

HIE development heats up in three states

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Activity in the health information exchange space is heating up, with three state HIEs launching or expanding.

The Nebraska Health Information Initiative (NeHII) recently completed a 90-day pilot and now looks to expand with the help of funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). In Washington State, a non-profit rural health network went live with its HIE. And the Detroit Medical Center agreed to partner with my1HIE, an exchange based in Bingham Farms, Mich. All three moves were announced July 7.

The Nebraska exchange, NeHII, links hospitals, laboratories, physicians, pharmacies and clinics, according to Axolotl, which provides NeHII's underlying technology. In a statement, Dr. Harris Frankel, a neurologist and president of the NeHII board of directors, said the exchange's rollout to rural communities "will be accelerated by stimulus dollars made available through ARRA and HITECH act."

The Western Washington Rural Health Care Collaborative, meanwhile, has launched a Web-based HIE that will initially provide electronic information sharing among three critical access hospitals and the Level I Trauma Center for Washington. Orion Health provides the HIE's infrastructure technology including messaging, clinical data repository, master patient index and tele-pharmacy capabilities, according to the company.

The HIE will expand to nine critical access hospitals. Funding stems from the Health Resources and Services Administration and a Washington State Department of Health's Office of Community and Rural Health grant award.

An Orion official stated that ARRA funding will spark HIE activity, but noted the importance of sustainable HIE practices.

"ARRA funding will certainly encourage additional activity among HIEs [and] RHIOs," noted Paul Viskovich, president, Orion Health North America and EMEA. "However, the real advancement has come in developing models that work in the U.S. healthcare industry." He cited Maine Health Infonet and Shared Health, a Tennessee-based HIE, as examples.

Orion Health has been involved in both projects.

Elsewhere, the Detroit Medical Center's agreement to affiliate with my1HIE gives its participating physicians access to the center's hospitals and physicians, according to the healthcare provider. The center includes eight hospitals and more than 3,000 physicians.