2016 APHL™ Annual Meeting
and tenth government environmental laboratory conference

June 6–9, 2016
Albuquerque, NM
Albuquerque Convention Center
Utilizing the Informatics Self Assessment Tool

Willie Andrews, BSMT(ASCP)
Director of Laboratory Operations
Virginia Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services
The Need -

• As a member of the APHL Informatics Committee:
  • Need a mechanism to evaluate informatics capabilities in PHL’s across the country
  • Recognize that “informatics” is not always understood or appreciated as being essential to the business of a PHL
    • Need a way to demonstrate what a strong, comprehensive informatics system should look like

• As a PHL director of operations responsible for Informatics-related activities:
  • Need a mechanism to evaluate the informatics strengths and weaknesses within Virginia’s state PHL
  • Comparative data to support requests for funding for new initiatives and additional resources
The Solution –
The Informatics Self Assessment Tool!

• A mechanism to conduct a comprehensive examination of your lab’s informatics capabilities
• Provides a baseline of your current informatics strengths and weakness and allows you to track progress over time
• Compare your informatics capabilities to previous assessments, other PHL’s and to the national average
• Provides data needed to support funding requests
• Enables leadership to better understand why informatics plays such a key role in the success of the PHL
Using the Visualization Tools

Example #1 - Compare informatics capabilities across systems within your organization
Example #2 - Compare informatics capabilities across states and against the national averages
So why the limited Use of the SA Tool?

• 14 PHL’s have created accounts and started assessments
  – Only 6 have completed and published one or more assessments

Reasons for NOT utilizing the SA Tool –

• Perceived to be a large task; no time available
• Requires input from multiple resources, hard to assemble
• Competing priorities pulling resources away
Identify an **Informatics Champion** that understands the business of the laboratory, can pull together resources and can work with IT as needed to complete the SA Tool.
Virginia’s Approach

• The PHL’s Champion created the assessment in the SA tool
• The assessment information was shared with the IT Lead who completed the assessment
• The PHL Champion reviewed all responses entered by IT and any noted discrepancies were discussed and resolved
• Assessments were approved upon completion and published
• 7 to 8 hours were spent by Lab and the same by IT.
Make your Self Assessment a Priority!!

- Time and money has been invested in a tool to aide PHL’s in the assessment of their informatics strength/maturity
- PHL’s need to take advantage of this opportunity
- To benefit of your organization, the PHL community and future initiatives...
Not just data collection
But, your data is needed...

- Understand the Big Picture- what is happening across the country
- Shines a spotlight on successes
- Allows weaknesses to come to the surface
- Identifies areas for collaboration and peer to peer mentoring

Advocacy, Policy, & Funding come when a gap is identified and there are data to back up the claim
Increasing Adoption

**Technical**
- Guidebook developed
- Trained staff on tool
- Updated guidance
- Functionality review

**Educational**
- Mobilizing Sr. Leadership
- Monthly community calls
- Peer to peer support
- Additional training opportunities
- One on one support (help desk)
Timeline to Success

June:
• Tool review and cleanup of functionality
• Informatics staff is training on the tool
• Informatics committee and CDC partners will finalize facilitation guide

July:
• Leadership involvement
• Set up monthly community calls
• Officially “reopen” the annual assessment
  – 50 state call?
• Ensure support and information is readily available during assessment
“Willie” Andrews, BSMT(ASCP)
willie.andrews@dgs.virginia.gov
804-648-4480 (ext 153)