



Legislation Text

File #: 2024-182, Version: 1

TITLE

DHHS-PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION CONTRACT AMENDMENT: SAS INSTITUTE, INC. SOLUTION FOR VIYA SOFTWARE (\$140,000)

SPONSOR

Dr. Iulia Vann

BACKGROUND

The Public Health Division's responsibilities to protect the public's health are unique. SAS Institute Inc. (SAS) has supported the Division's data modernization efforts to improve disease surveillance for protection of the public's health to prepare for the next pandemic. SAS Viya, a product of SAS, heavily emphasizes pandemic management, whether forecasting near-time activity or assessing the impact of community mitigation strategies to reduce the spread of disease. The SAS Viya solution brings understandable, consistent, and timely data insights to Guilford County's staff and the teams they support to bring these conditions under control. These data-driven insights are critical to identifying population health disparities and inequities, provide timely reporting for numerous stakeholders, identifying processes to control and mitigate disease spread, and create an evidence-based Public Health strategy for disease monitoring and control.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we acutely felt the need to access data in a faster, more streamlined way. SAS has helped us achieve that with the first iteration of our project. We are now moving to putting data into action. With SAS' dynamic reports, we can see hot spots as they develop and target the right communities with interventions at the right time. We hope to expand into other areas within our agency for a more holistic, integrated perspective. This will allow our staff to help meet community needs - and not just the ones we can see immediately. SAS Viya gives staff the time to plan accordingly if disease spread is predicted.

NCDHHS has approved the use of \$140,000 of COVID-19 funds for this project. This project, if approved by the BOC, has been selected by NCDHHS to be presented as a best practice as part of the "Future of Public Health" Task Force. The activities required for this addendum will be supported with funding for the FY24 allocation of Communicable Disease Pandemic Recovery Funding awarded to Public Health. Currently, we are budgeting \$197,766 in annual recurring funds for hosting the software and for licenses.

By investing in SAS Viya, the Public Health Division can become the primary provider of advanced analytics and real-time data for Guilford County. This would enable us to be prepared to spot anomalies that would indicate our teams to be on alert for an epidemic or pandemic as well as to monitor communicable diseases such as HIV, Syphilis, TB, Hepatitis and others as we seek permission to build on the foundation that SAS has already started. This ensures that the department maintains control over its data and analytics processes as well as sharing the real-time data with elected officials, county leadership, stakeholders, and the public to inform and educate about progress of disease and mitigation strategies such as PPE or vaccinations.

Currently, the Division relies on external sources for local data, such as state or federal partners. As was seen during the global pandemic, the delay in data reporting affected the timing of decisions that had to be made at the local level regarding COVID-19 and how to strategize for our community. While a multi-step system was developed so that real-time data could be shared with stakeholders, county leadership, elected officials, community partners and the public, a formalized data collection and analysis process was needed. While state and federal data are vetted and take time for corrections, often real-time data at the local level is needed. Bringing the SAS Viya product in-house provides greater flexibility and cost-effectiveness as well as reduces dependence on third-party vendors for local data which can potentially lead to cost savings and increased efficiency in delivering essential health services.

SAS Viya equips the Public Health Division to stay competitive to address the community's needs around specific diseases. By leveraging advanced analytics capabilities, the department can maintain its position as a collaborator and partner to improve the public's health by working with other community partners.

Quantitative Reach: SAS Viya's scalability enables the Division to analyze large volumes of health data, allowing for a broader reach of services or a more specific reach when necessary. This is critical for addressing Public Health issues that require analysis of extensive datasets, such as disease surveillance, population health management and healthcare resource allocation.

Qualitative Reach: Beyond quantity, SAS Viya empowers the Division to achieve qualitative scalability by providing advanced analytics tools and techniques. This includes predictive modeling, data visualization and machine learning, which enables deeper insights into health trends that lead to more effective and efficient decision-making.

Mandated Services: Many health services provided by the Division are mandated by regulations or standards at the federal, state, and local levels. SAS Viya helps the Division to comply with these mandates by providing the necessary analytics capabilities to monitor and evaluate health outcomes, track performance indicators and report as necessary to regulatory agencies.

Contractual Obligations: The Division may have contractual obligations with healthcare providers, insurers, other stakeholders, or state and/or federal partners such as with opioid settlement activities. SAS Viya's customizable solutions enable the Division to meet these contractual requirements while maintaining flexibility to adapt to changing needs and priorities.

Internal Focus: SAS Viya enhances internal operations within the Division by streamlining the data analysis processes, optimizing resource allocation and facilitating evidence-based decision-making. This improves the department's efficiency and effectiveness in delivering health services to the community and addressing health conditions.

External Focus: Through SAS Viya, the Division can better serve residents by delivering data-driven Public Health programs and interventions. This includes targeted health promotion campaigns, prevention and mitigation efforts, disease surveillance efforts and healthcare resource planning initiatives aimed at improving the health and well-being of the community.

In conclusion, funding SAS Viya for the Public Health Division is a strategic investment that aligns with the Division's mission to protect and promote Public Health. It also aligns with the National Public Health Accreditation Board's Foundational Areas and Foundational Capabilities of which Assessment and Surveillance is a key foundational capability. The ability to collect timely data for guidance in Public Health planning and decision making as well as to access, analyze, and interpret data is an activity that is core to the Division's protection of the community's health. By enhancing analytical capabilities, ensuring compliance with standards, and maximizing its impact on the community, SAS Viya enables the department to fulfill its mandate more effectively and ultimately improve the health outcomes of county residents. This request builds on the earlier completed foundation work to expand to additional diseases. This layer of the project being requested builds on the earlier completed foundation to add additional communicable disease data and add dashboards to visual the data on each disease being added to the platform.

BUDGET IMPACT

NO ADDITIONAL COUNTY FUNDS REQUIRED

NO COUNTY MATCH REQUIRED

REQUESTED ACTION

Approve, in substantial form, a contract amendment for SAS Institute Inc. (SAS) in the amount of a one-time allocation of \$140,000 to support work around communicable disease data analysis, bringing the full contract amount for FY23-24 to \$336,870.