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### Interoperability Dream Realized? ONC Issues Framework, Predicts Researchers Will Benefit

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By Theresa Defino

Within the next 90 days, federal officials expect to begin accepting applications from organizations, many likely part of research universities and integrated health systems, wishing to become qualified health information networks (QHINs) that will link together to form a national, interoperable health exchange.

Researchers will also be able to tap in, although that may be more off into the future.

Last month, Micky Tripathi, director of the HHS Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC), and leaders of the Sequoia Project released a Trusted Exchange Framework (TEF) and Common Agreement (CA), together referred to as TEFCA.<sup>[1]</sup> It's a step toward realizing an 18-year dream of an interoperable national health information network.

As officials explained, TEF is a "set of non-binding, foundational principles for policies and practices to facilitate data-sharing among health information networks." Meanwhile, the CA "will operationalize simplified electronic health information exchange" for many nationwide and establishes "a new baseline for the exchange purposes that need to be supported—a common source of friction across networks today."

The goal is for "broad industry alignment with these principles [to] help entities enter into more uniform contractual relationships that are required for improved electronic flow of health information where and when it is needed," as described in Tripathi's blog and in slides presented during a Jan. 18 briefing for stakeholders.<sup>[2]</sup>

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