

The background of the slide features a row of wooden mailboxes mounted on a wooden post. The mailboxes are weathered and have "U.S. MAIL" and "APPROVED BY THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL" embossed on them. Some mailboxes have numbers, such as "37" and "153". The scene is set against a blue sky with a soft light flare on the left side. In the top right corner, the "Rural Health Resource Center" logo is displayed in a blue, serif font with a decorative flourish above the text.

Rural Health
Resource Center

Health Information Technology and Rural Hospitals

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Executive Director

Rural Health Resource Center

Rural Health Resource Center

- Located in Duluth, Minnesota
- Private, Non-profit
- National Rural HIT Coalition
- Federally funded Technical Assistance and Services Center (TASC)

Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs)

- Authorized by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (BBA)
- 25 bed limit
- 96 hour average stay
- 1305 CAHs in rural America



CAHs and HIT

- ARRA introduced both incentives and penalties for health information technology (HIT)
- CAHs trail PPS hospitals in EHR adoption scores
 - CAHs average score: 1.68 compared to urban hospitals: 2.86

Source: 3rd Quarter, 2009 EMR/SEHR Adoption Model Scores, HIMSS Analytics.

CAH HIT Challenges

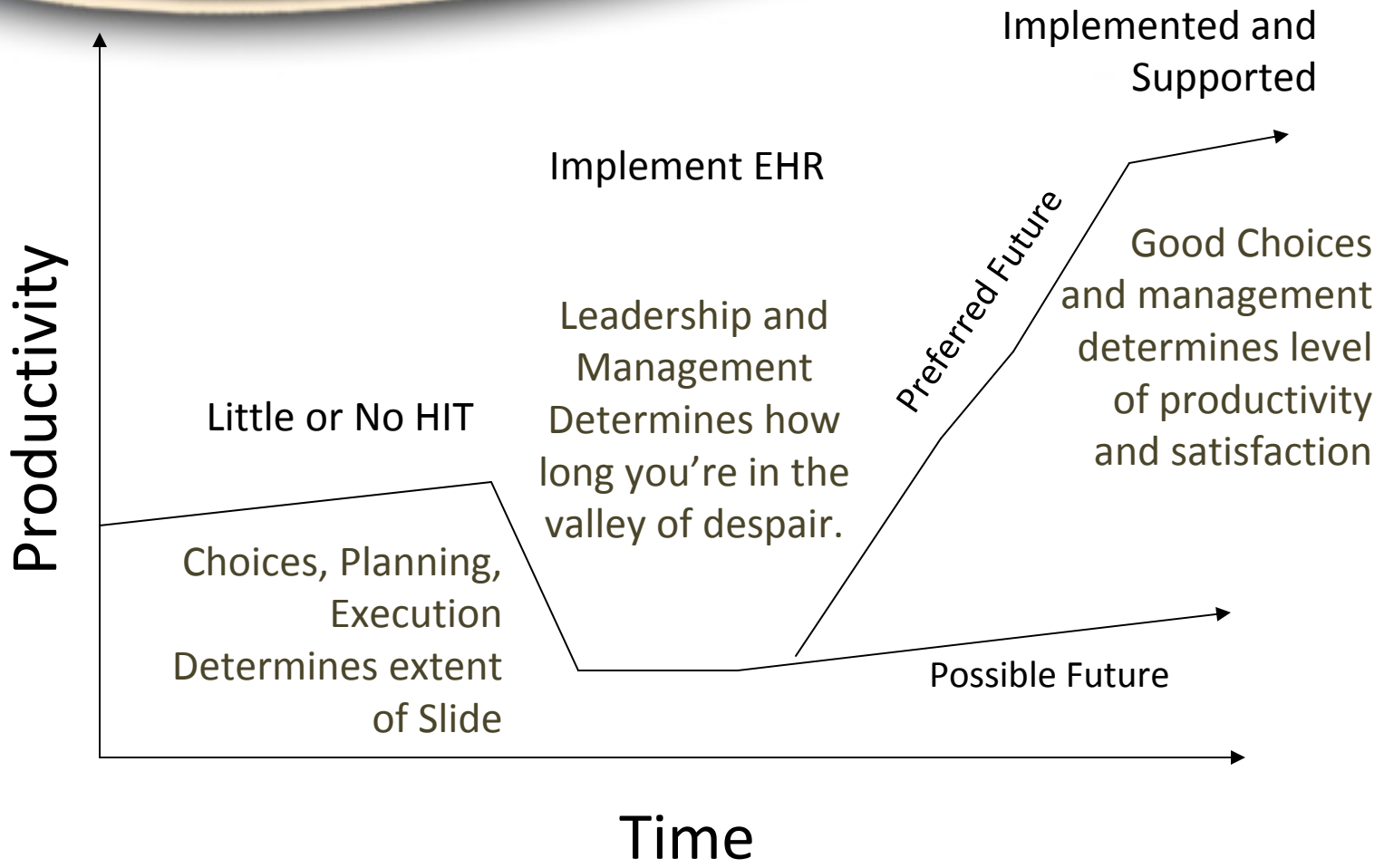
- HIT Workforce
 - Healthcare and computer-science related professions among top 20 fastest growing jobs
 - 40,000 HIT workers are needed right now
 - CAHs will be unable to recruit the limited supply
- Education
 - Various disciplines within the HIT workforce are needed with not enough secondary education programs or teachers available
 - Students are not enrolling in the programs
 - Rural communities need to grow their own IT professionals



CAH HIT Challenges

- **Capital**
 - ARRA funding not upfront for CAHs.
 - Grants and Loans
 - Funding for un-depreciated certified EHR products
 - Funding also needed for ongoing HIT support
- **Technical Assistance**
 - Process consultation needed
 - Rural awareness needed
- **Networks**
 - Access to grants and discounts
 - IT professional co-ops
 - Negotiating with vendors
 - Access to needed expertise

Valley of Despair



Important Rural HIT Challenges Remain

- Lack of telecommunications broadband in some rural settings
- Lack of internal technical support for HIT systems, programs, software, etc.
- Lack of effective strategic planning for HIT implementation
- Difficulty in making informed choices about HIT products and vendors
- Access to capital

Need for a Positive Message on Rural HIT Adoption

- Acknowledge that there is a huge amount for rural to gain via technology and HIT
- Seek meaningful, achievable targets with the required support available for the adoption of HIT to be successful in rural America
- The viability of the rural hospitals has a huge impact on rural schools, businesses, etc.



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