

## Funding

Under the negotiated agreement, the Ministry of Health will provide approximately \$108 million over the six year term of the agreement (April 2006 to March 31, 2012). PITO disburses the funds to physicians on a cost-shared basis between government (70%) and physicians (30%).

Under the agreement, funding is provided towards:

1. Software licensing, hosting, support and maintenance for PITO-qualified Electronic Medical Records (EMRs)
2. Implementation & Transition Support
3. Hardware (PCs, printers, supporting software, scanners, etc.)
4. A secure, private network and secure email

The Private Physician Network (PPN) is a secure, private end-to-end network provided by the government that allows secure high speed access to your EMR, Internet access and secure email messaging.

For physicians whose offices have not yet implemented an EMR, up to 70% of eligible hardware, software, implementation and monthly ongoing costs can be funded through PITO. (Please visit the PITO website for details of the funding model.)

For physicians who have already adopted an EMR, the "PITO Early Adopter Program" helps offset their monthly EMR costs for up to 18 months while they prepare to move to a PITO-qualified EMR. Reimbursement occurs on conversion to a PITO-qualified EMR.

## PITO

PHYSICIAN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY OFFICE

With PITO, BC physicians can help lead the way in providing the last vital link to truly integrated and automated health care.

For more information, please see the FAQ section on [www.pito.bc.ca](http://www.pito.bc.ca)

PITO Office:  
1665 West Broadway  
Vancouver, BC  
V6J 5A4  
Tel: 604.638.2946  
Email: [info@pito.bc.ca](mailto:info@pito.bc.ca)

Jeremy Smith  
PITO Program Director  
[programdirector@pito.bc.ca](mailto:programdirector@pito.bc.ca)

The Physician Information Technology Office (PITO) is an outcome of the 2006 Agreement, Appendix C ([www.bcma.org](http://www.bcma.org)), where the provincial government and the BCMA agreed to work collaboratively to "co-ordinate, facilitate and support information technology planning and implementation for physicians... including the development and implementation in British Columbia of standardized systems of electronic medical records" (EMR).

## Electronic Medical Records

---

EMRs are one of seven essential elements of British Columbia's long term vision for the integration of information and communications into the health care system as outlined in the province's *e-Health Strategic Framework* of November 2005. The other six components are: the Interoperable Electronic Health Record (iEHR), the Provincial Laboratory Information Solution Project (PLIS), the eDrug Project (PharmaNet II), the Provincial Diagnostic Imaging Project (Connecting DI), the Public Health Information Project (PHIP), and Telehealth.

## PITO

---

PITO is set apart from the other e-Health initiatives by its focus on introducing information technology in physicians' offices – a vital link in e-Health, as that is where most patient information is captured and the majority of patient care is delivered.

PITO is governed by a Steering Committee of three practicing physicians appointed by the BCMA and three representatives appointed by the provincial government, and acts on a consensus basis. It reports to the e-Health Steering Committee, which in turn reports to the BC Health Leadership Council, comprised of CEOs from BC health authorities and senior executives from the MOH.

BC's PITO initiative is preceded in Alberta and Ontario by the Physician Office System Project (POSP) and OntarioMD. Lessons learned by these two organizations have been shared and incorporated into the PITO program and processes. PITO is also working in collaboration with the BCMA Practice Support Program (PSP).

## Vendor Selection

---

An EMR is similar to any clinical tool and must be tested thoroughly to ensure it will support quality patient care and not endanger patients and their care. Therefore, time was invested in a comprehensive request for proposals (RFP) process designed to ensure the EMR selected vendors could provide the high quality products and customer support required by this initiative. Several steps have been created to ensure those specifications are met.

Only EMRs that will be hosted offsite by an accredited, non-government third-party application service provider (ASP) model were considered. More than 30 proposals to the RFP were evaluated. The successful vendors, identified in July 2007, also underwent conformance testing with the Ministry of Health before their software became PITO-qualified EMRs and eligible for funding.

Criteria for the RFP process was developed by an advisory group comprised of representatives from both the MOH and BCMA, including more than 40 practicing general and specialist physicians from across BC who were selected by the Ministry. The process was managed by the government's Strategic Acquisitions and Technology Procurement (SATP) branch on behalf of the MOH.

As the PITO program progresses, it is reviewed regularly to gauge how effectively the needs of specific segments of BC physicians are being met with respect to geographics, specialties and other variations. Accordingly, after July 1, 2009, up to two additional vendors may be added to the PITO-qualified list.

## Physician Participation

---

Participation in PITO is voluntary and applies to all interested physicians who are independent practitioners in BC, as opposed to salaried physicians in a hospital or medical school.

PITO launched pilot projects in September 2007 to evaluate the PITO processes and service offerings, including EMR, network (PPN), hardware, and implementation support, before broad implementation started in the spring of 2008. The pilot groups include both current users and non-users of EMRs and represent a geographic cross-section of the province's specialists and family medicine practitioners.

To date, PITO has been working with over 2,100 physicians towards EMR implementations.

## Physician Applications to PITO

---

PITO holds two application periods every year, one in February/March and one in August/September for projects starting in the spring and fall. Application forms are available at [www.pito.bc.ca](http://www.pito.bc.ca).

## Implementation Support

---

PITO is more than a funding initiative. The PITO team is available to help you with pre-implementation planning, provide tools to help you make an informed choice when selecting an EMR, provide support to ensure that the implementation goes smoothly, and conduct a post-implementation review to ensure everything goes well.

If you are interested in adopting a PITO qualified EMR, contact the PITO office and the PITO team will help you with the next steps.