



**CALL FOR MEASURES AND MEASURE CONCEPTS:  
Musculoskeletal**

NQF is seeking new measures and concepts in the areas of musculoskeletal as it relates to all populations, with an emphasis on disparate and vulnerable populations.

NQF is particularly interested in measures:

- measures of intermediate clinical outcomes or longer term health outcomes, including complications;
- composite performance measures;
- measures applicable to more than one setting;
- measures that capture broad populations, including children and adolescents where applicable;
- measures that are harmonized with similar measures; and,
- measures that are sensitive to vulnerable populations, including racial/ethnic minorities; and Medicaid populations.

This project launched **October 28, 2013**. The final submission deadline is **March 3, 2014**.

**BACKGROUND**

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are injuries or disorders, including inflammatory and degenerative disorders affecting the muscles, nerves, tendons, joints, cartilage and supporting blood vessels, and disorders of the nerves, tendons, muscles and supporting structures of the upper and lower limbs, neck, and lower back that are caused, precipitated or exacerbated by sudden exertion or prolonged exposure to physical factors such as repetition, force, vibration, or awkward posture.<sup>1</sup> Musculoskeletal disorders and diseases are a leading cause of disability in the United States, with increasing prevalence and cost associated with musculoskeletal diseases in an aging population.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the morbidity associated with musculoskeletal disorders, there has been a significant increase in the total costs associated with treatment of musculoskeletal disorders. Low back pain is among the most common reasons for visits to physicians and a major reason for work-related disability. Because of the burden of these disorders, there is a critical need for nationally recognized musculoskeletal care measures.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has previously contracted with the National Quality Forum (NQF) to conduct musculoskeletal measure endorsement projects. As of 2011, these projects yielded 26 NQF-endorsed measures which are due for maintenance. These measures primarily relate to care of low back pain, osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, and pain management.

This project will focus on the consensus-based endorsement, maintenance and harmonization of individual and composite musculoskeletal measures of process, outcomes and structure. NQF will solicit

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Musculoskeletal Disorders, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/programs/msd>. Last Accessed, June 2013.

<sup>2</sup> United States Bone and Joint Initiative: *The Burden of Musculoskeletal Diseases in the United States*, Second Edition, Chapter 9. Rosemont, IL: American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons; 2011.



new measures inclusive of all aspects of musculoskeletal health for review and endorsement that address all populations, with an emphasis on disparate and vulnerable populations. Additional musculoskeletal domains identified by HHS prior to the call for measures will also be accommodated. This project will include maintenance review of the 26 NQF-endorsed measures and harmonization of endorsed musculoskeletal health measures. This project will also provide information about domains in which gaps in musculoskeletal care exist, in the context of the National Quality Strategy (NQS) priorities.

## MEASURE CONCEPTS

In addition to soliciting fully-developed measures for consensus-based endorsement review, NQF is also soliciting measure concepts through NQF's new Measure Inventory Pipeline. This pipeline will serve as an important source of information for HHS and other stakeholders on new measure development in the broader healthcare community. It will also enable NQF to track current and planned measure development to ensure early collaboration among developers to drive harmonization and alignment of measures.

In an effort to capture comprehensive information on measures in development, NQF seeks input on several variables including:

- measure description;
- numerator statement;
- denominator statement (target population);
- planned use,
- stage of development; and
- other relevant information.

**Please note that the information entered through NQF's Measure Inventory Pipeline will not be evaluated by the Steering Committee against the NQF Criteria.** Submitted information will be catalogued by NQF and used to help inform the Steering Committee's measure gaps discussion. NQF will also share the information with HHS to inform CMS' Measure Inventory Pipeline, which is a reference for several stakeholders.

NQF's Measure Inventory Pipeline will be available for concept submissions in November 2013.

## MEASURE SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

**To submit a measure**, please complete the following:

- [Measure Submission Form](#) Clicking on this link will redirect you to the webpage for this project, from which you can access the online measure submission form.
- [Measure Steward Agreement](#) Please note that no materials will be accepted without submission of a fully executed *Measure Steward Agreement Form*. All materials not meeting this requirement will be returned to the sender.

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**Materials must be submitted using the online submission form by 6:00 pm, ET March 3, 2014.** If you have any questions, please contact, Farhia Mussa or Kathryn Streeter at (202) 783-1300 or via e-mail at [musculoskeletal@qualityforum.org](mailto:musculoskeletal@qualityforum.org).

***Conditions for Consideration:***

- The measure owner/steward verifies there is an identified responsible entity and process to maintain and update the measure on a schedule that is commensurate with the rate of clinical innovation, but at least every three years.<sup>3</sup>
- The intended use of the measure includes both public accountability and quality improvement.
- The measure is fully specified and [tested for reliability and validity](#). Measures that are not tested will not be accepted in this project.
- The measure developer/steward attests that [harmonization](#) with related measures and issues with competing measures have been considered and addressed, as appropriate.
- The requested measure submission information is complete and responsive to the questions so that all the information needed to evaluate all [criteria](#) is provided.

***Submission Guidance:***

- [Developer guidebook](#):
  - A Developer Guidebook as has been created to assist developers in the measure submission and evaluation process. The Guidebook contains all the information developers need to know when submitting a measure to NQF.
- ICD-10-CM/PCS:
  - Beginning April 1, 2013 measures specified with administrative claims data must submit a set of ICD-9-CM and ICD-10-CM/PCS codes. Click [here](#) for further information on this requirement.
- eMeasures:
  - Must be submitted in the Heath Quality Measures Format (HQMF) and use the Quality Data Model (QDM);
  - Review the [current measure evaluation criteria and guidance](#)
- Composite measures:
  - Please notify project staff if you plan to submit a composite measure

***Technical Assistance***

NQF project staff will provide technical assistance to measure developers at any time during the measure submission process up to the submission deadline. Contact the project team with any questions about the criteria, how to answer the questions in the form, any technical issues with the online submission process... or anything else!

**MEASURE SUBMISSION COMPLETENESS CHECKLIST**

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<sup>3</sup> Measure stewards must execute a Measure Steward Agreement with NQF.



- Measure steward agreement or concept agreement is completed and signed, and attached to the submission.
- Conditions for submission are addressed.
- There are responses in all fields on measure submission form (MSF) unless a particular item is not applicable as indicated in the item instructions.
- Attachments include: eMeasure specifications (S.2a) if applicable; data dictionary/code list (S.2b); Evidence and Measure Testing attachments.
- All URLs are active and accurate.
- Harmonization/competing measures: Did you present a plan for harmonization of the related/competing measures identified by staff during early identification/triage or justify submitting competing or non-harmonized measures? (see Harmonization process [Developer Guide](#)).
- Paired measures should be submitted on separate forms.
- An eMeasure must be specified in HQMF format, using QDM and value sets vetted through the VSAC.
- Composite performance measures: responses to the composite measure items are included.
- Both ICD-9 and ICD-10 codes are included

### RESOURCES FOR MEASURE DEVELOPERS AND STEWARDS

For more details on measure evaluation criteria, please see the following reports:

- [Evidence Task Force Report](#)
- [Measure Testing Task Force Report](#)
- [Harmonization Report](#)
- [Competing Measures Report](#)

Evaluation and Measure Submission Guidance:

- [eMeasure Testing Guidance Report](#)
- [Guidance on Quality Performance Measure Construction](#)
- [Evidence and Importance to Measure and Report](#)
- [Measure Testing and Scientific Acceptability of Measure Properties](#)
- [Composite Evaluation Criteria](#)
- [Resource Use Measure Evaluation Criteria](#)
- [Endorsement Maintenance Policy](#)