Section III:

Creating Your Public Health Informatics Profile

After you have developed your questions, gathered your data and conducted your assessment, the next important step is to begin creating your public health informatics profile. Key components in this step include analyzing your data and interpreting and communicating your results. There are important details to remember in each of those phases.

Analyzing the data

Analyzing the information you've collected can be an overwhelming task considering the wide array of information you may have. It is helpful to keep a few important things in mind before beginning to analyze the information you've collected.

1. Keep up with your data.
Consider creating a spreadsheet or some other database for tracking all of the various responses to questions, both for analysis as well as for future reference.

2. Create an analysis plan.
Consider, up front, what information will want to analyze and develop an analysis plan that is in accordance with your original goals/objectives for the project (see Section II).

3. Don't forget your message.
Consider what message you are trying to convey; data can convey different messages depending on how it is represented or displayed.

4. Consider using qualitative data.
Qualitative responses can be as, if not more, valuable than quantitative data. Depending on how you collect the information, you may collect a wide range of rich responses. Qualitative analysis, such as identifying themes, can be very effective at communicating a message.

5. Display your results visually.
You may want to start by tabulating responses to each question and displaying them in a table. Whenever possible, you may also want to graph your findings (see Section I).

6. Look twice.
Consider taking a second look at the data once it is all reviewed to identify possible associations.

Interpreting and communicating the results

For your assessment project to have an impact, you must undertake the next two steps. They are all too often not sufficiently emphasized or resourced: (1) knowledgeably interpreting the findings based on your environment and (2) effectively communicating the findings in ways that engage those who can effect change. Here are some tips for interpreting and communicating the results.

- 1. Confirm your results are justified.
  Make sure your tables, graphs and figures show the facts. It may be helpful to validate results with interviewees and other key groups to ensure that the information was understood and is consistent with what they were communicating to you.
- 2. Add your interpretation.
  If you conducted interviews, use your understanding acquired to provide additional meaning and interpretation of the findings (see Section IV).
- 3. Encourage respondents to draw their own conclusions.
  Consider engaging interviewees in drawing conclusions in which they hold a stake. Not only will you draw a better conclusion, and perhaps surface blind spots in your perspectives and conclusions, you will get their support for recommendations emerging from the findings. The results may provide insight into opportunities for different groups to work together to solve a common problem, or they may provide a view of the various systems and needs across an agency, leading to coordinated overall planning efforts for more consistent information exchange, integration, and/or interoperability. They may also reveal challenges that are best addressed collectively.
- 4. Document and communicate with both immediate and future needs in mind.
  Display results in a way that even an uninitiated viewer can interpret and understand, and annotate graphs with narrative notes that provide sufficient context for the viewer. While graphs and PowerPoint presentations will likely serve your immediate communication needs—whether for senior leadership, central IT or those who contributed to the data—also consider a full written report for archival purposes. You may want to include key pieces of contextual information about current agency priorities: for example, needing to develop a more coordinated, consistent agency-wide response to Meaningful Use or to receive surveillance data across many programs. Keep in mind that even in two years from now, when you or someone else may want to repeat this assessment, many of the process details and contextual environmental information will have been forgotten. Also include any lessons learned about your data collection instrument and process as an aid to whichever future team repeats the assessment process.