
Georgia Healthcare IT Workforce Readiness Survey: *Executive Summary*

The non-profit **Institute for Healthcare Information Technology** (IHIT) recently commissioned Atlanta-based Porter Research and Billian's HealthDATA to conduct an online survey of Healthcare IT *Suppliers* (vendors) and *Purchasers* (hospitals, clinicians) across Georgia to gauge the status of their plans to expand and hire from within the state, as well as their perceptions of how well-equipped Georgia's educational institutions are to provide qualified Healthcare IT candidates.

Executive Summary

Today's Healthcare IT jobs market in Georgia can be optimistically characterized as "healthy" by the singular fact that Healthcare IT *Suppliers* and *Purchasers* who took part in the study indicated that there are currently *4,757 Healthcare IT jobs* available in-state at their organizations. Tomorrow's Healthcare IT jobs forecast in Georgia also has positive indicators, as the majority (**86%**) of these Healthcare IT organizations anticipate a need to hire more Healthcare IT jobs within the state over the next five years.

The key to *Healthcare IT Workforce Readiness* success is having better alignment between business and state resources to address the perceived "major impact" factors and the workforce confidence levels discussed in this whitepaper. Georgia's business community and governmental agencies need to partner together to address these challenges that lie ahead, as well as implement proactive measurements to help foster Healthcare IT industry growth within the state over the next five years. Recommendations are covered in the '*Conclusions*' section at the end of the whitepaper.

Survey Overview

Research Objectives

The goals of this research include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Identify current needs and concerns related the Healthcare IT workforce in the State of Georgia.
- Understand the role the educational system can play in addressing the workforce development issues identified by Healthcare IT *Suppliers* and *Purchasers* within the State of Georgia.
- Understand the perceptions of stakeholder executives – vendors, educators, etc. – and to address the real or perceived deficiencies that are related to the Healthcare IT workforce talent in the State of Georgia.

Survey Respondents

More than 300 qualified participants, who were knowledgeable about their organization's Healthcare IT growth and recruitment needs over the next 3-5 years, provided feedback to the *Georgia Healthcare IT Workforce Readiness Survey*. The Healthcare IT *Suppliers* and *Purchasers* participating in this research included a range of small and medium-sized as well as some of the largest organizations in the state, such as those characterized with demographics of having more than 3,000 full-time employees (FTEs) and annual revenue greater than \$50,000,000.

Key Survey Findings

- **79%** of all respondents stated that their organization currently has Healthcare IT jobs available for employment.
 - Major impact on growth plans for Healthcare IT *Suppliers* and *Purchasers* in the State of Georgia are as follows:
 - Georgia IT skilled workforce
 - Georgia Healthcare IT corporate community
 - Georgia state & local government
 - **56%** of all respondents stated they were either 'Not Confident at All' or 'Somewhat Confident' that their organization would be able to fill their Healthcare IT jobs within Georgia.
 - **86%** of all respondents stated their organization anticipates some future need for Healthcare IT jobs within Georgia over the next five years.
 - **83%** of *Purchasers* of technology, segmented alone, stated they anticipate an increased need for Healthcare IT workforce talent over the next five years.
 - Perceptions of the Georgia workforce talent for entry-level Healthcare IT jobs:
 - **20%** of all respondents agree that Georgia has well-trained high school graduates.
 - **56%** of all respondents agree that Georgia has well-trained technical school graduates.
 - **76%** of all respondents agree that Georgia has well-trained college graduates.
 - Top Healthcare IT jobs over the next five years:
 - IT Security
 - System Administrator
 - Project Manager
 - Help Desk
 - Top Healthcare IT jobs where there is a perceived challenge in filling over the next five years:
 - Data Modeler
 - IT Auditor
 - Business Intelligence
 - Information Architect
 - Top five highly valued job skills to fill Healthcare IT jobs over the next five years:
 - Critical thinking & problem solving
 - Work ethic (attitudes, ethics, personal integrity)
 - Verbal communication
 - Prior healthcare experience
 - Computer (IT)
 - Respondents indicated the following as being the most willing to partner with to improve education / training of the Georgia workforce:
 - Georgia colleges / universities
 - Internship programs
 - Georgia technical schools
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Today's Healthcare IT Workforce in Georgia

79% of all respondents stated that their organization currently has Healthcare IT jobs available for employment.

The majority of Healthcare IT *Suppliers* and *Purchasers* stated that they presently have Healthcare IT jobs available for employment within the State of Georgia. At the time of the survey, respondents indicated that there are *4,757 Healthcare IT jobs* currently available in Georgia at their organizations.

The availability of Healthcare IT jobs in Georgia is a positive sign of the job demand that exists in the industry, but are those positions being filled here at home, by *actual Georgians*? This is the overarching question that should be kept in mind, but applied to the near future. This whitepaper will delve into the survey respondents' attitudes about the Healthcare IT workforce and their perceptions about anticipated needs over the next five years.

There are opportunities, strengths, and even areas for improvement found within the following survey findings, as it relates to Georgia's Healthcare IT workforce. The conclusions drawn in the report can be used by the State of Georgia to evaluate how "best" to align its resources in order to foster growth for the Healthcare IT industry and its workforce, as looking ahead to the demands of tomorrow.

Conclusions

There is a rich cluster of Healthcare IT organizations in the State of Georgia, with a strong potential for rapid growth over the next five years. Study results show that the majority (**64%**) of Healthcare IT organizations are looking ahead to grow their business operations over the next five years. The Healthcare IT *Suppliers* (vendors) and *Purchasers* (hospitals, clinicians) that participated in the study indicated that there are currently *4,757 Healthcare IT jobs* available in Georgia at their organizations. Furthermore, the majority (**86%**) of these Healthcare IT organizations anticipates filling more Healthcare IT jobs within Georgia over the next five years. The key for successful industry growth is to align business and state resources in order to address the "major impact" factors, as perceived by Healthcare IT organizations.

Survey respondents offered *Healthcare IT Workforce Readiness* recommendations that would be mutually beneficial for the business community and state organizations to partner together to improve the quality of Healthcare IT talent found within Georgia. Thematically, the respondents' recommendations highlighted the need to address:

- Recruitment strategies: Establish a more formal recruitment relationship between the Healthcare IT workforce & workplace.
- Workforce confidence perceptions: Create better alignment between educational programs and Healthcare IT organizations' job-skills requirements.
- Continuing education: Offer Healthcare IT-specific continuing education programs at local educational institutions, promoting ongoing Healthcare IT career advancement opportunities.
- Healthcare IT-centric scholarships: Fund the necessary educational requirements for entry-level jobs in the industry.
- Healthcare IT-centric internships: Provide future job applicants with the "real world" job skills that employers indicated as highly-valued.

It is recommended that the above topics need to directly correlate to the Healthcare IT jobs that are expected to increase over the next five years, to the highly-valued job skills that employers want in an employee, and to the higher education requirements that job candidates need for entry-level jobs in the Healthcare IT industry.

Georgia's educational institutions – specifically, colleges and universities – would likely be the “epicenters” where the ideas from a business community and state organizations partnership are tested. Georgia's colleges and universities could produce a higher quality Healthcare IT workforce on several fronts, including:

- Implementing and promoting educational programs and courses that correspond with future job demands.
- Aligning educational programs and courses with highly-valued job skills.
- Promoting the job availability and career advancement opportunities to their general IT/computer science undergraduate program population.
- Establishing closer ties with Healthcare IT organizations that have a willingness to “work together” with educators in developing high-quality Healthcare IT job applicants.
- Establishing more formal and direct recruitment initiatives between college and university placement departments and Healthcare IT organizations to “best” match students with Healthcare IT job/internship opportunities.

It should be noted that Georgia's future Healthcare IT prosperity will require a cooperative effort between all parties...an interdependence that requires input and involvement from Healthcare IT *Suppliers* and *Purchasers*, state regulators, agencies, educators as well as workforce candidates. Healthcare IT *Suppliers* and *Purchasers* are encouraged to initiate closer ties with the rest of the Georgia Healthcare IT community, or to share ‘new ideas’ that could benefit the overall regional Healthcare IT environment. Contact IHIT to share ideas, or for help to facilitate an *action plan* with the appropriate state agencies and/or educational institutions.

About IHIT

IHIT was founded for the purpose of connecting resources for the advancement of healthcare through technology in a way that has not yet been achieved elsewhere. IHIT plays a unique role in this coordination by leveraging the strength of the Healthcare IT industry within Georgia and the Southeastern U.S. to expand technology throughout the broader U.S. healthcare system. Specifically, IHIT will engage in projects that deliver on the mission of economic development and improvement of access and quality of care.

IHIT will achieve this mission by going beyond talk, and taking action firsthand by leading and partnering on projects aimed at leveraging the nation's leading Healthcare IT cluster. This approach will allow us to contribute to the ongoing development of these technology resources for future adoption and expansion across the nation.

If you would like to follow our progress, or have a project that might benefit from IHIT involvement, or otherwise want to stay in touch, please contact us at info@InstituteforHealthcareIT.org, or visit www.InstituteforHealthcareIT.org. We appreciate your interest, and we look forward to exploring how we might advance healthcare through information technology.