Case Study: Technical Landscape Assessment for a CBO Consortium in Long Island, New York

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Abstract

This needs assessment case study is an example of work that we feel can serve as a prototype for what is now considered Social Determinants of Health Networks (SDHN). This term is derived from New York State's 1115 waiver where regional SDHNs would be created to form networks of Community Based Organizations (CBOs[1]) in support of cross-sector collaboration and addressing social determinants of health. Intrepid Ascent has supported multiple similar community needs assessments with a focus on technology and readiness to build Community Information Exchanges (CIEs), though this specific example bears the closest resemblance to what may be needed for SDHN planning both due to its focus on non-HIPPA covered entities and also its focus on a community in New York State. Needs assessments are a crucial step toward building a CIE as shared in a recent blog post here.

Background

Intrepid Ascent was engaged by a consortium of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in Long Island, New York (one of the nation's most inequitable communities from an income and social/health outcomes perspective) to articulate their network's vision of continued capacity building within their CBO network for the purposes of further engagement with hospital systems for value-based care. The consortium had an objective to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the services people use in their communities and the ability to coordinate across organizations in order to provide better, more person-centered care. The member CBOs in the consortium had a patchwork of data management and reporting systems that lacked interoperability, thus impeding efficient service planning, collaboration, and delivery. They also had limited technological infrastructure for data sharing, care coordination, reporting, and streamlining payment which are key to participation in emerging value-based payment systems. Thus, the CBO consortium was formed to engage health and human service agencies, community members, and other stakeholders to ensure equitable health and life outcomes for all Long Islanders.

Intrepid Ascent conducted a community needs assessment of the member CBOs to identify challenges, assess current technical capacities, level of readiness for a shared IT system, and recommend a framework for implementing improvements. The assessment explored opportunities for data sharing among CBOs and determined the level of readiness to exchange data across shared technology solutions based on the individual technological resources and capacity of network members. Level of

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[1] For the context of this work, CBOs are identified as non-HIPAA covered entities.

readiness took into account a number of factors to assess barriers to adopting a new data sharing system among network members.

Approach

In collaboration with the CBO consortium, Intrepid planned and implemented a step-wise approach in collecting and analyzing the information gathered as part of the assessment.

Figure 1 outlines the approach used for data collection.
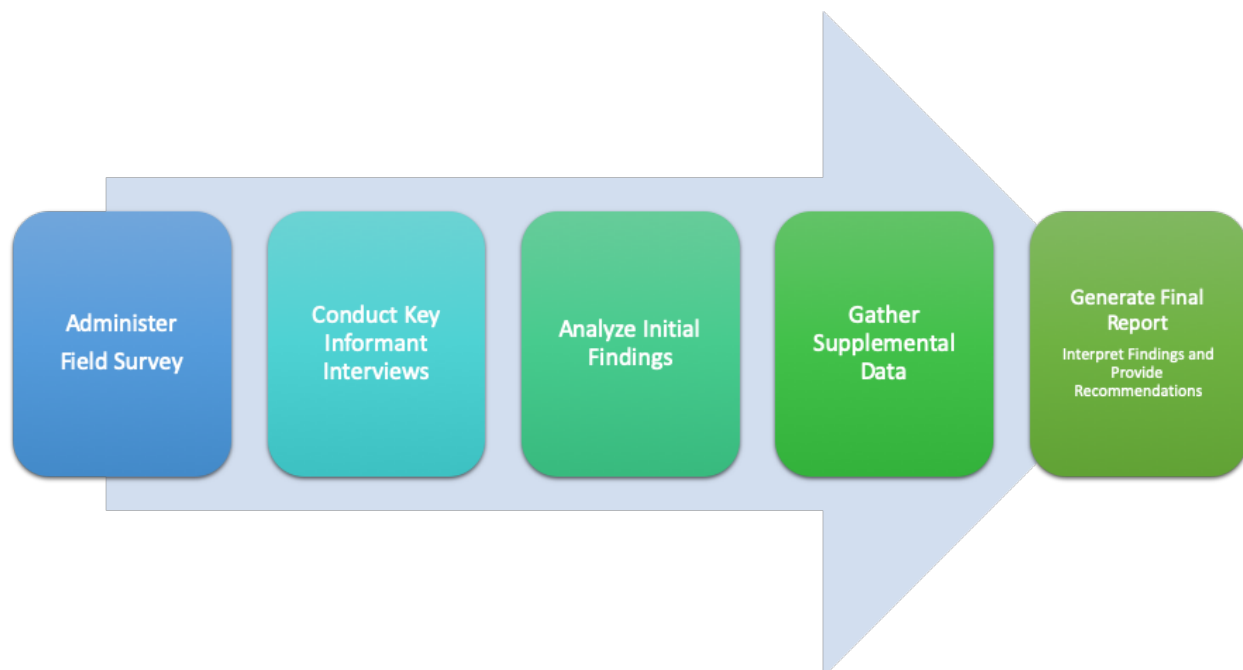
Due to the large size of the CBO cohort and the limited time for this engagement, Intrepid incorporated multiple touch-points with key consortium committee members throughout the assessment period. Data to inform this assessment was collected through the use of a survey and key informant interviews with a limited cohort of CBO participants. Initial findings were analyzed in order to determine the need for supplemental data in which other organizations and technology vendors were interviewed.

Outcome

The technology assessment developed by Intrepid was used to determine the overall approach for CIE in the community. This led to the procurement and implementation of a social service referral platform, NowPow (now Unite Us). The assessment measured CBO (and healthcare partner) desired functionality and overall readiness to participate in the CIE effort.

This included a description of the type of technology system they were looking for to support this work. Intrepid then worked with local CBOs to conduct an assessment of

CIE systems requirements by categorizing the needs of over 200 CBOs and healthcare partners to provide the community with technical requirements to inform an RFP (as well as associated strategic recommendations on how to use, manage, measure the outcomes of, and expand their CIE effort). As part of the assessment, Intrepid helped the community prioritize CBO participation in the initial implementation of a shared technology platform.

Figure 2 is a generic example of the output from that engagement and how a subset of CBOs were categorized based on their IT complexity and level of readiness to participate in a technology-driven CIE initiative. This also takes into account the number of challenges or barriers that would make it difficult for any particular organization to participate in such a technology solution. Organizations with a high number of challenges (3 or more) are depicted with a **red** dot. Examples of challenges identified by organizations include lack of trust in data quality, data sharing/privacy concerns, and insufficient IT staff resources.
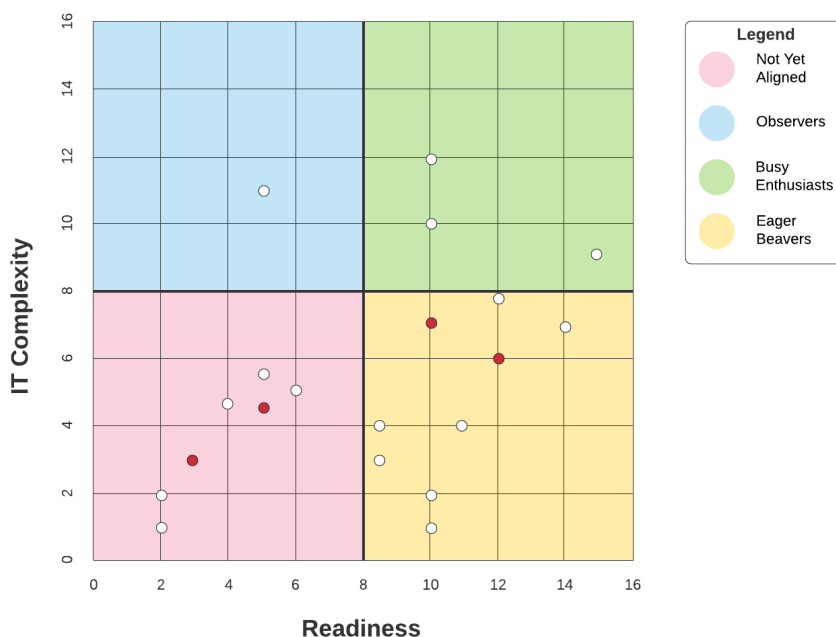
Figure 2. CBOs Categorized by Level of IT Complexity and Readiness

This community continues to utilize the technology platform Intrepid helped identify and select. The processes used to rigorously but respectfully gather, parse, analyze, and interpret information that we developed for this engagement continue to form the basis for our technical and programmatic needs assessment approach for CIE and other cross-sector whole-person initiatives.

For more information on this case study or to discuss other engagement opportunities, contact Alex Horowitz, VP Technology Strategy at alex@intrepidascent.com.