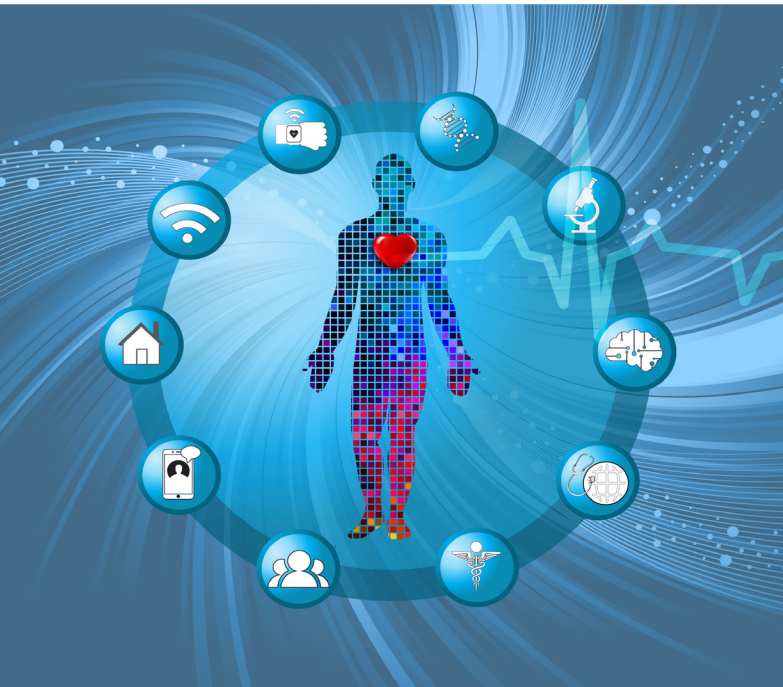


# A CALL TO ACTION A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DIGITAL HEALTH



*A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DIGITAL HEALTH OFFERS A FRAMEWORK FOR SHAPING AN ENDURING, ADAPTIVE DIGITAL HEALTH ECOSYSTEM.*

An explosion of new consumer- and enterprise-focused technologies has become a disruptive force in how the U.S. population experiences healthcare and well-being. These technologies—which collectively enable “digital health”—have the potential to transform the current system of receiving healthcare for individuals, families, and communities. The COVID pandemic illustrated that potential: it created a surge in the use of telehealth and other forms of digital health services. Now the healthcare system confronts the question of whether that surge will persist and drive truly transformative change. The alternative—simply layering digital technologies on top of the current system—will not merely maintain the status quo but will actually worsen the healthcare options available to those who are already behind in terms of connectivity, digital literacy, and access to quality care. That result, in a nation of such wealth and innovative capacity as the United States, is unacceptable.

Federal agencies and other stakeholders are making significant investments in new tools; methods for capturing, providing, and using data; and innovative ways to provide health services. Yet they have never

formally agreed on a national set of priorities to guide this multitude of innovators toward common goals, collaborative work, and high-priority outcomes. The nation must act strategically, with full consideration of the distinctive challenges and opportunities that digital health presents.

As a starting point, MITRE shared a draft framework in May 2021, with the intent of starting a conversation. The 2022 version includes a number of significant changes that reflect the insightful feedback we received and the evolution of our thinking. We propose the following six goals, with a focus on realizing the vision of **improved health and well-being of the nation powered by a digital health ecosystem.**

**Goal 1. Form a connected health ecosystem defined by timely and secure data exchange.** Semantic interoperability of health data is essential to advancing digital delivery of healthcare. A connected U.S. ecosystem will securely and reliably move actionable data on demand to those who need it when they need it, which will

improve health outcomes. Success in achieving this vision will depend on standardizing formats for patient identification, health data, and health architecture, as well as on building a safe, secure, and resilient digital health ecosystem.

- Goal 2. Empower individuals to take charge of their health and well-being.** Digital technologies and tools should enable individuals to better manage their health and access health information, anywhere and anytime, without special effort. The foundation for achieving this goal is individual ownership of personal health data, complemented by national deployment of resources to strengthen digital literacy. Digital devices and systems must equip individuals and providers with meaningful and shareable information and enable greater engagement of individuals in maximizing their health and well-being.
- Goal 3. Establish artificial intelligence (AI) as a trusted cornerstone of digital health.** AI can strengthen digital delivery of healthcare in multiple ways. It can increase the productivity and efficiency of care delivery, allow healthcare systems to provide more and better care to more people, improve the experience of healthcare practitioners, and increase recipients' trust in the guidance and care they receive via digital systems. Harnessing AI requires that its application be transparent, equitable, reliable, and unbiased.
- Goal 4. Institutionalize rapid sharing of integrated data for public health.** Public health authorities and their partners need access to complete, timely data to support decision making. Digital technologies can enable information flow throughout the federated public health ecosystem. Of critical importance is bringing together person- and provider-generated data from the primary care and public health domains. Adopting an integrated and interoperable systems approach to funding

public health can sustain these changes.

- Goal 5. Build a workforce skilled in application of digital health.** A sustainable healthcare workforce will use new technologies to deliver person-centered, integrated quality care. Digital health technologies will enable individuals to receive coordinated and collaborative home- and community-centered health services supported by a digitally empowered workforce that includes healthcare and social services.
- Goal 6. Grow digital equity to achieve health equity.** Digital technologies are now foundational for delivering health services, support, and information. All citizens must be able to access and adopt affordable broadband-enabled technologies and be sufficiently familiar with digital systems to use them in meeting their personal and family health-related needs.

Spanning all of these goals is the need to build a digital health ecosystem that is trustworthy, transparent, and equitable. Meeting that need requires a collaborative governance process to replace the fragmented and out-of-date structures now in place. The complete national strategy details the key components of the structure required and recommends steps for achieving effective governance mechanisms.

*A National Strategy for Digital Health* is designed to provide leaders with a framework for effecting change—transformative change that is not merely technological, but also political, social, and cultural. Leaders at all levels of government and in public and private sector organizations have an immediate opportunity to shape an enduring, adaptive digital health ecosystem; they should act on that opportunity now.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The authors include members of the MITRE Health Advisory Committee and MITRE's Chief Technology and Medical Officer. Through the Health Advisory Committee, MITRE engages visionary senior-level executives to guide MITRE and the federally funded research and development centers (FFRDCs) we operate in identifying innovations and solutions to transform the national health and human services enterprise.

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Dr. Cassel serves on the faculty at the University of California at San Francisco School of Medicine, where she is working on projects in aging and longevity, the role of technology in healthcare, biomedical ethics, and health policy. She is the former President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Quality Forum and served on President Obama's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology.

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