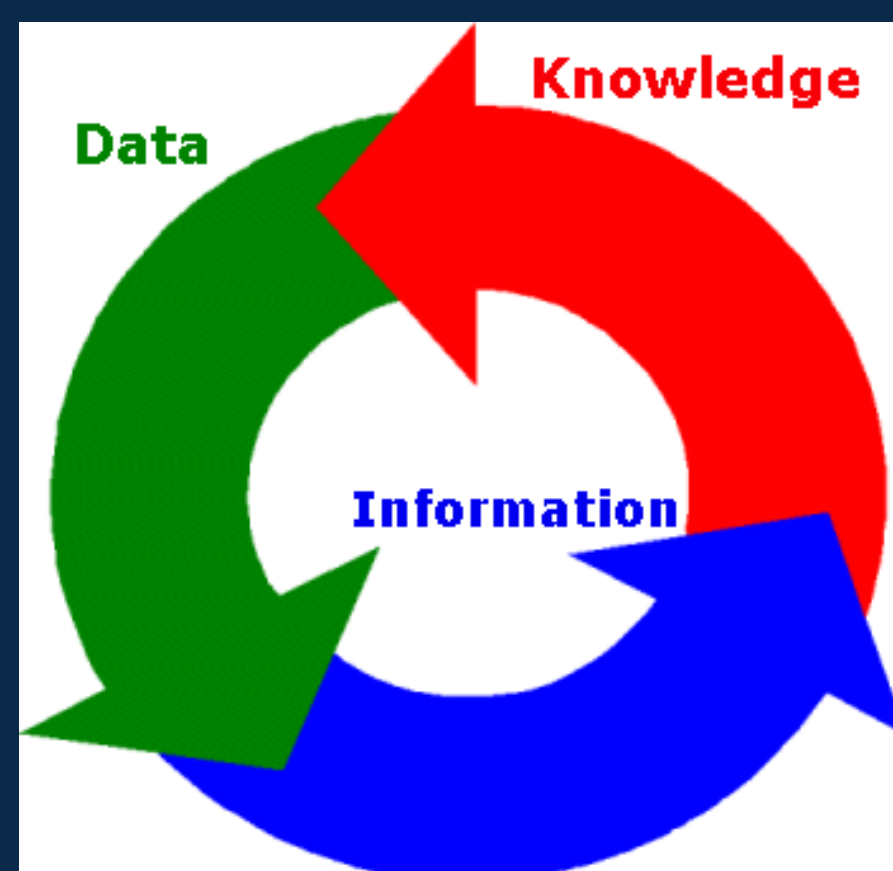


Informatics and Epidemiology: Separate but not Siloed

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Background

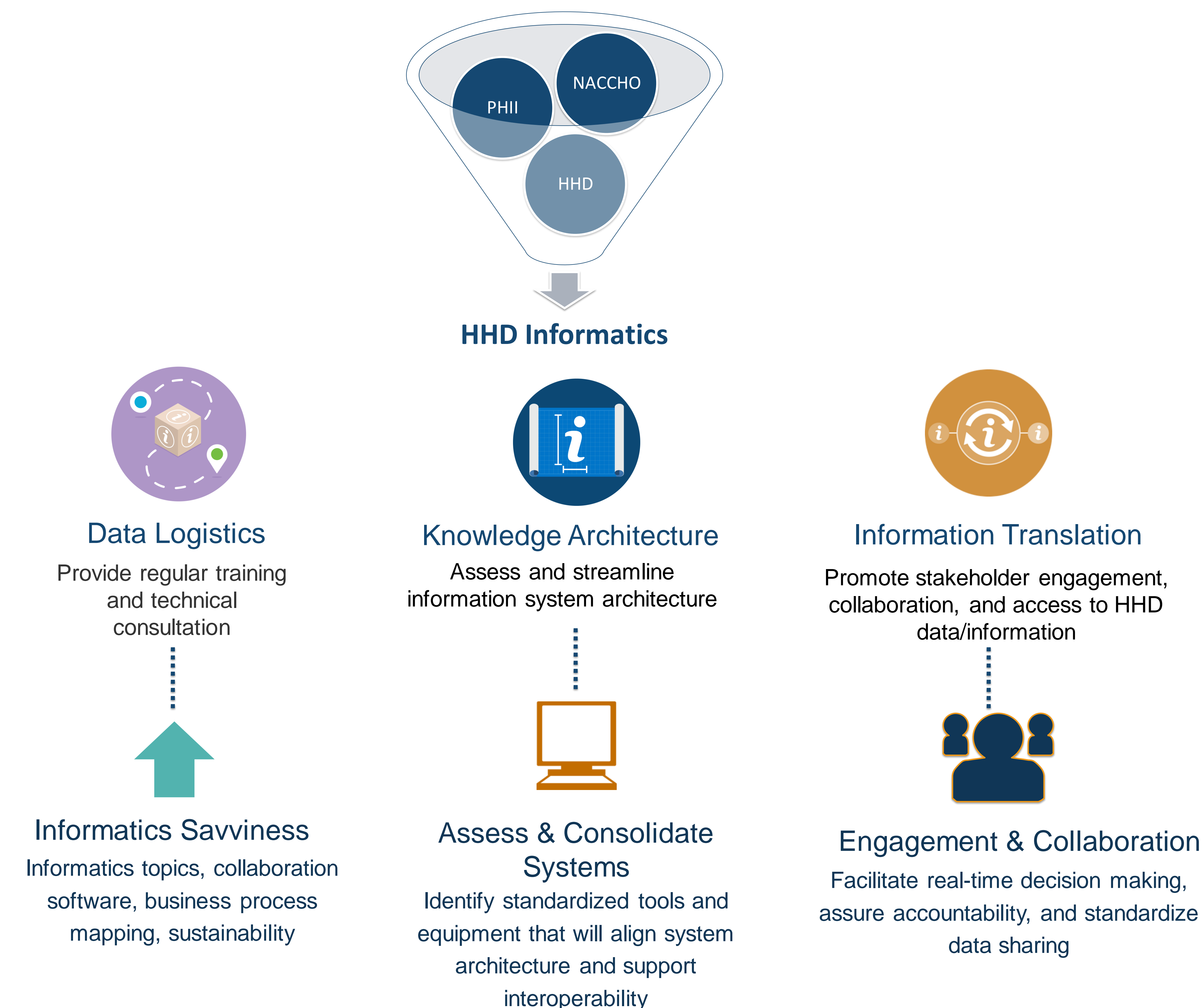
- Informatics is the process by which raw data turns into information and, subsequently, knowledge.



- Informaticians acquire, store, retrieve, and use data to create information to respond optimally to changing public health conditions.
- In 2015, the Houston Health Department (HHD) created the Informatics Program to operate in the space between epidemiology and IT.
- The Informatics Program:
 - Maintains the Houston Electronic Disease Surveillance System: MAVEN
 - Works on projects relating to data infrastructure and information exchange
- Informaticians do not perform traditional epidemiological duties. This initially caused much confusion over the nature of their role.

Program Development

- HHD partnered with the Public Health Informatics Institute (PHII) and National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) to pilot assessments of informatics savviness, interoperability, and to facilitate a strategic visioning session.
- The informatics strategic plan translates 3 key objectives into an organizational structure:



Program Outcomes

- Division of labor reduces lag between identification of an issue, proposed solution, and ultimate fix accommodating the needs of both Epidemiology and Informatics.
- Recurring meeting between Surveillance and Informatics provides epidemiologists an opportunity to ask questions and voice concerns and for informaticians to prioritize and develop solutions.
- A centralized email address was created so epidemiologists can email informaticians with problems they are experiencing with MAVEN.

Conclusions

- The development of a vision and subsequent strategies has resulted in a clear delineation between informaticians and epidemiologists. This has engendered effective communication of informaticians' roles, responsibilities, and value to colleagues in epidemiology and removed much of the mystique surrounding informatics.
- A benefit to having an independent informatics program is being able to target informatics-specific funding. HHD's informatics program has received nearly \$1M in grant funding.

References

PHII Public Health Informatics Profile Toolkit:
<http://www.phii.org/PHI-Toolkit/PHI-Toolkit/tip-sheets/assessment-methods>

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