



Friday, December 1, 2006



Ahead for 2007: Open-source software for RHIOs?

BY [Nancy Ferris](#)

Published on Nov. 13, 2006

[Related Links](#)

The California HealthCare Foundation is considering turning the software developed for the Santa Barbara County Care Data Exchange into an open-source software product that other regional health information organizations (RHIOs) could use.

Foundation officials revealed their tentative plan at a Washington, D.C., forum where people from many organizations discussed the potential of open-source software for health information exchanges. A Forrester Research executive said at the forum that the use of open-source software could result in a 20 percent increase in nationwide RHIO expansion by 2014.

Forrester Vice President Eric Brown said open-source software would not solve all the problems that RHIOs are encountering as they try to establish information exchanges. But he said a survey Forrester undertook for the foundation suggested that if open-source systems were available, 60 percent of the country might have access to a RHIO by 2014, compared with 48 percent without open-source software.

President Bush set 2014 as a target for all Americans to have e-health records. Health care providers could share those records via RHIOs.

In Santa Barbara, the foundation and other organizations spent nearly \$20 million on the software that underlies one of the country's first RHIOs. To increase the return on that investment, the foundation might submit the software to a consortium or other nonprofit that could license it to other users, said Sam Karp, the foundation's vice president of programs. As a result, RHIOs could acquire less expensive software and easily modify or enhance the system to meet their needs, forum speakers said.

The Forrester study suggested that the software from Santa Barbara could be converted to an open-source product for about \$695,000. Even if less than 10 percent of RHIOs used it, Brown said, its existence in the marketplace would influence other software vendors, holding prices down and tending to make products more open and standards-compliant, he said.

Lori Hack, director of government relations and policy at California RHIO, endorsed open-source software for health information exchanges.

"We have to find a sustainable model," she said, "and what's out there today just isn't working."

With open-source software, users can see the source code and modify it to meet their needs. They are expected to share enhancements with other users. As is the case with the open-source Linux operating system, for-profit companies can make money on open-source software by providing custom implementations and support.

About 75 people attended the forum, and many expressed interest in joining an open-source community for clinical systems. The foundation will hold a similar meeting in California this week.

[About Us](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Webmaster](#)

GovHealthIT.com is a product of FCW Media Group.

[Application Development Trends](#) | [Campus Technology](#) | [CertCities.com](#)
[The Data Warehousing Institute](#) | [E-Gov](#) | [EduHound](#)
[ENTmag.com](#) | [Enterprise Systems](#) | [Federal Computer Week](#)
[Government Health IT](#) | [IT Compliance Institute](#) | [MCPmag.com](#)
[Recharger](#) | [Redmond magazine](#) | [Redmond Channel Partner](#)
[TCPmag.com](#) | [T.H.E. Journal](#) | [TechMentor](#)

Copyright 2005-2006 [1105 Media Inc.](#). See our [Privacy Policy](#)

