Executive Summary

On behalf of our respective organizations, we would like to thank New England State Consortium Systems Organization (NESCSO) for the ongoing collaboration on the Medicaid Enterprise System Vendor Database. Enclosed please find the results of our online survey, which included questions intended to gather feedback from our memberships on the Database, its implementation, proposed benefits, concerns, and more. In total, we received feedback from 28 respondents representing 28 separate and distinct firms.

Although a majority of the survey featured open-ended questions, there were several key themes that were prevalent among the responses that were collected.

1. **Information Accuracy and Verification Matter** While many vendors indicated they were supportive or open to utilizing the Database and saw it as a resource for both government and vendors, several expressed concerns about the lack of validation for data. Many shared there would be a risk of bias or misinformation with no opportunity to verify the accuracy of the information that had been provided for states. If possible, several respondents said NESCSO should aim to provide third-party verification for the Database. Without verification of the information provided, the value of participation in the Database appears to be more limited from a vendor perspective.

   > *Key Quote*: 'With or without verification of the database, we feel that a statement should be associated with the site to inform users that the MES Vendor Database should be recognized as one source of information and not deemed as all-inclusive , as some vendors may opt-out of participation. In addition to verification, we suggest establishing standards for what is to be included in the [Database}. This may help the verification process and improve consistencies of the data being uploaded and within NESCSO's desired detail"

2. **Concerns of the Impact on the Procurement Process** Although the Database would provide a central resource for states to review vendors and their solutions in the MES space, several survey respondents shared concerns that the Database could result in a skewed procurement process that favors those vendors with more resources and harms smaller vendors ability to compete for these opportunities. Despite NESCSO providing the Database as one tool for states to utilize in the MES space, there were concerns that the information provided by vendors could be used to create preferred vendor lists for

solicitations. This was raised as particularly problematic given the self-reported nature of the data with no verification mechanism in place, which could lead to states making misguided procurement decisions as it relates to potential vendors, requirements, and more based on data that may not be fully accurate.

> ***Key Quote****: "This database while well intentioned would move around the usual procurement pools and processes enabling states to engage with only vendors who participate in this pay to play database. It would exclude other vendors who might be able to perform these services or who do not know of this database from being able to respond without bias to any forthcoming RFP's."*

3. **Cost for Participation Should Remain Low** Vendors generally agreed that they would pay a fee for database participation but were unwilling to make significant investment with the return on investment unclear. Across several responses, vendors felt that an appropriate fee level was dependent on the complete value proposition. Would user activity tracking, full database access, and information verification be included? Vendors expressed desire for a transparent cost breakdown. Many also felt that the most equitable approach would be a single fee for all vendors to avoid larger, more established firms holding uneven leverage. While vendors want to make sure that they are accessible for states, larger firms felt that their participation would not make significant business impact, and smaller firms felt that their solutions would be lost in the shuffle of search results.

> ***Key Quote:*** *"Whatever you decide, the fee should be the same for all vendors otherwise the big ones, who pay more, will feel entitled to sway the administration of it, owing to their disproportionate investment"*

4. **Vendors Want to Understand How the Database is Being Used** When asked what they expected for the fee paid to participate in the Database, several vendors indicated they expected transparency on how the website was being used through regularly updated statistics on the number of visitors to the site, views of their offerings, and key search terms used. Vendors also indicated they expected NESCSO to provide training and marketing to states on the Database to promote usage and better understanding of how to use the resource. In addition to promoting access to states, many respondents also believed that participating firms should be given access to the Database. This would allow them to better understand the offerings from other firms that were participating and identify opportunities for partnership.

> ***Key Quote:*** *"If they are provided access… we can develop strong partnerships in advance of a procurement if a State combine s multiple modules, potentially requiring partnerships. This ensures clients are receiving the best solution that is based on a strong partnership and collaboration."*

5. **Module Categories Need to be More Flexible** A majority of responses were concerned over the limitations in module categories. With no clear definitions for modules, many vendors felt that the categorization would be too subjective for states to access solutions that fit their needs. This concern is strongly felt for more niche vendors that specialize in certain areas. Vendors requested the ability to add flexible categories when their solutions did not fit under the provided module list. Several responses also made recommendations for additional standard modules including systems integration, quality assurance management, and data storage/management. Firms want to be assured that they are accurately represented in such a database to make sure their business remains competitive and relevant in the selections process.

> *Key Quote: "While the categories are valid, the list is by no means exhaustive. There are many categories that could be added. Also, some of these headings mean different things to different people….. There are no standards for module definitions so any list is going to be incomplete and subjective."*

In closing, our organizations appreciate the opportunity to provide input to NESCSO on the MES Vendor Database and remain committed to our collaboration on this topic going forward.