



The Sequoia Project's Public Health
Workgroup Charter
04/03/2023

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History:

The Emergency Preparedness Information Workgroup (EPIW) was officially chartered in 2020 in response to the pandemic and the emergency response taking place in the country at that time. Seizing the opportunity to support public health as it dealt with the many complex facets of the pandemic, The Sequoia Project brought together a diverse and experienced group of emergency preparedness and response experts to address the pandemic response and provide recommendations. The EPIW, importantly, was also stood up to provide a community of practice to those frontline individuals with real-life experience responding to the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Workgroup provided a mechanism for discussing innovations, lessons learned, challenges and other experiences related to emergency preparedness and response.

After an in-depth analysis of the emergency response ecosystem, the EPIW released its first deliverable in early 2022 – Pandemic Response Insights and Recommendations. This white paper synthesizes the Workgroup’s experience and unique insights into a set of recommendations pertaining to our emergency response to the pandemic. As these recommendations were documented, it became clear that a key theme emerged – access to data and the policies surrounding data and health IT interoperability proved to be challenging and at times, roadblocks. The Workgroup, at that point, began to consider a transition to a broader scope to facilitate and progress health IT interoperability in other areas within and across the public health sector, not just emergency response, and preparedness. The EPIW is expanding and will be called the Public Health Workgroup and will be housed with the Sequoia Project’s Interoperability Matters Cooperative.

Purpose

The Public Health Workgroup focuses on key topics, challenges and opportunities for states and other public health authorities impacting interoperability, information exchange and health IT modernization and digitization. We are specifically targeting Public Health departments, as well as other state, tribal, local, and territorial (STLT) entities with public health responsibilities. Key areas of focus may include policy and regulatory misalignment, programmatic challenges, modernization needs, data and/or data privacy, funding, resources (both human and financial), security, and communications. Given the prioritization of public health modernization, the Workgroup aims to collaborate with other public health organizations and workgroups throughout the country who might have a similar mission. Collaboration among these groups to elevate public health is essential. In that public health authorities are now “in the spotlight” given the influx of funding and efforts to modernize processes, it is essential to work within this timeframe so that funding and other resources are used as judiciously as possible.

This Workgroup has an acute focus on driving forward pragmatic recommendations and practical solutions that public health entities and stakeholders can use immediately as it relates to interoperability, data exchange and health IT modernization challenges. This Workgroup

serves as a community of practice for states and other entities to learn about public health innovations anchored in health IT modernization and interoperability throughout the country.

Finally, the Workgroup serves as a conduit to Sequoia for strategic recommendations that are solvable and relevant to the challenges public health is facing today.

The Workgroup composition includes, but may not be limited to, the existing members of the EPIW with the intention to expand membership to other state representation, Health Information Exchange Organizations, public health entities, federal, state, and local partners. This is a closed Workgroup with invitations for participation in the effort to specific individuals with the necessary public health expertise, whether in health IT, interoperability and data exchange or policy. While there are several ongoing efforts pertaining to public health happening throughout the industry, this Workgroup provides an intersection between health IT modernization, interoperability, and key public health stakeholders nationwide. Our intention is to hold at least two public meetings per year so that others who are not on the Workgroup may listen in and provide feedback.

Governance and Antitrust Compliance

The Public Health Workgroup operates under the authority and guidance of The Sequoia Project Board of Directors and the Interoperability Matters Leadership Council, considering input from the Interoperability Matters Advisory Forum. It actively seeks input from a wide range of stakeholders and subject matter experts. The Workgroup is organized and operates in a manner that is compliant with applicable antitrust laws.

Key Deliverables

The Public Health Workgroup seeks to prioritize opportunities and challenges where the members can utilize their public health backgrounds and expertise to bring about meaningful impact and practical recommendations that impact all public health authorities, whether a state agency or other public health authorities (states, territories, localities and tribal). Leveraging the *Pandemic Response Insights and Recommendations* white paper and other relevant resources, the group plans to prioritize and identify key areas of focus as it relates to the intersection of public health, health IT, and interoperability needs, and develop briefs to explain the issue and possible recommendations for the future. Areas of focus may include, but are not limited to, policy and regulatory challenges, modernization and funding needs, and data privacy. Other key concepts and items for consideration may be to improve disaster response and emergency preparedness utilizing technology best practices across states, HIEs and other key stakeholders. Finally, the Work Group will continue to cultivate and amplify a Community of Practice where public health innovations and lessons learned are discussed for broader knowledge sharing purposes.

As the EPIW completed its first deliverable, two key themes emerged for future work. Therefore, these are the Public Health Workgroup's primary deliverables:

1. **Create a Public Health Interoperability Policy Roadmap** – after collecting information across the nation regarding states' policy challenges related to interoperability, the Workgroup will create and deliver a policy roadmap that provides a path to interoperability. Just as data and IT modernization are needed in public health, policy modernization is also a key component.
2. **Develop a Public Health TEFCA Workflow Document** – to help public health stakeholders understand the benefits and value of participating in TEFCA. This document aims to focus on a specific public health application with TEFCA concepts inserted to demonstrate how interoperability might be achieved.

Life Cycle

This Workgroup's scope is expanding to include public health modernization challenges and opportunities and is an integral piece of Sequoia Project's Interoperability Matters Cooperative. Since public health has undoubtedly become a priority for the nation, it is necessary for the Workgroup to expand its thinking and reach beyond emergency preparedness and response, although this remains a key component of public health's responsibilities. This Workgroup meets monthly and is staffed by Sequoia.

Process and Timeframes

The Workgroup will share its work with the Interoperability Matters Leadership Council and Advisory Forum.

Phase 1: Administration and Prioritization

Because the Public Health Workgroup is being created from the EPIW, meeting schedules have already been determined. Additional members are being added to expand public health expertise, and the group is further organizing around the key deliverables. Each deliverable will have a project plan along with key milestones.

Phase 2: Conduct research with public health policy experts to determine policy constraints and challenges as it relates to health IT interoperability.

During this phase, the group will continue its outreach to public health policy experts to gather information around key policy constraints and challenges. This information will be synthesized into a summary document and the group will begin to make recommendations to mitigate policy challenges. To better conduct and organize the research needed to produce this deliverable, we plan to break the full workgroup into two groups, each led by one of the co-chairs. These subgroups will meet regularly providing updates to the larger Workgroup during

the monthly meetings. Sequoia staff will provide a template for the overarching Roadmap that will be drafted and shared with the full Workgroup.

Timeframe: Per the project plan, research is to be completed before October 2023.

Phase 3: Develop a Public Health Interoperability Policy Roadmap

During this phase, the Workgroup will develop recommendations to mitigate policy challenges that public health may be experiencing. These recommendations will be modeled in the form of a roadmap that provides a path to greater access to interoperable data.

Timeframe: December 2023

Phase 4: Develop a Public Health TEFCA Workflow Document

Timeframe: TBD

Phase 5: Cultivating a Community of Practice

The Public Health Workgroup aims to grow its community of practice so that members are comfortable providing feedback on various challenges within their own experiences and across the nation.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Operating Principles

The Workgroup, and its individual members, will abide by these principles throughout its work:

- All work must be open and transparent, with published meeting agendas, meeting notes, outcomes, a roster of all Workgroup members, and documentation of all decisions.
- Varying perspectives and needs must be accommodated and reflected in the deliverables.
- Prioritization decisions must be based on practical experience and the ability to maximize meaningful change
- Prioritization and scope decisions, once reached, must be honored; additional elements cannot be added to the project mid-stream without approval of the Interoperability Matters Leadership Council.
- All proceedings, recommendations, and deliverables must remain vendor, provider, and technology neutral.

Workgroup Composition and Responsibilities

The Workgroup currently consists of former EPIW members. We are adding members with

public health expertise in policy, health IT, emergency preparedness and response, data access, security, and privacy, etc. These members are experts who work in the field each day and have real life experience with the challenges public health is facing as it emerges from a pandemic. The Workgroup also includes federal partners.

Workgroup Leadership and Staffing

The Sequoia Project staff facilitate and organize the Workgroup. Workgroup Co-Chairs are appointed by the Interoperability Matters Leadership Council in consultation with The Sequoia Project Board. The Co-Chairs shall have the discretion to engage other stakeholders and subject matter experts as the Co-Chairs deem necessary. Workgroup Co-Chairs should have the requisite subject matter expertise, leadership, and facilitation skills to assure the work is conducted in an effective, open, and fair manner. The Co-Chairs may establish any necessary Workgroup subgroups. Such a subgroup will present its work to the full Workgroup for consideration as normal business as deemed necessary by the Workgroup Co-Chairs. Co-Chair duties include:

- Leading and facilitating Workgroup efforts, including the development and maintenance of Workgroup deliverables, and assigning subgroups, as necessary, to draft deliverables,
- Facilitate Workgroup meetings in a manner that assures that all Workgroup members are actively contributing to the Workgroup's efforts,
- Enabling balanced opportunities for all Workgroup members to contribute to the discussions and minimizing a few individuals from dominating the discussion,
- Serve as the public face of the Workgroup
- Conducting the work in a manner that is efficient, in accordance with the work plan, and
- Meet with Sequoia staff prior to each Workgroup meeting to prepare the agenda and discussion topics.

Staffing support will include:

- Program support staff to help develop agendas, schedule calls and support Workgroup communications and coordination.
- Subject Matter Expert(s) to support development and updates to the deliverables.

Responsibilities

In its role as a Workgroup for The Sequoia Project's Interoperability Matters Cooperative, the Workgroup members will fulfill the following responsibilities:

- Maintain personal involvement in Workgroup meetings and related activities,
- Respect the confidentiality of discussions held in the Workgroup,
- Publicly support the Workgroup activities
- Represent the necessary expertise to contribute to the development of the Workgroup deliverables and enlist feedback from the constituents represented, and
- Accept occasional assignment of tasks between Workgroup meetings.

Decision-Making and Relationship to Interoperability Matters and The Sequoia Project

The Workgroup will aim to reach consensus, where possible, and will capture differing views. Regardless of whether there is consensus, the Workgroup will assure diverse stakeholder views are heard. Areas of agreement will be identified, and divergent views captured. Where there is not consensus, the group will consider recommendations for further study to move towards consensus.