



2021 Cambia Grove Innovator Fellowship Program



*Executive Summary: Argonaut FHIR Accelerator Project
and the Value Metrics Framework*

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About the Accelerator

This accelerator project is designed to address the joint recommendations issued between HL7, and a collaboration of technology (primarily EHR) vendors, and providers organizations. The focus of this accelerator project is to create the “building blocks” from which other more complex workflows and content can be derived.

Interviews

The process of collecting information on the value proposition of Argonaut Implementation Guides was initiated by a point of contact at the project, who identified subject matter experts (SME) for each use case. Once connected with a SME, the fellows conducted one or more interviews to collect anonymous anecdotes and explanations of the use case. If deemed necessary by the fellow, additional interview subjects were identified by the SME, followed by additional interviews of a similar nature. Each use case had somewhere between 1 and 3 in-depth interviews.

Common Themes

The common theme in Argonaut use cases is their time-limited scope. This accelerator picks use cases once a year, and attempts to select those which are able to be completed within the course of the next year. Many of the use cases selected by Argonaut tend to be foundational in nature, with a strong preference for the end product to be modular, and extensible. This work is intended to be picked up and incorporated as part of other use cases (including in other Accelerator projects).

The practical result of these foundational use cases is that the value is often not apparent to a non-technical audience. While use cases in other accelerators often address business problems at an applied level (e.g. live check of pharmacy benefits), Argonaut has many use cases which make up only a part of an applied solution.

¹ The terms “Implementation Guide” and “Use Case” are used interchangeably throughout this process, and readers should consider them equivalent within all documentation produced by the Value Metrics Fellowship program.

Because of this somewhat indirect value proposition, it can be difficult to identify the instances where Argonaut use cases have been applied. However, because of the foundational nature of many of these use cases, they are incorporated as components of many of the applied use cases in other accelerators.

Potential Barriers

The greatest barrier to the implementation of Argonaut use cases is the abstract nature of the use cases, which can make the business value of implementation too abstract to be understood by non-technical audiences. The highly specific functionality makes these use cases very reusable, but requires some imagination by the implementer to understand applicable problems.

A secondary barrier is that the use cases vary wildly in their development support structure. For example, Clinical Decision Support (CDS) Hooks contains clear diagrams and a development sandbox with technical examples of the hook in action. Other APIs do not have this “extra” documentation, despite such documentation being crucial for a simple and straightforward development cycle. This is especially important given that Argonaut use cases are abstract -- if they are not intuitive to implement, it is difficult for a developer to advocate for the API in good conscience. If neither the technical nor the business lead are willing to advocate for the API, it will not be implemented to the same extent.

Other Points of Interest

Argonaut is a unique accelerator project because of how other accelerators liberally borrow from the use cases proposed by argonaut. This makes Argonaut a foundational accelerator, which is both a blessing and a curse. If Argonaut makes systematic changes to the implementation difficulty or clarity of its APIs, it will have cascading effects across all the FHIR accelerators.

Recommendations

We highly recommend that the Argonaut community observe and mimic the documentation for CDS hooks and strive to implement similar levels of documentation for each API. We also suggest that during the initial process for choosing the API, the team members ascertain business workflows that would be enabled by the introduction of this API.

Even if those workflows are several degrees removed, including such a “why should we implement” list couched in business terms would be crucial for enabling business leads to understand the API’s value.