

popHealth – Overview of Plan to Transition Governance to the Open Source Community

popHealth (projectpophealth.org) is an open source software tool that automates the reporting and visualization of Meaningful Use clinical quality measures (CQMs). The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) has supported the management and development of popHealth through a contractual relationship with the Mitre Corporation. However, due to resource constraints, ONC plans to transition the management and governance of popHealth to the open source community of users and developers.

Background/Technology

When created in 2009, popHealth was originally envisioned as an off-the-shelf-type tool that could be downloaded and used by non-technical providers for CQM reporting and visualization. ONC eventually learned that this was not the most viable use case because use of the tool required significant technical expertise. Furthermore, ONC decided to focus its efforts elsewhere because there was greater value in popHealth as a reference implementation for developers. The tool has also proven valuable for its component parts: its standardized data importer/exporter; its user interface; and perhaps most importantly its quality measure engine, which is technology shared with ONC's Cypress tool (projectcypress.org). EHR and HIE developers have utilized these components in different ways to improve their own products.

Transition popHealth to Open Source Governance

ONC currently sets the strategic direction for the management and governance of popHealth. However, there is a large and diverse user group that is utilizing the application (and/or parts of the technology) for a variety of use cases. These uses of the technology will set the stage for the application's long-term utility. Ultimately, the governance and development of popHealth will be transitioned from being a government-supported piece of software to one that is supported by the open source community.¹

Next Steps for Transition

ONC has contracted with [Audacious Inquiry](#) (Ai), a Health IT services firm, to assist with the planning and coordination of the transition of popHealth to the open source community. This work will involve several steps, including:

- **Stakeholder Identification/Recruitment/Convening** – Ai will develop a comprehensive list of stakeholders to identify who is using the tool and how.
- **Creation of Strategic Plan** – Ai will draft a strategic plan for the transition of popHealth. It will address, among other things, the vision and goals for popHealth as defined by ONC, strategies for marketing the tool, and the transition timeline.
- **Creation of Governance Plan** – This plan will be developed in conjunction with the user community and will address, among other things, the structure of the future governance entity for popHealth, including potentially how future decisions will be made and how knowledge/resources will be shared once popHealth is transitioned.
- **Creation of Technical Development Plan** – Ai will work with stakeholders to identify their technical needs and to establish consensus on a technical development plan for popHealth.
- **Coordinate In-Person Meeting** – ONC will host an in-person stakeholder meeting in Washington, DC, ideally in January 2014. This will allow ONC to present the strategic plan to the community. It will also allow for initial discussion and development of the Governance and Technical Development plans, as determined by the community.

¹ ONC will continue to govern and manage Cypress, including its quality measure engine.

Following the successful completion of these tasks, ONC will officially transition the governance and management of the tool to an open source community of stakeholders.

Participation/Contribution

ONC encourages all current and potential users of popHealth to participate in the transition process. Ai will be reaching out to known users and developers. ONC asks that if you are interested in being a part of this process to please contact Genevieve Morris at gmorris@ainq.com.

As ONC refines and implements the plans for popHealth, the agency asks the community for its continued support of the development of the application through www.github.com. The code for the tool is located at <https://github.com/pophealth/popHealth>. Anyone can continue to engage in the development process as described at projectpophealth.org/participate.html.

If developers would like to contribute code back to the community with new features and defect fixes, ONC asks they follow the standard github process for “forking” and submitting “pull requests” The following wiki site provides step-by-step process for installation of a test/development instance of the application: <https://github.com/pophealth/popHealth/wiki/Installation-v2.1>

If you wish to make any changes to the code for your internal use or to contribute back to the main repository, you can fork the repository and make changes under that repository. When you are ready to send the new code to the project developers to include in the main application code, send a pull request to the main repository. It is ***strongly encouraged*** that contributors use the popHealth development listservs (<https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/pophealth-dev>, <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/pophealth-announce>, and <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/pophealth-talk>) to communicate their activities. It is also ***strongly encouraged*** that contributors submit pull requests in small quantities, which are easier to manage. In other words, please contribute early and often!

Guides on forking and creating pull requests are available here for reference:

1. <https://help.github.com/articles/fork-a-repo>
2. <https://help.github.com/articles/using-pull-requests>

Please Contact Us with Questions

Genevieve Morris, Project Manager, Audacious Inquiry - gmorris@ainq.com

John Rancourt, Program Analyst, ONC - John.rancourt@hhs.gov