

# I. Key Elements for Integration of Public Health Programs and Their Information Systems

## 1. Leadership

**Best Practices:** A project has an executive sponsor and, ideally, also a champion. They may be the same person. The executive sponsor is a high level official who works for the institutionalization of the project, creates a work environment that fosters risk-taking and innovation, is a good communicator, and has political awareness and influential contacts. The champion has a passion for the project, the respect of other staff and higher-ups, access to senior leadership, and is willing to devote a significant effort to see the project succeed.

## 2. Project Governance

**Best Practices:** The project is guided by a steering committee representing all key stakeholders. The steering committee develops the integration strategy, based on clearly defined business processes. Outside facilitators are used to assist the committee in making objective decisions.

## 3. Project Management

**Best Practices:** The project has formalized management strategies and project management methodologies designed to assure consistent communications, accountability, and awareness of resource constraints. The project has adequate and appropriate staff with the right skill sets to achieve project goals.

## 4. Stakeholder Involvement

**Best Practices:** Frequent and high quality communication with stakeholders and stakeholder involvement in the integration project contributes to its credibility and effectiveness. Stakeholder communication and involvement can influence the perception, reception, and ultimately, the success, of the project. In addition to the programs that are being integrated, important stakeholder groups include

providers, parents, other organizations, and government sectors, and insurers, including Medicaid. “Stakeholder involvement” means seeking their input throughout the life cycle of the project, establishing mutual goals, and providing a feedback loop to them.

## 5. Organizational and Technical Strategies

**Best Practices:** There is no single best strategy for an integration project. A strong integration strategy takes into consideration local issues such as funding, the political environment, organizational structure, the strengths of the organization, and stakeholder beliefs and values. The strategy is customer-focused, developed through a legitimate process involving stakeholders, and based on business processes.

## 6. Technical Support and Coordination

**Best Practices:** Technical information systems support and coordination is organized centrally to assure consistent technical support and a robust infrastructure capable of maintaining and complying with standards governing public health and healthcare systems. Technical staff works closely with the program staff in order to understand their objectives and business processes. Technical coordination involves translating programmatic needs to technical staff. A new role, business analyst, offers a means of implementing this best practice.

## 7. Financial Support and Management

**Best Practices:** The project funding is adequate and derived from multiple sources. Funding streams are integrated and “creative.” Grants management is performed by an oversight committee to ensure accountability and coordinated use.

## 8. Policy Support

**Best Practices:** Rules, regulations, legislation, and policy advisory or policy-making bodies are supportive or are at least neutral to program integration and the integration of health information systems.

## 9. Evaluation

**Best Practices:** The project has some form of qualitative and/or quantitative monitoring or evaluation that is performed regularly. The measures can be developed internally or adapted from other sources.