



## IHE® Users' Quick Reference Guide

### What is Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise?

Founded in 1997 by HIMSS - Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society and RSNA - Radiological Society of North America, IHE is a global non-profit entity that enables the collaboration of healthcare providers and industry leaders to work together to improve *interoperability and exchange of health information*. IHE utilizes a proven framework for standards-based interoperability of health IT systems which is being adopted and implemented worldwide.

IHE is based on a fully cooperative partnership model with over 350 member organizations that contribute individual volunteers to participate in IHE committees. IHE volunteers have a diverse background including clinicians, ambulatory practices, hospitals, medical societies, academic medicine, researchers, and vendors from across the globe.

### What is an Integration Profile?

Each IHE Integration Profile describes a clinical requirement for systems integration and a solution to address it. It defines functional components, called *IHE Actors*, by specifying in careful detail the transactions each Actor must perform, based on standards such as Digital Imaging and Communication in Medicine (DICOM) and Health Level 7 (HL7). This detailed information is useful to IT professionals who can easily implement IHE profiles into health IT systems to make them interoperable.

### How do you get IHE Integration Profiles?

You specify IHE capabilities as requirements on the information systems you are purchasing or upgrading. Simply state in the Request for Proposal (RFP) which IHE Actors and Integration Profiles you want.

### What do IHE Integration Profiles cost?

In some cases Integration Profiles cost nothing—they are integral to a product's capabilities. In other cases, vendors may package IHE Integration Profiles at an added cost with new systems or offer them as upgrades to installed systems. IHE Integration Profiles should represent only a small fraction of the total cost of most systems, and they are definitely less expensive than inventing 'one off' integration solutions.

### What is the business case for implementing Integration Profiles?

Integration Profiles enable you to efficiently manage the array of integrated information systems necessary to support effective healthcare. The alternative—building site-specific interfaces—is more expensive and requires maintaining these custom interfaces for the life of the system involved. Integration via IHE is less costly at the start and makes future acquisitions easier to plan and execute, as well as more productive in delivering valuable functionality. Integration Profiles give clear definitions, based on widely accepted standards, of how the pieces fit together.

### What other benefits does IHE provide?

IHE makes it practical for healthcare providers to use advanced information technology to improve the quality and efficiency of care. By ensuring the integrity of health information, IHE enhances patient safety. By reducing the time spent in solving data problems such as lost and mismatched studies, IHE allows the most efficient use of staff time. By providing care providers comprehensive patient information, IHE enables better-informed healthcare decisions. The IHE Technical Framework is freely available in the [public domain](#).

### **How do I select IHE Integration Profiles?**

Specifying integration requirements for the systems you are purchasing is a simple matter of selecting which IHE Integration Profiles and which IHE Actors you want supported. Note that some Profiles include options that provide additional functionality that you may also decide to select.

### **How do I know if a vendor has IHE capabilities in their products?**

*IHE Integration Statements* are declarations by vendors of their support for specific IHE Integration Profiles in specific products. Many vendors post product Integration Statements on their Web sites. These are also linked on a [single index page](#).

*IHE Connectathon results* indicate which vendors are developing and successfully testing which Integration Profiles. IHE Connectathons are annual testing events that vendors participate in on a voluntary basis. These events allow vendors to test the IHE integration capabilities of their products with those of other vendors in a structured and supervised environment. The results indicate which vendors have demonstrated proficiency in implementing a given Actor in a given Profile.

Vendors are not required to participate in the Connectathon to claim support for IHE in their products. The Connectathon results should not be considered a certification of a vendor or product; rather, published results can be considered a useful litmus test. When a vendor that has successfully tested a given Profile at a Connectathon makes a direct claim that their product has implemented said Profile, you have some evidence they know what they are talking about. Obtain IHE Connectathon Results from [www.ihe.net/](http://www.ihe.net/) and [www.ihe-europe.org/con\\_result](http://www.ihe-europe.org/con_result).

### **Where can I see IHE capabilities demonstrated?**

IHE Profiles that include public comment review and pass Connectathon testing may be demonstrated at HIMSS Interoperability Showcase™ events at conferences across the globe. Interoperability Showcases are interactive activities that provide demonstration of complex healthcare scenarios showing how different organizations and agencies incorporate interoperability into their products.

### **What other resources are available to help me?**

Several great resources are available for implementers including the [IHE Product Registry](#) and [User Handbooks: Advice for Purchasers and Implementers](#). The IHE Product Registry provides essential information for IT administrators and executives responsible for purchasing and integrating health IT systems. Detailed testing results from IHE Connectathons in Europe, North America and Asia are available in this easy-to-use online database. Results are cross-linked to IHE Integration Statements which are conformance commitments of the IHE capabilities of commercial products from vendors worldwide.

### **What should I do next?**

Learn about the IHE Integration Profiles available and consider how they meet your organization's goals. Learn how to require these capabilities in an RFP and how to implement them in your setting. These resources and more are available at [www.ihe.net](http://www.ihe.net).

### ***Interested to Learn More About IHE?***

Please visit our website at [www.ihe.net](http://www.ihe.net)

If you are interested to receive our monthly newsletter or have questions,  
please contact us at [secretary@ihe.net](mailto:secretary@ihe.net)