



FHIR-Integration Project Summary: Advancing Interoperability and Clinical-Community Linkages in Iowa

The [Iowa Community HUB \(Iowa HUB\)](#) is a nonprofit Community Care Hub established in 2020 to bridge healthcare and social services across Iowa. Supported by a braided funding model of grants and contracts, Iowa HUB partners with healthcare systems, state and local health departments, community-based organizations, academia, and associations to improve care coordination, connect individuals to essential resources, and strengthen chronic disease prevention and management statewide.

Through partnerships with over 600 healthcare providers and 300 organizations, Iowa HUB has built a statewide network that streamlines referrals, reduces administrative burden, and connects Iowans to evidence-based programs. Since 2021, the HUB has linked thousands of individuals to chronic disease prevention programs and continues to deliver tangible health supports such as fresh produce boxes to promote wellness and equity in access to care.

Building on this foundation, Iowa HUB partnered with [EMI Advisors LLC](#) through funding from the [USAgings Center of Excellence to Align Health and Social Care](#) to develop a [FHIR \(Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources\)](#)-based use case for arthritis referral management. The project's goal was to establish a scalable and replicable model for interoperability that can extend to other chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and fall risk. This initiative represents the first phase of Iowa HUB's broader interoperability strategy to improve information exchange and system integration across clinical and community settings.

Using a human-centered, co-design approach, the project team engaged stakeholders from across the state, including healthcare providers, community organizations, payers, academic institutions, and state agencies, to identify challenges, map existing referral pathways, and co-create a vision for connected, interoperable referral systems. Engagement activities included discovery interviews, materials review, and a design studio workshop attended by more than 30 representatives from 16 organizations.

The initiative produced key insights into workflow challenges, data and reporting limitations, and opportunities to improve interoperability across Iowa's referral ecosystem. The project identified a clear pathway to modernize Iowa HUB's infrastructure transitioning from manual, program-centric systems toward a modular, standards-based architecture that supports person-centered, bi-directional data exchange. This



transformation will enhance efficiency, strengthen statewide collaboration, and support Iowa HUB's long-term sustainability through alignment with value-based care and digital health initiatives.

The project concluded with a set of strategic recommendations to guide next steps:

1. Develop an interoperable, modular technology architecture grounded in national standards such as FHIR.
2. Pilot a targeted, digital referral workflow to operationalize FHIR infrastructure.
3. Align policy and program strategies with state and federal initiatives for sustainable funding.
4. Continue applying a human-centered design approach to reimagine workflows and reduce administrative burden.

With continued investment, Iowa HUB is well-positioned to lead Iowa's transition toward integrated, interoperable systems that connect healthcare and community supports advancing efficiency, equity, and health outcomes statewide.

If you're interested in learning more about this initiative—or in building a referral pathway to connect your patients with community programs and services across Iowa—please reach out to Trina Radske-Suchan at tsuchan@iacommunityhub.org. We'd love to explore how the HUB can support your efforts to improve health and well-being statewide.