



Transformative Clinical Leadership: CHIO Hiring Insights

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01 Introduction

The Chief Health Information Officer (CHIO) is a physician executive who bridges clinical practice and digital strategy. Combining clinical credibility with informatics expertise, the CHIO ensures that technology initiatives directly enhance patient outcomes, combat clinician burnout, and advance enterprise performance.

Although each health system's needs are unique, the most effective CHIOs tend to share common areas of responsibility. They are on the front lines of EHR optimization and workflow redesign, supporting adoption and improving usability. They also embed decision support that enhances safety and quality, and establish governance for data, interoperability, and compliance. In more advanced settings, CHIOs oversee virtual care expansion,

analytics, and the safe, responsible implementation of AI strategy, along with alignment across physician, nursing, and research informatics.

The scope of the CHIO role depends on an organization's size, digital maturity, and strategic priorities. This guide introduces a maturity model (Levels 1.0–4.0) to help organizations define the role effectively today and ensure it can evolve to meet future needs.

Drawing on Kirby Partners' experience conducting CHIO searches for leading health systems, this resource will help your organization define the role, establish the right scope, and attract leaders capable of driving clinical transformation and sustained digital value at scale.

02 CHIO or CMIO? Choosing the Right Clinical Informatics Leader

As healthcare organizations advance digitally, they must decide whether to appoint a Chief Medical Information Officer (CMIO) or elevate the role to a Chief Health Information Officer (CHIO). The scope and impact of these positions differ significantly.

CMIO Position Overview

- Focuses on physician engagement, EHR optimization, and clinical workflow improvement.
- Typically reports to the Chief Medical Officer (CMO).
- Supports governance structures but rarely leads them.
- Often maintains an active clinical schedule.
- Usually oversees other physician informaticists.
- Best suited for organizations early in their digital journey.

CHIO Position Overview

- Leads enterprise-wide informatics strategy spanning physicians, nursing, research, analytics, and digital health.
- Reports jointly to the CMO and CIO, reflecting shared clinical and technology priorities.
- Builds and leads governance to align technology decisions with enterprise goals and measurable value.

- Practices part time to remain connected to care delivery.
- Oversees enterprise informatics teams, including CMIOs and CNIOs, with accountability for strategy, budgets, and talent development.
- Adds the most value in complex systems undergoing transformation, scaling innovation, or integrating new platforms and care models.

Your organization may be ready to elevate to a CHIO if:

- Informatics extends beyond physician workflows.
- Governance is needed across care settings.
- Digital front door, AI, or consumer technology are strategic priorities.
- Informatics functions are siloed and need unified leadership.
- Innovation, analytics, and data governance require executive oversight.
- Provider engagement, usability, and wellness are enterprise-level priorities.
- The CMIO is already operating at an enterprise level but lacks the authority to drive decisions or allocate resources.

If you move forward with a CHIO, the next step is determining where the role falls on the CHIO maturity curve, outlined in the next section.

03 The CHIO Maturity Curve

The CHIO maturity curve outlines four stages of leadership, each building on the last. It helps organizations align the role with digital maturity today while planning for future strategy and innovation.

1.0 – Foundational System Stabilization & Compliance

- Focus on EHR implementation, compliance, and early clinical adoption.
- Act as translator between IT and frontline clinicians.
- Lead basic informatics functions and workflow support.
- Focus on system stabilization, regulatory compliance, and maximizing the immediate return on core EHR investment.

2.0 – Optimization Focused (in addition to Level 1.0 responsibilities)

- Drive workflow efficiency, usability improvements, and early data-driven quality initiatives.
- Lead governance structures that align technology with clinical and operational needs.
- Collaborate across departments to enhance clinician experience and reduce burnout.
- Reduce ‘pajama time’ metrics and drive measurable improvements in EHR usability.
- Oversee optimization, performance dashboards, and basic interoperability initiatives.



3.0 – Transformational

(in addition to Levels 1.0–2.0 responsibilities)

- Shape enterprise strategy through digital health innovation and system integration.
- Lead across clinical, digital, data, and operational domains at the executive level.
- Lead the translation of AI/ML and predictive analytics into actionable, measurable clinical outcomes (e.g., readmission reduction, sepsis detection).
- Govern adoption of AI, predictive analytics, and advanced care models with measurable outcomes.
- Support virtual care growth, patient engagement platforms, and M&A integration.
- Establish enterprise-level Clinical Data Governance to ensure data integrity and accessibility for analytics and population health.
- Serve as a strategic advisor and change leader across the healthcare ecosystem.

4.0 – Enterprise Digital Leader

(in addition to Levels 1.0–3.0 responsibilities)

- Provide unified leadership across all informatics domains (physician, nursing, research, analytics, AI, digital health).
- Embed informatics into enterprise strategy and board-level decision-making.
- Establish governance for safe, ethical, and responsible use of AI and emerging technologies. Align digital transformation with population health, consumer experience, academic medicine, and research informatics.
- Drive system growth and value-based care performance through technology-enabled clinical operating models.
- Represent the organization nationally as a thought leader advancing clinical informatics.



04 Attracting Top CHIO Talent

The strategies below will help position your organization as an employer of choice.

Emphasize Leadership Impact and Strategic Influence

- Position the CHIO as a key architect of enterprise priorities such as digital transformation, M&A integration, data strategy, and care model innovation.
- Reinforce the role's visibility and influence by highlighting direct collaboration with the CMO, CIO, and other senior leaders.
- Demonstrate how the CHIO will shape long-term strategy, lead system-wide change, and drive measurable outcomes.

Showcase Your Commitment to Digital Transformation

- Highlight high-priority initiatives such as AI governance, analytics maturity, virtual care expansion, and innovation programs.
- Share examples of successful digital efforts that improved clinical outcomes, clinician experience, or operational performance.
- Demonstrate visible board and C-suite engagement in informatics strategy and decision-making.

Offer Competitive and Strategic Compensation

- Align compensation with the scope, visibility, and enterprise impact of the CHIO role.
- Include performance incentives, long-term rewards, and, where appropriate, protected clinical time.
- Provide resources for leadership development, advanced education, and participation in national industry forums.

Promote Culture, Values, and Well-Being

- Reinforce a commitment to wellness, usability, and human-centered technology design.
- Highlight organizational mission, values, and flexibility to explore innovative approaches.
- Showcase leadership development opportunities and support for long-term career growth

Optimize the Candidate Experience

- Streamline the hiring process with clear communication, defined timelines, and meaningful engagement with leaders and future colleagues.
- Be transparent about expectations, next steps, and decisions to build trust and enthusiasm.

05 CHIO Interview Strategies

A strong interview process does more than assess qualifications. It shapes candidate perception and signals that your organization values their time and is serious about their candidacy. Because top CHIO candidates often have multiple opportunities, efficiency and preparation are key.

Accelerating the Process

A focused, timely process reduces the risk of losing top candidates to competing offers. Consider the approaches below to keep momentum high without compromising the quality of your search:

- Establish a clear, compressed timeline and communicate it early.
- Explain the interview process clearly to each candidate, including what to expect, next steps, and the anticipated timeline.
- Pre-schedule stakeholder availability to avoid delays.
- Use virtual interviews for initial rounds to speed early evaluations.
- Minimize interview stages with panel interviews or a single full-day format.
- Provide prompt feedback after each stage to keep candidates engaged.

Preparing Stakeholders for Success

Interviewers should understand the CHIO role, scope, and priorities before the process begins. These steps support a thoughtful, equitable evaluation:

- Ensure each interviewer has a copy of the job description and the candidate's resume in advance.
- Use a structured interview guide and ask the same core questions in the same order (by the same interviewers) for every candidate to ensure consistency and reduce bias.
- Coordinate questions among interviewers in advance so candidates aren't repeatedly asked the same questions and all key competencies are covered.
- Be mindful of non-verbal cues such as body language or tone that could unintentionally influence a candidate's behavior or responses.
- Avoid questions about protected characteristics and ensure every candidate has a fair, respectful experience.
- Document feedback promptly and thoroughly after each interview to support objective decision-making and create a clear record of the evaluation process.
- Empower the interview team to make timely decisions when a strong candidate emerges.

06 CHIO Interview Questions

These questions are designed to assess the most critical competencies for a CHIO. Select those most relevant to your organization's priorities and goals.

Opening & Rapport-Building

- Please give a two-minute overview of your career, focusing on your leadership responsibilities in clinical informatics and digital health.
- What interests you about this CHIO opportunity?
- What is a significant goal or initiative you pursue outside of your professional responsibilities?

Informatics & Technology Expertise

- How have you used informatics to improve care quality, safety, or patient outcomes?
- What is your approach to driving EHR adoption and optimization while maintaining clinician engagement?
- Describe how you've redesigned workflows to improve usability and provider satisfaction.
- How have you leveraged data and analytics to guide clinical decisions or population health strategies?
- What strategies have you used to improve data sharing across systems or partner organizations?
- How do you ensure clinical information systems remain compliant with evolving regulations and privacy standards?

Strategic & Transformational Leadership

- How have you aligned informatics initiatives with broader organizational strategy such as value-based care or growth priorities?
- What is your process for evaluating and adopting emerging technologies like AI, predictive analytics, or digital front door solutions?
- Tell me about a large-scale transformation you led. How did you guide stakeholders through the change?
- Describe a governance structure you implemented. How did you ensure cross-functional alignment and accountability?
- How do you measure and communicate the value and ROI of informatics investments to executive leadership or the board?
- How would you design a multi-year innovation roadmap that advances clinical, operational, and consumer priorities?





Leadership, Culture & Influence

- How would you describe your leadership style, and how has it evolved over your career?
- What values guide your decision-making as a healthcare leader, and how do you ensure they're reflected in daily work?
- What kind of culture do you aim to build within an informatics team, and how do you sustain it through periods of change?
- How do you foster psychological safety and create an environment where clinicians and technologists feel empowered to share ideas or challenge assumptions?
- Tell me about a time you had to unify teams with conflicting priorities. How did you build trust and align them around a shared goal?
- What steps do you take to identify and develop emerging leaders within your team?
- How do you approach difficult personnel decisions, such as when a team member isn't aligned with organizational values or strategic direction?

Collaboration & Communication

- How do you explain complex informatics or analytics concepts to non-technical stakeholders such as the board or frontline clinicians?
- How have you built strong partnerships with clinical, operational, and IT leaders to advance shared goals?
- How do you build consensus when key stakeholders initially disagree on priorities?
- How do you build credibility and influence with C-suite peers who may not fully understand informatics?
- How do you structure and develop a high-performing, multidisciplinary informatics team?
- What specific strategies have you used to improve collaboration between IT, clinical, and operational functions?
- How do you ensure that informatics priorities reflect input from frontline clinicians as well as executive leadership?
- Share an example of a time you successfully influenced a strategic decision without formal authority. What was your approach?

07 Sample CHIO Job Description

The following job description is an example tailored for a large, complex health system seeking a Level 4.0 CHIO and can be adjusted to match your organization's needs.

Chief Health Information Officer

Organization Overview

XYZ Health is a leading integrated healthcare system serving more than 2 million patients annually across three states. With 12 hospitals, over 200 outpatient facilities, and a nationally recognized telehealth program, we are committed to delivering high-quality, patient-centered care. Our focus on digital transformation and clinical excellence has earned us HIMSS Stage 7 recognition and a spot among Newsweek's "Most Wired" hospitals. As we continue to advance our technology, harness the power of clinical data, and optimize the clinician experience, we are seeking a strategic and forward-thinking Chief Health Information Officer (CHIO) to bridge the worlds of clinical practice, informatics, and technology to drive measurable improvements in patient outcomes and operational efficiency.

Position Overview

Reporting jointly to the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and SVP/Chief Information Officer (CIO), the Chief Health Information Officer (CHIO) is the senior executive responsible for the vision, strategy, and leadership of clinical information systems, data governance, and informatics across the health system. Serving as the primary bridge between clinical teams and Information Technology Services, the CHIO ensures technology enhances patient safety, care quality, and provider well-being while maximizing the value of the organization's EHR and digital health investments.

Key Responsibilities

- Set and execute a unified informatics vision that advances enterprise strategy, clinical outcomes, patient experience, and operational performance.
- Establish and lead governance for clinical data, interoperability, analytics, and regulatory compliance to ensure integrity, security, and enterprise value.
- Oversee strategic optimization of core clinical platforms, ensuring technology investments deliver measurable quality, safety, and efficiency outcomes.
- Serve as a strategic advisor to the board and executive team on technology-enabled clinical transformation and the future of care delivery.
- Guide informatics strategy during mergers, acquisitions, and major system expansions, ensuring alignment, standardization, and scalability across the enterprise.
- Set organizational standards for clinical data models, vocabulary, and documentation across all affiliated entities to achieve system-wide data liquidity and integrity.
- Partner with CISO and executive leadership to manage clinical data risk, oversee privacy incident protocols, and guide the organization through major regulatory compliance audits.
- Manage the capital and operating budgets for clinical informatics, ensuring fiscal discipline and maximizing the return on investment from strategic vendors and platforms.
- Champion clinician engagement and well-being by shaping enterprise approaches to usability, workflow design, and technology adoption.
- Develop enterprise capabilities in clinical intelligence, predictive analytics, and decision support to advance precision care and organizational agility.
- Partner with executive leadership to integrate digital health, virtual care, AI, and advanced analytics into care delivery models and population health strategies.
- Actively scan the external healthcare and technology markets to identify, pilot, and integrate breakthrough digital solutions that provide a competitive advantage.
- Build and sustain a high-performing, multidisciplinary informatics organization, including succession planning and leadership development.
- Foster the use of clinical and operational data for research, medical education, and population health studies, ensuring ethical access and data de-identification practices.
- Represent the organization nationally through thought leadership, collaboration, and contributions to the advancement of clinical informatics.

Qualifications

Education

- Medical degree (MD, DO, DNP, PharmD, or equivalent) required.
- Advanced degree such as MBA, MHA, MS, or MMM preferred.
- Formal training or certification in clinical informatics highly desirable.

Experience

- 10+ years of progressive leadership in clinical informatics, digital health, or enterprise healthcare IT, including executive-level responsibility across a large, complex health system.
- Proven success shaping and executing enterprise informatics strategy that advances clinical quality, operational performance, and strategic growth objectives.
- Demonstrated ability to align clinical, digital, data, and operational priorities to organizational mission and board-level goals.
- Experience leading large-scale platform transformations, including EHR modernization, ecosystem integration, and digital innovation at scale.
- Track record of driving adoption of analytics, AI, and advanced technologies to improve outcomes, patient experience, and organizational agility.
- Expertise guiding informatics integration during mergers, acquisitions, and system expansions, ensuring alignment, standardization, and scalability.
- Expertise managing large-scale clinical IT capital and operating budgets, including strategic vendor contract negotiation and management.
- Experience extending informatics strategy and platforms to ambulatory, community, and post-acute settings (e.g., population health, virtual care in the home).
- Significant experience influencing executive and board decision-making and presenting strategic priorities to senior leadership and governance bodies.
- Success building and leading high-performing, multidisciplinary informatics teams and developing future leadership talent.
- Deep knowledge of regulatory, compliance, and interoperability requirements shaping clinical data and digital health strategy.

Certifications

- Board certification in Clinical Informatics preferred.
- Additional certifications in health IT, data governance, or quality improvement (e.g., CHCIO, PMP, Lean Six Sigma) desirable.

Skills & Competencies

- Expert at managing the organizational psychology of change, securing buy-in and minimizing disruption during major technology transformations.
- Instills a data-driven culture across clinical and operational teams, championing data literacy and evidence-based decision-making.
- Maintains executive composure and provides decisive, clear leadership during critical system outages, security incidents, and high-stress events.
- Skillfully mediates and resolves complex, high-stakes disagreements between competing clinical, operational, and technical priorities.
- Proven capacity to drive the adoption and utilization of consumer-facing digital health tools and patient engagement platforms.
- Possesses sophisticated vendor management and negotiation skills to secure optimal pricing, service levels, and strategic alignment in complex contracts.
- Serves as a credible, articulate external spokesperson and advocate for the health system's informatics strategy with regulators and peer institutions.

Work Arrangements

- Hybrid role with a minimum of three days per week on-site.
- Up to 25% travel to clinical sites, partner organizations, and professional events.
- Limited after-hours availability for major clinical system issues, governance decisions, or executive engagements.



08 Selecting Your CHIO

After interviews conclude, gather feedback quickly and convene within 48 hours to evaluate finalists against agreed-upon criteria. Begin by assessing how well each candidate's vision aligns with your organization's digital strategy, clinical priorities, and current level of informatics maturity. As part of that discussion, surface any concerns about leadership style, change management approach, or ability to deliver results in a complex environment.

From there, shift the focus to leadership presence and cultural fit. Look for candidates who communicate a clear and compelling strategy for improving workflows, advancing analytics, and driving digital innovation, while also demonstrating credibility with clinicians and executives.

The strongest finalists pair strategic vision with a proven ability to achieve operational results and build

alignment across clinical, IT, and administrative teams.

To ensure consistency and objectivity, use a standardized scorecard to guide evaluations. This helps structure feedback, minimize bias, and compare candidates across key competencies such as strategy, governance, communication, and clinical credibility. Give added weight to those who show the capacity to grow with the organization as digital maturity evolves and who have the influence skills to build consensus across diverse stakeholder groups.

Once a finalist is identified, act quickly. Extending an offer without delay demonstrates organizational alignment and commitment. It also increases your likelihood of securing top talent in a highly competitive CHIO market.

09 Enabling Long-Term CHIO Impact

Hiring the right CHIO is just the start. Organizations must create conditions for the role to adapt and deliver lasting impact as care models, technology, and priorities evolve. These strategies can help sustain your CHIO's impact:

Building Role Flexibility

- Design the CHIO position with built-in agility, allowing it to evolve as care models, organizational priorities, and digital capabilities change.
- Give the CHIO authority to reshape governance, reconfigure teams, and redirect strategic initiatives as the health system's needs shift.

Fostering a Culture of Innovation

- Create an environment where informatics leaders are encouraged to pilot new ideas, test emerging technologies, and scale successful solutions.
- Value creative problem-solving and calculated risk-taking that improve clinician experience, care quality, and patient engagement.

Expanding Strategic Influence

- Position the CHIO as a trusted advisor and strategic partner to the executive team, with a voice in enterprise decisions beyond technology.

- Involve them early in planning for growth, new service lines, partnerships, and population health initiatives to ensure informatics strategy shapes organizational direction.
- Support their efforts to build consensus across clinical, operational, and IT teams, driving adoption of new workflows, digital tools, and data-driven practices at scale.

Investing in Continuous Learning

- Encourage ongoing professional development through leadership training, exposure to emerging technologies, and participation in industry conferences and organizations such as The Scottsdale Institute.
- Prioritize opportunities that help the CHIO stay ahead of advances in clinical decision support, AI, analytics, and digital care models.

Planning for Succession

- Build a leadership pipeline within the informatics function, spanning physician, nursing, and data domains, to ensure continuity and organizational resilience.
- Support mentorship and career development within the CHIO's team to strengthen internal talent.

About Kirby Partners

Specialized Leaders, Superior Results

We find future-ready leaders to fill your critical C-suite, VP and director roles.

Our expertise:

- Chief AI Officers
- Chief Data Officers
- Chief Digital Officers
- Chief Digital and Information Officers
- Chief Executive Officers
- Chief Health Information Officers
- Chief Human Resource Officers
- Chief Information Security Officers
- Chief Information Officers
- Chief Innovation Officers
- Chief Medical Information Officers
- Chief Privacy Officers
- Chief Research Information Officers
- Chief Risk Officers
- Chief Technology Officers
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- VPs & Directors of HR
- Enterprise Architects

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To learn more about Kirby Partners, schedule a discovery call with our team.

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