What is the National Health Information Network (NHIN)?

**Question**
What is the National Health Information Network (NHIN)?

**Answer**
A National Health Information Network would link disparate health care information systems together to allow patients, physicians, hospitals, public health agencies and other authorized users across the nation to share clinical information in real-time under stringent security, privacy and other protections. The NHIN is described in greater detail in the Framework for Strategic Action: “The Decade of Health Information Technology: Delivering Consumer-centric and Information-rich Health Care” which is available at: [http://www.hhs.gov/onchit/framework/](http://www.hhs.gov/onchit/framework/).

Why is an RFI being used to seek public input on the National Health Information Network?

**Question**
Why did the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) choose a Request for Information (RFI) to seek public input on the National Health Information Network (NHIN)?

**Answer**
As the nation embarks on the widespread deployment of electronic health records (EHRs), a variety of challenges and barriers must be addressed. There are many perspectives that can be brought to bear on this important topic. Health information technology organizations, healthcare providers, industry associations and other stakeholders all have important insights that will help inform future deliberation. By issuing an RFI, ONCHIT can seek a wide range of feedback from the public at large that would otherwise be attainable in a public hearings or in a white paper.

How do I obtain a copy of the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI?

**Question**
How do I obtain a copy of the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI?

**Answer**
If you have Internet access, you can download a copy of the RFI from the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) website at [http://www.hhs.gov/healthit](http://www.hhs.gov/healthit) or from the Federal Register at [http://frwebgate3.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate.cgi?WAISdocID=53004226505+1+0+0&WAISSaction=retrieve](http://frwebgate3.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate.cgi?WAISdocID=53004226505+1+0+0&WAISSaction=retrieve). If you do not have Internet access, please call 877-474-3918 and request a copy of the NHIN RFI to be faxed to you.

What is a Request for Information (RFI)?

**Question**
What is an RFI?

**Answer**
RFI stands for Request for Information. The RFI issued from the Office of the
National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) on November 15, 2004 is titled “Development and Adoption of a National Health Information Network.”

How do I participate in the December 6 technical assistance conference call about the NHIN RFI?

Question
How do I participate in the December 6 technical assistance conference call about the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI?

Answer
Further details about the technical assistance conference call will be provided on the ONCHIT website at [http://www.hhs.gov/healthit](http://www.hhs.gov/healthit/) in the final week of November.

To be notified when the conference call phone number is available, please click on the 'Notify Me by E-mail if this Answer is Updated' button (below). Provide your email address and submit. When the phone number is available, an email will be sent to you linking you back to this answer.

By issuing an RFI, is the government planning to purchase services or solutions to build a NHIN?

Question
By issuing an RFI, is the government planning to purchase services or solutions to build a National Health Information Network?

Answer
No. The NHIN RFI is intended to inform policy discussions about possible methods by which widespread interoperability and health information exchange could be deployed and operated by the private sector on a sustainable basis.

Where does the NHIN RFI fit into the overall National Health Information Technology Strategy?

Question
Where does the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI fit into the overall National Health Information Technology Strategy?

Answer
On April 27, 2004 President Bush called for the widespread adoption of electronic health records (EHR) for most Americans within 10 years and established the position of National Health Information Technology Coordinator via an Executive Order. In response to the President's Executive Order, the National Coordinator prepared and released a Framework for Strategic Action that was presented at a Secretarial Summit on Health Information Technology on July 21, 2004. The Framework outlined an approach toward nationwide implementation of interoperable health information technology in both the public and private sectors. It included four goals, each with three corresponding strategies.

The NHIN RFI addresses the second goal in the Strategic Framework: Interconnecting Clinicians so that clinicians can exchange health information using advanced and secure electronic communication. It seeks public comment and input regarding how to achieve widespread interoperability of health information technologies and health information exchange through a NHIN.
How long should responses to the NHIN RFI be?

**Question**

How long should responses to the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI be?

**Answer**

The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) encourages responses that are thorough yet concise.

Who can respond to the NHIN RFI, just one person at a time, one organization or multiple organizations?

**Question**

Who can respond to the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI, just one person at a time, one organization or multiple organizations?

**Answer**

All respondents, from individuals to consortia, are invited to respond to the NHIN RFI. In the interest of having the most compelling, complete and thorough responses possible, the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) encourages interested parties to collaborate and submit unified responses to the NHIN RFI wherever possible.

What is the purpose of the NHIN Request for Information (RFI)?

**Question**

What is the purpose of the National Health Information Network (NHIN) Request for Information (RFI)?

**Answer**

The purpose of the RFI is to seek public comment about the means to achieve and sustain the widespread interoperability of health information technologies through a National Health Information Network (NHIN).

Will my response to the NHIN RFI be kept confidential?

**Question**

Will my response to the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI be kept confidential?

**Answer**

Portions of Health IT RFI responses may be used in future documents from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). If you plan to submit information that you do not wish to be made public, please designate the information or relevant sections of your response as "confidential." The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) will protect information designated as "confidential" to the fullest extent allowed by Federal law. However, there may be circumstances where Federal law may require ONCHIT or HHS to make your entire submission publicly available.

Do I need to answer every question in the NHIN RFI?
Question
Do I need to answer every question in the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI?

Answer
The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) encourages full responses wherever possible. However, you may respond to the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI in part.

If I don’t respond to the NHIN RFI, will this affect my ability to participate in future opportunities?

Question
If I don’t respond to the NHIN RFI, will this affect my ability to participate in future opportunities related to the National Health Information Network (NHIN)?

Answer
No, there is no preference given to organizations or individuals that respond to the RFI.

What happens after the NHIN RFI responses are processed?

Question
What are the next steps after the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) processes the responses to the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI?

Answer
The responses to the RFI are the first step in public discourse on how to achieve and sustain widespread interoperability of health information technologies and health information exchange through a National Health Information Network (NHIN). The responses to the RFI are the first diagnostic step to guide future decisions within the federal government regarding the NHIN.

What do you expect to learn from releasing the NHIN RFI?

Question
What does the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) expect to learn from releasing the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI?

Answer
By releasing this RFI, the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) expects to learn more about the barriers to interoperability, as well as possible solutions to achieve and sustain widespread interoperability of health information technologies and health information exchange.

For more details, the electronic version of the RFI is available on the ONCHIT website (http://www.hhs.gov/onchit) or from the Federal Register (http://frwebgate6.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate.cgi?WAISdocID=526968265773+1+0+0&WAISaction=retrieve). If you do not have Internet access, please call 877-474-3918 and ask for a copy to be faxed to you.
Whom do I contact with questions about the NHIN RFI?

**Question**
Whom do I contact with questions about the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI?

**Answer**
Please check the NHIN RFI FAQ list before contacting the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT). If you have a question that is not directly answered by the FAQ list, then please send an email to NHINRFI@hhs.gov.

ONCHIT also has a toll free number (877-474-3918) for assistance with RFI questions. Please leave a brief message, stating your callback phone number and the nature of your question. ONCHIT will respond to you as quickly as possible.

In addition, on December 6, 2004, ONCHIT will hold a technical assistance conference call to answer RFI questions. Further details about the technical assistance conference call will be provided on the ONCHIT website at [http://www.hhs.gov/healthit/](http://www.hhs.gov/healthit/) in the final week of November.

If you would like to suggest a new 'Frequently Asked Question' to be added to this category, please click on the Suggest a Question tab above and complete the form. Our staff will review the request and add the answer to the knowledge base if it would be helpful to everyone.

What will be done with the NHIN RFI responses?

**Question**
What will The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) do with the responses to the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI?

**Answer**
ONCHIT staff will review the responses to the Health IT RFI and use them to inform and guide decisions within the federal government regarding the National Health Information Network (NHIN).

What electronic format should the responses for the NHIN RFI be in?

**Question**
What format should the responses for the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI be in?

**Answer**
For ease of processing, your response should be a single electronic file, preferably in Microsoft Word. The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) can also accept WordPerfect and text files.

What is the deadline for sending a response to the NHIN RFI?

**Question**
What is the deadline for sending a response to the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI?
How do I submit my response to the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI?

**Question**

How do I submit my response to the National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI?

**Answer**

The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) prefers that National Health Information Network (NHIN) RFI responses be submitted electronically to the NHINRFI@hhs.gov email address. Please include **NHIN RFI Responses** in the subject line.

ONCHIT will accept mailed responses, the mailing address is:

**NHIN RFI Responses**

US Department of Health and Human Services

Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology

Hubert H. Humphrey Building,

Room 517D

200 Independence Avenue, S.W.

Washington, DC 20201


[http://www.healthlawyer.com](http://www.healthlawyer.com)

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