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AT&T Overview

AT&T has been providing voice solutions to the healthcare industry since the first doctor installed a telephone line 130+ years ago. Technology in more recent years has refocused the industry on data applications, and AT&T's goal has been to apply its long-standing network skills in voice—usage, transport, and security—to the data side of communications, including such vital areas as Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery.

AT&T's 2007 entry into the emerging healthcare data marketplace centered on the development and application of its Healthcare Community Online (HCO) product. AT&T has made a significant financial and technological investment to its HCO platform. That investment includes developing new applications and integrating leading HIT applications to accelerate the deployment, adoption and use of HIEs.

AT&T's HCO platform was developed to be “payer neutral and vendor agnostic” with full interoperability. AT&T does not require health information exchange members to “rip and replace” their current technology. Instead, HCO works with the end point applications that are in place today to send and receive clinical and administration data.

We selected this approach for several reasons. Based on our experience with HIE projects, the most successful HIE strategies are those that take the “vendor neutral” approach to the promotion of HIT. Since the participants in any HIE are at various levels of maturity in their development and technical capability, mandating a single application for a desired functionality would likely alienate participants with existing investments and could prove detrimental to the adoption of the HIE. Providing interoperability via AT&T's HCO gives the various stakeholders the flexibility necessary to allow “all initiatives to rise together.”

In short, AT&T Healthcare Community Online (HCO) enables secure exchange and sharing of patient health data across multiple health systems. It is a cloud-based health information exchange (HIE) and portal that integrates patient records/data from multiple sources into a single patient view, providing real-time access for physicians to patient information and eHealth applications.

HCO is just one example of AT&T's commitment to North Carolina. The company's 7,300 North Carolina-based employees have an annual payroll of nearly \$500 million and AT&T pays more than \$253 million in state and local taxes. In all, it equates to an economic impact of more than \$1 billion to the state. AT&T enjoys a long-term strategic relationship with the State and has significant business relationships with the majority of the North Carolina-based healthcare organizations.

Comments on NC RFC

The appropriate platform will help drive long term user adoption, required improvements in efficiency, quality of care for return on investment, and compliance with meaningful use.

The clinical functions that would be most helpful for the statewide HIE to support are the ones required to meet Stage 1 of Meaningful Use. This closely matches the clinical functions that you have listed in your value-added HIE services. AT&T has highlighted the following functions with examples of how HCO can address the needs:

- Lab Ordering: Depending upon a provider’s existing workflow and technical environment, HCO facilitates the lab ordering process through various mechanisms. Alternatives may include simplified access to a third-party ordering application using Single Sign-On and Patient Context integrations or manually creating an order through the HCO portal’s inbox.
- Eligibility checks. With integration to Medicaid, Medicare payers and eligibility clearinghouses, HCO can be a central point for HIE participants to verify coverage and review claims status.
- Summary Record (CCR/CCD). HCO can provide the exchange of both CCR and CCD formats, as well as providing a “virtual CCD” with our portal for a real-time aggregated view of patient information
- Quality Reporting. HCO offers a variety of comprehensive quality management tools that bring evidence-based guidelines to the point of care and support PQRI data submission.

AT&T congratulates the North Carolina Health Information Exchange for creating a thorough list of HIE services and division of core and value-added services. We believe the most important decision to be made in laying the foundation for success with HIE is selecting a proven, state of the art technology platform that can be leveraged to deliver the needed flexibility, scalability, and usability. Listed below are the services that AT&T believes will be most valuable to your HIE efforts.

- Core Services
 - Security Services / Identity Management and Authentication. The HCO Security services offer a framework of trust for the State of North Carolina and its users. This suite of identity life cycle management capabilities include advanced facilities such as user registration, permission management, federated provisioning, credentialing, and authentication that are unmatched in the industry.
 - Message/Record Routing/ Return Receipt.HCO Clinical Messaging is provider-to-provider messaging or secure messaging sent between two provider endpoints. It is a “push” of data. Upon receipt of a clinical message, HCO will translate the message into the appropriate format and route it to the recipient via fax, to an inbox accessible via the HCO portal, or directly to the provider’s EMR. This is a key concept of HCO’s Clinical Messaging service – it can meet providers where they are in terms of technology and not require them to replace technology they are currently using to utilize the HIE.
 - Patient Matching / Record Locator Service. These two components allow patient data to be requested or “pulled” from disparate data sources across a community, aggregated, and presented in a single consolidated view. HCO incorporates an industry-recognized Master Patient Index reconciliation service that matches records from disparate systems to provide a definitive mechanism for locating all records in the community for a specific patient. The MPI uses various probabilistic algorithms with a defined set of patient demographic information to match patients across the systems. While the MPI properly identifies the patient, HCO’s RLS locates and retrieves the associated records for presentation.
- Value Added Services
 - Lab Ordering / e-Prescribing. HCO can provide access to pre-integrated applications to allow a user to order labs and prescribe medication. For users that do not have online system capabilities, it can provide a quick path to use this technology and have it integrated with patient data already available via the HIE.

- Radiology and Lab Result Delivery. Using the HCO Clinical Messaging capability mentioned above, these results can be delivered in the format required by the participating provider. This capability leaves no provider behind in receiving this information.
- Quality Reporting. HCO provides the capability for quality reporting. The information will allow the provider to submit the appropriate information, as well as being proactive with their quality measures to improve patient outcomes. This will also be important as payers move to Pay for Performance and providers become part of Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs).

AT&T HCO is flexible in the way it requests and receives information. As for requesting information, AT&T leverages standards-based Master Patient Index (MPI) and Record Locator Services (RLS) to identify, locate, and retrieve associated patient records across the exchange. Requests can be made from within a provider's native EMR environment or from within the HCO portal. As for receiving information, there are three primary methods within HCO:

- HCO Portal. Provides a patient dashboard that displays the data retrieved using the RLS services mentioned above and any centralized data stored within the exchange. - Gives providers a view of patients that are being seen by their practice (with their Practice Management and EMR systems integrated into the HIE environment) including patient schedules and clinical tools, and patients that are in the state community to consolidate statewide information about a patient to assist in their care.
- HCO Clinical Messaging. Can be either to a portal based message inbox or directly to fax for paper-based providers.
- Direct integration into Providers EMR. Most of the hospitals and larger practices "live" in their EMR. HCO, with its pre-developed integrations into a majority of EMR systems, can deliver information directly to the EMR, and integrate the launching of the portal from their EMR.

North Carolina HIE has put together a comprehensive list of requirements for the project. As mentioned above, we believe the most important decision to be made in laying the foundation for success with HIE is selecting a proven, state of the art technology platform that can be leveraged to deliver the needed flexibility, scalability and usability. In addition, it is important to be able to provide information that is relevant to the providers since this will directly correlate to the sustainability of the HIE and ensure fuller utilization.

As for additions, North Carolina HIE should consider offering EMR applications as part of the value-added services to support the providers in NC that are behind the technology curve and need quick access to electronic systems to meet Meaningful Use. HCO supports Meaningful Use at various levels, including a completely integrated EHR-C solution (submitted for CCHIT certification), as well as streamlined access to numerous certified EHR-M solutions via the HCO AppCloud.

As for modifications, you may wish to consider the phases of your Core and Value-Added services in the context of Meaningful Use and supporting the new Accountable Care and Patient Centered Medical Home models. This could increase the usage of the exchange and foster excitement in the community to use the technology.