

OpenEMR Weekly Meeting Detailed Summary

July 14, 2026

The meeting was given over to a presentation of the SDOH referral project.

Background: Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

SDOH refers to the non-medical conditions and environments in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age — factors that significantly affect health outcomes, functioning, and quality of life.

Presenter

- **Char Miller** presented the project as its sponsor.
- **Background:** currently an IT program manager, with 15 years at Microsoft and a career in database architecture.
- **Completed a Master of Public Health four years ago;** her masters project was adding SDOH capability to OpenEMR.
- **Availability:** starting an advising company in September, and leaving her current role in December to work on the SDOH project full time.

The Problem

- **Community-based organizations (CBOs) are the target beneficiary.** There are an estimated 100,000+ CBOs in the United States.
- **Most are small and volunteer-run,** without the resources or finances to maintain electronic records. Those that keep records generally keep them on paper.
- **CBOs have no electronic means of receiving SDOH reports** from clinicians, and no means of passing back information about the services they have delivered.
- **Current practice is manual** — most CBOs expect a fax or a phone call.
- **Existing tooling does not close the gap.** Epic and Cerner provide licenses, and CBOs use referral platforms such as Aunt Bertha, but these do not handle referrals end to end and are costly for organizations of this size.
- **The goal: a working closed-loop referral** — information flowing from clinician to CBO and back again.
- **Related work in the project:** Stephen Nielson is working on closed-loop referral in Ireland.

Project: OpenEMR Care Sphere

A four-phase plan, moving from customer discovery through grant funding to a piloted product.

Phase	Program	Detail
Phase 1	Regional NSF I-Corps	Four-week program. Interview 20 people — community-based organizations and clinicians, including medical social workers. Unpaid, volunteer. Requires a two-member team.
Phase 2	National NSF I-Corps	Seven-week program, 100 interviews. Requires a post-doctoral participant from UC Berkeley. \$50,000 grant covering travel and expenses. Completion opens the route to applying for a pilot grant.
Phase 3	SBIR Phase I	\$275,000 grant; earliest application January. Requires forming a for-profit entity to hold the grant — proposed name OpenEMR Care Sphere, structured for expenses only. Funds an OpenEMR instance that CBOs can host, piloted with two or three organizations. A successful pilot would make the entity a certified government vendor.
Phase 4	SBIR Phase II	\$1,000,000 grant to expand to 50–100 community-based organizations.

Team

- **The regional NSF I-Corps phase requires a two-member team.** Char will be one member; Sage Miller, a recent biochemistry graduate taking a year out before postgraduate study, will be the second.

OpenEMR Architecture Documentation

- **Char asked whether OpenEMR has an architecture diagram.** One exists in the documentation folder as a Mermaid diagram.
- **The database schema is now published on the OpenEMR website**, with graphical table relationships available under the Relationship tab.

Schema documentation: <https://www.open-emr.org/documentation/8.2.0/b10/index.html>

Open Questions

- **Should SDOH functionality be built as a custom module, or go through core?** Raised at the close of the presentation and left unresolved.
- Whether the second regional I-Corps team member is confirmed, and who fills the UC Berkeley post-doctoral requirement at the national stage.

Editor's Notes

Points carried over from the v1 notes that may need confirmation:

- **“SBIF” in the v1 notes has been rendered here as SBIR** (Small Business Innovation Research), which is the federal program matching the described structure and the \$275,000 / \$1,000,000 award levels. Worth confirming.
- **“Aunt BIRTHa” has been rendered as Aunt Bertha**, the SDOH referral platform now operating as findhelp. Worth confirming.
- **“NSF icore” has been rendered as NSF I-Corps** (Innovation Corps) throughout, consistent with later summaries.