

 An official website of the United States government

250 Join HHS in Celebrating Freedom 250 </freedom250/index.html> →



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

[Press Room](/press-room/index.html)



Navigate to:



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 15, 2026

Contact: HHS Press Office

202-690-6343

[Submit a Request for](#)

[Comment](#)

HHS Announces \$4 Million KidneyX EMPOWER Prize Challenge and Health Technology Project to Advance Living Kidney Donation and Patient-Centered Innovation

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) today announced the 2026 KidneyX EMPOWER Prize Challenge <https://kidneyxempowerchallenge.org/>, a **\$4 million national competition** to accelerate innovation supporting **living kidney donors and**

patients who depend on them. To further enhance nephrology care, HHS will also support data standardization and health information technology improvements across the kidney care ecosystem. The challenge will be run through the Kidney Innovation Accelerator (KidneyX).

Addressing Critical Gaps in Living Donation

More than a dozen Americans die each day while waiting for a kidney, and nearly 100,000 Americans are currently waitlisted for a kidney transplant. Living kidney donation is one of the most effective treatment options for kidney failure, yet the number of living kidney donors has remained virtually flat for approximately two decades at fewer than 7,000 per year. Significant financial, logistical, educational, and social barriers often limit the number of people able to donate or receive a transplant.

The **\$4 million EMPOWER Prize Challenge** directly targets these challenges by seeking bold, practical solutions that improve:

- **Public Awareness & Mentorship:** Develop participatory, community-based models to better identify and support potential living donors.
- **Donor Interventions:** Create educational tools to reassure donors about outcomes and address fears of surgery or long-term health risks.
- **Donor Readiness & Eligibility:** Provide tools to help potential donors overcome barriers such as body mass index management, smoking cessation, and financial planning.
- **Donor-Centered Outcomes:** Implement monitoring strategies and data collection efforts to support donors in their long-term health and well-being journeys after their kidney donation, helping provide reassurance and improved outcomes.
- **Center Practices:** Focus on sharing of knowledge, such as successful best practices that reduce administrative barriers and delays across a broader geographic area.

By advancing innovations in these areas, the 2026 EMPOWER Prize Challenge emphasizes living donation as a critical pathway to improving outcomes and saving lives, ensuring that living donors are supported before, during, and after donation as they help more Americans receive life-saving transplants. By elevating lived experience alongside technical innovation, the challenge seeks to generate solutions that are both impactful and scalable.

“Living kidney donation delivers some of the best outcomes for patients with kidney failure, yet avoidable barriers still stand in the way,” **said HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.** “Through the \$4 million KidneyX EMPOWER Prize Challenge, we are calling on innovators to remove those barriers and expand access to patient-centered, equitable donation—so more Americans can live longer, healthier lives.”

How to Participate

Interested participants should visit kidneyxempowerchallenge.org <<https://kidneyxempowerchallenge.org>> to apply for the 2026 EMPOWER Prize Challenge and receive updates, key dates, and reminders as they become available. Selected winners will receive monetary prizes and national recognition, helping accelerate the development and real-world adoption of their solutions.

Advancing Data Standards and Interoperability in Kidney Care

In addition to administering the 2026 EMPOWER Prize Challenge with the American Society of Nephrology (ASN), the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) will work with the nephrology community to explore opportunities to improve data standardization and enhance interoperability across the kidney care ecosystem.

This effort will focus on identifying gaps and advancing solutions that enable more seamless, secure, and patient-centered data exchange, supporting better clinical decision-making, care coordination, research, and innovation in kidney disease and transplantation. By strengthening the underlying data infrastructure, HHS and its partners aim to accelerate progress toward more equitable, efficient, and high-quality

kidney care. This action is part of broader HHS efforts to modernize and improve the national organ procurement, donation, and transplant system and improve patient access to life-saving transplants.

“Innovation in kidney care must begin with the experiences of patients and living donors,” **said ASN President Samir M. Parikh, MD, FASN.** *“By fostering innovations that empower living donors and streamline the process, we are not only better supporting Americans who save the lives of others, but also reducing the long-term burden on the Medicare program, safeguarding both our nation's kidney health and its fiscal future.”*

“Data and technology play a critical role in supporting patients, donors, and clinicians across the transplant ecosystem,” **said National Coordinator for Health IT Dr. Thomas Keane, MD, MBA.** *“By fostering innovation through this challenge and advancing more seamless, interoperable data exchange, we can help ensure that individuals have the information and tools they need to make informed decisions and receive high-quality, coordinated care.”*

About KidneyX

The Kidney Innovation Accelerator (KidneyX) is a public-private partnership between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the American Society of Nephrology (ASN). KidneyX accelerates innovation in kidney care by funding prize competitions and fostering collaboration across the kidney community to improve outcomes for people with kidney diseases. Since its launch, KidneyX has catalyzed innovation across the kidney care ecosystem by awarding more than \$25 million dollars in prizes to more than 70 prize winners to support a growing network of innovators dedicated to transforming prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, including transplantation.

###

Note: All HHS press releases, fact sheets and other news materials are available in our Press Room </press-room/index.html>.

Like HHS on Facebook, follow HHS on X @HHSgov <<https://x.com/hhsgov>>, @SecKennedy <<https://x.com/seckennedy>>, and sign up for HHS Email Updates

<<https://cloud.connect.hhs.gov/subscriptioncenter>>.

Last revised: April 15, 2026

Submit a request for comment

For media inquiries, please submit a request for comment.

Sign up to receive our press releases

Sign Up

<<https://cloud.connect.hhs.gov/news-sign-up>>

Related Press Releases

FDA Accelerates Action on Treatments for Serious Mental Illness Following Executive Order </press-room/fda-accelerates-action-treatments-serious-mental-illness-following-executive-order.html>

APRIL 24, 2026 | PRESS RELEASE

HHS and CMS Announce Healthcare Advisory Committee Members to Improve Patient Care and Modernize the U.S. Healthcare System </press-room/hhs-cms-announce-healthcare-advisory-committee-members-improve-patient-care.html>

MARCH 27, 2026 | PRESS RELEASE

HHS and American Urological Association Announce Landmark Collaboration to Advance Women’s Health </press-room/aua-collaboration-to-advance-womens-health.html>

MARCH 12, 2026 | PRESS RELEASE

Related Blog Posts

Doing Homework on Vaccines this Back-to-School Season? Here are 10 Ways to Separate Fact from Fiction. </blog/2022/08/17/doing-homework-on-vaccines-this-back-to-school-season-here-are-10-ways-to-separate-fact-from-fiction-test.html>

Content last reviewed April 15, 2026