

# Drafting a Blueprint for Information Governance

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Information governance (IG) is evolving as a necessity in healthcare as institutions expand their footprint and partnerships to meet “meaningful use” and earn EHR Incentive Program payments, participate in accountable care organizations, and tackle other industry challenges such as the transition to ICD-10-CM/PCS. HIM professionals have long strived to protect the health record and ensure its integrity for use in improved quality of care. Now, HIM professionals are at a pivotal time in the profession with an opportunity to influence the changing landscape and leverage HIM expertise in data management best practices to support enterprise IG initiatives.

## Establishing a Need for IG

When tackling any new project or initiative, it is critical to begin with establishing the scope—specifically, to define what it is the team and/or enterprise is trying to accomplish. It is also time to ask questions, such as: What are the problems that need to be solved? Where do improvements need to be made? Is there a timeline or budget that needs to be considered?

To begin to identify needs, look to principal enterprise information management (EIM) managerial functions focused on lifecycle management of information assets across the enterprise. Linda Kloss explains that IG encompasses five building blocks that can be used to help define the scope of governance. “An organization won’t be successful with information governance without a corresponding strong EIM capacity. The converse is also true: EIM is unlikely to fully succeed without effective governance.”<sup>1</sup> The following takes a closer look at examples from these building blocks.

## Privacy, Confidentiality, and Security

Consider the compliance manager overseeing the security office, and monitoring non-authorized access of health and other business information. To ensure that security risks and vulnerabilities are proactively managed, there will need to be metrics defined for how/what is considered to be in compliance with regulations and law.

## Integrity and Quality

Many HIM departments have found a need to establish master patient index (MPI) maintenance and integrity policies to continuously improve the value and trustworthiness of their information assets. Establishing proactive error prevention and correction processes will provide assurance that quality care can be provided through quality information.

## Design and Capture

To improve the quality of data capture, downstream usage, and interoperability, the use of templates can help with data management, enhancing the accuracy of data capture, and reducing redundancy with standardization.

## Content and Records Management

Retention and disposition of medical records is a long-standing HIM responsibility. IG takes this one step further by allowing oversight beyond the designated record set to include the clinical and business needs of the organization against applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

## Access and Use

The patient portal is a good example of where IG principles can be used to ensure clinical and non-clinical data and information are available, trusted, and useable by those who rely on them.

An information governance initiative has the potential to completely transform an organization's thinking about the value of information and how it can be used to power future strategic initiatives. It pays to put sufficient time in at the beginning to both lay the foundation and determine how best to involve leadership in the conceptual development. Once the IG needs are established, additional challenges include rallying support—and, potentially, resources—to devote to its development and conviction in the face of the complexity that is inherent in transformational projects.

One way to address these challenges and get an IG program off the ground is to develop a program blueprint. The blueprint is a graphical plan that describes and illustrates the means by which an organization moves from the current state to its desired future state. The power of the blueprint is in its ability to depict even a complex and multi-dimensional program simply and succinctly. In doing so, the vision is articulated and leadership alignment is achieved.

## Constructing a Blueprint

Constructing a blueprint starts with describing the desired future state of the IG program. This is a visioning activity that must involve leadership level stakeholders and the executive sponsor. Developing the future state in this manner builds alignment, support, and buy-in—all critical underpinnings for long-term success. The future state in this context is “what success looks like.” It will include elements of program achievement and stability, resource and infrastructure components, and tie-ins to strategic initiatives.

Once the future state is agreed upon, the current state of IG is added. This description should touch on both strengths and weaknesses across all dimensions of the scope. In the case of an information governance blueprint, the status of the components of an EIM program above would logically be addressed, along with the status of the IG knowledge base and AHIMA's Information Governance Principles for Healthcare™, organizational structure, and tools and technology.

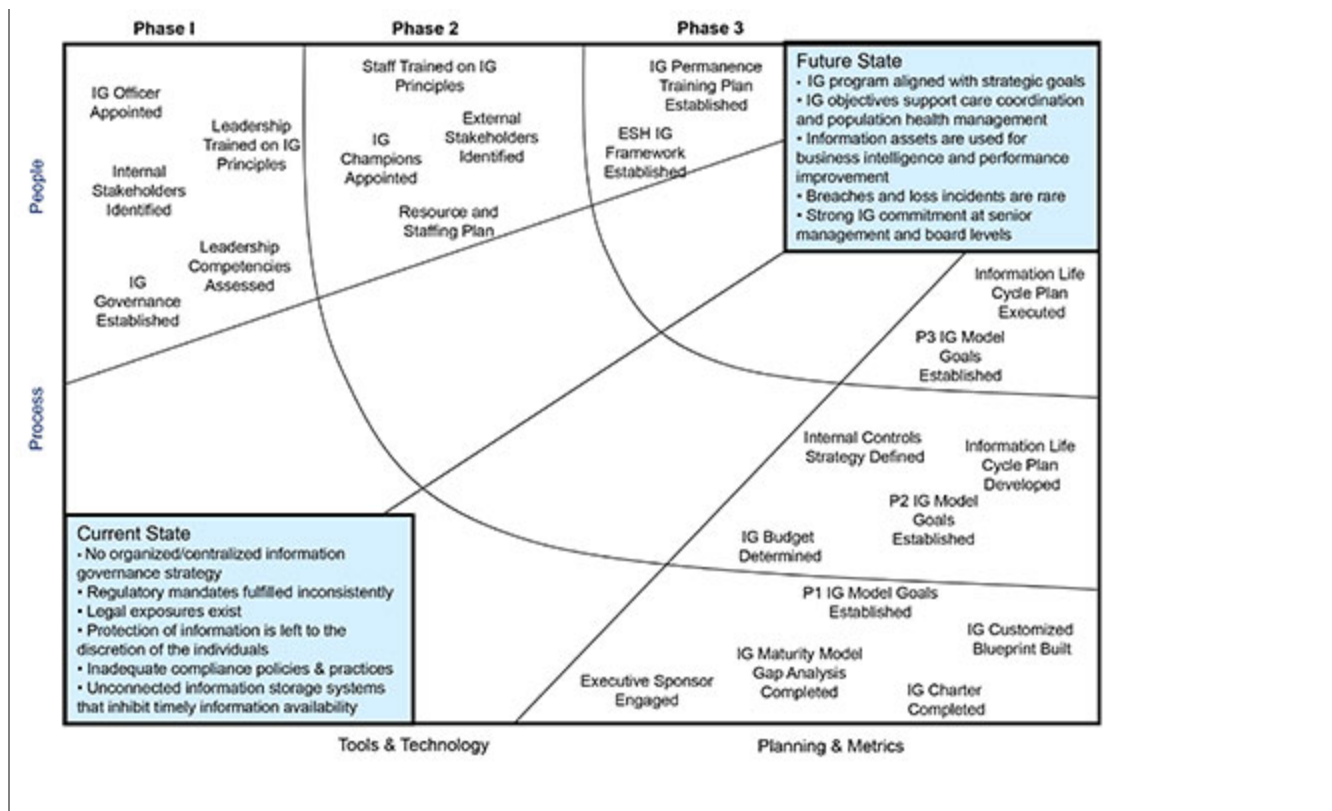
With the current and future states documented, the plan to move from the former to the latter can be developed. The model in Figure 1 uses a two-dimensional pattern to plot milestones, achievements, and deliverables on the journey from current state to future state. The first dimension is progression, represented on the sample IG blueprint by three phases in the form of arcs. Broad timelines are generally assigned to the phases, and phase titles can be added as well. For instance, phase one might be captioned “discovery” or “situation analysis,” phase two “implementation” or “program development,” and phase three “optimization.”

It's important to note that the blueprint does not take the place of a project plan or more detailed timeline. Those tools are still necessary to guide and inform task execution. The blueprint enables leadership and participants to conceptually visualize the program and agree upon achievements rather than tasks.

The second dimension on the model blueprint is the inputs to the program that together solve the business problem. These can be seen on the model blueprint on page 53 as the sun rays moving from bottom left to top right. Typically these inputs are comprised of people, processes, technology, and planning. The people, planning, and metrics inputs are built out on the sample IG blueprint in Figure 1.

Program accomplishments that demonstrate milestones in the development and rollout of an IG program are assigned to the three phases. As time progresses, these milestones, achievements, and deliverables are color coded to depict status.

### Figure 1: Information Governance Blueprint



## Using the Blueprint to Ensure Success

The blueprint is both a plan and a living document that can be used throughout the life of the program to inform stakeholders and executive sponsors of status, reinforce the vision, prevent scope creep, and even budget resources and infrastructure expenditures. It should be updated regularly and presented to stakeholders at least quarterly. The blueprint is also a useful tool for articulating the purpose of the IG program and providing a visual “elevator speech” to engage leadership and staff.

Information governance programs are complex and involve many stakeholders. Developing a blueprint allows an organization to have an agreed-upon plan on a single sheet of paper, ensuring alignment and accountability and, eventually, program success.

## Note

1. Kloss, Linda. *Implementing Health Information Governance: Lessons from the Field*. Chicago: AHIMA Press, 2015.

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