Health IT: Will IT Vendors Be Eligible for Membership in AHIC 2.0?

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The **September 5, 2007** American Health Information Community (AHIC) technical meeting had a more structured and informative agenda than its predecessor, which was held on **August 17, 2007**. The central theme revolved around the proposed public-private collaboration, also known as AHIC 2.0. AHIC 2.0 will be the successor of AHIC, the current health information technology (IT) federal advisory committee.

The primary speaker, Robert M. Kolodner, M.D., the National Health IT Coordinator, delved into the AHIC 2.0 vision, membership criteria, eligibility, board member selection, voting rights and the grant process. Attendees and internet-based viewers were presented with visual aids, such as models and diagrams to assist in comprehending the proposed organizational structure and strategic objectives. A sizable portion of the meeting was spent reviewing the various sectors of the health IT community, such as physicians, consumers, and employers, that will be represented via membership in the collaboration. Noticeably absent from the list of potential sectors was the IT vendor community.

During the question and answer period, an individual asked Kolodner the rationale behind the decision to exclude the vendor community. The response was that IT vendors were consciously left out due to their potential to benefit from the activities of AHIC 2.0. However, Kolodner noted that this issue may be reconsidered when the planning board meets to finalize plans and by-laws of AHIC 2.0. Kolodner went on to add that vendors may have the ability to participate on an individual basis as part of the consumer sector or possibly in the employer sector.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has allocated a $13 million dollar grant to fund AHIC 2.0 over the next two years and an award is expected in November. HHS representatives indicated that the agency is not seeking a technology vendor to lead the effort. The estimated timeline is broken down into two stages; stage one is a 4 month design and establishment period and stage two is the operational, self-sustaining period.

GovWin's Take:

Since the planning of AHIC 2.0 is still in the early stages there is a potential for the planning board to reverse the decision to exclude IT vendors. However, there is no guarantee that such a transaction will take place. In the meantime, invested vendors should continue to follow the AHIC 2.0 activities to determine where they might fit into the grand scheme, whether it is as consumers, employers or directly as vendors. IT vendors are at the forefront of the latest technologies, perform implementation tasks and experience system successes and failures firsthand; so their GovWin could be very valuable to AHIC 2.0.

AHIC will continue to accept public questions and comments until September 10, 2007; interested parties are encouraged to submit.