

Connectathons, Projectathons, Prototyping, and Validation

Welcome to the newest addition of health care interoperability testing in Canada, the Projectathon! We hope that your participation in the upcoming events will deliver value for you and your organization and will help to pave the way to a more predictable future for Canadian health care interoperability.

Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise (IHE) Connectathons have long been viewed as a staple of technical interoperability testing around the world. In fact, in the United States under Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) leadership, ever-increasing showcases of health care connectivity have been organized for many years. More recently Europe, South America, Asia Pacific and other parts of the world have also started adopting this testing approach. A key benefit of Connectathons is the ability to provide objective evaluation of technical specifications and to demonstrate solution portability and encapsulation.

Connectathon Background

IHE International, the organization that introduced the concept of the Connectathon, broke down complex interoperability scenarios into the so-called Integration Profiles. These profiles (as they are referred to by the health information technology industry) are detailed technical specifications that describe and clarify how to use standards in an unambiguous way to solve a particular interoperability challenge.

The technology platform at the core of the Connectathon is called Gazelle and it represents a technical rendering of the integration profiles. The platform allows vendors to test and prove that their products align with the published specifications. This brings many benefits to both digital health solution providers and to implementers wishing to invest in a particular capability. Products can be selected based on listed interoperability capabilities that have been proven in these connectivity events.

Connectathon Objectives

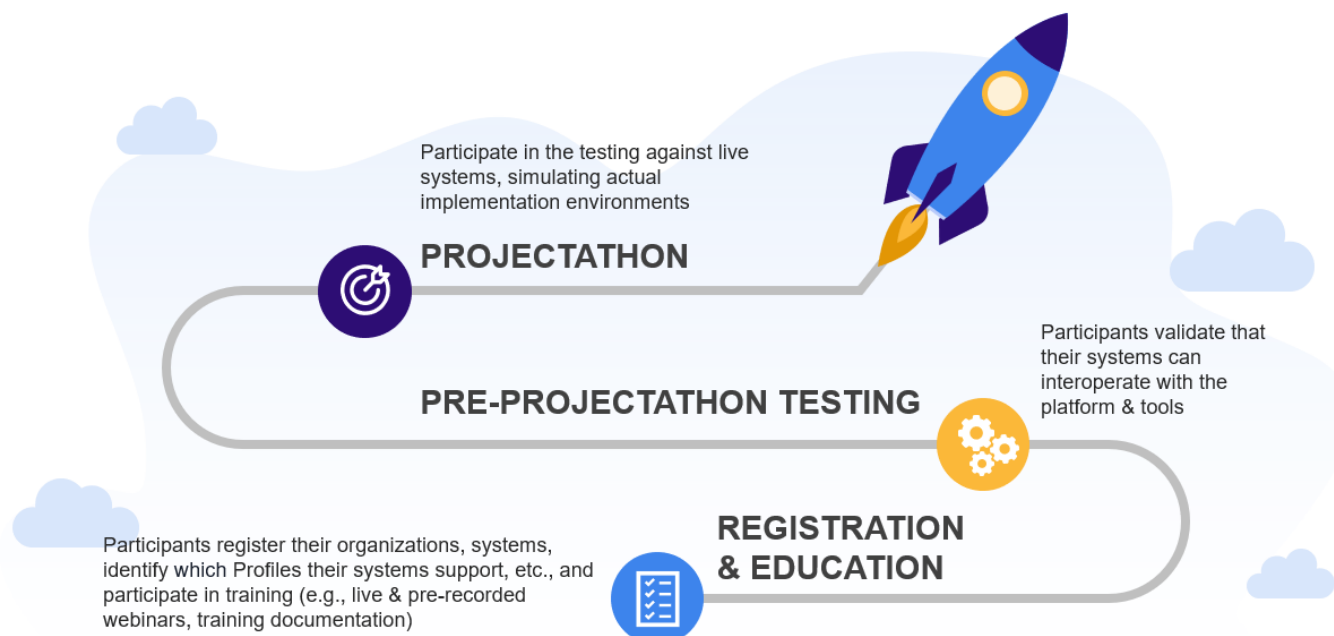
Connectathons represents a high quality, technical conformity assessment event (quality label) where participants prove that their products have implemented industry grade integration profiles (standardized pieces of core interoperability) and that their products can successfully carry out data exchanges with other systems (concepts of plug & play). Successful participation in a Connectathon event allows vendors to proudly and confidently represent that their product(s) conform to published interoperability patterns. This offers system integrators and health data custodians the opportunity to design data infrastructures and distribution networks by choosing standardized capabilities from products that display these seals of successful connectivity.

It is much easier to design a complex eco-system from standardized pieces of functionality than it is to describe every single aspect of systems in isolation. Just like the most complex electronic systems are built from catalogs of discrete elements, integration profiles break down the complexity into manageable pieces of core functionality. System integrators, who are responsible for designing strategies and architectures that deliver interoperability ecosystems, can use this approach in their system design.

Projectathon Objectives

Projectathons are the workshop versions of the Connectathons. Typically, these events are organized for specifications under development or specifications focused on a limited realm (national/regional). The Projectathon brings together vendors to test and collaborate on these specific use cases. The key difference between the Connectathon and the Projectathon is that the outcome of the Projectathon does not result in a conformance stamp of approval for products. The intent of Projectathons is to accelerate product development, bring developers and implementers together and help identify and bridge difficult conditions in specification development that have the potential of becoming insurmountable, threats to clinical and business workflows.

Projectathon Lifecycle



Interoperability in Canada

The Canadian Patient Summary (PS-CA) project is a great opportunity for Canada Health Infoway to advocate and proactively lobby for the adoption of these best practices in technical interoperability, embracing proven methodologies for the development of the PS-CA specification package.

Adopting the profiling approach, Infoway has extended the integration choices available to digital health solution developers by introducing the Canadian FHIR Exchange (CA:FeX) integration profile.

There is a strong belief that these patient summaries will be more than just FHIR® documents. They carry the opportunity for broader data exchange, breaking down barriers of distribution and bring patients closer to their own data and care. As such, it is important to recognize that successful implementation of these specifications will have to solve a number of challenges, some being outside the realm of the summary itself.

The first Canadian Projectathon, in March 2022 and upcoming event in March 2023, is a no-fee event organized and sponsored by Canada Health Infoway, designed to be the first in a line of events that will introduce increasingly more complex scenarios to the market, work with vendors and stakeholders to identify, test and solve typical data exchange and workflow challenges that hinder current integration efforts.

Thank you for showing interest in building a more proactive and predictable path for the future of health care interoperability in Canada.