INNOVATION PROJECT STAFF ANALYSIS: Semi-Statewide Enterprise Health Record Project (Phase 2)

Tulare County

Total INN Funding Requested: $456,440
Duration of INN Project: 2 years

Review History

Public Comment Period: July 1, 2025 – July 31, 2025
Behavioral Health Board Hearing: August 5, 2025, and August 19, 2025
Board of Supervisors Approval: October 28, 2025
County Final Submission Date: November 7, 2025

Project Introduction

Tulare County Behavioral Health (County) is requesting up to $456,440 of Innovation spending authority over a period of two (2) years to partner with the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) on Phase 2 of the Semi-Statewide Enterprise Health Record Innovation Project (EHR Project). There are currently twenty-five (25) other counties participating in the EHR collaborative, which aims to create a more integrated approach to county health information, technology, data collection, and reporting. This project will address the severe behavioral health workforce crisis by reducing documentation burden and improving provider satisfaction, retention, and behavioral health outcomes.

BHSA Alignment and Sustainability

This multi-county Innovation project aligns with the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) through a shared focus on meeting behavioral health workforce and technological needs in a rapidly changing and increasingly interoperable environment and increasing access to meaningful data to evaluate behavioral health service outcomes and equity. All successful outcomes, refined workflows, and updated policies and procedures resulting from this Innovation project will become standard operations for future program sustainability. Additionally, other funds that may be utilized for ongoing needs potentially include BHSA funds, federal and state grants, cross-agency partnerships, and collaborations with local organizations.

Statutory Requirements

WIC Section 5830(a)(1)-(4): This project seeks to increase the quality of mental health services, including measured outcomes; and promotes interagency and community collaboration related to Mental Health Services or supports or outcomes.

WIC Section 5830(b)(2)(A)-(D): This project meets Innovation criteria by making a change to an existing practice in the field of mental health, including but not limited to, application to a different population.

Background

Tulare County Behavioral Health has had longstanding difficulties translating evolving policies into local practice. The county reports that the current electronic health record and reporting systems are not equipped to support real-time data, tracking, and analytics. Healthcare workforce shortages exacerbate these challenges, largely in part due to Tulare County's small population and rural characteristics. Although prior efforts have been made to address improvements and standardization of data systems, the county is in need of additional support to address the evolving requirements that come with the BHSA, as well as to meet the rising behavioral health needs of its community.

CalMHSA has been leading an initiative to modernize and unify behavioral health across the state through the Semi-Statewide EHR Project. Currently, twenty-five (25) county behavioral health plans participate in this project using SmartCare, an EHR system developed by Streamline Healthcare Solutions. Through a phased, two-part roll-out, this project seeks to tackle the severe behavioral health workforce crisis by streamlining workflows, reducing documentation burden, and ultimately improving provider satisfaction, retention, and care outcomes.

How this Innovative Project Addresses the Problem

The EHR Project offers a multi-county, coordinated approach to policy implementation that translates complex regulatory requirements into clear, usable materials that contribute to better, more positive client outcomes. Tulare County has prioritized this project for its scalability and cost-effective approach that emphasizes cross-county collaboration, reduction in duplicative efforts, and shared solutions.

Phase 1 of the EHR Project identified several key challenges highlighting areas of improvement, such as the specific inefficiencies of the current electronic health record system and its inability to adapt to the requirements of evolving state policies. Provider burn-out and documentation burden were also commonly seen and noted as barriers that could be greatly reduced with implementation of restructured practices and procedures. Additionally, Phase 1 provided better insight into the needs of the Medi-Cal population and established expert guidance to assist counties with implementing critical policy changes.

Phase 2 will add two (2) new components that build on the lessons of the first phase while working in tandem with other statewide policy shifts, such as CalAIM, BH-CONNECT, and the Behavioral Health Transformation initiative. These efforts require counties to expand access to care and maintain fidelity to evidence-based practices (EBPs), particularly for individuals in the foster system, people experiencing homelessness, and those involved in the justice system.

Community Planning Process

Tulare County began conducting its annual community engagement process in early 2025, which involved consumers, family members, county staff, specialty groups, and other community stakeholders. Through surveys, public forums, and meetings of the Children's System Improvement Council and Executive Mental Health Plan Providers, the county presented and requested feedback on this Innovative project proposal. No concerns or objections were provided, and discussions reflected strong support for this initiative.

The required 30-day public comment period for this Innovative project proposal occurred between July 1, 2025, and July 31, 2025. It was brought to the local behavioral health board on August 5, 2025, and August 19, 2025, and the project was approved by the Tulare County Board of Supervisors on October 28, 2025.

Learning Objectives and Evaluation

The EHR Project – Phase 2 seeks to examine the effectiveness of tools and infrastructure created during Phase 1 in supporting counties with implementing key policies. Two (2) primary project aims are indicated below.

Aim 1: Multi-County Policy Implementation Support

This project will evaluate whether a coordinated science-based approach helps county plans more efficiently and consistently adopt and implement new state-mandated policies; standardize workflows and reduce fragmented local policy responses; and leverage shared training, learning platforms, and EHR configurations.

Specifically, CalMHSA seeks to answer the following learning question: *Does employing principles of implementing science via multi-county policy implementation support prepare county plans to more efficiently and effectively implement new initiatives, respond to new regulatory requirements, and adopt system-wide changes across their provider networks in a more standardized and complete way?*

Aim 2: Enhanced Data Analytics and Dashboarding

This project will assess whether using enhanced analytic dashboards built on shared EHR data helps counties improve management of service delivery, fiscal health, and program operations; monitor quality, identify gaps, and make timely interventions; and implement effective, data-informed quality improvement efforts.

Specifically, CalMHSA seeks to answer the following learning question: *Does using a Learning Health System methodology via leveraging enhanced analytics dashboards allow county plans to more effectively manage the fiscal health, program operations, and service delivery of their provider networks and implement more effective quality assurance and improvement activities focused on their behavioral health benefit at the plan, program, and individual levels?*

Additionally, to assess progress toward learning goals, CalMHSA will implement a comprehensive, mixed-methods evaluation, which will include existing data sources, surveys, and training participation tracking. This comprehensive evaluation intends on demonstrating how shared tools and coordinated support can drive more consistent, effective behavioral health policy implementation and service delivery improvements statewide.

CalMHSA will oversee implementation, coordinate support across participating counties, manage evaluation activities, and ensure alignment with state initiatives and local needs. To formalize participation, Participation Agreements have been executed between CalMHSA and each county behavioral health plan involved in the project. Furthermore, Streamline Healthcare Solutions LLC has been selected as the technology vendor responsible for the development, implementation, and maintenance of the semi-statewide EHR platform, SmartCare. This partnership enables streamlined deployment of enhancements and standardized tools across counties.

Budget

Tulare County is requesting authorization to spend up to $456,440 of MHSA Innovation funding for this project over a period of two (2) years. One hundred percent (100%) of the project will be supported by Innovation funding. The breakdown by fiscal year and expenditure category is as follows:

Category	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	Total
Personnel	$84,243	$84,243	$168,486
Operations	$0	$0	$0
Non-Recurring	$0	$0	$0
Contracts & Consultants	$131,979	$155,975	$287,954
Total	$216,222	$240,218	**$456,440**

Thirty-seven percent (37%) of total projected expenditures are allocated for personnel costs. This includes one (1) 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) administrative specialist who will oversee

project implementation, administrative, and coordination support. They will serve as the liaison between stakeholders, consultants, and internal teams and will also ensure compliance with all privacy and data governance regulations throughout the project.

Sixty-three percent (63%) of the requested Innovation funds are reserved for contractor and consultant costs, which will cover operating costs and direct support to the county in developing comprehensive policies and data infrastructure. One primary outcome of their assistance is enhancement of a personal health information (PHI) dashboard that allows for improved data visualization, monitoring, and decision-making across multiple departments.

Conclusion

Tulare County's proposed Semi-Statewide EHR Project – Phase 2 appears to meet the minimum requirements listed under MHSA Innovation regulations and aligns with the goals of the BHSA.

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