

I. PROJECT ABSTRACT

Project Title: The Alabama Regional Extension Center (ALREC)
Applicant Name: The University of South Alabama Center for Strategic Health Innovation
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The University of South Alabama's Center for Strategic Health Innovation (USA CSHI) has formed a consortium of partners including The Alabama Medicaid Agency, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Auburn University, and the Alabama Primary Healthcare Association, to apply to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Health Information Technology Extension Program: Regional Centers. This represents collaboration on an unprecedented scale of State agencies and universities in Alabama.

Providers seeking to meaningfully use EHRs face a variety of challenging tasks. Those tasks include assessing needs, selecting and negotiating with a system vendor or reseller, implementing project management, and instituting workflow changes to improve clinical performance and ultimately, outcomes. Past experience has shown that robust local technical assistance can result in effective implementation of EHRs and quality improvement throughout a defined geographic area.

If awarded, the consortium will serve as the Alabama Regional Extension Center (ALREC) to provide assistance, defined as education, outreach, and technical assistance, and to help providers select, successfully implement, and meaningfully use certified EHR technology to improve the quality and value of health care. The Regional Center will also help providers achieve, through appropriate available infrastructures, exchange of health information in compliance with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, and patient preferences.

The overarching goal for ALREC is to form an increasing statewide network of partners to serve as physician advocates in overcoming barriers to the adoption of EHR and meeting Meaningful Use criteria. The consortium will design an appropriate organizational structure to continue the activity at the end of the 4-year grant period. Action Plan: In Year-1 and Year-2 of the project, the partners will coordinate efforts to assist 1,500 targeted priority primary care providers in EHR adoption, use, and meeting Meaningful Use criteria. The application requires an aggressive 2-yr approach requiring the collective skill set, resources, and experience of the statewide partners. Each partner will provide training and onsite technical assistance in their proposed areas of the State, or for their proposed group or targeted physicians. Also, an Advisory Board is planned consisting of the original partners and the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), and the Medical Association of the State of Alabama (MASA). The Advisory Board will provide guidance and direction for the project, approve vendors, and design and approve a sustainability plan to continue the efforts of ALREC at project end.