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**VA Begins Process to Create Open Source Electronic Health Record**

*Formally Announces Request for Proposal & Implementation Schedule*

WASHINGTON **–** The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today released a draft Request for Proposal (RFP) aimed at forming an Open Source community around its ground-breaking VistA (Veterans Integrated System Technology Architecture) electronic health record (EHR) system. When award is made under a planned RFP for a custodial agent, VA will commit to deploy the Open Source version of VistA to all of its facilities, and will contribute all non-security essential modifications to the product it makes or pays for directly to the Open Source custodian. VA will also commit to participate in Open Source VistA with other public and private sector participants.

"VistA is an important asset for VA, and for the Nation,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “As we work to ensure that we provide Veterans with the best in health care, modernization of VistA is absolutely critical. This move towards Open Source welcomes private sector partners to work with us to improve VistA, and is an important part of our strategy to ensure that VA clinicians have the best tools possible, and that Veterans receive the best health care possible."

VA expects to begin conversion to an Open Source version of VistA by this summer. A key step in this process will be the selection of a custodial agent to perform all aspects of operating the Open Source community. On Feb. 18, 2011, VA released a Request for Information (RFI) asking for information from stakeholders and potential offerors for a custodial agent. Concurrent to this announcement VA issued a draft RFP for custodial services.

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**Open Source EHR 2/2/2/2**

The VistA system is widely viewed as the most extensively used electronic health record system in the Nation. It is currently used in 153 major VA hospitals and more than 800 community based outpatient clinics across the U.S. It forms the basis of the Resource and Patient Management System (RPMS), the EHR system used by the Indian Health System, as well as the basis of installations in more than 50 hospitals globally. A vibrant community outside VA already uses VistA.

"Over the past year, we have followed a deliberative process to examine the implications of Open Source for VistA, and we are convinced that this is the best approach for VA, Veterans, and taxpayers," said Roger Baker, VA assistant secretary for information and technology. “Our primary goal is to re-ignite the innovative processes that made VistA such a great EHR system. We also want to ensure that vendors of proprietary products can easily and confidently integrate their products with VistA to make them available for VA to purchase and use in our facilities.“

VA expects that other organizations may commit to VistA Open Source, and welcomes their participation in the development, use and governance of VistA.

VA Chief Technology Officer Peter Levin, who helped lead the Open Source initiative, said, “This is a terrific example of what the Administration means by Open Government: transparent, collaborative and truly participatory. This is a historic moment for health care informatics. By moving towards standards-based systems that incorporate health records and the best that industry and government can offer, VA will remain at the vanguard of electronic health care delivery.”

Hundreds of companies, organizations, government agencies, universities, Congressional stakeholders, and individuals advised VA’s path towards Open Source via published studies, RFI responses, meetings or individual comments. In the best traditions of Open Source, the combined wisdom of this community has ensured establishment of a much better path than any single institutional stakeholder could possibly have achieved on its own.

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