U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

HITECH Priority Grants Program:
Health IT Workforce Development Program
Facts-At-A-Glance

- Section 3016 of the HITECH Act authorizes the creation of a program to assist in the establishment and/or expansion of education programs designed to train a highly skilled workforce of health and information technology (IT) professionals to effectively put in place and use secure, interoperable electronic health record systems.

- Under that authority, the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) has announced the availability of $120 million in funding for the **Health IT Workforce Development Program**.

- The Health IT Workforce Development Program focuses on several key resources needed to rapidly expand the availability of skilled health IT professionals who will support broad adoption and use of health IT in the provider community. These resources include:

  o A community college training program to educate an expanded workforce of IT professionals;

  o Research-based curricula that institutions of higher education can use to construct core instructional programs;

  o A competency testing program to evaluate trainee knowledge and skills acquired through training programs; and

  o Additional university programs to support certificate and advanced degree training.

- Currently, only about 20 percent of physician office practices and 10 percent of hospitals have a minimally functional electronic health record (EHR) system. The anticipated growth in the use of EHR systems is expected to result in a dramatic increase in demand for health IT professionals.

- Estimates based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Department of Education, and independent studies indicate a shortfall over the next five years of approximately 51,000 qualified health IT workers required to meet the needs of hospitals and physicians as they move to adopt electronic health care systems.

- ONC has developed, in collaboration with the National Science Foundation, Department of Education, and the Department of Labor, the Health IT Workforce Development Program to assist in the training and assessment of qualified graduates who will reduce the estimated shortfall by 85 percent.

Community College Consortia to Educate Information Technology Specialists in Health Care

Please note: Oregon's community colleges have joined with colleges from other Western states to apply for this grant funding. Portland Community College has the lead position for Oregon.

- The Community College Consortia Program will provide approximately $70 million in assistance through cooperative agreements to approximately five institutions of higher education to rapidly create or expand health IT training programs at approximately 70 community colleges throughout the nation. [If awarded, Oregon's community college collaborative would receive approximately $1 million in grant funding.]

- Community Colleges funded under this initiative will establish intensive, non-degree training programs that can be completed in six months or less by individuals with appropriate prior education and/or experience.

- Trainees are expected to develop skills in the areas of information technology, health care, workflow of health care practices, redesign of health care practices, change strategies, and quality improvement techniques. The training will also prepare individuals to support IT in public health settings.

- It is expected that by the end of the two-year project period, the participating Community Colleges will have collectively established training programs with the capacity to train at least 10,500 students annually to be part of the health IT workforce. **[If awarded, Oregon's participating community colleges would be responsible to train/graduate 300 students in two years.]**

- Applications are due on January 22, 2010. Award decisions for the Community College Consortia Program are anticipated in March 2010 for a two-year project period.

Information Technology Professionals in Health Care: Curriculum Development Centers

Please note: OHSU is applying for this grant funding.

- The Curriculum Development Centers Program will provide approximately $10 million in assistance through cooperative agreements to approximately five non-profit institutions of higher education to develop curriculum and instructional materials to enhance workforce training programs primarily at the community college level.

- Materials will be prepared in collaboration with community colleges and aligned with a common set of nationally validated competencies to enable the rapid launch of standardized academic programs that meet the needs of the health care industry

- Materials developed under this program will be used by the members of the Community College Consortia Program as well as be available to institutions of higher education across the country.

- One of the awardees under this program will receive additional funding to serve as a National Training and Dissemination Center that will collect feedback from instructors and students, coordinate subsequent revisions of the curriculum materials, and manage version control of the revised materials.

- Applications are due on January 14, 2010. Award decisions for the Curriculum Development Centers Program are anticipated in March 2010 for a two-year project period.

Information Technology Professionals in Health Care: Competency Examination for Individuals Completing Non-Degree Training
Please note: OHSU is applying for this grant funding.

- The Competency Examination Program will provide approximately $6 million in assistance through a cooperative agreement to an institution of higher education to support the development and initial administration of a set of health IT competency examinations.

- This program will create an objective mechanism to assess basic competency for individuals trained through short-duration, non-degree health IT programs, and for members of the workforce with relevant experience or other types of training who are seeking to demonstrate their competency in one or more workforce roles.

- The competency examinations will be available at no charge to the first 10,000 examinees as part of the national Health IT Workforce Development Program.

- Applications are due on January 25, 2010. The award decision for the Competency Examination Program is anticipated in March 2010 for a two-year project period.

Information Technology Professionals in Health Care: Program of Assistance for University-Based Training
Please note: OHSU is applying for this grant funding.

- The University-Based Training Program will provide approximately $32 million in assistance through competitively awarded training grants to eight or more institutions of higher education to establish programs that will rapidly increase the availability of individuals qualified to serve in specific health IT professional roles requiring university-level training.

- Each educational program targeted for creation or expansion must address one or more of the six targeted roles below, and each institutional application must include programs that address at least three of these roles.

1. Clinical/Public Health Leader
2. Health Information Management and Exchange Specialist
3. Health Information Privacy and Security Specialist
4. Research and Development Scientist
5. Programmers and Software Engineer
6. Health IT Sub-specialist

- Educational programs developed under these grants are expected to generate additional graduates in vital highly specialized health IT roles, over the course of three years. The highly trained and specialized personnel developed through these programs will play an extremely important role in supporting meaningful use of health IT nationwide.

- Programs are expected to be completed in 12-months or less and lead to a university-issued certificate of advanced training (e.g., post-baccalaureate or graduate certificate) or a master's degree.

- Applications are due on January 25, 2010. Award decisions for the University-Based Training Program are anticipated in March 2010 for a 39-month period.