

**Request for Information (RFI):
Establishment of Mirror or Backup Sites for
The Demographic and Health Surveys Program Archive**
ICF Incorporated, LLC
Issue Date: Wednesday, May 6, 2026

1. RFI Overview

ICF is committed to facilitating and enabling the continued availability and accessibility of the Demographic and Health Surveys Program microdata and knowledge products (henceforth referred to as the ‘DHS Archive’) in perpetuity. To this end, ICF is seeking information from interested organizations regarding sustainable implementation models; technical approaches and innovative partnerships for hosting one or more mirror or backup sites for the DHS Archive, thereby strengthening system-level resilience and long-term access.

Responses will be used solely for information and planning purposes to inform whether and how ICF proceeds to deeper engagement, which could include conversations, co-design, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or Request for Proposals (RFP) process. ICF may share responses with The DHS Program’s funders and other parties who share ICF’s commitment to facilitating and enabling the continued availability and accessibility of the DHS Archive. Please note that this Request for Information (RFI) is for informational purposes only, and no contract will be awarded as a result. A firm or organization’s response to the RFI—or lack thereof—will have no impact on the evaluation of responses to any subsequent RFP released (if any).

1.1. Submission Details

Please submit your responses to this RFI via email to SurveyArchiveRFI@icf.com before the due date identified in Section 1.2. When submitting your response, please:

- Use the email subject line—DHS Archive RFI Response, [your organization’s name].
- Include your RFI response as a .pdf attachment.
- Use the file name structure, Response_OrganizationName_YYYYMMDD, for your response.
- Ensure that other attachment(s) you choose to submit (if any) have an appropriately descriptive file name.

Physical (paper) copies of RFI responses are not allowed.

1.2. RFI Timeline

Please review the RFI timeline below. Dates may be modified or amended by ICF Incorporated, LLC, which will post an amendment to this RFI notifying prospective respondents of any change.

- RFI Released: Wednesday, May 6, 2026
- Responses Due: Friday, June 19, 2026 (11:59pm EST)

2. Background Information

2.1. Goals and Outcomes

Goal	To ensure that the DHS Archive continues to be freely available, accessible, and trusted for generations to come. [enduring public good]
Outcome	Built-in redundancies and institutional safeguards ensure continuous, reliable access to the DHS Archive. [system-level resilience]
Results	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. One or more mirror and/or backup sites for the DHS Archive are established and operational.2. Durable organizational commitments are in place to sustain the DHS Archive independent of external funding.3. Systems are in place to support mirror and/or backup site(s) reliability, performance, and state-of-the-art protection against cybersecurity risks.

2.2. Background

Archive Overview

The DHS Program was established in 1984 by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to advance local and global understanding of population, health, and nutrition in low- and middle-income countries. Since then, the DHS Program has supported more than 90 partner countries to implement 450+ household- and facility-based surveys, disseminate results, and use the data collected to inform programs and policy. The data collected are owned by the partner country, which grants permission to the DHS Program to distribute datasets, final reports, and other materials through the dhsprogram.com website. ICF has served as the custodian of the DHS Archive for decades and continues in that role today.

The DHS Archive presently includes more than 15,000 datasets from survey types including the Demographic and Health Survey, AIDS Indicator Survey, Malaria Indicator Survey, Service Provision Assessment, and other household surveys. Aggregate data are also accessible through STATcompiler, DHS Program API, DHS Mobile app, and DHS Spatial Data Repository. The DHS Archive spans the dhsprogram.com website, including the microdata archive and knowledge products (reports, manuals, methods, etc.), related outlets (listed above), and legacy and related properties (e.g., World Fertility Survey archive, User Forum, Learning Hub). The DHS Archive continues to grow as new surveys are completed. As of writing, 15 surveys are currently in progress.

Thanks to country ownership, standardization, accessibility, quality and ethics, and comprehensive scope, DHS Program data are among the most widely accessed and used demographic and health data—both aggregate and microdata—in the world. The diverse range of data users include partner country governments and civil society, UN agencies, researchers and students around the world, health and development funders, and public health professionals.

Next Steps

ICF intends to continue to be a custodian of the DHS Archive and recognizes that additional built-in redundancies and institutional safeguards are necessary to ensure the DHS Archive continues

to be freely available, accessible, and trusted for generations to come. This RFI represents ICF's next step towards building system-level resilience and support for the DHS Archive to remain an enduring public good. Any next steps taken will honor existing DHS access controls and country-specific restrictions; data ownership, permissions, and conditions of use remain and will remain unchanged.

While this RFI invites creative ideas for ensuring long-term continuity of the DHS Archive, several models have been contemplated (see illustrative examples in the **Box** below). As reference, additional information on the DHS Archive and ICF's Data Management Access Plan is included as a resource in the **Appendix**.

Box. What Partnership Could Look Like (Illustrative)

To help respondents understand the range of potential engagement models, these illustrative, non-exhaustive examples highlight possible ways organizations might partner with ICF:

- **Full Mirror Site Host:** An organization that would create, operate, and sustain a fully mirrored version of the DHS Archive, designed to replicate the structure, content, and user experience of existing platforms (e.g., dhsprogram.com and related tools). Under this model, the partner would commit to maintaining technical parity and operational alignment with the primary DHS Archive, ensuring continuous, trusted access for users.
- **Backup Archive Custodian:** An organization that would maintain a secure, complete backup of the DHS Archive, designed to preserve the full archive and enable rapid restoration of public access in the event of major disruption. This model emphasizes redundancy and continuity, with the backup site operating in the background or being activated under defined circumstances, rather than serving as a parallel public-facing platform.
- **Regional or Distributed Redundancy Partner:** An organization, potentially located within a DHS Program partner country or region, that would host and sustain a regional or other defined subset of the DHS Archive, contributing to geographic, institutional, and jurisdictional diversity. This model may complement other approaches to support system-level resilience while adhering to common standards for data access, governance, and use.
- **Technical or Platform Co-Developer:** An organization that would contribute technical expertise, infrastructure, or innovation to strengthen the DHS Archive system (for example, improving mirroring feasibility, security architecture, automation, or user experience), without necessarily serving as a long-term host of archive content. This role could be complementary to hosting partnerships and focused on enabling sustainability and scalability across the system.

ICF recognizes that participation in this effort offers institutional value alongside public-good benefits. For participating organizations, hosting or supporting a mirror or backup site presents an opportunity to take a visible role in sustaining a globally trusted data resource and to further strengthen their reputation as a committed steward of data and digital public goods.

3. Information Requested

3.1. Who We're Looking For:

We are looking to build partnerships with organizations who share our goal of ensuring the DHS Archive continues to be freely available, accessible, and trusted for generations to come.

The major pre-requisite to partnership is that your organization should be positioned to make long-term commitments, including financial commitments, to sustain the DHS Archive independent of external funding. Other ideal—though not required—attributes include organizational:

- Stability (as evidenced by leadership, governance, and funding stability alongside program/service continuity).
- Experience managing a data archive.
- Headquarters in a DHS Program partner country (or region) [for a country list, see <https://dhsprogram.com/Countries/>].
- Commitment to maintaining the full DHS Archive (rather than pieces thereof).
- Operating context (legal/jurisdictional) supportive of public data access.

3.2. What We're Looking For:

Respondents are invited to provide information on the following subjects of interest to ICF/The DHS Program:

Organizational Capabilities: Please describe the degree to which your organization aligns with the commitments and attributes described in Section 3.1, including descriptions of your organization's:

- Vision for contributing to the long-term stability of the DHS Archive.
- Anticipated ability to make long-term commitments, including financial commitments, to sustain the DHS Archive, including expectations on start-up costs and maintenance costs, and the proportion of such costs that would be funded internally.
- Relevant experience hosting data archives and/or collaborating across institutions to sustain shared data infrastructure.
- Existing technical capabilities that could support the longevity of the DHS Archive.
- Key legal, political, or reputational risks you foresee and how you would mitigate them.

Technical Approach: Please describe how your organization would design and/or implement a DHS Archive mirror and/or backup site. Please consider feasibility, cost, and user experience (including trust) as you describe your organization's perspectives, suggestions, and rationale, including whether:

- Additional site(s) would be a mirror of existing sites (e.g., a replication of dhsprogram.com) or a backup that provides access to the DHS Archive.
- Additional site(s) would be operating concurrently with dhsprogram.com or operating in the background and "turned on" in the event of a serious disruption.
- Additional site(s) would host the full archive or an archive subset.
- Additional site(s) would operate as static or continuously updated site(s).
- Data user registration and other user information (particularly user registration information) would be shared between archive sites/partners.

Partnership Model(s): Please describe how your organization would propose partnering with ICF/The DHS Program, including:

- The partnership model role your organization would prefer to take (building from illustrative examples provided in Section 2.2, Box). Organizations may identify with more than one illustrative model or propose alternative approaches consistent with the goals of this RFI.

- Expectations about how DHS Archive partners, including ICF, would collaborate and coordinate, particularly to ensure uniformity—of the archive contents and user access procedures.
- Perspectives on whether and under what circumstances surveys not formally part of The DHS Program would be incorporated into the DHS Archive.
- Suggestions on how information between organizational servers would be shared, including for ensuring new content is uniformly available and accessible between mirror sites.
- Suggestions on how to make the DHS Archive more user-friendly.
- Suggestions on how to ensure the DHS Archive remains secure against cybersecurity threats.

This RFI **does not request** detailed budgets, legal commitments, or detailed technical architecture; please do not provide such level of information. Information provided should total **no more than 15 pages** (single spaced, 12-point font). Respondents may include additional attachments, as they deem appropriate.

4. Appendix

Additional information on the DHS Archive and ICF's Data Management Access Plan is included as a resource appendix incorporated at the end of this RFI document. This appendix is provided for context only and is not intended to introduce additional requirements beyond those described in this RFI.

Appendix

This appendix provides a streamlined, non-technical high-level overview of how data in the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) Program Archive are managed, protected, and made accessible. It is intended solely to support the understanding of respondents to the *Request for Information (RFI): Establishment of Mirror or Backup Sites for the DHS Archive*. It does not introduce new requirements beyond those described in the RFI.

1. The DHS Archive at a Glance

The DHS Archive is a globally trusted public data resource that provides free access to population, health, and nutrition data from more than 450 surveys conducted by over 90 countries since 1984. The archive supports governments, researchers, UN agencies, funders, and practitioners worldwide, and includes:

- Microdata (standard recode datasets derived from final cleaned survey data)
- Knowledge products (final reports, key indicator reports, manuals, methods documentation)
- Aggregated data systems, including:
 - STATcompiler (indicator database)
 - DHS Application Programming Interface (API)
 - Spatial Data Repository (SDR)
- Legacy and related resources (e.g., historical survey archives and related platforms)

The archive continues to grow as new surveys are completed and approved for release. ICF serves as the steward of the DHS Archive, working under formal agreements with participating countries that retain ownership of their data.

2. Core Principles Governing DHS Data Management

All DHS data are managed under a consistent set of principles that underpin legitimacy, trust, and long-term public value:

- Country ownership: DHS Program surveys are implemented by partner countries, and all DHS datasets belong to the country where the data were collected.
- Permission-based distribution: Data and reports are released only after formal partner country approval.
- Ethical oversight: DHS survey instruments, protocols, and data management procedures are reviewed by the ICF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and, where required, host-country IRBs.
- Privacy protection: Personally identifiable information (PII) is removed prior to public release; additional protections are in place for sensitive data (e.g., GPS, biomarker data).
- Equitable access: DHS data are provided free of charge to bona fide data users, with minimal barriers to access.

These principles apply equally to the existing DHS Archive and to any mirror or backup site.

3. What Data Are in the DHS Archive

The DHS Archive contains data from multiple survey types:

- Household-based surveys, including:
 - Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS)
 - AIDS Indicator Surveys (AIS)
 - Malaria Indicator Surveys (MIS)
 - Other specialized household surveys
- Health facility surveys, primarily Service Provision Assessments (SPA)

Publicly released data are provided as standard recode datasets, which are anonymized, harmonized, and structured for cross-national comparative analysis. Datasets are accompanied by comprehensive documentation, including recode manuals and variable dictionaries, and are available in multiple statistical formats (e.g., Stata, SPSS, SAS, flat files).

Raw data containing PII are never made publicly available and are not part of this RFI.

4. DHS Data Lifecycle

At a high level, DHS data progress through the following stages:

1. Collection: Partner countries collect data using standardized digital tools with built-in range, consistency, and logic checks.
2. Processing: Data undergo staged cleaning, validation, anonymization, and transformation into standard recode datasets.
3. Country approval: Partner countries review and grant approval for release of final reports and datasets.
4. Publication: Approved datasets and knowledge products are published to the DHS Archive and related platforms, including partner country platforms.
5. Retention: Final processed datasets are retained in perpetuity, with secure backups.

This standardized lifecycle ensures data quality, comparability, and protection across all DHS surveys.

5. Data Security and Privacy Safeguards

DHS data are protected through layered technical, procedural, and governance safeguards, including:

- Encryption during data collection, transfer, and storage
- Password-protected and role-based access to non-public data
- Removal of direct identifiers prior to archiving and release
- Systematic displacement of geographic coordinates to protect respondent confidentiality
- Regular automated backups with off-site redundancy

Public-access datasets are governed by Terms of Use that prohibit redistribution of microdata and any attempt to re-identify respondents. DHS data users are free to distribute aggregated data, including aggregated data they produce stemming from their analyses of DHS microdata.

6. How Users Access DHS Data

DHS microdata are accessed through a standardized process:

- Users register for an account on the DHS website
- Users submit a brief description of their planned data use
- Users agree to dataset-specific terms of use

Requests for most datasets are approved routinely. Additional acknowledgements or justifications are required for more sensitive datasets (e.g., GPS, HIV, or other biomarker data).

Aggregated indicators are accessible openly, without registration, through STATcompiler, the API, and other public-facing tools.

7. Scope Boundaries for Potential Mirror or Backup Solutions

For clarity, any mirror or backup arrangement would:

- Operate within existing DHS governance frameworks
- Respect country ownership and previously granted distribution permissions
- Use the same public-use datasets and documentation currently released by DHS
- Adhere to existing conditions of use and ethical safeguards

Any future mirror or backup arrangement would **not** alter:

- Country ownership of DHS data
- Conditions of use for microdata
- DHS data access approval workflows
- Ethical review, privacy, and confidentiality protections
- DHS Program survey methods

All existing DHS principles, permissions, and safeguards would continue to apply.