
Steps for Sustainable Health Information Exchange

Step 4: Get to Trusted and Streamlined Governance

A big part of getting exchange going is getting entities to understand where value can be created together. However, if all the parties let this slip into some visionary sets of committees, imposing multiple rules and sticking points, the effort is not going to work very well. One means might be a trusted broker. Conversations must happen but it is important to get to common value-propositions quickly. Conceivably, a technology partner can be helpful with brokering. Such a partner has incentives for efforts to move forward. Obviously, if technical choices are at issue, there is an immediate conflict. However, the energy from potential technology partners is probably useful in overcoming inertia that will arise in putting groups together.

However a trusted community broker – a chamber of commerce or other neutral entity can cut through the clutter. A community government can certainly play this role, but again, the focus needs to be on business value. In Pensacola, we are the technology partner for a health information utility that is run by an organization created by the Pensacola Chamber of Commerce. Initial participating members, like the hospitals and other major players are on the board of directors of this entity.

Keeping things streamlined includes maintaining focus. Participation requires leadership and project mentality. The project will need to create governance, data use agreements, and a core exchange technology or approach. The effort may need a proof of concept to show value.

A good start is transparently to inventory the health information systems of the major players, along with some initial thoughts on objectives. This can be published. There are hundreds of players who will put forward proposals and ideas. There is also plenty of federal help coming in the form of Regional Extension Centers. There is nothing wrong with a period for obtaining information and options. The objective is to get a critical mass to get the ball rolling. If the value propositions are right, others will join in over time.

The basic focus is simply to draw a path between the current inventory and an intermediate step in exchange. The end-state cannot be properly described for many years. A reasonable exchange plan should show return on investment in a clear manner within a five year time frame. Governance should focus on such objectives as explicit criteria. Governance for maintenance of the exchange should be lined up to further the business and health care objectives of value creation, more customer, and layered applications driven by the market efforts or further agreements of the community.

Cogon Systems, Inc. (COGON) is a Pensacola, Florida - based health information technology and consulting firm with locations in Ft. Lauderdale, FL and Washington, D.C that facilitates healthcare connectedness.