IG Case Study: Utah Health Information Network's Information Asset Inventory

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Many healthcare organizations that implement an information governance (IG) program have difficulties deciding which projects to prioritize first. Often, organizations will target the "low hanging fruit" projects, such as establishing an IG committee or advisory group or the projects that will show a clear return on investment, such as developing a record retention schedule and minimizing record storage space and costs. However, other IG projects can demonstrate multiple benefits to an organization.

Creating an information asset inventory is one of these projects. An information asset inventory is a useful way to identify and categorize the various systems, including databases, within each business unit in an organization. For example, there is a human resources database, a clinical database, a metadata tracking system, and a number of analytics databases. These are just a few examples of what could potentially be hundreds of systems within an organization. Simply identifying the various systems is the first step.

Once all of the systems have been identified and organized into one location (i.e., an Excel database or other program) organizations can add information about the individual systems. Data elements should include at a minimum:

- Operating/functional business unit
- System name
- System or process owner
- Data steward
- Name of asset
- Description of asset
- Media source of asset (paper, electronic, cloud)
- Classification
- Integrity
- Availability
- Security of asset
- Retention period

It can be difficult to track information with ease when navigating the hundreds of systems within an organization. But an information asset inventory will allow this vast amount of information to be organized into one location. An organized list of systems will result in more informed decision making and more productive use of staff time. As questions arise regarding any database or system, staff can access the information asset inventory to determine the owner, the type of information housed, and other key attributes.

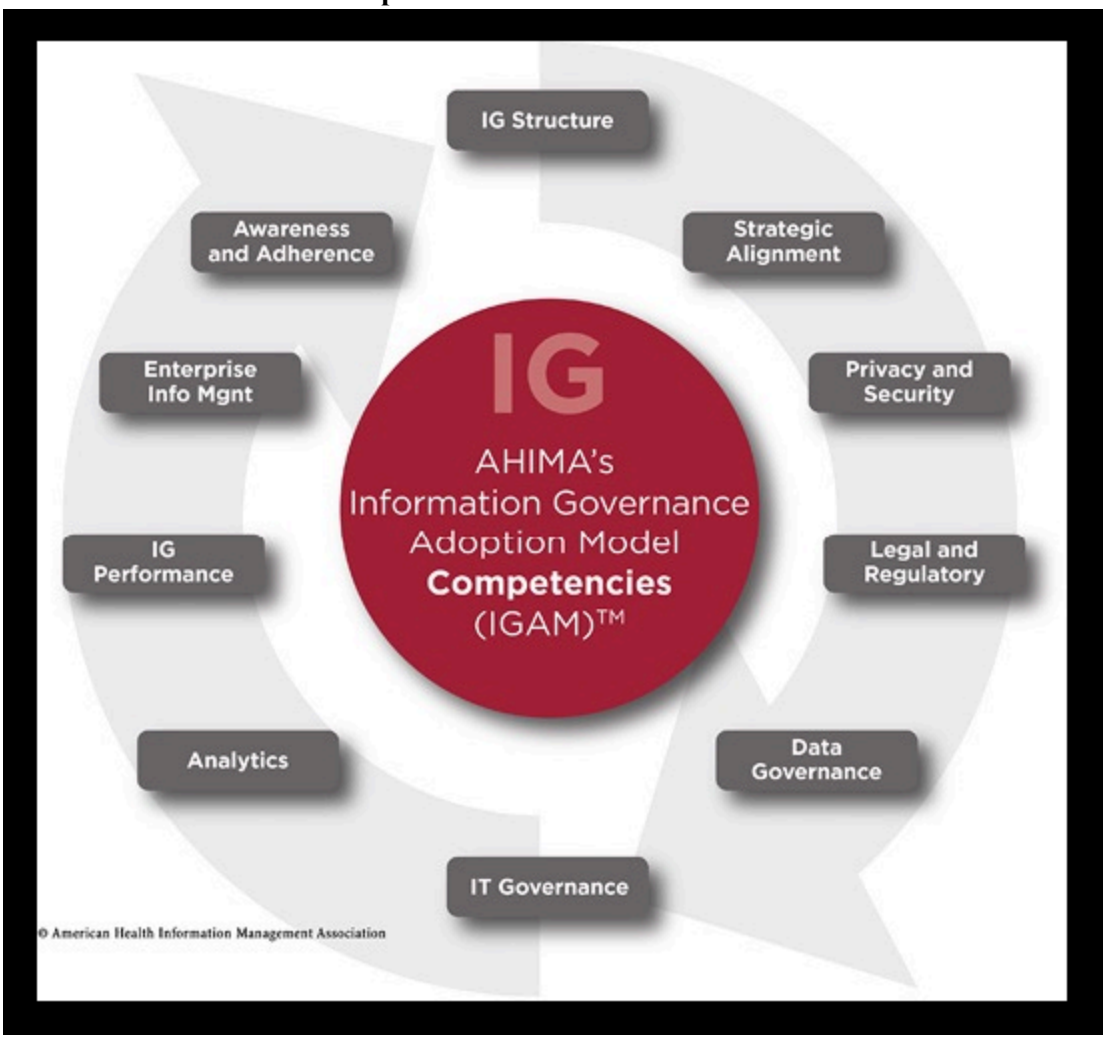
This case study reviews the challenges and benefits of creating an information asset inventory at the Utah Health Information Network (UHIN). This initiative falls under the enterprise information management competency of the Information Governance Adoption Model (IGAM™), as it classifies the information systems across the entire organization.

UHIN Profile

UHIN is a nonprofit coalition of healthcare providers, insurers, state government, and other stakeholders whose goal is to positively impact healthcare through reduced costs, improved quality, and better results by fostering data-driven decisions. UHIN is both a clearinghouse and a health information exchange (HIE). They electronically exchange medical, hospital, and dental claims and reports, and operate the cHIE, Utah's state-designated HIE. The cHIE facilitates secure and

timely exchange of clinical records, as well as informatics, using community-wide data. Electronic exchange is a secure, efficient, and cost-effective way to get information where and when it's needed. UHIN currently serves nearly all the hospitals, ambulatory surgery centers, national laboratories, insurers, and approximately 90 percent of the medical providers in Utah, as well as the Utah state government.

Information Governance Adoption Model



The Challenge

Prior to working with AHIMA's IG Advisors® consultants, UHIN had an existing governance program, but it wasn't formalized. There were individuals performing some information governance functions, but specific and ongoing roles through an information governance committee had not been identified. For the pilot competency in IGAM the organization's IG team—in conjunction with senior leadership—chose to focus on Enterprise Information Management, an IGAM competency. Specifically, the projects they focused on were:

- Retention and disposition management
- Up-to-date information asset inventory
- Enterprise storage management protocols

The information lifecycle management competency was chosen because it aligned with current operational focus areas where the organization already had good momentum. An information asset inventory was the first step to enable reliable risk and lifecycle management.

Approach and Implementation

Under the leadership of a core team, UHIN:

- Chose development of an information asset inventory for its first information governance project; the team agreed the most progress could be made on an asset inventory in a short period of time
- Identified more than 100 systems and system details to include in the inventory
- Planned to utilize the asset inventory in the future to guide work on retention/disposition and numerous other projects

Resulting Value/Benefits

UHIN's formal information governance program was new, and the organization didn't understand the total scope of an IG program—which made their work and guidance from IG*Advisors*® beneficial. UHIN identified the following benefits of the experience working as an IG pilot site and their lessons learned:

- Helped the organization identify their current state, a desirable future state, and the required steps they needed to take to get there.
- Completion of the *IGHealthRate*™ Maturity Assessment provided excellent feedback; the baseline comparison to other *IGHealthRate* users put the strengths and weaknesses of UHIN's IG in perspective. Although UHIN thought some areas would be higher or lower than average, results followed the baseline across the board.
- UHIN learned that creating a comprehensive information asset inventory was a major, time-consuming undertaking.
- UHIN realized when the inventory is completed it will support work on numerous information governance projects and provide a disciplined approach to managing all the organization's data, information, and systems.

Inventory Brought Significant Benefits

Although the information asset inventory was time consuming, significant benefits were noted. By organizing all of the information assets in UHIN's possession, the organization was able to compare the systems and determine next steps, answering questions like: Who are the data owners? Is the asset secured, yet available, to those with access? Are these records compliant with record retention periods or is the creation of a record retention schedule the next IG project to tackle?

Regardless of the answers to these questions, UHIN was able to identify their gaps and weaknesses within the various information systems and identify the next IG projects to begin. UHIN is now well on their way down the road to governance.

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