



March 21, 2016

Arizona REC Winding Down and Will Close June 5, 2016

The Arizona Regional Extension Center (REC) will be winding down its operations this spring and will close operations on June 5, 2016. The REC, which has assisted more than 3,200 Arizona providers with Meaningful Use, began in April 2010 with an original grant of \$10.8 million, later increased to \$11.5 million with the addition of critical access hospitals and rural hospitals to its scope of work. Originally slated to close on April 5, 2014, the REC was granted no-cost extensions in 2014 and 2015 to continue its work assisting Arizona providers in meeting Meaningful Use.

The REC has changed the Arizona health IT landscape. It will close having achieved 90% of the original goal of assisting priority primary care physicians (PPCPs) and 100% of the original goal of assisting critical access hospitals and rural hospitals. Perhaps more importantly has been the effect on Arizona health care practices and the Arizona economy. When the REC opened its doors, some 40% of Arizona providers were using electronic health records (EHRs). Today, more than 80% of Arizona providers are using an EHR. In addition to the \$11.5 million in grant funding, the Arizona economy has benefited from the REC's assistance to providers and hospitals eligible for the Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentive Payment Program. Since the REC opened, more than \$200 million has been paid to eligible providers and more than \$550 million has been paid to eligible providers and hospitals through the EHR Incentive Payment Program.

Connie Ihde, REC Director and Director of Programs for Arizona Health-e Connection (AzHeC), credits the AzHeC staff and the direct technical assistance providers who have assisted Arizona providers, critical access hospitals and rural hospitals. Direct technical assistance has been provided by Health Services Advisory Group, Practice Max and InTech Health Ventures. "Our direct technical assistance providers have been our 'boots on the ground' and they have done outstanding work in helping providers develop the workflows and knowledge to make EHRs work for their practices," she said. "Their excellent work has made the REC a success in Arizona."

For questions about the REC and the EHR Incentive Payment Program, contact ehr@azhec.org or (602) 688-7202.