

## A Single, Centralized, Team Focused Collaboration System for Analyses

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### ABSTRACT

Statisticians and programmers work in concert with each other to complete analysis projects and often resort to using Excel and email to store metadata, track project milestones, and collaborate with each other. See how using a single, centralized system to store TFL/Dataset metadata, communicate key analysis project milestones, report on QC efforts, conduct collaborative TFL reviews, and track TFL change requests can dramatically reduce data entry and reap big productivity benefits.

### INTRODUCTION

Biometrics teams have many active analysis projects ongoing at the same time with multiple statisticians and programmers working on each one. Often, the work to store TFL and dataset metadata, communicate milestones, and TFL change requests happen in isolation within and across analysis projects.

Some teams have one or more in-house built tools to help automate tasks and communicate work, but most resort to Excel and email resulting in a lot of duplicate data entry and making it difficult, if not impossible, to report on.

In this paper we highlight the challenges statisticians and programmers face and share a novel solution to overcoming them.

**Candid** is an analysis lifecycle management system. It is a database backed web application that provides a single, centralized resource to store metadata, track analysis project milestones, and track TFL and dataset programming bugs and change requests. Candid is a hub for biometrics team communication and analysis project work.

### WHAT IS THE MAIN UNIT OF WORK FOR BIOMETRICS TEAMS?

Our industry is rife with synonyms. Different words and acronyms (e.g. TFL, TLF, TLG) are used to represent the same thing (is it a complex algorithm, method, or comment?).

There are many common synonyms for analysis like deliverable, project, and study (study is often used interchangeably with analysis and clinical trial).

For the purpose of this paper we will use the term **Analysis** to refer to the main unit of work for Biometrics teams.

An **Analysis** is a discrete unit of work that has a plan (e.g. Statistical Analysis Plan), a team of statisticians and programmers, and a defined set of outputs (Tables, Figures, and Listings or TFLs) and datasets to be programmed, tested, reviewed and delivered to their endpoint.

### TEAM USER SCENARIOUS WE WILL FOCUS ON

Using Candid's workflow engine in concert with its metadata repository we will show how Candid provides a common resource for supporting key activities Biometrics teams do to complete analyses.

- Track analysis projects and communicate team responsibilities.
- Store, share, and manage TFL metadata.
- Store, share, and manage dataset metadata.
- Leverage TFL and dataset metadata to meet automation goals via an application programming interface (API).
- Track and report on TFL and dataset testing (aka QC or validation) processes.
- Securely share TFL files with statisticians and programmers.
- Conduct online TFL reviews.
- Track change requests, bugs, questions about TFL, dataset programming efforts.
- Get status updates at a glance from dashboards.
- Get metrics and reports on all above processes.

## TRACK ANALYSIS PROJECTS AND COMMUNICATE TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

### OVERVIEW

#### User Goals

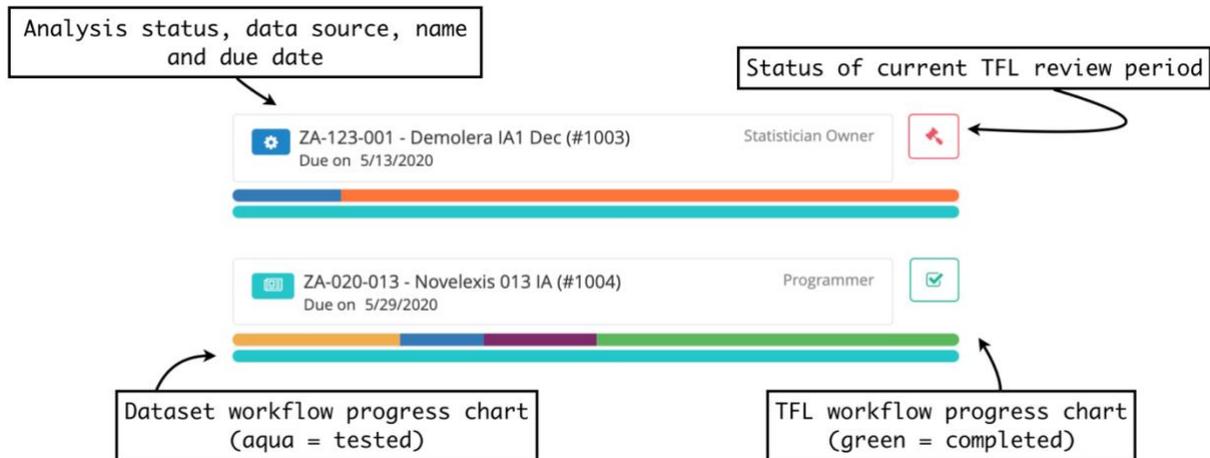
*As a manager, I can't easily see what my teams are working on without getting everyone to spend time writing status updates or looking at departmental or individual tracking spreadsheets.*

*As a programmer, I want to minimize my time updating my own and others' tracking spreadsheets or sending e-mail status on my progress.*

#### Solution

Managers, statisticians and programmers are all tracking their work, often separately in Excel. Shifting work from updating tracking spreadsheets to a central system means everyone knows where to go get their questions answered about project work. The nagging issues of locked Excel files, where spreadsheet trackers are located, and which one is correct instantly go away.

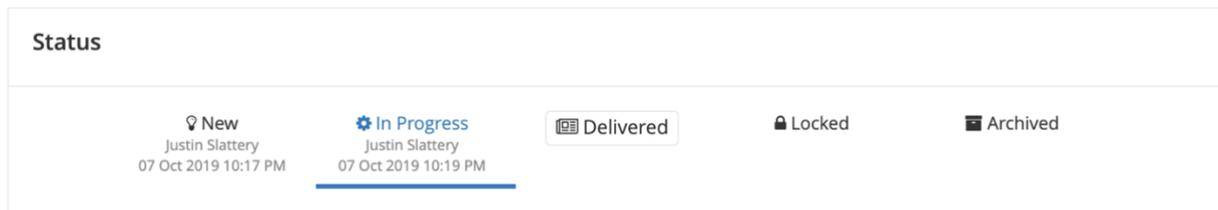
When teams are tracking their work in a centralized system rather than separately, everyone can see the results immediately. Figure 1 shows a section of Candid's overview dashboard that shows how Candid automatically rolls up status details about active analyses, providing at-a-glance progress teams are making across the department.



**Figure 1. Analysis Summary Example**

Candid's workflow engine helps productivity by automatically governing rules to move forward or back through the workflow and reducing the amount of data entry and formatting that spreadsheet tracking demands. All status changes are automatically date and time stamped and record the user who performed the changes. All these details are captured in an audit trail that tells the whole analysis story.

Analyses in Candid have a several workflows. This standardizes communication about project status, TFL programming progress, and dataset programming progress across the entire department. Figure 2 shows an example workflow for the conduct of an analysis.



**Figure 2. Analysis Workflow Example**

### **CANDID'S WORKFLOW ENGINE**

- Provides a consistent means of communicating Analysis, TFL, and Dataset progress.
- Provides a standard terminology for communicating progress.
- Enforces departmental workflow standards.
- Provides an automated audit trail (means less data entry over Excel or disparate systems to accomplish similar goals).
- Workflows can be customized per instance of Candid.

### **ANALYSIS PROPERTIES**

In addition to project status, Candid also tracks the type, task, name, due dates, data sources, analysis team members (and their roles), and shared documents (e.g. Statistical Analysis Plan).

**Table 1 Analysis Properties**

<b>Property</b>	<b>Description, Examples</b>
Type	Ad-hoc, Planned
Task	NDA, Final, DMC Meeting, Publication, etc.
Name	A short, descriptive name for the project.
Data source	Associated clinical trial or trials.
Due date	Expected completion of delivering outputs.

## **THE ANALYSIS TEAM**

Each analysis in Candid has team. Membership on a team serves two important purposes. The first is to communicate to the department the team members' responsibilities. The second is to secure the analysis. A user's combination of their *membership* and *role* on a given analysis determines what details they can see and what actions they can perform (e.g. a programmer can add or edit TFL metadata, whereas a reviewer cannot).

## **SHARING DOCUMENTS**

It is easy to share analysis project related documents with the team. All team members (except Reviewers and Observers) can add and remove documents in the Supporting documents section on the detail page of the analysis.

## **STORE, SHARE, AND MANAGE TFL METADATA**

### **OVERVIEW**

#### **User goals**

*As a statistician, I need to communicate TFL specifications and specification updates to programmers. I am eager to know when programmers have produced TFLs so I can begin reviewing them and providing my feedback as soon as possible.*

*As a programmer, I want to keep track of my programming progress and communicate my progress to statisticians and testers.*

#### **Solution**

Storing TFL metadata and tracking progress in a single place allows has many benefits. Candid allows all team members to easily view and update metadata and progress. For example, a statistician may be monitoring the efficacy figures a programmer is working on. As soon as she sees the programmer has finished and uploaded them into the system, the statistician can immediately open the viewer and begin reviewing the TFLs. She can then quickly provide feedback back to the programmer, who will see that feedback on their dashboard (see Securely Share TFL Files with Statistician and Programming Team Members topic in this paper for more details).

All of this communication occurs inside the system. It is available to all team members, not hidden in email inboxes or spreadsheets.

Change Made On	Message	Change
Justin Slattery 19 Nov 2019 08:20 AM	Review period 1	Team Reviewing → Completed
Sonny Rollins 07 Oct 2019 09:28 PM	Added to review period 1	Stat Reviewed → Team Reviewing
Sonny Rollins 07 Oct 2019 09:24 PM		Tested → Stat Reviewed
Diana Krall 07 Oct 2019 09:16 PM		Ready → Tested
Justin Slattery 07 Oct 2019 09:13 PM	File version 1 uploaded.	Programming → Ready
Justin Slattery 07 Oct 2019 09:09 PM		New → Programming
Justin Slattery 07 Oct 2019 09:08 PM	Importing output	New

**Figure 3. Audit Trail Showing Status History of a Single TFL**

Candid provides several ways to add, edit, and copy TFL specifications in bulk. There are wizards for copying existing metadata on to new analyses. Specifications can be exported to Excel, edited and then read back into the system. Candid also has an advanced templating system for storing standards that makes it very quick and easy to copy metadata in bulk. These standard libraries can generate titles and footnotes on new or existing analysis projects as well.

## STORE, SHARE, AND MANAGE DATASET METADATA

### OVERVIEW

#### User Goals

*As a programmer, I want to keep track of my progress and see others' progress on TFLs that are in progress.*

#### Solution

Centrally storing Dataset metadata and tracking progress through each Dataset's lifecycle has many benefits. Similar to TFLs, teams track the programming effort and testing effort while at the same time storing SDTM and ADaM dataset specifications for each analysis. Storing variable details, controlled terminology (CDISC and custom), and value level metadata is also an option. Figure 4 shows an example of dataset details that include the workflow, top level dataset details and programming assignments.

**Status**

📌 New

Justin Slattery

07 Oct 2019 09:20 PM

⚙️ Go back to prog

Justin Slattery

07 Oct 2019 09:21 PM

✓ Ready

Justin Slattery

07 Oct 2019 09:22 PM

🏠 Tested

Brad Mehdau

07 Oct 2019 09:23 PM

**Details** Variables (0) Clone Edit

**Name:** ADAE - Adverse Events Analysis Dataset

**Type:** ADaM-IG

**Class:** Subject Level Analysis Dataset

**Program:**

**Default Test Program:** t-ds.sas

**Default Test Method:** Independent Programming

**Structure:** One record per adverse event per subject

**Documentation:**

**Domain:**

**Repeating:** True

**Is Reference Data:** False

**Assignments**

Bill Frisell  
Programmer

Diana Krall  
Tester

Add

**Figure 4. Dataset Workflow and Details Example**

As with TFLs, Candid provides several ways to input, reuse, and copy metadata to new or existing analysis projects. Dataset specifications can be exported to Excel, edited and then read back into the system. Candid also has an advanced templating system for storing standards that makes it very quick to copy metadata in bulk.

## LEVERAGE TFL AND DATASET METADATA TO MEET AUTOMATION GOALS VIA AN API

Candid provides an extensive library of application programming interface (API) calls allowing programmers to access the metadata repository via an API. Whether you are using SAS, Python, R or any popular programming language, you have an interface to programmatically access the data and return either JSON or XML. You can also add and update data as well via the API. This opens the door for many automation opportunities.

Example using Candid's REST API (for integration with other systems; call from SAS programs)

```

*-----*
| HTTP to write XML file from Candid API
*-----*
proc http url="http://web_server/candid/api/v1/1/analysis"
  out=analysisList
  method="GET"
  ct="application/xml";
run;

```

## SECURELY SHARE TFL FILES WITH STATISTICIAN AND PROGRAMMING TEAM MEMBERS

### OVERVIEW

#### User Goals

*As a statistician, I am waiting for the programmers to produce requested outputs so I can review them. This involves back and forth emails between stats and programming to figure out which outputs are ready and where they are located. Once reviewed, feedback is entered into spreadsheets or emailed to programming and is frequently not collated or easily tracked.*

#### Solution

Once programmers have produced TFLs, the TFLs can be bulk uploaded into the system. This changes the status of the TFLs to Ready, alerting the statistician that the TFLs are available for viewing.

Statisticians (or other authorized team members) then use Candid's **Quick View** utility to view TFLs and start providing feedback (e.g. change requests, questions, bugs) in the system by adding *Issues*.

Added issues show up on the programmer's dashboard. The issues are automatically date and time stamped. Team members can see and respond to these issues directly in Candid.

Central tracking of Issues (change requests, questions, and bugs) provides the programming team a hub for discussing all the programming minutiae toward completing an analysis. Important findings, discussions about the best course of action, and the eventual resolution are preserved and searchable for future use.

## CONDUCT ONLINE TFL REVIEWS

### OVERVIEW

#### User Goals

*As a statistician, I need to securely share TFLs with stakeholders in my organization, collect their questions and feedback, and then turn that feedback into action items for programming. I also need to monitor reviewer progress and make sure they are meeting the deadline. I typically have no visibility into the progress reviewers have made.*

*As a statistician, I have a big job at the end of a review to collate and make decisions about all the feedback. This feedback comes to me via tracking spreadsheets, email, and handwritten notes. I wish there was a system that would collate all those details for me.*

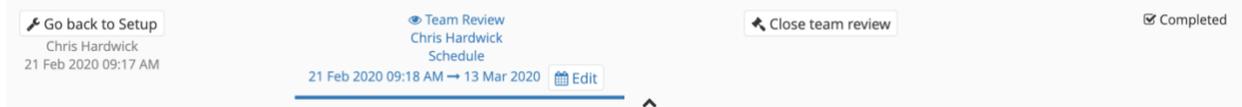
*As a reviewer, I want to know what TFLs I am supposed to be reviewing. I want to know how much time I have to provide my feedback, what details are important from the statistician's perspective for me to focus on, and what has happened with the feedback I provided.*

#### Solution

For most Biometric teams, conducting TFL reviews is a manual and laborious process. Candid's review system makes it easy to conduct a formal TFL review. The entire process, from setting up a review to collecting reviewer feedback to reporting on actions taken with that feedback, is automated. Review periods and collected feedback are available to the whole team and are permanently archived. Figure 5 shows the workflow details for a single review period.

### ***With Candid's Review Tool a Statistician can:***

- Identify which TFLs to share with reviewers.
- Select which stakeholders are allowed to view and comment on TFLs.
- Set and communicate a schedule for reviewers to provide their feedback.
- Monitor each reviewer's progress.
- See and reply comments being added by reviewers in real time.
- Determine which comments are actionable or not.
- Provide instructions for programming that are automatically associated with the comment.
- Track programming progress toward completing actions items.



**Figure 5. Review Period Workflow**

### ***With Candid's Review Tool a Reviewer can:***

- See what review periods the reviewer has been granted access to.
- See the schedule for providing their feedback.
- View a summary of their own and others' progress.
- See comments in real time and reply to others' feedback.
- Add comments by marking up the TFL using drawing tools (e.g. pinpoint, a circle or square lasso, or highlight).
- See what happened to their feedback after the review period is over.

### **Commenting**

Reviewers add comments in a variety of ways. Each comment is automatically date and time stamped and recorded with the name of the reviewer. Reviewers can also reply to comments from other reviewers to provide more information.

Comments can also be added by drawing on the surface of the uploaded TFL in Candid. Figure 6 shows the process to follow to add markup comments.

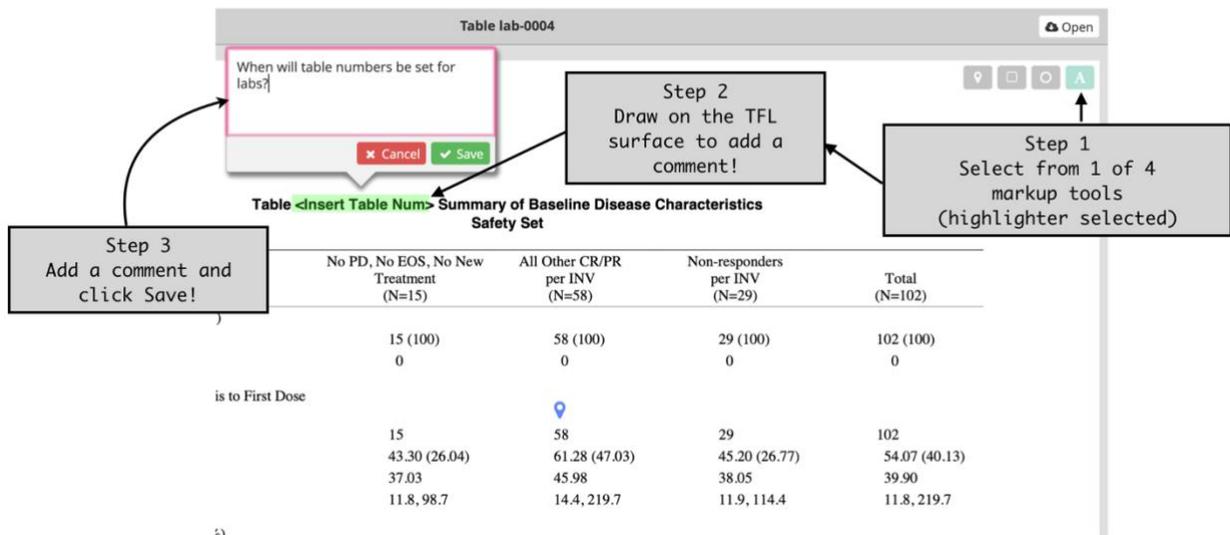


Figure 6. Reviewers can markup output inside the review tool

## Increasing Reviewer Participation

Candid's review system has detailed dashboards that allow statisticians to monitor progress on the review period. Reviewer progress is automatically tracked by Candid. Figure 7 shows the reviewer progress chart on the review period's dashboard.

### Team Progress Details

Billie Holiday

Completed: 2 | Viewed: 1 | Comments: 3 | Remaining: 1



Diana Krall

Completed: 0 | Viewed: 2 | Comments: 1 | Remaining: 3



Ella Fitzgerald

Completed: 1 | Viewed: 1 | Comments: 0 | Remaining: 2



Figure 7. Statisticians Can Monitor Reviewer Progress

## TRACK CHANGE REQUESTS, BUGS, QUESTIONS

### OVERVIEW

Candid has a formal *Issue* tracking system that is available to all team members. An issue can be a change request, a question or a bug. Issues give a team a central, flexible resource for recording conversations about the specification and programming effort for analysis projects across the department. A single issue can be associated with both TFLs and Datasets.

An interaction on a single issue may look something like this:

1. Statistician creates a new issue for a programmer to address.
2. Programmer asks a question by adding a comment to the issue.
3. Statistician responds to question.
4. Programmer addresses the issue and records the issue as resolved and closed.
5. Statistician can see the issue is closed and reviews the newly created TFL to verify.

Centrally tracking issues means there are no spreadsheets to update and no buried emails to dig up.

## BENEFITS OF METRIC DASHBOARDS FOR TEAMS

There are three dashboards in Candid. Each dashboard targets the primary questions different roles in Biometrics may have about departmental work.

### MAIN

The Overview dashboard summarizes and shows high level metrics about all analysis work currently in the system.

### MY ANALYSES

The My Analyses dashboard is the home page for statisticians and programmers. It displays a summary of each active analysis the logged in user is a team member of. Charts summarizing the workflow progress of TFLs and Datasets as well as links to open Issues are available here.

### REVIEW

The Review dashboard is the homepage for all reviewers in the system. This page summarizes the logged in user's access to current and past review periods they have participated in.

### REVIEW PERIOD DASHBOARD

This dashboard serves as the homepage for every review period. Anyone on the analysis team can access review period dashboards for a given analysis. From here, team members can see a summary of comments and progress reviewers have made towards completing the requested TFL reviews. This is especially helpful for statisticians who (without Candid or a similar software) typically have little insight into how well reviewers are progressing through their review.

## GET METRICS AND REPORTS ON BIOMETRIC TEAM ACTIVITIES

There are many predefined reports in Candid that summarize analysis projects. Reports can be viewed within the system and also can be exported to Excel. Table 2 Predefined Reports, lists a few of the reports that are available in all versions of Candid.

**Table 2 Predefined Reports**

Name	Description
Status Changes	Groups active analyses by their data source (Study).
Team Resourcing	Lists all users, their analysis membership and TFL and dataset assignment counts.
Analysis Lifecycle Report	Lists all outputs for a given analysis, their testing status and workflow histories.

Name	Description
TFL Audit Report	Lists all TFLs, their programming, testing assignments and workflow histories.
Dataset Audit Report	Lists all datasets, their programming, testing assignments and workflow histories.
Issues Report	Lists all issues in a format that can be shared with team members or CROs outside of Candid.

We have been touting the benefits of avoiding spreadsheets. However, for those that need data from the Candid database, whether it be for internal use, trial master file input, or for sharing with external partners, exporting data to Excel is an option in many places with the click of a button. Analysis metadata, TFL metadata, dataset metadata, issues, user lists and user assignments are all examples of information that can easily be exported.

## CONCLUSION

Candid provides the opportunity to have your team's story all in one place. You can manage analyses, communicate team assignments, securely publish and review TFLs, manage all your output metadata, and automate tasks via the comprehensive API. As the pharmaceutical industry pushes to standardize, automate, and drive efficiency gains in drug development, Candid is a logical first step for biometrics departments that are still spreadsheet driven. Adoption of Candid can be phased in: first by replacing existing tracking spreadsheets then by driving deeper automation using centralized metadata, the workflow engine, and APIs.

We hope you found this paper interesting. Thank you for reading!

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Your comments and questions are valued and encouraged. Contact the author at:

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