

NASHVILLE AREA OFFICE IT TRIBAL SHARES LISTENING SESSION

April 7, 2011

Presentations from Dr. Theresa Cullen (ISAC IT Priorities), Lisa DeCora (IT Tribal Shares listening session process) and Raymond Willie (Tribal Shares)

Listening session included participants from the Nashville Area Office, Penobscot Nation, Mississippi Band of Choctaw, Oneida Nation, Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, Eastern Band of Cherokee, and Seminole Nation.

Feedback from the participants:

FUNDING AGREEMENTS/AREA OFFICE & HEADQUARTERS SUPPORT

In the funding agreements, it is important to define specific services and correlating prices. The language in the funding agreements reflects what Tribes get with their Tribal shares. The Nashville Area office provides information that area Tribes use in its agreements but not on a granular level. Would it be possible to itemize everything? Also, if there are extra costs for items, that information is not always available to the ALNs/Tribes if OIT/IHS does not provide the information in a timely manner. It is important for Tribes to know what services are provided for the prices and to verify that the Tribes are getting the services. Also, if Tribes can find a lower price in the private sector, it would be in its best interest to purchase elsewhere.

A question was asked if Tribes who takes partial shares of IT services believe they are getting their share of support/services. A discussion about the area shares versus headquarters shares was discussed and how to resolve situations and potential communication errors. The Nashville Area assigns each Area Office staff to a site but could that model be used on the headquarters shares? Could there be a point of contact that an Area Office staff person uses to assist with troubleshooting an IT problem?

COMMUNICATION/INFORMATION ON SERVICES/PRICES

Currently, there are IT services and costs that are not listed for Tribes to review due to constant changes with technology. It would be helpful to Tribes to provide information about new services/technologies to see if there is a need out there. If so, then IHS could potentially be an “intermediary” to purchase services that Tribes may want. Instead of Tribes purchasing services/products individually, there could be a benefit based on economies of scale. In some instances, the Tribes may need to enter into a contract that it would be committed to a specified number of years to receive a certain price for an IT service/product.

The PSFA Manual is very old and outdated. The IT sections are not helpful and currently, OIT uses outside documents to explain the services/products it provides. IHS is in the process of reviewing the Manual but it would be important for OIT to keep its section updated, as technology and requirements change. Tribes suggested that OIT create a technical development website that provides current services/products/pricing and that it would be updated annually. It was suggested that OIT sit down with Tribes to update the wording so each party understands the services that IHS is providing, along with the current pricing.

It would also assist Tribes if OIT could re-bundle the services that are necessary and itemize the rest that can be provided separately. Tribes do not also know what services need to be bundled together so if OIT has services/products that cannot be broken into portions, then Tribes will need to know what those are.

Tribes also realize that prices increase over time but that information is not available so it sees the increase but does not understand why. Tribes would like to see more detail when prices change/increase. Generally, Tribes do not mind paying for what they are receiving but would like to know what they are receiving. Also, the descriptions are vague and if OIT could provide more descriptions, it would help Tribes make a better business decision based on its needs.

The concept of an “ala carte” service menu was mentioned as an option for providing services/products. Tribes would like to see all of the services OIT may offer and the associated prices. The menu could also differentiate from fixed cost and variable cost items. Right now, there are services/products that are part of the current bundle, like Vista Imaging, but Tribes are not charged for it. So, it’s available to use without a charge but what about those Tribes who do not use it? Do they get a reimbursement for it?

In certain situations, OIT is not a reseller of products so IHS cannot provide a service as part of its cost. An example is certain licenses and if a Tribe does not purchase the bundled services with the license, then instead of attempting to buy it as a single item from IHS, it would need to go to the vendor and purchase it separately, which can cost more than the bundle of services IHS offers.

Tribes would also like the opportunity to provide information to OIT about adding a service. If a Tribe has a suggestion and there is enough interest, could IHS help with facilitating that type of transaction? Again, the economies of scale where Tribes could collectively purchase an outside product but also benefit from a cheaper price based on total amount sold. This would require the ability to provide information to all Tribes in a timely and effective fashion. This issue tied into another example where a Tribe paid for a service since IHS did not have a current contract for Hewlett Packard services. But, IHS did renew the contract and the Tribe was not aware of the change but still paid separately for the service instead of “tapping into the IHS resource.”

A Tribal also commented that it would want to invest in the “premier” system but cannot always afford to do that but looking at these types of applications, spending is going to increase but using revenue management to spend money on tools that will provide a large return.

RPMS

RPMS is available for anyone who requests a copy of it via the Freedom of Information Act process. But, the real question is “Who should pay for the RPMS development?” RPMS costs \$8-9 million annually for research and development. Why isn’t R&D costs on a separate line item? It would also be beneficial to have expertise “in house” to develop RPMS instead of using outside contractors for all development of the system.

Tribes would find it helpful to know if RPMS can be broken down into parts/services. For example, some Tribes only use a portion of RPMS for its programs; it shouldn’t be required to purchase all of RPMS.

There is some confusion about what OIT/IHS does for Tribes who do not use RPMS. It would be helpful if OIT could provide information on how it helps Tribes that do not use the RPMS electronic health record.

IT EQUIPMENT LIST

This concept was borrowed from Office of Environmental Health & Engineering's BEMAR list (improvement and repair list for equipment). This type of list would keep OIT in touch with the Tribes' needs and the data would provide information for national budgetary requests.

OIT FEEDBACK AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS

Tribes believe that OIT could be run on business models and Tribes should be able to provide feedback to OIT on customer satisfaction, similar to a contact. OIT could be evaluated on measures such as technical capacity and customer service. These IT satisfaction surveys could be done annually.

IT TRIBAL SHARES IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

A Tribe commented that the project schedule is fairly aggressive (to get a final product out by early 2012) and suggested that OIT really focus on the proper roll-out, which may delay the final outcomes but that the Tribes would be understanding and amendable to a reasonable delay.