

# Information Governance Road Map: Mile Marker 2— Updates from the Journey

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By Ann Meehan, RHIA

*Editor's Note: This article is the fifth in a series that provides a road map for implementing an information governance (IG) program in any organization. Each month a set of concepts will be discussed that tie to the IG Road Map Infographic developed by AHIMA. Any organization can take these implementation concepts and travel along the Road to Governance.*

An important part of trip planning is plotting your journey. The Information Governance Road Map was developed by AHIMA to assist organizations in doing just that. Whether speeding along the road to IG or taking it at a leisurely pace, Mile Marker 3 is in sight! Before continuing on, take a look at the Information Governance Road Map and review each step to ensure that all guidance is being followed. Buckle up!

## Postcards from the Road

The next step on the road map (see at right) is “Conduct IG Workforce Training.” Think of it as sending postcards home to your family and friends. Likewise, it is important to make the organization’s workforce aware of the IG journey—what it is, why it’s important, and the specific role that the workforce plays in ensuring trustworthy information.

Organizations that are well on the way to a mature IG program have incorporated IG training into orientation programs for new staff. The training may include a high-level overview of what IG is, the role of the IG oversight committee structure, and how the IG program is aligned with the organization’s strategy, mission, and values. Likewise, it is important to include training on IG as part of annual compliance training. The IG program is critical to ensuring compliance with the many regulations that impact healthcare organizations through the integrity of its information.

Many organizations have begun to take IG education a step further by developing in-person or web-based training that is specific to the role of each individual. For example, the training that would be provided to dietary staff would be very different from the training provided to nursing or business office staff. There are many different categories of training based on whether the workforce is clinical, non-clinical, or technical. Just as important is the need to build IG competencies into workforce job descriptions as expectations of specific roles. Annual and ongoing training will support these competencies and ensure that staff is knowledgeable of their role in ongoing information governance efforts.

A fun way to educate staff at all levels is to include quick messages via e-mails and memos, or flyers and table tents. E-mails and memos can be periodically distributed across the organization or to specific groups, while flyers and table tents can be strategically placed in dining rooms, cafeterias, well-traveled hallways, and conference rooms.

Children’s Medical Center of Dallas, one of AHIMA’s IG Pilot Organizations, approached workforce training by using case studies unique to the individual’s discipline.

“The training department wove the information into new employee on-boarding and annual training. Additional awareness was shared system-wide during Health Information Professionals week with information governance posters placed in prominent locations throughout the organization,” says Katherine Lusk, MHSM, RHIA, chief health information management and exchange officer, and Michelle Hermann, MS, RHIA, HIM operations manager at Children’s Medical Center of Dallas in a joint e-mail.

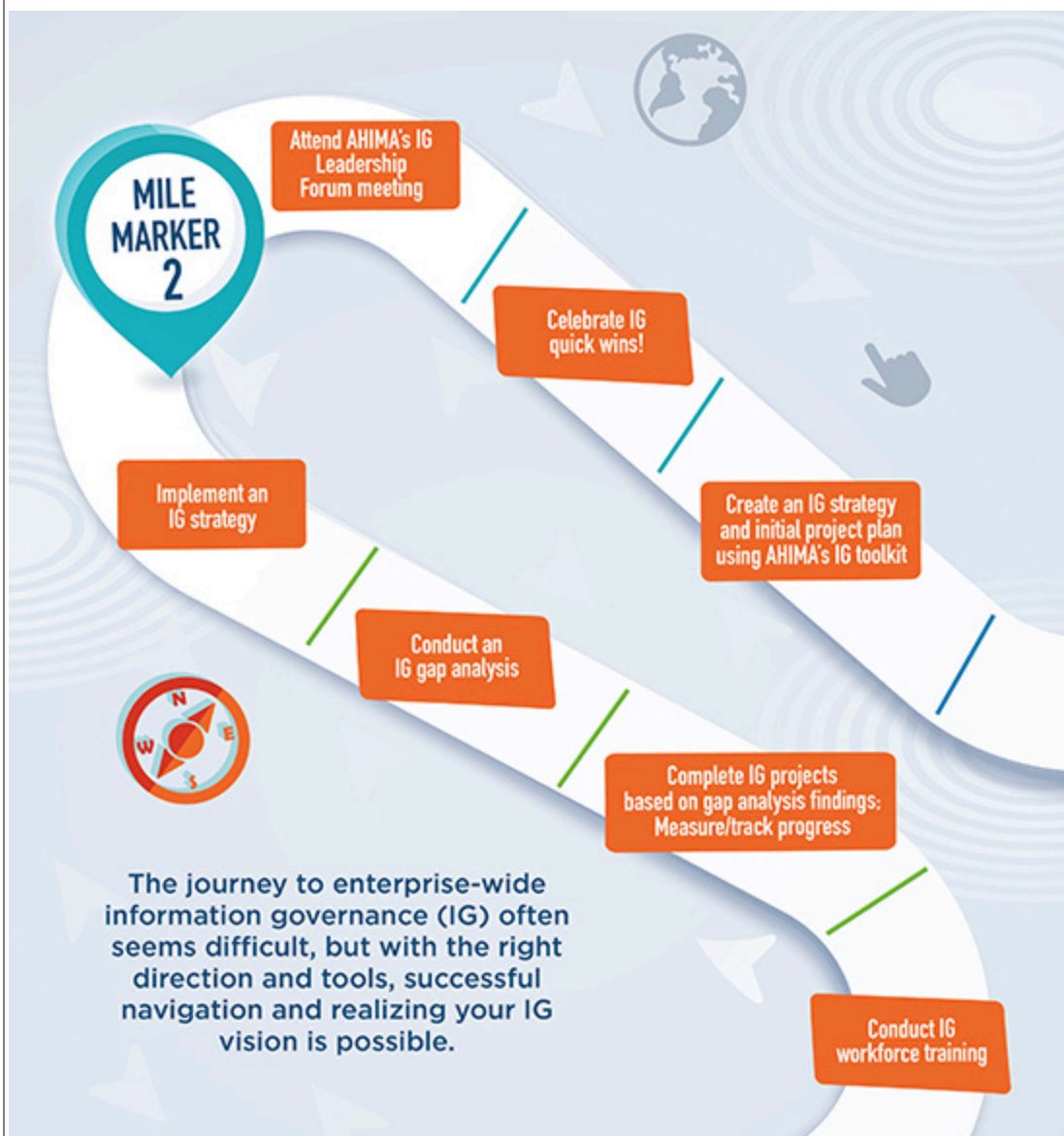
As part of their training, Lusk and Hermann provided the following examples of how IG impacts care delivery to staff members:

- Medication dosing is based on weight in pediatrics. If weight is entered inaccurately, a patient may be harmed.
- Complete information is important. An incomplete family history can slow down diagnosing the patient.
- Accurate information is important. Inaccurate family history may lead to diagnostic tests not applicable to the patient.
- Concise, factual information is important. Clutter in the record delays clinical communication.

Lusk and Hermann realized it was important for the staff to be able to relate to the value of IG, to ensure success and to hear the message in more than one venue. This has worked well at their organization, allowing the IG initiative to move forward and garner support from the executive team to the front-line staff members.

Continue to send those postcards to the workforce so staff understands the IG journey and their role. Take the time to gain feedback on their understanding and adjust the communication and education strategy appropriately.

## Information Governance Road Map



## Prepare a Travel Budget

Most travelers should prepare a travel budget well in advance of taking a trip. The traveler needs to determine how much can be spent and how dollars are distributed across transportation, lodging, food, entertainment, and incidentals, as well as any

unexpected emergency needs.

Here's where an IG program may differ between facilities. Often, the IG program needs to get started and be well underway before an organization can consider a budget. The IG program should first be formalized with a charter, an executive sponsor, and a project plan with a gap analysis and celebration of wins. Once an organization has a track record of success with their IG program and efforts, discussions can begin relative to a future budget. It's never too early to put forth a solid budget recommendation, whether it's for a full fledged IG department or for other key IG components.

Budget considerations for an IG department should include the chief information governance officer (CIGO) role or other executive leadership time, as well as any support staff salaries and benefits. Additionally, include all other budgeted items, such as office space and office supplies. Working with IT and other business units, determine if any system remediation solutions, tracking/auditing tools, and certification expenses should be budgeted. Consider whether the time to develop organization-wide policies and procedures should be budgeted. Whether specific budgeted items fall into an IG department or to other areas, dollars should be earmarked for IG activities.

Another important part of the budget process is to develop a strong value proposition statement that clearly articulates the goal of the IG program to include what current state is, an overview of the IG program, and how it will address and improve upon the current state. Additionally, it is important to document both the tangible and intangible values, or return on investment, surrounding the IG program. These values can help to offset any costs associated with IG work.

Tangible values include those that can be seen, measured, and have a defined value. The most common are processes and solutions put into place to address duplicate medical record numbers (also known as patient identity), record retention and disposition solutions, and the cost of breaches. However, think outside the clinical box. Think in terms of IG program standardization efforts that will positively impact charge capture, denials management, and regulatory audit processes. Figure out how an organization can tie in processes and standardization addressing vendor partners, human resource information, and other non-clinical areas of information.

Likewise, intangible values should be considered and documented. Intangible values are those that are hard to quantify in terms of dollars. However, intangible resources may actually be just as much or more valuable than tangible ones. For example, an intangible value is one that is associated with the reputation of the organization. If the organization receives negative publicity in the news for a poor outcome, audit findings, or privacy breach, that organization is subject to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars as patients may lose trust and look for another healthcare organization. Likewise, competitive advantage is an intangible asset that is quite valuable to healthcare organizations as information transparency is at a fever pitch through the efforts of The Leapfrog Group and others. Being able to say that the organization is one of the top 100 best, or that it has been accredited by the Joint Commission or DNV is a stamp of approval that gives patients comfort in their quality of care. The assurance of trustworthy information in support of the requirements of these organizations is a value add for which a price tag is difficult to measure.

## No Looking Back!

As Mile Marker 3 is approached, the journey will continue next month with a discussion on analyzing the IG program through measures and benchmarks. The road to governance continues along the path toward a fully realized, mature IG program. Keep moving forward toward this goal!

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