

New Focus on State-level HIEs

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Research from AHIMA's Foundation of Research and Education brings state-level health information exchange initiatives into the spotlight, detailing their key roles, identifying successful practices, and sharing lessons from their work to date.

The project surveyed nine state-level initiatives to determine successful governance, legal, financial, and operational characteristics models. The findings include principles and tools that can assist state-level HIE initiatives, as well as recommendations for future work to advance nationwide efforts, especially related to the role of statewide projects.

Researchers interviewed leaders of initiatives in California, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Utah. They then developed consensus on a set of principles and materials that can assist both new and existing efforts. These findings were developed into a workbook made available for public comment and used as the basis for a public consensus meeting.

Researchers also worked with the National Conference of State Legislatures to capture perspectives on state policy making, a greater understanding of the state health system and financing reform environment, and politics and policies at the state level.

Case Studies, Principles, and Worksheets

Because state-level HIEs differ significantly in their origins, market characteristics, and approaches, the study does not recommend specific practices. Instead, it offers principles, checklists, and worksheets that allow initiatives to fit their practices to opportunities and conditions in their states. The report includes summaries of the nine initiatives, which serve as case studies.

Findings revealed a number of barriers shared by even the most experienced state-level HIEs. Major issues include:

- Securing funding for start-up, organization building, and sustaining organizations over time
- Lack of consensus on the most effective role for state government in HIE and the silos within state governments
- Minimal participation and support from private payers
- Nonaligned stakeholder interests
- Lack of shared experience with start-up projects that produce results
- Lack of a road map for how state-level HIE relates to federal NHIN programs or how contiguous states should relate to one another regarding HIE
- Informal or insufficient mechanisms for knowledge sharing among state-level organizations

The research was conducted under contract to the Office of the National Coordinator of Health Information Technology and released in September at a meeting of the American Health Information Community. The report and workbook are publicly available at www.staterhio.org.

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