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NASCIO Recommends State Government Adopt the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM) to Enable Government Information Sharing

The National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) recommends the adoption of the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM) for enabling collaborative information exchanges across the state government enterprise. NIEM should be integrated into state government enterprise architecture and data management strategy specifically for planning and implementing inter-governmental information exchanges. NIEM provides a broad range of products and capabilities for planning and implementing enterprise-wide information exchanges. Government effectiveness and citizen centric government services require effective cross line of business collaboration and communication. Use of national standards will avoid redundant investment and unnecessary variation. What is needed is a common discipline for information sharing that is employed by all government lines of business. NIEM exists as *that* discipline for federal, state and local government.

Government must be able to respond efficiently and effectively in delivering citizen services. Cross line of business collaboration will continue to become more routine and necessary in serving the citizen as well as designing and deploying integrative government processes that require information from multiple state agencies. The *National Strategy for Information Sharing* calls for “common standards” to maximize access to shared information among federal, state, local, and tribal governments; and the private sector.¹ There are situations where information sharing can occur through granting appropriate system access. Where that is not an option, data must be packaged, transmitted and received. NIEM provides the process and the tools for planning and implementing such exchanges. As a community, NIEM provides the training, technical assistance, and the relationships necessary for assisting government in developing the knowledge and skills to effectively employ NIEM.

The inception of NIEM was a “grassroots” effort on the part of federal, state and local government to develop a common vocabulary for facilitating cross jurisdictional information sharing within the justice community. That work led to the development of the Global Justice XML Data Model (GJXDM). NASCIO actively promoted the GJXDM within the justice line of business but had also begun examining its application for other lines of business. NASCIO made the case for the need of a common exchange vocabulary and discipline to enable inter-enterprise / inter-jurisdictional collaborative information exchange across all government.^{2 3}

In 2005, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) signed a memorandum of understanding to expand the GJXDM to accommodate collaborative information exchanges for homeland security and justice related government lines of business. This is was inception of the NIEM concept. Subsequently, additional domains have been added to the NIEM portfolio of information exchange vocabularies.⁴

In October of 2010, the Chief Information Officer for the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) signed the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for HHS to join DOJ and DHS as the *third primary sponsor* of the NIEM program. The MOA outlines a cooperative effort to commit resources to support development and implementation of NIEM and adds HHS as a member of the Executive Steering Council.⁵ In March of 2010, the Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) required each agency to evaluate NIEM for their cross-boundary information exchanges and submit a plan to OMB.⁶ In April of 2011, the Federal CIO Council issued its evaluation of these responses in its report “Agency Information Exchange Functional Standards Evaluation – Adoption and Use of the National Information Exchange

Model (NIEM)".⁷ Twelve federal agencies reported that they are *committed* to adoption of NIEM for information exchanges. Eight agencies are still in the evaluation process. Many of these agencies specifically include state, local and tribal governments in their list of stakeholders.

These activities at the federal level demonstrate the growing importance of NIEM in moving government toward an enterprise approach where agencies are working together collaboratively in delivering services. Future government will increasingly demand and rely upon policy and technology that enable and promote such government inter-operability and cross line of business collaboration. NIEM processes and governance are in place to enable such collaborative capabilities across government.

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¹ *National Strategy for Information Sharing*, October 2007. p. 7, 13. Available at <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/infosharing/index.html>

² *Hot Pursuit – Achieving Interoperability Through XML*. NASCIO, 2004. Available at <http://www.nascio.org/publications/videos.cfm>.

³ *Perspectives on Government Information Sharing, Volume 1: Government*. p. 13. Available at <http://www.nascio.org/publications/videos.cfm>.

⁴ Introduction to NIEM, retrieved on November 10, 2010, from <http://www.niem.gov/OverviewDocuments.php>.

⁵ *The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Joins the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM)*, The ISE Blog, November 12, 2010. Retrieved on November 23, 2010, from <http://www.ise.gov/Blog/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=102>.

⁶ *Agency Information Sharing Functional Specification – Guidance and Templates*, March 4, 2010. p. 2. Available at http://www.niem.gov/pdf/Agency_Information_Sharing.pdf.

⁷ Federal CIO Council, *Exchange Functional Standards Evaluation Adoption and Use of the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM)* p 22-24. Available at <http://www.niem.gov/pdf/AssessmentReport.pdf>.