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## Western states HIEs prime candidates for stimulus money

March 05, 2009 | [Patty Enrado](#), Contributing Editor

PHOENIX – The economic stimulus funding for healthcare IT was a major topic of the Western States Health-e Connection Summit & Trade Show, which wrapped up March 3, at the Phoenix Convention Center.

David Sayen, regional administrator for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Region 9, told attendees the emphasis of the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 is to stimulate the economy by creating employment for Americans through projects that will work and be sustainable,

Arizona, California, Colorado, Oregon and Washington state representatives reported on their state initiatives, many of which are "shovel ready" and therefore prime candidates for the economic stimulus funding, said Brad Tritle, executive director of Arizona Health-e Connection .

Janet Marchibroda, CEO of eHealth Initiative and a speaker at the Summit, singled out Arizona as "perfectly positioned" because of its planning efforts and various stages of healthcare IT and health information exchange, or HIE, implementations, Tritle said.

Anthony Rodgers, director of the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), spoke about his agency's project, funded by a Medicare Transformation Grant awarded in 2007, to develop and implement a Web-based HIE utility that would enable Medicare providers to access patient data. The grant is funding two projects, the Arizona Medical Information Exchange and the Arizona Purchasing & Assistance Collaborative for Electronic Health Records (PACeHR), which provides assistance for small- and mid-size physician offices ready to implement EHRs. The purchasing collaborative is also developing a Web-based EHR.

Southern Arizona Health Information Exchange, or SAHIE, selected Wellogic to be its technology partner in late February. SAHIE is looking to provide secure health data sharing in the emergency departments and urgent care centers in the three participating counties of Cochise, Pima and Santa Cruz.

Arizona State Sen. Amanda Aguirre (D-Yuma), CEO and president of the Regional Center for Border Health and the San Luis Walk-In Clinic, discussed the work being done by CAPAZ-MEX (Community Access Program of Arizona and Mexico) to provide healthcare services to low-income families and individuals - primarily seasonal farm workers - in Yuma County, Ariz., and San Luis, Mexico. To serve this highly itinerant group, CAPAZ-MEX is currently implementing an electronic community health records system based on the Continuity of Care Record Standard.

Additionally, Arizona's Government Information Technology Agency (GITA) oversees the Rural Health Information Technology Adoption (RHITA) grant program, which supports the implementation of healthcare IT and healthcare information exchange among rural healthcare providers. There are currently six planning grants for rural Arizona, Tritle said.

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In January, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services implemented a personal health record pilot for Medicare beneficiaries in Arizona.

"What a great time for Arizona and what great timing," Tritle said, referring to the stimulus funding for healthcare IT. Arizona Health-e Connection, established as a nonprofit organization in January 2007 to foster healthcare IT adoption and HIE efforts in the state, is currently working with Arizona's new governor, Jan Brewer, to "ensure that the money comes in and is spent on worthwhile projects," he said.

Tritle was pleased with the third summit, which drew more than 550 registered attendees and 60 HIE, e-prescribing, PHR and EMR vendors. While the first two summits focused on Arizona's HIE efforts, the third summit, a collaboration that included the Arizona Health Information and Management Systems Society Chapter (AzHIMSS) and the Arizona Health Information Management Association (AzHIMA), opened it up to a handful of western states. Tritle hopes that in the future other states, including Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming, will participate.

The next Western States Health-e Connection Summit & Trade Show is slated for April 12-13, 2010.

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