTC Data Cooperative (and CMS data, if proposing to use EHR + CMS data)
   - Review the relevant data dictionaries and include the data elements you are planning to include in your proposal
2. **Eligible:** Proposals must be within scope, i.e., propose to develop and/or validate measures capable of being applied to clinical trials within nursing homes and/or assisted living communities.

Research Project Examples

- Assessing completeness, frequency, and validity of EHR data elements in assisted living communities compared to nursing homes
- Establishing validity of EHR data elements through comparison to claims data:
  - EHR medication administration or order records compared to Medicare Part D data for particular drugs or drug classes
  - Diagnoses captured in the EHR data compared to MDS and/or claims
- Establishing validity of EHR data elements by comparing them across resident subgroups for which measurable differences are expected:
  - Lab measures for residents with / without relevant chronic conditions, or across different disease stages
  - Medication use based on relevant diagnoses and/or MDS assessment data

Research Project Examples *continued*

- Development and validation of measures improving existing MDS-based or claims-based measures alone (e.g., using medication data to augment identification of chronic conditions compared to using diagnosis codes alone)
- Assessing periodicity of pain assessments or other vital signs, including variation within and across facilities
- Examining prevalence, frequency, and validity of different types of medical orders* across and within facilities (e.g., advance directives, nutrition orders, treatment orders)

  **Note: Only certain order subtypes (medications, labs, advance directives) are available.*

- Using natural language processing (e.g., transformer models) to validly extract outcome measures from unstructured text (e.g., free-text orders, dose documentation in medication administration records).



Application

Application Components

See RFA for details:

- **NIH Biosketch**
- **Candidate Section** (2 pages)
- **Research Plan Section** (1 page)
- **References** (up to 10, 1 page)
- **Budget and Justification**
- **Letter(s) of Support** (2 pages per letter)
  - Candidate's supervisor
  - Faculty Sponsor (*only for postdoctoral fellows/graduate students*)



Online Submission



Applicants must register to access the online application form.

Completed applications must be submitted online no later than **Thursday, December 3, 2026**, at **6:00PM ET**.

Candidate Section ~ 2 pages

- 3 components must be linked tightly together to tell your unique story



Candidate Section

- **Tell us your story: Why you are an excellent candidate for this award?**
- **Describe your previous training, research, and technical experiences**
  - Highlight your role in prior work, analyses, and/or publications that show your ability to use large-scale data.
  - Include any research experience relevant to post-acute care, NH or ALC settings and/or using real-world data to develop or validate measures
- **Describe your immediate and long-term goals**
  - How can this award help you achieve these goals?
  - How will this research support development of your methodological skills and capabilities using real-world data and provide a foundation for future research projects?
- *Graduate students and postdoctoral fellows must address why this program is appropriate at this stage of their training.*

Research Plan ~ 1 page

Develop a research plan **relevant** to your career goals:

- → **Research Objective**: Clearly state the research objective and relevance to establishing validity of data.
- → **Measures:** Describe the key data elements and measures that will be studied.
  - Refer to the LTC Data Cooperative **Data Dictionary** and, if using CMS data, the **NIA LINKAGE Data Dictionary**.
- → **Analytic Plan:** Detail the analytic approach that will be used to achieve the research objective.

Budget & Budget Justification

- **Salary support for candidate only**, other personnel support not permitted
  - Candidates supported by other training grants (e.g., T32) or career development awards (e.g., K-series) remain eligible to apply. However, funds requested from this award may not be used for the candidate's salary support if on another training grant.
- **Travel Cost**: Budgets must include travel and accommodation costs for the candidate to attend the following two 2-day meetings: 1) the IMPACT Collaboratory Annual Business Meeting and Scientific Conference in Bethesda, Maryland, and 2) the NEXT STEPs Annual Meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana.
- **Publication costs**: Budgets should include allowable publication costs in accordance with the NIH Public Access Policy.

Letter of Support ~ Supervisor

Required letter from the **candidate's supervisor** (e.g., Department Chair, faculty mentor/advisor, graduate supervisor)

- Must confirm the candidate's proposed level of protected time for the award
- Should address candidate's technical and analytical skills, experience using large-scale or real-world data, and their readiness and potential to benefit from the program.
- 2-page limit

Letter of Support ~ Faculty Sponsor
Postdocs & Graduate Students Only

Faculty sponsor is required for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows (2-pages limit):

- Confirm willingness to serve as faculty sponsor and assume the responsibilities associated with award, including execution of required DUAs and oversight of institutional and IRB processes.
- Describe why the candidate is appropriately positioned to participate in the RWD Scholars Program at this stage of their training (i.e., why the timing is appropriate).

If the faculty sponsor is also the candidate's supervisor, the faculty sponsor and supervisor letter requirements may be addressed in a single 2-page letter



Key Dates & Next Steps

Key Dates

October 6, 2026	*RFA Release Date*
October 26, 2026 @ 1:00pm ET	*Informational webinar*
December 3, 2026 @ 6:00pm ET	***Application Due Date***
February 2026	Scientific Merit Review
April 1, 2026	*Earliest Budget Date*

Scientific Merit Review

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TRANSFORMING DEMENTIA CARE

Detailed in Appendix 2 of RFA



- Reviewed by 2 or more non-conflicted IMPACT Collaboratory reviewers
- Will use adapted NIH review criteria and scoring:
  - Overall
  - Candidate
  - Technical Experience
  - Training Potential & Goals for Career Development
  - Research Plan
  - Analytic Plan & Alignment with Areas of Research

Award Decisions & Onboarding

- **Decision**: Application decisions are anticipated in February.
- **Onboarding**: Actual award start dates will occur after notification and onboarding. O*nboarding is expected to take an average of four months* depending on the timing of NIA prior approval of subawards, execution of data use agreements, and completion of required regulatory documents.

Program Year Expectations

- Participate in monthly 1:1 calls with their mentor
- Participate in monthly virtual working group meetings of RWD Scholars Program
- Participate in quarterly virtual IMPACT Research -in-Progress seminars with IMPACT trainees
- Participate in annual 2.5-day IMPACT Scientific Conference in Bethesda, MD during each year
- Participating in the NEXT STEPs Annual Meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana
- Participate in trainings and academic activities



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TRANSFORMING DEMENTIA CARE

Questions?

Contact Us:
IMPACTcollaboratory@hsl.harvard.edu