

## **Health IT Strategic Framework:**

- Guiding Principles
- Strategic Themes, Objectives, Strategies

**Office of the National Coordinator for  
Health Information Technology**

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Version 14

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**I. BACKGROUND & CHARGE**

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**A. HITECH Act Direction and Authorization**

On February 17, 2009, the President signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). This statute includes the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act of 2009 (the HITECH Act) that sets forth a plan for advancing the meaningful use of health information technology (HIT) to improve quality of care and establish a foundation for health care reform.

The HITECH Act requires the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC), in consultation with other appropriate Federal agencies, to update the Federal Health IT Strategic Plan published in June 2008. The 2008 Strategic Plan focused on the 2008 – 2012 timeframe and was intended “to guide the nationwide implementation of interoperable health information technology in both the public and private health care sectors that will reduce medical errors, improve quality, and produce greater value for health care expenditures.”

The statute states that the update to the Health IT Strategic Plan shall include specific objectives, milestones, and metrics with respect to the following:

1. The electronic exchange and use of health information and the enterprise integration of such information.
2. The utilization of an electronic health record for each person in the United States by 2014.
3. The incorporation of privacy and security protections for electronic exchange of an individual’s individually identifiable health information.
4. Ensuring security methods to ensure appropriate authorization and electronic authentication of health information and specifying technologies or methodologies for rendering health information unusable, unreadable, or indecipherable.
5. Specifying a framework for coordination and flow of recommendations and policies under this subtitle among the Secretary, the National Coordinator, the HIT Policy Committee, the HIT Standards Committee, and other health information exchanges and other relevant entities.
6. Methods to foster the public understanding of health information technology.
7. Strategies to enhance the use of health information technology in improving the quality of health care, reducing medical errors, reducing health disparities, improving public health, increasing prevention and coordination with community resources, and improving the continuity of care among health care settings.
8. Specific plans for ensuring that populations with unique needs, such as children, are appropriately addressed in the technology design, as appropriate, which may include technology that automates enrollment and retention for eligible individuals.

The ARRA included commitment of significant federal funding to provide incentives for nationwide adoption of certified electronic health records (EHRs) as well as investment in infrastructure to facilitate health information exchange. The ARRA also expanded authorities of ONC.

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Effective use of HIT is also essential to support health reform and improving health.

The Health IT Strategic Framework described here will establish guiding principles for HIT policy and technology and will become the foundation for the Update to the Federal Health IT Strategic Plan.

### **B. Prior efforts in strategic planning within ONC**

- The 2004 Strategic Framework
- The 2008 Strategic Plan  
[http://healthit.hhs.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_10731\\_848083\\_0\\_0\\_18/HITStrategicPlan508.pdf](http://healthit.hhs.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_10731_848083_0_0_18/HITStrategicPlan508.pdf)

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## **II. STRATEGIC PLANNING SCOPE and APPROACH**

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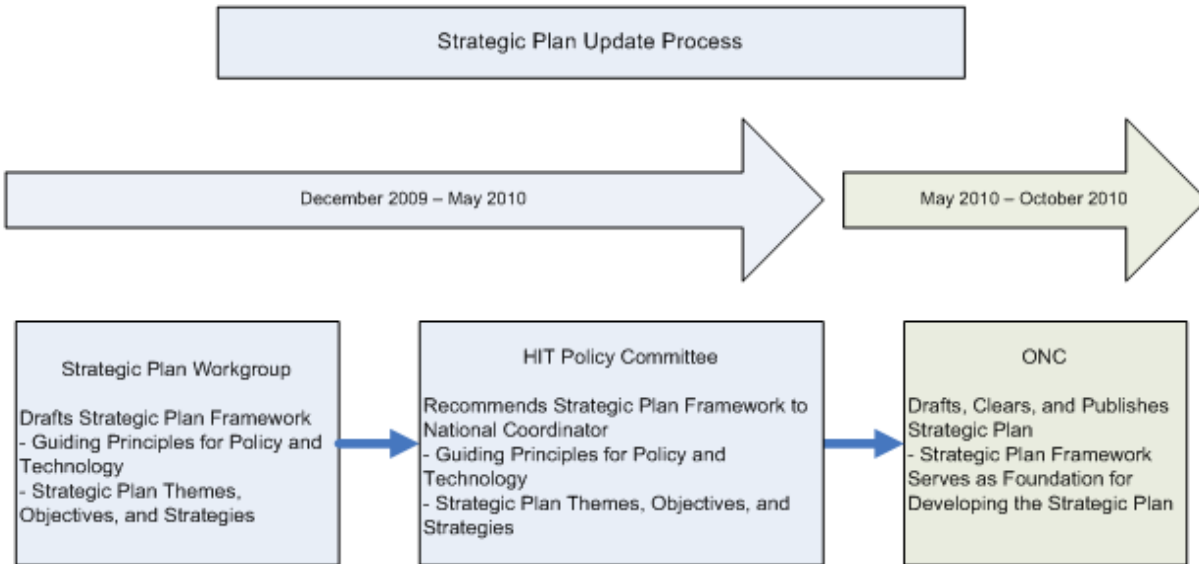
### **A. Strategic Planning Scope**

- The Federal Health IT Strategic Plan Update will encompass three levels:
  - The entire public/private HIT “enterprise”
  - The broad array of Federal HIT policies, regulations, systems, and activities
  - The specific mandate, authorities, and role of the ONC
- The Update will emphasize the implementation of legislative imperatives to achieve widespread adoption and meaningful use of HIT.
- The Health IT Strategic Plan Update will focus on 2011 through 2015 time period.
- It will also focus on laying the ground work for the period beyond 2015 to create a learning health system through the effective use of HIT.

### **B. The update process will include guidance from the HIT Policy Committee Strategic Plan Workgroup and Federal agencies.**

- ONC will lead the update process and update the Federal Health IT Strategic Plan.
- The HIT Policy Committee Strategic Plan Workgroup will be chartered to inform the Strategic Plan development and provide the vehicle through which private and public input and coordination will be achieved.
- An appropriate coordinating vehicle will be used to allow Federal agencies to participate in Strategic Plan update development.
- A Health IT Strategic Framework will be developed by the Workgroup, with input from other stakeholders, which will include recommendations regarding key themes, goals, principles and objectives, and outline options for inclusion in the Strategic Plan.
- This Health IT Strategic Framework will provide the foundation for the Federal Health IT Strategic Plan Update.
- A listening session will be held by the Strategic Plan Workgroup to engage key stakeholders in the Strategic Plan development process.
- ONC will develop the Federal Health IT Strategic Plan and obtain all necessary clearances for the Federal Health IT Strategic Plan.

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### III. VISION and GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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- A. Vision** – A learning health system that is patient-centered and uses information to continuously improve health and health care of individuals and the population.

This vision aligns with the six specific aims for improvement included in the Institute of Medicine's *Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* report that care be:

- Safe
- Effective
- Patient-centered
- Timely
- Efficient
- Equitable

To transform our current health care delivery system, a learning health system is needed, in which new insights and evidence are constantly produced, and value is constantly enhanced, by real-time learning from the clinical experience and seamless application of the lessons in the care process. Learning should extend to individuals, populations, including populations with special needs, and communities. As such, this vision builds upon a broader set of national priorities – including patient and family engagement, population health, safety, care coordination, palliative and end-of-life care, and overuse – established by the National Priorities Partnership (NPP) convened by the National Quality Forum.

HIT is an essential component for the success of health reform and the transformation of the current health care system. That said, there are many components necessary for this

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transformation to succeed. The meaningful use of HIT and the elements included in the Health IT Strategic Plan play an essential role in this larger effort.

### **B. Guiding Principles**

1. The planning process will be participatory with broad involvement across the health care sector with opportunities for public input and discussion.
2. The planning process will include priorities and initiatives that are achievable.
3. The Strategic Plan should focus on effective use of HIT to support health reform and improve health and health care.

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## **IV. STRATEGIC THEMES**

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Strategy for HIT can be characterized within four broad themes, each with a measurable goal with the specific objectives, strategies, milestones, and metrics that will constitute the Federal HIT Strategic Plan Update.

### **Theme 1: Meaningful Use of Health Information Technology**

- a. **Goal:** Improve health outcomes, patient engagement, care coordination, and efficiency of the health care system by promoting the adoption and meaningful use of health information technology.
- b. **Principles**
  1. Meaningful use objectives should focus on health outcomes that are aligned with national health priorities set by national consensus groups.
  2. To improve individual and population health, the decision makers (which includes patients and consumers) must have access to the right information at the right time, based on the need to know.
  3. Public- and private-sector efforts to improve health outcomes through enhanced availability and meaningful use of health information should be coordinated and harmonized to reduce the burden on providers and consumers.
  4. ONC should prioritize its use of resources to provide support to areas and providers that have the greatest need.
- c. **Objectives and Strategies**
  1. Enable all Americans to benefit from the capture and use of electronic health information by 2014.
    - o Encourage consumers to take an active role in managing their health through effective use of HIT.
  2. Achieve EHR adoption and meaningful use through effective use and coordination of public and private resources and programs, such as:
    - o Regional Extension Centers.
    - o HIT Workforce training, curriculum development and deployment.

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- HIT efforts of Federal partners (HRSA, IHS, VA, DOD, Commerce, USDA).
  - Initiatives with professional societies and associations as resources for outreach and continuing education.
  - Initiatives targeted specifically to providers not eligible for incentives to encourage adoption.
  - Promote development of products and tools to focus on “usability” for end users.
3. Through appropriate use of ARRA programs and resources and appropriate rulemaking, develop meaningful use criteria that align the HIT adoption programs with national health priorities set by national consensus groups.
  4. Demonstrate and measure the health outcomes and efficiency benefits of effective use of HIT.
  5. Improve public health through an emphasis on bidirectional EHR/public health communication to monitor and inform the quality of health and health care delivery.
  6. Coordinate HIT efforts and ensure efficient use of all federal resources (e.g., HHS, VA, DoD) to accomplish the goal.

### **Theme 2: Policy and Technical Infrastructure**

- a. **Goal:** Enable electronic health information exchange through the development and support of appropriate policies and technical specifications.
- b. **Principles**
  1. Policies and technical specifications required and/or promoted by the Federal government should, at a minimum, allow providers to achieve meaningful use of HIT.
  2. Federal resources and activities should be coordinated to enable maximum benefit and avoid conflicting requirements or incentives for providers and consumers.
  3. The Federal government should leverage the Web and market innovation to foster appropriate health information exchange.
  4. Effective health information exchange should enable all participants in the exchange to contribute toward improving health and health care.
  5. Policies and technical specifications should be kept as simple as possible and be designed for implementation by all participants.
  6. Policies and technical specifications should make possible and promote increased patient engagement and access.
- c. **Objectives and Strategies**
  1. Enable exchange by adopting standards and related implementation specifications and data definitions (vocabularies).
  2. To ensure HIT products are interoperable, establish certification criteria for the use of all adopted exchange standards.
  3. Increase market confidence in the interoperability of HIT products and solutions that support health and health care improvement.
    - Monitor compliance with exchange standards.
    - Establish a certification process to assist providers in selecting HIT products that can exchange health information with other certified products.

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- Promote the adoption and use of certified HIT products through the HIT Regional Extension Centers.
- 4. Increase the nationwide capability for health information exchange.
  - Support the delivery of health information exchange services through the State Health Information Exchanges, including the development of state-level directories and provision of technical services for exchange within and across states.
  - Provide Nationwide Health Information Network (NHIN) implementation specifications to support innovation in the marketplace by having publicly accessible specifications that innovative companies can build to and to support Federal agencies and partners in meeting the specific requirements of the NHIN architecture.
  - Leverage Federal efforts of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and other Federal agencies to increase broadband access for health care providers.
- 5. Build confidence and trust in health information exchange while making participation easier through governance and appropriate policies.
  - Establish NHIN governance to decrease the difficulty of health information exchange.
  - Ensure health information exchange among proprietary networks.
  - Coordinate health information exchange efforts to support and meet health reform goals.
  - Identify and effectively address policy challenges by using Federal levers to influence the market (e.g., electronic laboratory transactions).
  - Promote the value and benefits of HIT and health information exchange to providers, individuals, and other stakeholders.
  - Explore incentives and/or penalties to help increase business demand for exchange and encourage a plurality of exchange architectures that are cost effective and sustainable.

### **Theme 3: Privacy and Security**

- a. **Goal:** Build public trust and participation in HIT and electronic health information exchange by incorporating privacy and security solutions in every phase of its development, adoption, and use.
- b. **Principles**
  1. Solutions should enhance privacy and security while facilitating the appropriate access, use and exchange of health information to improve outcomes.
  2. Privacy and security solutions should build trust among all participants in health information exchange.
  3. Privacy and security protections should take into account where the data resides.
  4. Security of health information includes data integrity.
  5. Privacy and security solutions should be flexible to adapt to evolving technical capabilities over time.
  6. Privacy and security solutions should be consistent with the *Nationwide Privacy and Security Framework for Electronic Exchange of Individually Identifiable Health Information*.

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[http://healthit.hhs.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_10731\\_848088\\_0\\_0\\_18/NationwidePS\\_Framework-5.pdf](http://healthit.hhs.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_10731_848088_0_0_18/NationwidePS_Framework-5.pdf)

- Individual Access
- Correction
- Openness and Transparency
- Individual Choice
- Collection, Use, and Disclosure Limitation
- Data Quality and Integrity
- Safeguards
- Accountability

### ***c. Objectives and Strategies***

1. Identify and prioritize general privacy and security needs for all stakeholders.
  - Utilize Federal advisory committees and other mechanisms to obtain public input on privacy and security needs.
2. Develop, promote and enforce privacy and security laws and appropriate policies for all aspects of HIT and health information exchange.
  - Implement HIPAA modifications included in ARRA.
  - Implement breach notification requirements.
  - Create certification criteria to ensure that certified EHRs have the capability to meet all Federal privacy requirements, including audit trails.
  - Assess, identify and address gaps in existing privacy and security laws, including entities not covered by HIPAA.
  - Provide guidance and recommendations to states for enabling inter-state exchange of health information.
  - Include privacy and security objectives in the criteria for meaningful use under ARRA.
  - Develop specific guidance to health care stakeholders on the implementation of privacy and security policies within organizations defined in the *Nationwide Privacy and Security Framework for Electronic Exchange of Individually Identifiable Health Information*.
  - Develop policies regarding anti-discrimination.
  - Facilitate an environment of accountability through public education and effective and fair enforcement of current law.
3. Increase providers and individuals understanding of policies and practices to protect the privacy and security of health information.
  - Implement a national education campaign to enhance public transparency regarding uses of protected health information and the rights of individuals with respect to such uses.
  - Develop and promote the use of a “plain language” model personal health record fact sheet that will enable consumers to clearly understand and compare privacy policies across personal health records.
  - Develop and provide comprehensive guidance to providers on privacy and security policies and their implementation.
  - Provide annual guidance on the most effective and appropriate safeguards.

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### **Theme 4: Create a Learning Health System through Effective Use of HIT**

- a. **Goal:** Transform the current health care delivery system into a high performance, learning health system by leveraging information and technology.
- b. **Principles**
1. Improved integration between EHRs and other HIT systems should deliver better value than the value provided by each component.
  2. A transformed health system should better integrate health and health care and encourage continuous learning by individuals, providers and systems.
  3. HIT should empower individuals and foster an environment of increased responsibility.
  4. A common HIT infrastructure/architecture should be established to synergize efforts across various components of the health system.
- c. **Objectives and Strategies**
1. Create knowledge and tools for individuals and their caregivers that promote health awareness and support healthy behavioral changes.
    - Provide actionable health information in a manner that is easily understood by individuals and their caregivers.
  2. Leverage the experience and best practices of the provider community to enhance lifelong learning and its application to the care of individuals and populations.
    - Incorporate professional Maintenance of Certification (MOC) activities.
  3. Enable community systems that create dynamic partnerships to improve health by acknowledging and addressing the social determinants of health.
    - Schools, senior centers, caregivers, public health agencies and others.
  4. Develop a common architecture that enhances capacity to inform and integrate the various behavioral, service, training and research domains of health and health care.
  5. Improve population health by making information available through aligned Federal efforts to support activities such as comparative effectiveness research and drug safety monitoring.
  6. Promote HIT innovations that create value for providers, individuals, and the overall population.
    - Conduct research focused on achieving breakthrough advances to address well-documented problems that have impeded adoption of HIT and to accelerate progress towards achieving a high-performing, continuously-learning health system.