Replacing VA's Medical Scheduling Software and the Role of this Contest

3 months ago

Replacing VA's Medical Scheduling Software

VA intends to replace the current MSP with a scheduling product[1] which is a standards-based, modular, extensible and scalable, certified as compliant and fully interoperable with the production version of VistA now held by the Open Source Electronic Health Record Agent (OSEHRA), http://www.osehra.org/.

The replacement product must effectively perform VA's scheduling-centric and scheduling-related legacy business functions. It must also demonstrate it can meet non-functional requirements including integration with multiple instances of VistA.[2]

Role of this Contest in Replacement of VA's Medical Scheduling Software

This contest will achieve two significant goals in replacement of VA's MSP.

- First, it will mitigate risks which VA has identified as contributing to the failure of previous attempts to replace the MSP.

- Second, it will encourage commercial software vendors to actively engage in development of solutions, by providing a basis on which VA can rate proposals in any subsequent procurement of a replacement for the MSP.

  Risk Mitigation. VA's previous attempts to replace the MSP module in VistA were not successful. Assessments of the reasons for these failures identified three critical risks that VA will mitigate via this contest:

- *Market Research:* One of the reasons VA was not successful was lack of sufficient knowledge about the actual capabilities of vendors to meet VA's business needs. Via this contest, VA will obtain valuable information about industry's current ability to meet VA's business needs via actual demonstration of product capabilities in a VA-defined test environment. Additionally, VA will be able to assess industry's ability to perform not just scheduling-centric functions offered by most robust scheduling products, but also scheduling-related workload-capture and data-reporting functions that are unique to VA. This contest will also provide VA with valuable information about changes in business workflows that will be needed when a replacement product is deployed.

- *Integration issues:* Another reason why earlier attempts were not successful was VA's inability to effectively integrate replacement software with the VistA system. Since then, VA has elected to place VistA in the open source community and to prefer software products which are openly architected to integrate with VistA. Via this contest, VA will be able to assess industry's ability to technically integrate its products with Open Source VistA.

- *Test environment:* Analyses for the previous lack of success also found that VA was unable to effectively test replacement software to assure it met functional and technical requirements. To support this contest VA will provide a test environment, judge contest entries using that test environment, assess the effectiveness of the test

environment, then use the results of that assessment to adjust the test environment as needed to support testing in a procurement of a deployable scheduling replacement product.

Via this contest, VA will obtain the needed information in a lower-risk-of-failure context than if directly procuring a deployable replacement product. VA believes the information it obtains via direct evaluation of entries in this contest will be superior in quality and can be obtained in significantly less time via this contest route than by custom development. VA also believes the aggregate cost of the contest is highly competitive with the cost of acquiring the same types of information via other arrangements. If industry is not able to demonstrate it can meet VA's needs then no prize will be awarded.

Effect on Subsequent Procurement. VA anticipates that compatibility with Open Source VistA will be among the requirements in any subsequent procurement of a replacement for the MSP. Demonstration of open source compatibility in this contest may be taken into consideration in the rating of proposals in any subsequent procurement.

The goal of this contest is to encourage creation of systems that help Veterans make appointments to receive outpatient and ambulatory care[3] from the Veterans Health Administration. VA also seeks to obtain information which will allow it to reduce the risks inherent in procurement and deployment of a replacement medical scheduling product.

[1] As used in this notice, "product" means either a discrete software module which is installed on VA servers or a software service.

[2] The replacement product will, as a part of the overall VistA EHR, deliver privacy, security, data integrity, patient accessibility, interoperability and other services required by federal law, regulations and VA policy. Many of these services are delivered by other components of VistA.

[3] Scheduling of inpatient, surgical, and extended nursing care is excluded.