

MES Oversight Design Principles

Design principles help everyone involved in building and supporting MES Oversight stay focused and aligned on a shared vision of what it means to **truly orient the funding and oversight of MES investments toward directly improving Medicaid & CHIP program outcomes**. The principles should be specific enough to drive clear decisions, and broad enough to apply to all parts of MES Oversight.

Our top-voted principles

Keep people at the heart of everything we do.

The point of our work is to improve the lived experience of *real people*, not just improving processes and systems. Everything we do is in service of Medicaid & CHIP beneficiaries. We are investing in improving the working relationship between states and the MES team because their combined efforts have a huge impact on beneficiaries' experience of our programs.

Tie every decision back to program outcomes and end-user needs.

All technology investments should clearly and directly support a measurable improvement in outcomes for end users and/or the Medicaid & CHIP programs overall, and each of our interactions with states should reinforce this expectation. Impact on end users should be the most important factor in decision-making, whether those users are members of the public, healthcare providers, or state and federal employees.

Minimize burden at every opportunity.

MES oversight should enable and support states to use technology to improve program outcomes, while minimizing interference and unnecessary burden for all involved. Oversight should feel like a natural and supportive part of states' service delivery efforts, adapting to and

taking advantage of each state's existing project management approach wherever possible vs. imposing a one-size-fits-all approach that creates excessive overhead to the state.

Make consistently transparent and evidence-based decisions.

We use both current project plans and historical evidence and patterns to inform our funding and support decisions, and foster transparency by regularly communicating with our state partners throughout the entire lifecycle of each MES investment. We proactively communicate our expectations and decision criteria in a way that is understandable and actionable to our state partners.

Possible unintended consequence(s):

- There's an element of "gut" work in making decisions—you can't quantify everything without risking rejecting projects that don't look good on paper but would have otherwise worked out
- Risk of creating some sort of prediction algorithm that is bad/not effective

Be discerning stewards of public funds.

Our funding is not unlimited; we are stewards of a finite amount of taxpayer dollars, and it's our responsibility to only fund MES projects that we believe are realistically set up to meaningfully improve program and end user outcomes. When that is not the case, it's our responsibility to say "no" (and to support the state to adjust their approach toward a more promising one).

Other possible principles that didn't make the initial cut

Foster a collaborative partnership between CMS and states.

All our work should actively seek to build a trusting, collaborative partnership with our state counterparts, providing active support and assistance to enable their successful administration of Medicaid & CHIP. We aim to build a relationship between CMS and states characterized by frequent contact, ease of communication, and friendly problem-solving and assistance.

We consider trends and patterns in MES projects when making individual decisions.

We gather insight on MES projects iteratively and continuously.

Instead of assessing projects once in a while, we aim to assess them frequently and regularly with strong communication with the state. States should be aware of their status and able to make decisions iteratively as CMS guides them through the continual assessment process.

Start with outcomes and program needs

All technology investments should clearly and directly support an improvement in outcomes for end users and the Medicaid program overall. Impact on end users should drive decision making whether they are members of the public, healthcare providers, or state and federal employees.

- **States are able to:**
 - Demonstrate the benefit to end users
 - Articulate the "why" of their proposed investment
 - Define metrics that support program success
 - Measure, analyze and adjust as they go
- **CMS is able to:**
 - Objectively state what "success" looks like in terms of program outcomes
 - Understand if a certified system continues to meet state needs and CMS requirements
- **Oversight materials/processes should:**
 - Demonstrate progress/status
 - Inform investment decisions
- **How we'll check for alignment with this principle re: new oversight processes:**
 - Does this encourage involvement from program and policy people?
 - Does this help CMS/states measure the benefits of an investment in terms of program goals?
 - Is this beneficial to state program operations staff as well as IT?
 - Do the states and CMS have the same understanding of the objectives?
 - Does this specifically ask about the program impact (vs just system impact)?
 - Are guidance & templates clearly grounded in program goals? Do they give clear examples of the types of program outcomes we're aiming for?

Helpful and intuitive Minimize the burden for states

Enable state accountability for using technology to improve program outcomes without unnecessary burden and interference. Oversight should be simple to utilize and adaptable based on the needs of the state.

- **States are able to:**
 - Get added value from the oversight process

- Adjust in real time according to feedback
- Navigate the oversight process and find up to date guidance with minimal friction
- ID when they are going off track and communicate without fear of "punishment"
- **CMS is able to:**
 - Assess and monitor states continuously instead of all at once
 - Answer state questions about CMS oversight with confidence and consistency
 - Identify success
 - Act as a resource providing lessons learned, best practices, and tools to ease the burden on states
 - Help states improve / align program delivery
- **Oversight materials/processes should:**
 - Process should be transparent to states
 - Increase confidence and communication through clarity and plain language
 - Be easy to incorporate into state work instead of adding extra steps
- **How we'll check for alignment with this principle:**
 - Does this add clarity for both states and CMS? Or does it add confusion?
 - Is this easy to explain and train? If not, is the benefit worth the complexity?
 - Is this flexible in application across states?
 - Will this be difficult/burdensome to implement for states?
 - Is this built upon common definitions/shared understanding?
 - Does this enable a stronger partnership between states and CMS?
 - How will we understand the impact and collect feedback from users?

Make transparent, evidence-based decisions

Words from the workshop: science vs art, easy transfer of knowledge, efficient and transparent vs manual and dense, informed by historical patterns, appropriately documented, clear expectations.

- **States are able to:**
 - Demonstrate progress towards a specific goal/objective
 - Understand how funding decisions will be made and what they're being held accountable to
 - Readily indicate how a project will support program needs
- **CMS is able to:**
 - Agree with the state on measures indicating program success

- Consistently collect evidence from 56* states and territories
- **Oversight materials/processes should:**
 - make assessment criteria clear
 - provide a lexicon to set expectations
- **How we'll check for alignment with this principle:**
 - What does this measure and how?
 - Does this make the data that supports it transparent to all?
 - Can the data collected be used to inform projects nationwide?
 - Is this process informed by the state/past experience?
 - How do we ensure this checkpoint is applied consistently across all states?
 - How does this help improve accountability from an IT perspective?
 - How do we specify criteria to successfully "pass" this step?
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Demonstrate and practice fiscal responsibility

- **States are able to:**
 - Articulate how the funding will make a difference for end users
 - Link the cost of an investment to the program benefit
 - Justify the cost of an investment for their legislatures and funding agencies
 - **CMS is able to:**
 - Review past performance on similar investments to inform funding decisions on current ones
 - Say no to requests
 - Hold states accountable to what's happened on previous investments; if they went badly, how will this be different?
 - **Oversight materials/processes should:**
 - Intuitively Set clear expectations for states, CMS, and public reporting
 - Inform cost estimates and insights by providing comparisons
 - Consistently track spending
 - **How we'll check for alignment with this principle re: new oversight processes:**
 - How does this help CMS / states be accountable for dollars spent?
 - What insight will this provide into CMS investments?
 - Do we have a sense for how expensive this will be for CMS and states to implement?
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- **How we'll check for alignment with this principle re: new state investments (fiscal responsibility):**

- Can we evaluate the reason why they need funding?
 - Is this investment a good use of taxpayer money?
 - Do we have cost-benefit analysis for previous "things" like this?
- **How we'll check for alignment with this principle re: new state investments (program outcomes):**
 - Do the State and CMS have the same understanding of the project's program objectives?
 - Do state program operations staff (as opposed to IT) see benefits?