

## Summary of Roundtable Input on Assessment from the 2015 AIRA National Meeting

On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, over 150 members of the Immunization Information System (IIS) community came together at a roundtable session at AIRA's National Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana to participate in facilitated discussions on the topic of IIS assessment and certification. This summary represents their input and feedback.

Assessment and certification have long been topics of conversation across the IIS community. Many across the community recognize the need to establish stronger objective measures to better assess current status and to chart progress as the IIS community develops and matures as a network of systems. Substantial work was completed on this topic in the late 1990s by the Technical Working Group (TWG) within AIRA, and subsequent work in 2012-2013 by the AIRA Assessment Steering Committee provided early examples of efforts to quantify and measure the progress of the IIS community. However, each of these efforts fell short of the full adoption and implementation needed to move the community forward toward measuring uniform alignment with standards.

In April 2015, AIRA released a white paper titled "[\*Summary and Environmental Scan of Assessment and Certification Models\*](#)," which provided a review of relevant assessment and certification models in use across public health and health care. The paper provided recommendations for the IIS community's next steps to continue exploration of assessment and certification, and served as a jumping off point for conversations about these topics at AIRA's National Meeting. A summary of the paper and early planning on assessment was presented in a plenary session on the first day of AIRA's [National Meeting](#).

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### Overview of Methods

A group of 22 facilitators made up of AIRA staff, AIRA Board of Directors, and key immunization community contacts were selected as volunteer facilitators for the roundtable meetings. These volunteer facilitators were prepared in advance with the white paper talking points related to assessment and certification, as well as specific roundtable discussion tools, including:

- A Facilitator's Guide and Notes Pages
- Participant Guides and Notes Pages
- Sign-in sheets
- Instructions for leading roundtable discussions

On the morning of Wednesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, 155 IIS program staff, immunization program managers, IIS vendors, and interested stakeholders/partners participated in facilitated small group discussions to review and respond to the recommendations in the AIRA assessment white paper. Input and discussion was captured through two primary methods:

- Facilitators were asked to take summary notes of the group's discussion and input on the Facilitator's Guide (See Appendix A). 22 facilitators' notes pages were collected.
- Participants were asked to provide more detailed and individualized input on the Participant Guides (See Appendix B). 105 participants' notes pages were collected.

The input from these forms was transcribed and entered into an Excel document by AIRA staff for analysis and summarization.

The analysis of this collected data illustrates the themes identified in the input and discussion, and reports quantitative findings based on the numeric responses reported by facilitators, but avoids reporting quantitative findings on the frequency of the narrative themes for two key reasons. To support candid feedback, participants could submit their written input as identified or anonymous, or could blend their verbal input with the larger group notes. The majority of participants opted to identify themselves and their programs in written feedback, but some chose to remain anonymous or not submit written feedback, which makes it challenging to draw conclusions regarding how representative these data are across the community. Secondly, themes and viewpoints could be echoed and reported redundantly based on the method of collecting data; by asking both facilitators and participants to document the discussion concurrently, a single theme or idea may be represented multiple times, while other comments may be blended into the facilitator's notes, perhaps underrepresenting some themes. For these reasons, the following summary findings are best considered at a high aggregate level.

## Findings

133 participants and 22 facilitators took part in the roundtable session. Additional facilitators were recruited and available, but were not utilized given the number of participating tables.

One overarching theme emerged throughout the roundtable discussions: IIS assessment should be community driven. Facilitators and participants alike noted the importance of the full IIS community, including programs, vendors, IT, and partners, providing input to and guiding the assessment process.

Question 1 asked participants to rate the extent to which their group supported, in concept, launching a community driven, internally-facing assessment and measurement process, on a scale of 1-5, with one signifying fully supportive, and 5 signifying absolutely opposed. The average ranking of all groups was 1.47, midway between fully supportive and somewhat supportive.

Question 2 asked about the biggest benefits to the IIS community and/or to their IIS related to assessment and measurement. Comments regarding the benefits of assessment included, in order of frequency (from highest to lowest):

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*One overarching theme emerged: IIS assessment should be community driven.*

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**Standardization.** Many respondents mentioned the importance of standardization, and the important role assessment could provide in moving the IIS community toward stronger standards alignment. Several comments referenced the ability for assessment to validate how strongly the IIS community already aligns with standards.

**Credibility.** Following standardization, credibility was the next often raised theme regarding benefits. EHRs and Central IT were noted specifically as sectors where increased credibility would be considered valuable. A related concept to credibility was external validation of alignment with existing standards. Several respondents emphasized that assessment should lead to an externally visible process of certification.

**Prioritization.** Participants noted that the assessment process would yield key information to use in prioritizing individual enhancements as well as community-wide priorities for improvements. A related theme in this area was that assessment would also allow targeted priorities for resources that would in turn reduce disparities across the community.

*Interoperability.* The benefits to interoperability in particular were noted repeatedly by multiple participants across many groups. Interoperability themes addressed both IIS-EHR interfaces as well as IIS-IIS interfaces for inter-jurisdictional exchange. Easier, more streamlined onboarding was noted as a potential outcome as well.

*Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration.* The opportunity to share information with and gain information from peers was called out as an anticipated benefit that could lead to stronger joint development. A related concept was the opportunity to compare ones' IIS with neighboring systems to see how systems measure up to one another.

Question 3 asked about the biggest concerns within the IIS community and/or their IIS related to assessment and measurement. Anticipated concerns were addressed by nearly all discussion groups. Primary themes were as follows, again in order of frequency mentioned:

*Resources.* Concerns about financial resources (dollars) and/or human resources (staff time) were raised by nearly every group participating in the Roundtable event. Many participants encouraged the exploration of automated solutions to minimize the burden of assessment on IIS staff. Staff turnover was called out specifically as a point of concern in regard to human resources. Regarding financial resources in particular, participants were concerned about how this effort would be funded. Questions asked included:

- Would IIS receive funds to prepare for and complete the assessment process?
- Would funds be available for enhancements resulting from the assessment?
- Would funding be targeted to high performers or to those in need?

*Consequences.* Nearly half of all groups voiced questions or had discussions regarding the consequences if an IIS did not meet assessment goals, and several asked what would be done with assessment results.

*Local Variation.* Nearly a third of the discussion groups called out the importance of accommodating local laws and policies in drafting and applying assessment metrics.

*Agreement on Standards.* Several groups discussed the need to gain agreement on which standards would be included in an assessment process, and/or the need to maintain stable standards over time.

*Timelines.* Many participants noted that it was essential to be flexible in implementing timelines for both assessment and reassessment.

*Exposure.* There were a few comments voicing concern that an assessment process could potentially expose weaknesses across the IIS community, or could expose proprietary information to a vendor's competitors.

Question 4 asked about how best to engage the IIS community in the assessment process. The following themes emerged:

*Diverse Means of Communication.* Many groups discussed the importance of multiple and varied avenues for sharing information with the full IIS community. National meetings, regional meetings, in-person community wide meetings, and Joint Development User Groups were all called out as opportunities for communication. Many respondents specifically called out the need for small groups to allow for discussion and conversation. It

was requested by several groups that these opportunities for communication and overall participation in the assessment process be grant-required by CDC funders.

*Report Card, Benchmark Approach.* Many participants called out the importance of an encouraging a quality improvement approach to assessment, using a gold-silver-bronze scale, or providing actionable quality measures that could guide improvements. It was emphasized that this would bring value and engage IIS in a supportive, positive way.

*Incentives.* Approximately a third of groups discussed the benefits of offering incentives to further engage IIS in the assessment process. The nature of those incentives (financial or otherwise) was not specified.

*Engagement of All IIS.* Requests were made by several groups to ensure that all IIS (not just CDC awardees) would be engaged in the assessment process. To minimize burden, it was requested that documents remain brief, and that adequate time be allowed for providing input and feedback.

Question 5 asked about the participants' support for the process steps as presented (early testing/discovery, followed by assessment, followed by a decision for formal, externally-facing certification). The group ranking on this question averaged 1.34, between fully supportive and somewhat supportive.

Question 6 asked about the participants' support for the high-level content steps as presented (transport assessment, followed by message format assessment, functionality, and data quality). The group ranking on this question averaged 1.84, again between fully supportive and somewhat supportive, but suggesting slightly more concern than the previous questions, and potentially a need for further discussion/exploration.

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*Several participants proposed a phased approach. "Start small and don't go too big early on."*

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Question 7 asked participants to identify strengths of the phased approach. Strengths noted, again in order of frequency, included:

- Ability to identify and correct problems along the way
- Early successes will support buy-in across community
- Phased process would be more manageable from a resource perspective
- Allows for greater sharing/collaboration

Responses to Question 8 noted weaknesses of the phased approach, including:

- May move too slowly
- Not entirely clear what will be in each phase
- Difficult to tease apart phases
- Suggested order of phases may not be optimal

Several participants proposed an alternate order for a phased approach. Although there was not one unifying order proposed, several of the respondents noted that, in testing incoming data sources for an IIS, data quality validation comes first, prior to message transport or format testing. Similarly, several groups discussed the need for each phase to be iterative, and able to be run in parallel with other phases if needed. Some flexibility would be necessary due to the differences among systems. Finally, two groups asked specifically where programmatic and architectural content would fit within this phased process.

Final summary comments represented a broad range of input and opinions, but several specific themes and questions emerged:

Many participants voiced a belief that, regardless of the details, a formal assessment and validation process was a necessary next step in the evolution and maturity of IIS. The limitations of the current process of using self-reported data for the IIS Annual Report (IISAR) and other measurement processes were specifically noted, due to subjectivity and vulnerability to bias.

The role of IIS vendors as a potential source of support and opportunity for leverage was called out by several respondents. IIS vendors may have the ability to participate in, or facilitate a program's participation in assessment in a way that offsets the burden on IIS program staff, particularly if the assessment process leverages automated testing tools and procedures.

Participants were forthcoming in their interest to be involved in the assessment process. The largest number of volunteers were interested in reviewing and testing the metrics as they were developed, but a significant number of participants were also interested in engaging in the planning process. AIRA will draw from these respondents in forming SME groups and work groups on this topic.

## Limitations:

Although the roundtable feedback included participation from over 150 IIS program staff, vendors, and interested partners, these representatives were a convenience sample from the larger community, made up of those members able to attend the National Meeting in New Orleans and that self-selected to attend the roundtable meeting. This group is likely to be fairly representative of the larger community, but efforts should be made to engage AIRA members who were unable to attend the National Meeting in subsequent planning efforts for assessment.

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*Many participants agreed that a community driven assessment and validation process was a necessary next step.*

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Because of the dual and redundant method of data capture by both facilitators and participants, quantitative findings were limited to numeric responses; themes emerging from narrative responses should be viewed at a high level to guide assessment planning.

Finally, the meeting to gather roundtable feedback and input was only one hour long. Despite the fact that the assessment white paper (*Summary and Environmental Scan of Assessment and Certification Models*) was provided prior to the meeting and early assessment planning was discussed in the plenary session prior to the meeting, an hour was not adequate time to fully explore these ideas and themes in depth. In truth, the participants could have used an entire day or more at the National Meeting to discuss these topics and gather input.

## Conclusion and Next Steps:

On the whole, the roundtable input is clear on several overarching themes:

Participants see great benefit in moving forward with a community-driven assessment process. There is broad agreement that assessment would help the IIS network to gather a clear baseline regarding standards alignment, and to prioritize immediate and long-term areas for further standards-based enhancements.

There is broad support for a quality improvement approach that provides feedback akin to a report card format to measure alignment with standards.

Despite concerns regarding the potentially slow pace of a phased implementation, this is regarded as a preferred approach, rather than an all-or-nothing assessment implementation.

Communication regarding the planning and implementation of an assessment process should be frequent, use diverse methods, and be transparent across the membership. It is essential that the full community be kept in the loop about and invited to participate in developing assessment processes.

Many programs and individual members are invested and willing to take part in the planning, testing, review and implementation phases of the process.

Other areas warrant further exploration:

The order in which the assessment phases are planned (transport, message format, functionality, data quality) will likely not be validated or supported until actual measures or metrics for the assessment process are clear. At that point, the proposed order of phases should be revisited and revised as needed.

Incentives and resources for participation may be a necessary precursor to participation by many programs.

As discussed at the National Meeting, AIRA will be convening a group of SMEs to review the white paper *Summary and Environmental Scan of Assessment and Certification Models* during summer of 2015. This group will draw relevant and applicable information from the paper, as well as from this roundtable feedback, and will leverage this information in planning for an IIS assessment process.

AIRA would like to extend its thanks to all the members and partners who participated in the roundtable event. Evaluations from the National Meeting included very favorable input on the roundtable session, with the one caveat that more time would have allowed for deeper conversations and more exploration of assessment components. Every effort will be made to plan similar events with larger time blocks for future meetings. That being said, despite the limited time allotted, the roundtable meeting yielded excellent actionable input that will guide assessment planning efforts moving forward, and the efforts of both facilitators and participants are greatly appreciated.



## Roundtable Facilitation Guide and Notes Page

Wednesday, April 22, 2015, 8am- 9am, Armstrong Ballroom / 8<sup>th</sup> Fl.

*Objective: To guide discussion and gather critical feedback from the IIS Community on the planning and implementation of a comprehensive assessment and measurement process*

*Note to Facilitators: This will be the Facilitator's guide as well as note-taking tool to capture majority feedback. Participants will also have a note-taking tool to capture individual input, more detailed responses, and/or to declare their willingness to participate in future assessment efforts. You will have one hour to complete these discussion questions – rough time guidelines appear throughout this guide.*

**Introductions:** Ask each member to share their name, where they are from (organization), and what they primarily do, but please keep this short to allow for later discussion.

**Begin the first question by 8:10am at the latest**

**Facilitator to Restate to Roundtable Group:** Tuesday afternoon's plenary session outlined the primary reasons to move forward with a comprehensive, internally-facing assessment and measurement process within the IIS community:

- 1) Increasing demands for standards-driven interoperability across health care
- 2) Growing need for information to guide prioritization of enhancement and development efforts
- 3) Strong desire to eliminate disparities and variation where possible across IIS systems

**Question 1:** To what extent does this group support, in concept, launching a community-driven, internally-facing assessment and measurement process? (please circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
Fully Support	Somewhat Support	Neutral	Do Not Fully Support	Absolutely Opposed

Please comment:

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**Question 2:** What does this group think are the biggest benefits to the IIS community and/or to their IIS related to assessment and measurement?

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**Question 3:** What does this group think are the biggest concerns within the IIS community and/or to their IIS related to assessment and measurement? Are there solutions they would suggest be considered in response to these concerns?

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**Question 4:** What are the optimal ways to engage ALL IIS in planning and implementing an assessment process, recognizing heavy schedules and competing priorities?

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**Begin this question by 8:30am at the latest**

**Question 5:** The suggested approach for testing involves three distinct and sequenced steps: 1) Early Testing to refine processes, 2) A defined Assessment Period to internally refine measures and metrics, and 3) Exploration of a formal Certification Process to validate and publish each program's alignment with selected measures and metrics.



To what extent does this group support, in concept, this step-based approach?

1	2	3	4	5
Fully Support	Somewhat Support	Neutral	Do Not Fully Support	Absolutely Opposed

**Question 6:** Early planning for an assessment process suggests that we measure distinct areas of testing separately, and in a phased approach, and prioritize them as follows:

- Transport, or how a message moves from one system to another (e.g., conformance with SOAP/Web Services, CDC WSDL)
- Message Structure, or how a message is formatted in a standardized way (e.g., alignment with HL7 2.5.1, VXU, QPB/RSP)
- Functionality, or what functions your system provides (e.g., does your IIS decrement inventory, provide reminder/recall, produce AFIX reports, forecast in compliance with CDS specifications, etc.)
- Data, or what information your system contains (e.g., does your system capture core data elements, what proportion of your adolescent population is captured by your IIS, etc.)

To what extent does this group support, in concept, this prioritization?

1	2	3	4	5
Fully Support	Somewhat Support	Neutral	Do Not Fully Support	Absolutely Opposed

**Question 7:** What are the perceived strengths of this step-based and prioritized approach?

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**Question 8:** What are the perceived weaknesses of this step-based and prioritized approach? Are there things you might change?

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**Begin this question by 8:50am at the latest**

**Facilitator: Guide the participants to respond to the following questions only on their participant's guide. Consider stating the following, verbatim or in your own words:**

As a member organization, AIRA operates based on the guidance from and involvement of its many members and partner organizations. Particularly for an initiative as critical as Assessment, AIRA needs the active engagement and contributions from all programs. How can your programs/staff members contribute to this effort? Questions 9 and 10 are your opportunity to let us know what you might be willing to contribute to this effort. Question 11 asks for anything more you might want to share with us about the approach to Assessment, and Question 12 asks for your contact information.

**If you would like your previous comments to be confidential, feel free to separate this page from your previous comments by tearing off the back page and submitting it separately.**

**Question 9:** What role are you or your team members willing to be considered for as this process moves forward? (circle all that apply)

Planner – Subject Matter Expert	Planner – Advisory Committee	Tester	Reviewer	Implementer
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**Question 10:** What skills do you or your team members have to bring to this process? (circle all that apply)

Consultation on process steps	Consultation on governance	Development/testing of metrics/measures	Contributions on communication/ messaging
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*Question 11: Please share with us any final comments:*

*Question 12: Contact Information*

**By 9am:**

*Facilitator: At the close of the meeting, please gather all notes pages and sign-in sheets, thank all participants for their engagement and participation, and restate that input will be summarized and shared within one month.*

Please share any final comments as a facilitator that you want to make sure get captured:

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*Please turn in these facilitator notes, participant notes, and sign-in sheets to an  
AIRA staff person or to the AIRA Registration Desk. Thank you for your time and your facilitation skills!*



## Roundtable Participant Notes Page

Wednesday, April 22, 2015, 8am- 9am, Armstrong Ballroom / 8<sup>th</sup> Fl.

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*Objective: To guide discussion and gather critical feedback from the IIS Community on the planning and implementation of a comprehensive assessment and measurement process*

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*Note to Participants: Facilitators will be taking notes and capturing majority feedback. However, all participants are also encouraged to use this note-taking tool to capture individual input, more detailed responses, and/or to declare your willingness to participate in future assessment efforts. Teams from the same program may opt to use one single participant notes page; they may choose to make the majority of comments identified or anonymous.*

**Question 1:** Tuesday afternoon's plenary session outlined the primary reasons to move forward with a comprehensive assessment and measurement process within the IIS community:

- 4) Increasing demands for standards-driven interoperability across health care
- 5) Growing need for information to guide prioritization of enhancement and development efforts
- 6) Strong desire to eliminate disparities and variation where possible across IIS systems

To what extent do you support, in concept, launching a community driven, internally-facing assessment and measurement process? (please circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
Fully Support	Somewhat Support	Neutral	Do Not Fully Support	Absolutely Opposed

Please comment:

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**Question 2:** What do you think are the biggest benefits to the IIS community and/or to your IIS related to assessment and measurement?

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**Question 3:** What do you think are the biggest concerns within the IIS community and/or to your IIS related to assessment and measurement? Are there solutions you would suggest be considered in response to these concerns?

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**Question 4:** What are the optimal ways to engage ALL IIS in planning and implementing an assessment process, recognizing heavy schedules and competing priorities?

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**Question 5:** The suggested approach for testing involves three distinct and sequenced steps: 1) Early Testing to refine processes, 2) A defined Assessment Period to internally refine measures and metrics, and 3) Exploration of a formal Certification Process to validate and publish each program's alignment with selected measures and metrics.

To what extent do you support, in concept, this step-based approach?

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Fully Support	Somewhat Support	Neutral	Do Not Fully Support	Absolutely Opposed

**Question 6:** Early planning for an assessment process suggests that we measure distinct areas of testing separately, and in a phased approach, and prioritize them as follows:

- Transport, or how a message moves from one system to another (e.g., conformance with SOAP/Web Services, CDC WSDL)
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- Data, or what information your system contains (e.g., does your system capture core data elements, what proportion of your adolescent population is captured by your IIS, etc.)

To what extent do you support, in concept, this prioritization?

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Fully Support	Somewhat Support	Neutral	Do Not Fully Support	Absolutely Opposed

**Question 7:** What are the strengths of this step-based and prioritized approach?

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**Question 8:** What are the weaknesses of this step-based and prioritized approach? Are there things you might change?

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As a member organization, AIRA operates based on the guidance from and involvement of its many members and partner organizations. Particularly for an initiative as critical as Assessment, AIRA needs the active engagement and contributions from all programs. How can your programs/staff members contribute to this effort?

**Question 9:** What role are you or your team members willing to be considered for as this process moves forward? (circle all that apply)

Planner – Subject  
Matter Expert

Planner –  
Advisory  
Committee

Tester

Reviewer

Implementer

Other:

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**Question 10:** What skills do you or your team members have to bring to this process? (circle all that apply)

Consultation on  
process steps

Consultation on  
governance

Development/testing of  
metrics/measures

Contributions on  
communication/  
messaging

Other:

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Question 11: Please share with us any final comments:

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Name	Organization	Email

*Please be sure to share contact information for all individual contributors (more room on back).  
If you would prefer that the rest of your comments remain anonymous, simply detach this final page  
from the previous pages and turn them in separately. Thank you for your participation!*