"Building Successful Telemedicine Programs"
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Ronald S. Weinstein, MD, FCAP, FATA

Founding Director, Arizona Telemedicine Program

Professor of Pathology, Medical Imaging, Public Health, and Pharmacy Science

The University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ

President-Emeritus, American Telemedicine Association

Boston Logan International Airport Medical Station – *Connecting to the Massachusetts General Hospital*

First Case - April, 1968

Dr. Kenneth Bird

Where to start?

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Assess Your Market & Need  →  Establish Your Vision  →  Build Your Financial Plan
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Form Your Partnership & Workflows  ←  Do Your Due Diligence  ←  Find Your Partner
         ↓
Train Your Staff  →  Market Your Service  →  Evaluate Your Program
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Assess Your Market & Need

Involve Stakeholders in All Phases of Decision-making

- Internal stakeholders:
  - Administrators & business office
  - Clinical (all healthcare professionals, not just physicians)
  - Support staff (e.g., case coordinators)
  - IT
  - Legal
- External stakeholders:
  - Patients & patient groups/representatives
  - Other healthcare providers (e.g., local medicine man)

What Is Needed in Your Community?

- **Look at patient data & outcomes (e.g., # diabetics, # diagnosed with late stage diabetic retinopathy)**
  - **For your community**
  - **For your hospital/system**

- **Look at local physician coverage gaps (e.g., ? no neurologists)**

- **What healthcare services are patients having to travel or be transported for?**

- **Look at regulations (e.g., penalties for readmission)**

How Will Telemedicine Tie into Your Practice?

- **Complement/expand your clinical offerings or substitute when your providers are unavailable?**

- **What specialty services?**

- **What hours will telemedicine be offered?**

- **Personnel requirements?**

- **What are service goals? Provider-patient? Provider-provider?**

- **Where are you connecting? Provider office? Telemedicine clinic? Patient home?**
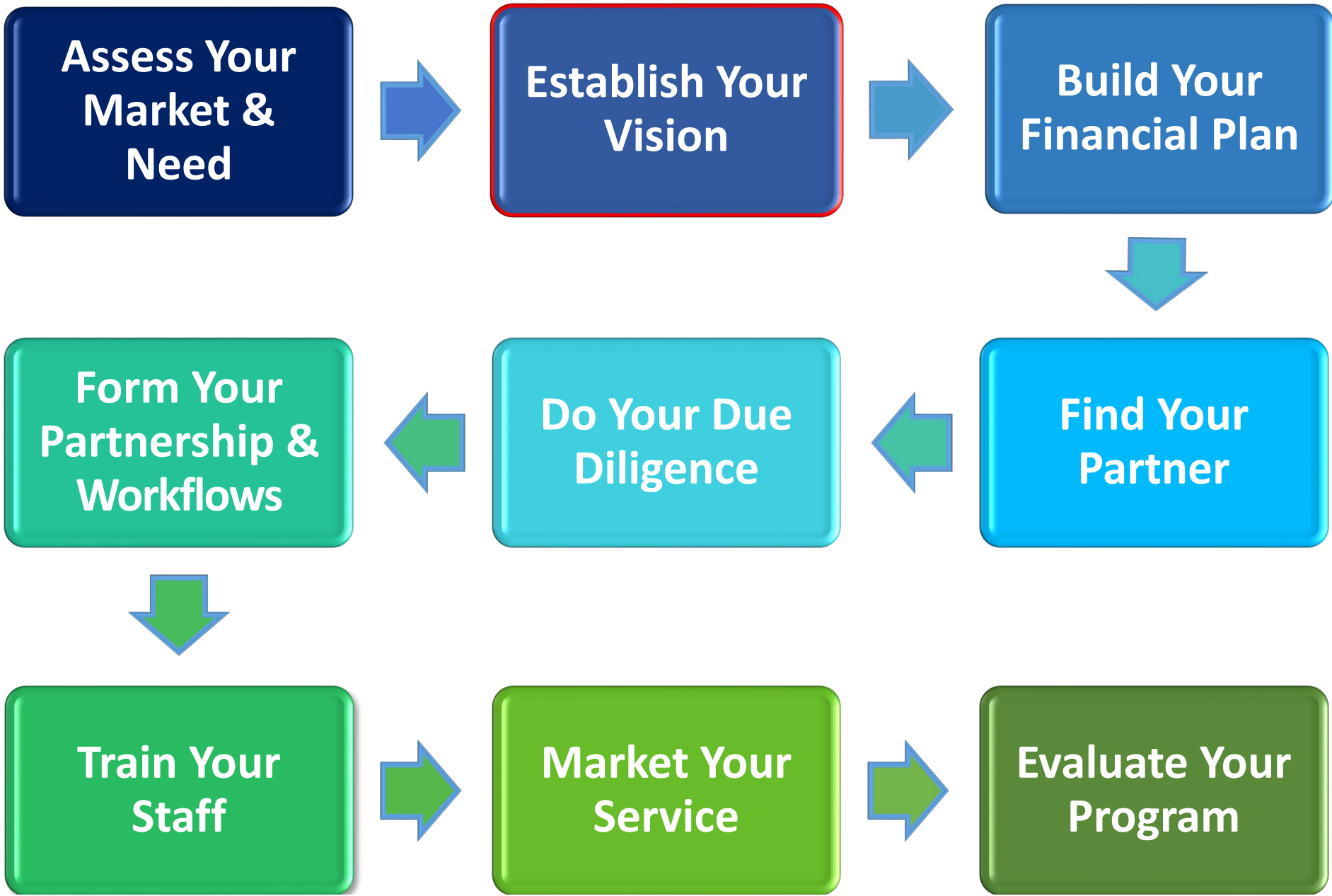
How Will Telemedicine Tie into Your Practice?

- *Recommended approach:*
  - *Choose one or two of the most important services and start with them*
    - *Don't take on too much at one time*
  - *Expand upon initial service; build program incrementally*
    - *Figure out process for integrating 1-2 services effectively & efficiently, then expand*

- "Tele-everything" **Disaster!**

Reasons to Partner with a Service Provider

- **Capability to deliver clinical services without interruption**
  - **Recruit & retain practitioners**
  - **Large networks of credentialed healthcare providers**

- **Partner can handle back-office functions (reports and billing)**

- **Partner can manage or co-manage program**

- **Experience/expertise**

- *Support*
  - **Help desk**
  - **Legal & regulatory**
  - **IT**
  - **Administrative**
  - **Marketing**

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Establish Your Vision

Establish a Vision Aligned with Your Mission

Establish a Vision of the Delivery Model

# Establish a Vision Aligned with Your Mission

- **Vision statement: Define the optimal desired future state; provide guidance & inspiration**
  - *"Our vision is to fully incorporate telehealth technologies into the routine business and practices for the provision of health care in our County and throughout Arizona."*

- **Mission statement: Identify and understand the objective(s) the telemedicine service will accomplish – what it does, who does it, how it does what it does**
  - *"Our mission is to improve the health of citizens in our county through the development and evaluation of innovative health care and education services supported by health information technologies."*

Establish Your Vision

Reality Testing

The Physician-Patient Relationship

- **Generally, once a physician affirmatively acts in a patient's case by examining, diagnosing, treating, or agreeing to do so, and the patient accepts, a relationship exists**

- **Must establish an appropriate physician-patient relationship in order to prescribe**
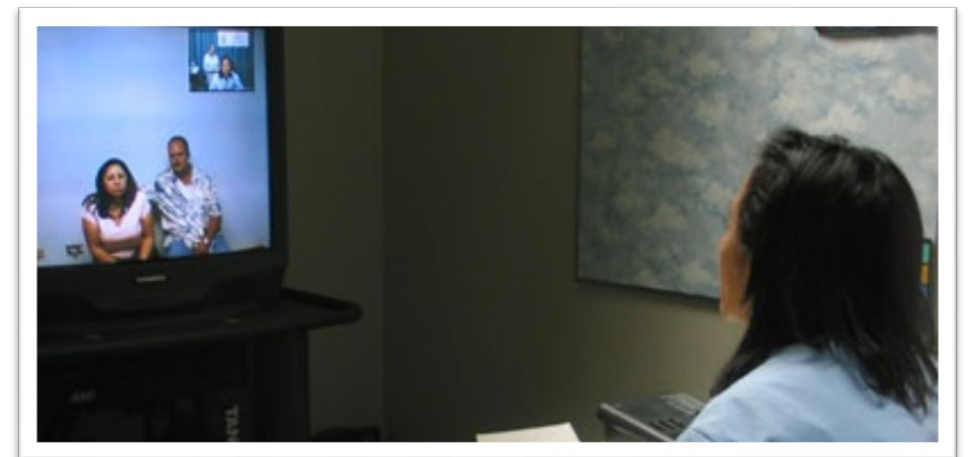
Know the Legal and Regulatory Landscape

- **All the laws still apply regardless of whether it's in-person or via telemedicine: HIPAA, privacy & security, licensing, anti-kickback, liability, standard of care.**

Know the Legal and Regulatory Landscape
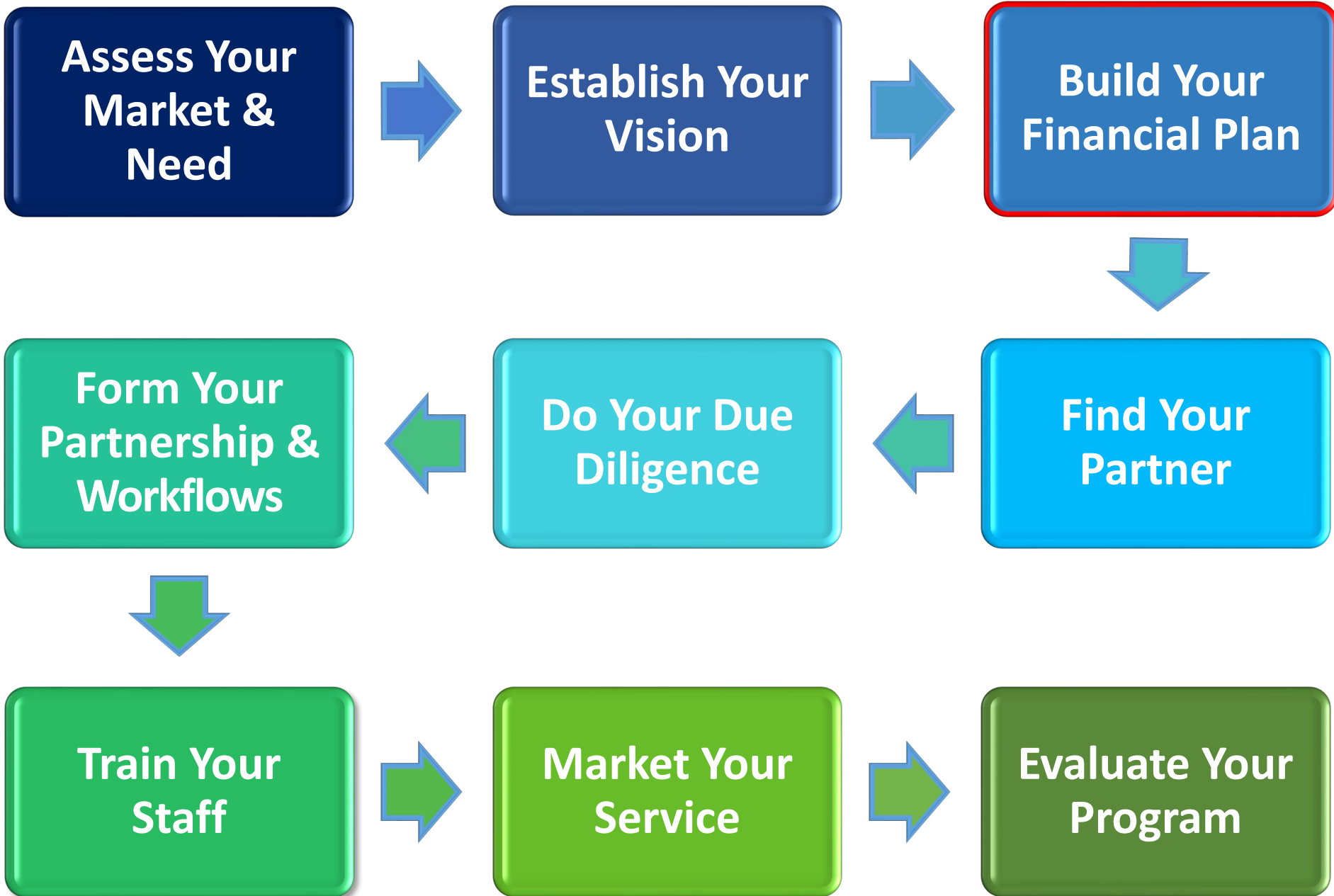
- **Informed consent & education**:
  - **Mitigates risk**
  - **Informed consent is required by AZ law**
    - **For Behavioral Health under AHCCCS (administered by ADHS/DBHS) informed consent must be obtained by at least 1 year BH experience— also, separate informed consent required for recording a video session.**
  - ***Even if informed consent not required*, should educate patient about unique aspects of telemedicine compared to traditional visit**

- **Arizona does not require an in-person exam to establish Provider-Patient Relationship: Video technology must be adequate to conduct history and physical exam remotely**

- **Medicare also allows video substitute for in-person exam**

Stark & Anti-Kickback Statutes

- Stark Law prohibits physicians from referring patients for designated health services to an entity with which the physician has a financial relationship.

- AKS prohibits offering or soliciting anything of value, directly or indirectly, in return for patient referrals.

- Telemedicine may be subject to fraud and abuse laws if the use directly or indirectly generates reimbursement from a federal health program.

- Equipment leases or the provision of free telemedicine equipment to referral sources should be evaluated under fraud and abuse laws.

Credentialing & Privileging of Tele-providers

- **CMS Proxy Credentialing Rule:**

  - *Allows medical staff of hospital where patient is being treated via telemedicine to rely on the credentialing and privileging done at the Medicare-certified hospital where the telemedicine practitioner is located and credentialed*

  - *Written agreement required*

  - *Streamlined: Obtaining medical staff privileges at a hospital takes 2-3 months*

  - *May require hospital bylaw amendment*

- ***Or, retain complete credentialing of all telemedicine providers using existing credentialing process***

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Build Your Financial Plan

Build Your Financial Plan

- Return on investment
  - Savings
  - Revenue
  - Strategic contribution
  - Penalty avoidance

- Payment for services
  - Subscription
  - Fee-for-service
  - Direct from patient
  - Who will do the billing?
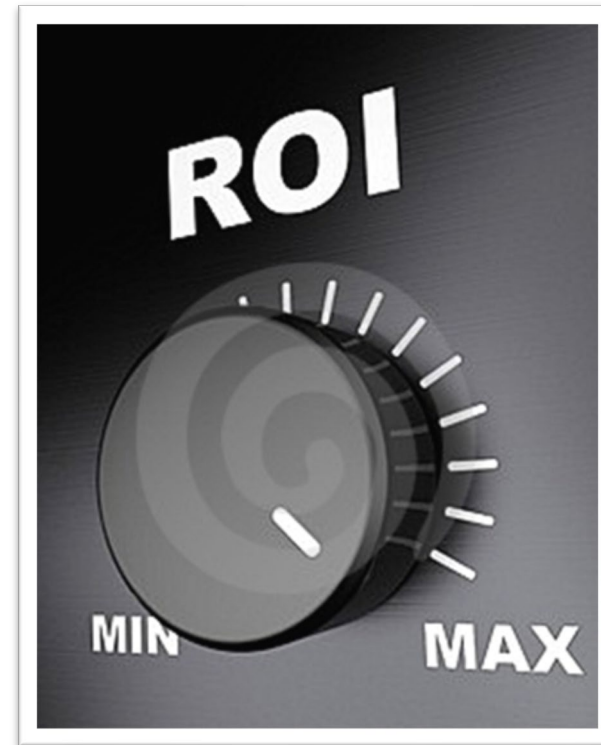
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Find the Right Partner(s)

TELEMEDICINE APPLICATIONS

Where to Start?

- Arizona Telemedicine Program (ATP) – Home page

- ATP -- Service Provider Directory

https://telemedicine.arizona.edu/servicedirectory

Questions to Start With

- **Does their history and implementation plan sync with your organization and goals (mission & vision)?**

- **Number of years in telehealth business**
  - **If they're a startup, who are their investors and how committed are they?**
  - **Who are their customers? Will they provide references?**

- **How strong is their management team?**
  - **Expertise and experience**
  - **Healthcare experience or only IT and technical?**

- **Where are the located – headquarters, providers, tech support?**

Past Performance

- **Number of sites potential partner has taken live**

- **Number of customers – past & present**

- **How many telemedicine cases have they done? What kind?**

- **What is their growth rate?**

- **Can they provide data to back up their claims?**

  - **Clinical**

  - **Financial**

Questions to Start With

- **Do they have experience with the coverage and capability you need?**
  - **Hours of availability**
  - **Wait times for consults**

- **Are they willing to work with your organization's size and number of consultations?**

- **Do they have a robust implementation plan?**
  - **In writing**
  - **Proven, battle-tested**

How Strong is their Clinical Team?

- **Number of physicians/providers in the specialty you need, at the level you need (# and qualifications), and licensed in Arizona (or your state)**

- **Clinical experience, training, degrees, board certification, lawsuits**

- **If academic institution: faculty, fellows or residents?**

- **How strong is their clinical team?**

What Technology Platform Do They Use?

- How strong is their platform?
  - Does it meet standards?
  - FDA-approved devices?
  - HIPAA compliant?
  - Reliable, easy to use? How many clicks/how much training is required?
  - What is the failure rate?
  - Interoperability?
  - Connections to EHRs? PACS? Does it work with your EHR and your PACS? Costs to integrate?

- Or, will they use whatever platform you provide?

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Due Diligence, Documentation & Your Contract

Due Diligence: Background Check

Do Your Due Diligence

- Do they have proper licensure, etc.?

- What is their malpractice history and insurance?

- Do they have third-party credentials (e.g., Joint Commission, American Telemedicine Association, Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology certified HIT)?

- What is their BBB rating?

- Have they had trouble with IRS?

- Have they been in trouble with medical organizations?

- Have there been lawsuits against them?

Due Diligence: References

- Request a customer list/references and contact them
  - Are you happy with this company?
  - What have they provided to you?
  - What have your challenges been with this company?

- Find and interview customers not given as references

  - Search the web

  - Go to trade shows & conferences

  - Look for user groups

The Contract

- Ensure they have appropriate medical malpractice insurance, liability insurance

- Who will own the data? What data? Who will have rights to retain copies of the data? To license it, to sell it? For how long?

- Who will be responsible for continuity of care?

- Consider annually renewable contract

- Cover expansion

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Form Your Partnership & Integrate Telemedicine into Your Workflows

Form a Partnership

- Telemedicine service programs are not one-sided, turnkey programs

- Requires effort on both sides:

  - putting together a program and educating the user ends (client org staff, health care provider org staff, and patients)

  - integrating workflows

- <u>Collaborate</u> with partner on what program will look like; form unity of vision for what you are trying to accomplish

Recognize You Are Changing the Status Quo

- Identify and leverage the proponents/champions: CMO, CNO tend to be important sponsors

- Identify and embrace the outliers: Reach out, make them part of the process, hear and address their concerns

  - e.g., "Big Brother": eICU does not mean you are being watched 24/7; just that trends are being identified that need your attention

  - e.g., Will I have to become a technical expert?

  - e.g., Will my patients receive care as good as in person?

Agree on an Implementation Timeline

- Technical implementation is not what takes time

- Most time is spent working with the staff:
    - ensure messaging and impact is well understood
    - invaluable for successful implementation and ongoing relationship
    - Make sure everyone (not just providers) is trained

- Don't rush

- Do some dry runs (i.e., mock trial runs) with simulated patients before doing any actual cases

Communicate Internally & With Partner

- Project goals and plan, team members

- Site review by partner

- Tele-providers need to respect the pre-existing relationships and transfer arrangements in the community

- Reasonable and measurable expectations

- Trackable & well-defined metrics to measure telemedicine progress

- [Standards and guidelines](#) to be used for this service

Standards and Guidelines

- ATA Practice Guidelines:
  - Multiple specialties including telepathology, teleICU, telemental health, teledermatology, telerehabilitation, home telehealth, diabetic retinopathy
  - Also primary and urgent care, telepresenting, and core operational guidelines
  - Remote healthcare data management
  - others
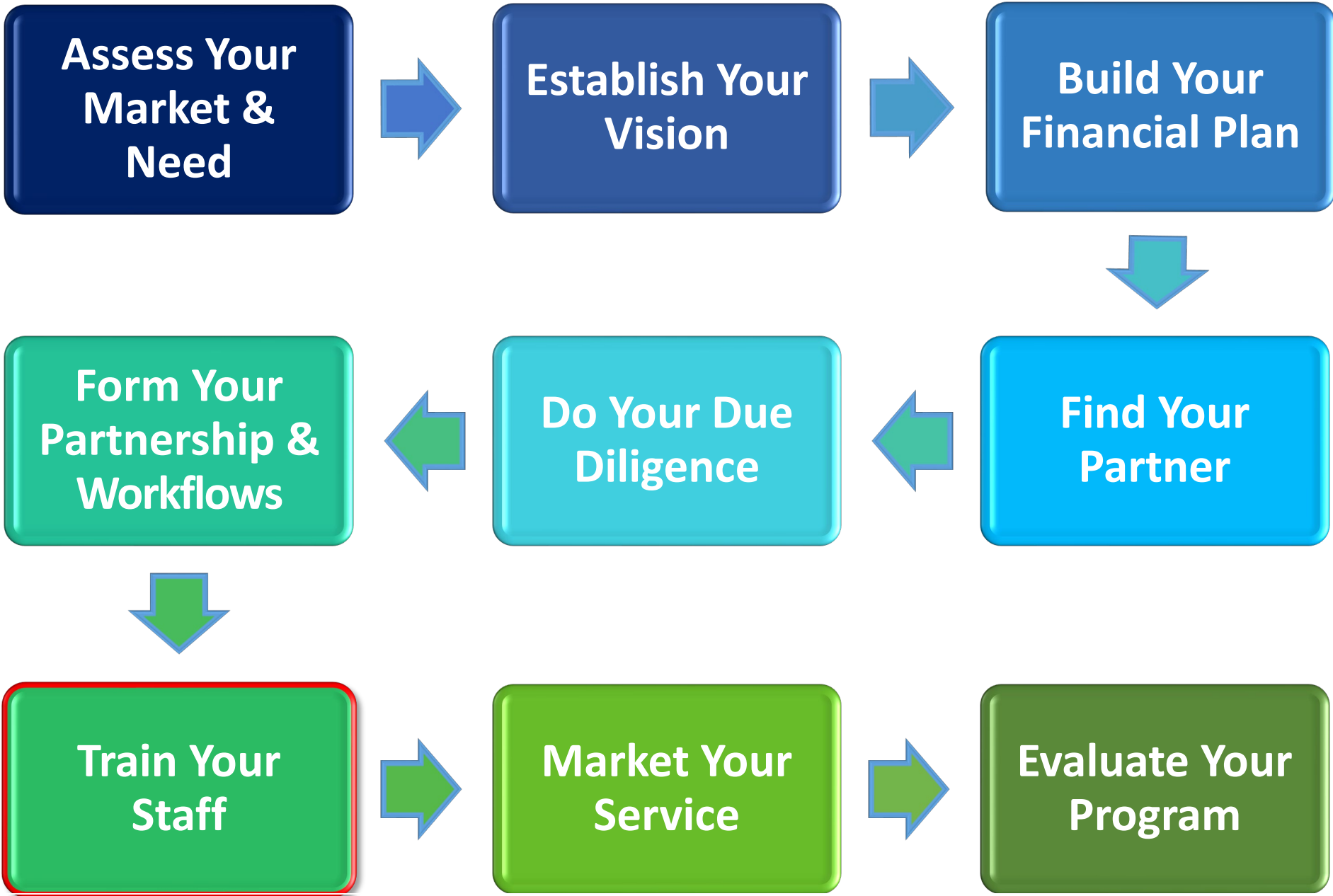
Train Your Providers & Staff

Train Your Providers & Staff

- **Telemedicine is an integrated component of your institution or practice and should be part of the normal position expectations**

- **Determine who needs to be trained (usually everyone)**

- **Determine content &extent of training needed for each position involved**

- **Determine how to provide the training & how often (for new users as well as refresher training)**

- **Evaluate training results**

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Market Your Service

Marketing Internally

- **Let people & stakeholders know what your results are**
  - **Consult numbers**
  - **Patient outcomes**
  - **Patient satisfaction**
  - **Staff satisfaction**

- **This is a team process; be transparent**

- **Invite input/suggestions**

- **Tell them in more than one way (meetings, website, emails, etc.)**

Marketing Externally

- **Let your community know there is a new service available**

    - **Press release**

    - **PSA**

    - **Website and web content marketing (SEO)**

    - **Blog with email updates/sign-up**

    - **Letter to patients**

    - **Success stories**

    - **Social media**

- **Cite partner experience & successes**

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Evaluate Your Program

Evaluation: How to Start

- View transition on a relative basis:

  - Have we improved?

  - In what ways?

  - To what extent?

- Use measurable, objective data – choose metrics in advance

- What are you concerned with?

What to Measure

- Patient-centered outcomes (e.g., clinical markers, reduced hospital stays)

- Provider-centered outcomes (e.g., diagnostic accuracy, efficiency & efficacy)

- Business outcomes (e.g., increased profits, reduced travel costs)

- Technical outcomes (e.g., faster network, more reliable communications, redundancy, better peripheral technology)

- Program outcomes (e.g., more sites added to network, number of consults, is the program growing?)

Evaluation Resources

- Southwest Telehealth Resource Center Online Learning Module: [Evaluation](#)

- [Telehealth Resource Centers Toolkits](#)

Thank you!

Questions?

Ronald S. Weinstein, M.D.

rweinstein@telemedicine.arizona.edu