



Objective Guidance for Shared Governance, Readiness, and Long-Term Success

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Executive Summary

Epic Community Connect can extend Epic's capabilities to community hospitals and affiliated organizations, but its success depends on the operating partnership behind the technology. The host must be prepared to function as a reliable service provider, while the hosted organization must understand how the model will affect autonomy, governance, staffing, workflows, data access, support, and decision-making. Addressing these realities early helps both organizations prevent misaligned expectations, unclear accountability, costly delays, and strained relationships.

An experienced consulting firm provides the objective perspective needed to bridge the interests of both organizations. Drawing on experience across Community Connect implementations, an independent advisor can clarify expectations, identify gaps, surface risks, and distinguish proven practices from local preferences without being constrained by internal politics or legacy decisions. This balanced guidance supports more transparent decisions, stronger accountability, and earlier resolution of issues that could otherwise affect scope, cost, timelines, or long-term support.

This paper identifies five connected opportunities for laying positive groundwork: selecting the right host and partnership, defining the relationship and contractual model, aligning maturity and governance, building an effective staffing and workflow strategy, and strengthening readiness and change adoption. Together, these activities form a practical decision path from initial evaluation through Go-Live and stabilization. Structured evaluation, clear responsibility models, informed governance, realistic resource planning, supportable workflow design, and measurable readiness activities help both parties reduce implementation risk and move forward with shared expectations. Ultimately, the quality of the partnership behind the platform will determine whether Community Connect delivers sustainable clinical, operational, financial, and strategic value.

The Unsaid Assumptions of Epic Community Connect

Epic Community Connect introduces several assumptions organizations may not fully recognize at the outset. The host effectively becomes a vendor, and its staff assume customer support responsibilities potentially including travel requirements. The hosted organization, meanwhile, gives up a degree of autonomy and must quickly learn Epic

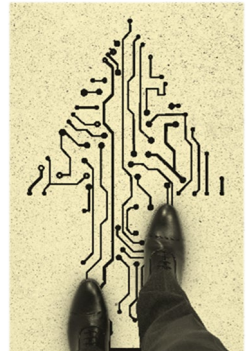
terminology and governance practices to participate effectively in decision-making. Both parties must understand and fulfill the obligations defined in the host-hosted contract, including expectations for support, customization, staffing, data, and escalation. The hosted organization also needs a plan to realign IT personnel, define and communicate its data needs, and coordinate internal resources with the host. Above all, consistent communication between the organizations is the foundation for success.

The Value of a Trusted Consulting Firm

Unspoken assumptions can create gaps in expectations, accountability, and decision-making. Guidance independent of both the host and hosted organizations helps ensure concerns are heard, tradeoffs are understood, and decisions remain aligned with shared goals.

An experienced consulting firm brings an objective viewpoint without being constrained by internal politics, legacy decisions, or competing priorities. Drawing on work across multiple organizations, the consultant can distinguish proven practices from local preferences and help both parties by doing the following:

- Assess readiness and clarify expectations.
- Identify gaps and surface risks early.
- Guide decisions about governance, staffing, contracts, workflows, customization, data, and support.
- Translate lessons from other implementations into practical actions.



This balanced perspective reduces friction, strengthens accountability, and helps both organizations address challenges before they affect timelines, budgets, or relationships. It also supports practical decisions and coordinated actions contributing to long-term success.

Preparing for Success: Laying the Groundwork

Opportunity 1: Make an Informed Host and Partnership Decision

The value of an experienced consulting firm is realized when its objective perspective is paired with a disciplined process to build confidence, alignment, and readiness from the outset. The first opportunity is to determine whether Community Connect is the right model and, if so, which host offers the strongest fit. Structured decision tools can engage the right stakeholders, compare options consistently, document the rationale, and build internal support. To corroborate that decision, a consulting firm can facilitate a weighted evaluation of prospective hosts across service levels, governance participation, implementation capacity, total cost, data access, support responsiveness, and strategic fit. Interviews with clinical, operational, financial, and IT leaders can reveal priorities that may not appear in a standard proposal, such as local reporting autonomy or rapid escalation for critical workflows. After a preferred host is identified, an independent contract review can clarify obligations and risks related to governance, service levels, staffing, customization, support, and accountability. The outcome is a defensible selection supported by transparent criteria, broader stakeholder commitment, fewer contracting surprises, and a partnership chosen for long-term compatibility rather than price or proximity alone.

Opportunity 2: Define the Relationship and Contractual Model

Establishing the right relationship model is equally important. Community Connect cannot be treated solely as a traditional vendor arrangement or as an informal affiliate relationship. A blended approach recognizes the host's responsibility to deliver reliable services while respecting the hosted organization's operational priorities and need for meaningful

participation. An experienced advisor can help both parties define this balance early and document it in the contract, creating a foundation for productive interactions during negotiation, governance, customization decisions, and ongoing support. This balance can be put into practice through a responsibility matrix specifying who owns application decisions, workflow approvals, testing, training, issue resolution, upgrades, data requests, and communication. It can also define escalation thresholds and establish a joint leadership forum for decisions affecting both organizations. The outcome is a practical operating model in which responsibilities are understood, issues move to the right decision-maker without unnecessary delay, and both parties have a consistent way to resolve disagreements before they affect the relationship or implementation timeline.

Opportunity 3: Align Maturity, Governance, and Decision-Making

With the relationship framework established, the next opportunity is to assess the information systems maturity of both organizations and determine how well their capabilities fit together. An unbiased evaluation of technology use, information use, data management, change management, operational alignment, and business intelligence can identify strengths and gaps before implementation. The assessment may reveal, for example, the hosted organization has strong clinical leadership but limited data governance, while the host may have mature enterprise standards that do not account



for local reporting or community-specific operational needs. A consultant can document these differences, identify the capabilities to be developed locally, and recommend where the hosted organization should participate in the host's governance structure. The assessment then becomes the basis for governance design, including local decision-making structures, decision rights, escalation paths, stakeholder roles, meeting cadence, and approval processes. The outcome is faster, better-informed decision-making, clearer accountability, fewer late-stage design reversals, and a governance model to protect enterprise standards while preserving appropriate local input.

Opportunity 4: Build the Right Staffing and Workflow Strategy

Maturity and governance findings also provide the basis for realistic staffing and workflow decisions. Standard Epic staffing recommendations may address the technical build but may not reflect the hosted organization's operational, informatics, governance, and change management needs. A consulting firm can translate the assessment into a practical staffing model that strengthens weak areas, defines responsibilities across both organizations, and provides a roadmap for sustainable internal capabilities. A resulting sample staffing model may call for a dedicated clinical informatics lead, a data and reporting owner, operational subject matter experts with protected project time, and local change champions even when the host supplies application analysts. Those roles are also essential when the organizations evaluate where standardization is appropriate and where local variation is necessary. A smaller community hospital, for instance, may require a swing-bed workflow unfamiliar to a larger host. An experienced advisor can explain the operational and regulatory need, document the use case, and translate it into a standardized, supportable design rather than an isolated customization. The outcome is a staffing plan reflecting the work, clearer ownership across host and hosted teams, fewer resource bottlenecks, and workflows supporting local care delivery without creating unnecessary long-term maintenance.

Opportunity 5: Strengthen Readiness and Change Adoption

The final opportunity is to convert the partnership's plans into measurable operational readiness and sustained adoption. Consultants who have supported successful implementations and helped recover troubled ones can apply practical lessons to surface risks internal teams may overlook. Their independent position often encourages candid input from local stakeholders, revealing adoption concerns, workflow gaps, and organizational readiness issues that may not otherwise reach the host. These risks can be identified through structured readiness interviews, workflow validation sessions, role-

based training assessments, and Go-Live simulations. The consulting firm can translate these findings into a prioritized readiness plan with accountable owners, target dates, measurable criteria, and leadership reporting, avoiding issues arising when managers have not reinforced new responsibilities, providers lack protected training time, downstream interfaces have not been fully tested, or support teams are unclear about escalation procedures. The outcome is earlier risk mitigation, stronger user preparation, more coordinated Go-Live support, and faster stabilization.

Conclusion

Collectively, the five opportunities create a deliberate foundation of informed selection, clear contracts, balanced relationships, aligned governance, appropriate staffing, supportable workflows, and measurable readiness. This foundation allows the host and hosted organizations to begin implementation with shared expectations and sustain the partnership beyond Go-Live.

Epic Community Connect is more than a technology implementation; it is a long-term operating partnership. Success requires the host and hosted organizations to recognize the assumptions inherent in the model, understand their respective obligations, and build the structures needed to work together effectively. The host must be prepared to serve as a reliable vendor and support partner, while the hosted organization must adapt to shared standards, new decision-making processes, and changes in autonomy, staffing, data management, and support. When these expectations remain unspoken or are addressed too late, they create avoidable friction, cost, delays, and operational risk.

An experienced consulting firm helps convert those risks into opportunities by bringing objective guidance, practical experience, and a balanced perspective to both sides of the relationship. Across the partnership lifecycle, an independent advisor helps ensure decisions are transparent, responsibilities are clear, and local needs are addressed without undermining enterprise standards. This combination of strategic insight and disciplined preparation allows issues to be identified earlier, tradeoffs to be resolved more constructively, and implementation plans to reflect the realities of both organizations.

Ultimately, Community Connect success depends on the quality of the partnership behind the platform. Organizations investing early in informed selection, clear contracts, shared governance, realistic staffing, supportable workflows, candid communication, and measurable readiness create a stronger foundation for Go-Live and sustained value. With trusted third-party guidance, the host and hosted organizations can move forward with shared expectations, greater accountability, and a partnership equipped to support evolving clinical, operational, financial, and strategic priorities over time.

About the Author



Stephanie Hojan

Stephanie is a healthcare consulting executive with 20 years in the healthcare industry. She has employee experience on both the payer side and the health system perspective and is a proven leader. Stephanie assembled and managed a strong reporting and analytics team while continuing to consult on reporting / data strategy and operational support needs, and has led HSi in executive roles since 2015. As a strong, objective 3rd party, Stephanie assists organizations in bringing clarity to their long-term vision for reporting and analytics, developing the road map, and facilitating its implementation to bring it to fruition in a manner best suited for the individual organization.

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