

Information Technology Capital Investment Program  
Project Status Report

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**To:** Information Technology Strategy and Investment Committee  
John Vittner, Office of Policy and Management

**From:** Sumit Sajnani

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**Agency:** Office of Health Strategy

**Project:** Health Information Exchange

**Project Manager:** Jessica Guite (jessica.guite@ct.gov)

**Reporting Period:** Project Inception through 12/31/2021

**Total Funds Requested:** \$7,559,960

**Total Funds Allotted to Agency:** \$3,227,281

**Accumulative Total Capital Fund Expenditures to Date:** \$3,227,281

**Brief Project Description/Summary:**

Updated January 2022

The Office of Health Strategy is working to establish a statewide health information exchange (HIE). The goals of the HIE (Health Information Alliance/Connie) have been established in consultation with the HIT Advisory Council and include 1) creating and managing the identity of patients and caregivers, 2) creating a trust framework that facilitates the exchange of health data, 3) enabling use cases that provide specific value to the health ecosystem and 4) enabling analytics to drive better health outcomes, lower costs, reductions in the burden of government and improved population health.

**Summary of Progress Achieved to Date:**

Updated January 2022

Following up on our last status update, significant progress has been made by the end of 2021. As previously noted, the state's HITO chairs HIA's multi-stakeholder board. Allan Hackney, the state's HITO, resigned from his position December 2020 and Mark Raymond, the state's CIO and HIA Board Member, subsequently served as Acting Board Chair. Connecticut's Health Information Technology Officer (HITO), Sumit Sajnani joined the OHS team in October 2021, and took over as the new permanent Board Chair at that time. During 2020 and 2021, the board met monthly with standing agenda items including Board Chair report, board committee reports, and operations reports.

OHS health IT initiatives by year's end include the following significant highlights:

(1) With gratitude for the staunch dedication of many believers in the value of health information exchange –and for the support of Governor Lamont and the General Assembly – Connecticut's HIE, Health Information Alliance, Inc.

(Connie), was officially opened for data exchange services on May 3, 2021, with the mission to enhance the health and well-being of state residents through the provision of health information technology services. As an update to our mid-year status report provided on 8/3/2021, the following project milestones have all been met and, at times, have exceeded expectations. Specifically, the HIA Board of Directors had set the following target goals for the organization for calendar year 2021: (1) 50% of hospitals, labs, and physicians connecting to Connie and sending clinical data, (2) the development and approval of a sustainability plan, (3) approval and implementation of three initial use cases and two additional use cases in the demonstration phase, (4) a fully populated board of directors, and (5) full staffing to plan. By the end of December 2021, Connie's Executive Director, Jenn Searls, announced that 273 organizations had officially signed Connie's participation agreement; this represents approximately 2.79M unique patients (76 percent of Connecticut's population).

(2) The Statewide Health Information Technology Plan (Health IT Plan) was developed in 2021. The HIE plays a central role in the plan. The plan was based on a rigorous, 16-month process to evaluate the current environment of health IT and HIE across 10 domains of healthcare sectors, as well as to identify the most critical data needs and gaps and potential opportunities for improving health and healthcare in Connecticut through information technology and exchange.

(3) Additionally, after an exhaustive process to identify and recruit the right individual to serve as Connecticut's Health Information Technology Officer (HITO), Sumit Sajnani joined the OHS team in October 2021. As previously noted, his strategic leadership encompasses administration of the statewide Health Information Exchange (HIE) and he serves as the current Chair of the Connie Board of Directors. In his role, he also covers administration of the All-Payer Claims Database program (APCD) and development of implementation plans for the recently completed Statewide Health Information Technology Plan. With guidance from Connecticut's Health Information Technology Advisory Council, our new HITO will continue to monitor myriad federal, state, and local policies and programs for health IT and HIE implications and for regulatory changes or policies needed in the year ahead to achieve success for all IT Capital Investments.

**Issues and Risks:**

Updated January 2022

At the start of 2021, work was supported through the HITECH Act which provides 90/10 federal funds. This program ended Sep 30, 2021.

Prior to the HITECH program funding ending, significant sustainability planning took place including work to transition to Medication Management Information Services (MMIS) funding effective 10/1/21. This is a new funding methodology that all the US states, as well as within CT that DSS, OHS, and Connie staff are navigating. Challenges exist due to the makeup of the Connecticut agencies involved in the HIE project. There is an increased amount of complexity because funds need to flow from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to the Department of Social Services (DSS) to OHS to Connie that requires more time to negotiate than might otherwise be the case.

On December 2, 2019, the DSS Commissioner and OHS Executive Director established the Department of Social Services (DSS) & Office of Health Strategy (OHS) Joint Steering Committee. The purpose of the Joint Steering Committee is to provide recommendations on conceptual and strategic matters, as well as to make decisions on tactical and operational matters as defined through the DSS-OHS Memorandum of Agreement. DSS and OHS agree that a successful collaboration recognizes both OHS' statutory charge for overseeing the statewide HIE and DSS' authority and fiduciary responsibility as the Single State Medicaid Agency for administering federal funding from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to support the HIE. The agreement describes the joint vision of OHS and DSS working together and sets forth its understanding of the steps and processes that will be used for the mutual benefit of both agencies, the HIE Entity, and other Connecticut stakeholders. Current collaborative activities include the development of CMS funding proposals for HIE implementation and operations. In addition, DSS and OHS are working together to obtain CMS certification of HIE functionalities as they become operational.

**Next Steps & Project Milestones:**

Updated January, 2022

In considering next steps for 2022, Connecticut submitted its initial Implementation Advance Planning Document (IAPD) to CMS to request funding for Design, Development, and Implementation (DDI) and related services to continue building out Connie. This was following a series of Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act APDs for HIE planning and design, development, and implementation (DDI) activities, dating back to 2011. HITECH funding supported strategic planning for health information exchange services the establishment of a governance structure, and most recently, the establishment of a state designated entity for health information exchange, Connie. Recent HITECH IAPDs included funding to establish the technical infrastructure of the HIE, to onboard providers to the HIE, and to begin developing use case services and additional supportive critical infrastructure or foundational components. A separate Operations APD will be submitted for a service that has operated since May of 2021, after the service receives outcomes-based certification from CMS.

Percentage driven, Pool driven, and SUPPORT Act milestones and success criteria are included in the OHS Connie contract and reflected in the OHS DSS MOA that ties the release of funds to specific deliverables as planned in the IAPDU. OHS continues to monitor Connie's progress with respect to achieving milestones and success criteria. Additional use cases are being developed, along with workgroups that will bring additional stakeholder engagement and insights in the evaluation of sustainability options. These groups will work collaboratively with Connie's Board of Directors and staff on the outputs for OHS and the HITAC. Continued exploration of investments in Connie's HIE services and upgrades to state data systems will enable more efficient care and more effective programs, which will save the state money, lower employer costs, and lead to a healthier, more productive population. [General Statute Sec. 17b-59e](#), which sets legislative mandates for hospitals and provider organizations to participate in Connecticut's health information exchange, is a powerful driver that will accelerate the value that a connected system of care can bring to a state or region.