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\$16.1M allocated for WNY telemed

Business First of Buffalo - by [Tracey Drury](#)

A Western New York collaborative has received \$16.1 million in federal stimulus funding to advance the implementation of electronic health records and telemedicine for the benefit of patients with diabetes and other chronic conditions.

HealthLink was selected among 15 health IT pilot programs nationwide to receive \$220 million through the Beacon Community Program, with funding through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA).

The awards, announced May 4 in Washington, D.C., are intended to help communities achieve meaningful health care improvements through technology. The awards are also intended to help lay the groundwork for an emerging health IT industry that is expected to support tens of thousands of jobs.

HealthLink, formed as the **WNY Clinical Information Exchange Inc.**, will use the funding to use such support tools as registries, point-of-care alerts and reminders and telemedicine solutions to improve primary and specialty care for diabetic patients. The organization also hopes to decrease preventable emergency room visits, hospitalizations and re-admissions for patients with diabetes and congestive heart failure or pneumonia, and improve immunization rates among diabetic patients.

According to a prepared release, the selected Beacon Communities will use health IT resources within their community as a foundation for bringing doctors, hospitals, community health programs, federal programs and patients together to design new ways of improving quality and efficiency to benefit patients and taxpayers.

Each Beacon Community has elected specific and measurable improvement goals in each of three vital areas for health systems improvement: quality, cost-efficiency, and population health. Goals vary according to the needs and priorities of each community.

Each community will also be expected to access existing federal programs and promote health information exchange at the community level.

The Beacon Community awards are part of an overall \$100 billion federal government investment in science, innovation and technology through ARRA to spur domestic job creation in emerging industries and create a long-term foundation for economic growth.

HealthLink and the other awardees were selected from among more than 130 applications. An additional \$30 million is currently available to fund additional Beacon Community cooperative agreement awards.

It also received the largest award among the 15 communities, which included the Geisinger Clinic in Danville, Pa., \$16.07 million; and the Mayo Clinic of Rochester, Minn., \$12.3 million.

HealthLink, a nonprofit corporation, provides an electronic network of clinical information from multiple sources, giving physicians providers, hospitals and health insurers shared access to laboratory results, prescription drug history and other transcribed reports.