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1	Specific to the requirement around integration to 3rd Party Product+B2:C9s, please give the vendor community an idea or examples of the types of 3rd party products and/or use cases that this Cloud Based UI Model/Solution needs to integrate with?	As part of a proof of concept or multiple proofs of concept, use cases would be used to assist in understanding the requirements. The use cases would have to demonstrate that third-party products can solve those problems. Our goal is to shy away from an experienced-based kind of learning process or from just picking a technology because we like it but it doesn't necessarily fit the need. Within the UI space it is important to understand.that there are third party products used to satisfy ancillary business requirements; such as content management and imaging systems, correspondence, schedulers, address validation software, IVR and other call center applications. We are looking for the smart integration of those tools as one of the areas we would like to explore in terms of the proof of concept.
2	How can shared services be leveraged to meet the needs of an integrated UI system?	For example, components of a system; if a state wants to adopt a benefit module that has been created by another state. The concept is it could be shared through a cloud environment, that is one state for instance can pick up as an example the WYCAN's benefit module. With these services being in the cloud, it makes it easier - states are a little bit reluctant sometimes for other states to come into their system, and that causes a lot of concern around security and having this in the cloud and having a secured environment already structured, will certainly ease those pains. Regarding the shared services, leveraging shared services and how it's implemented, in terms of software infrastructure is a vital aspect to the consortium, that is gaining economies of scale of those sharing services in an integrated fashion. Whether it be a single instance of a solution - or a single instance of a license of a product that gets shared among the states, the costs are shared. With this initiative, we're trying to understand how these concepts could be achieved and leveraged nationally.
3	Two Related Questions: [1] Who is providing the initial source of funding for project - Federal Government or States? [2] What is the time frame when the funds have to be spent?	The U.S. Department of Labor is the is the fund source.
4	Given the models you have laid out and described, where you have the Department of Labor, you have some vendors in the middle performing various roles and you have consumers in the - in the states - how do you envision the contractual relationships? What type of vehicles do you anticipate using? Do you anticipate the contractual relationships between the vendors and DOL, the vendors and the states or some combination thereof?	We don't think we have a clear answer to that question at this point. It will depend on the models that make the most sense, that involve some of this process, and that we are able to test out in a proof-of-concept about whether or not we move forward in the model that's totally driven by states coming together with their own money, or whether there is something that comes out, such as brilliant ideas at the federal government. We are trying to do a stretch here and figure out what's feasible, what the various options are, we can find the money at the Department of Labor, or we can do it collaboratively with states, or states can do it collaboratively together.
5	What is the definition of "technical Broker" and "Business Broker"?	There's the technical dimension to this broker service in terms of connecting the need, as expressed in the requirements, the technology basis of the system and the evolution of a system. So this includes both the technical and business side. There's certainly multiple aspects to this. And in fact, maybe there are two layers or side-by-side brokers that communicate. That is a potential here. We are interested if industry would suggest that in their response to the RFI. We put forward this broker concept as an example of how it could work. We think there are probably multiple models. There may be other models. This is the part where we want industry to come to us and help us innovate.
6	It was mentioned during the opening remarks that there are approximately 80-85% of common requirements. 'Employer must be able to register their account online' is a common requirement across all states, but each state differs drastically in the registration. How do you envision the consortium will resolve those issues with 'common requirements' will a decision be made across the states, will each state have separate functionality or will it be decided on case by case basis?	Yes that is a common requirement. When we're talking about common requirements, we're talking about steps within a use case and interaction between the system and an end user. So there's a process - there's an interaction between the system and between the user and the development process and the re-engineering process. The states work together to come to consensus on that. At that level, there is a high degree of commonality. What we found in the ranges - 60 to 85 percent among the states - a lot of it is law-driven, so it's state-specific law that drives that, but there's also federal law, and then there's also the policies that drive these rules. At the rule level, emphasis is on the configurability capability within the common framework. While states differ drastically in employer registration, if it's not dictated by state law, and it's only dictated by state policy, we really should be looking at best practices and what's the best way for employers to register. For example, most of the employers that are in Colorado are also in Wyoming and Arizona and North Dakota. And so maybe it's time for us to actually start making it easier for them instead of having 50 different state registration portals. One of the side benefits of the consortium model is having the states work together and see what's common, what's different, and then, maybe some of it is just different because it's been that way for 30 years. We can change that process and make it more common.
7	Is mobility a significant requirement?	That's not really central to this. If there's any input provided in that regard it would be welcomed, but that's not the central piece of this RFI.
8	Can you provide us a high-level at least a high-level example of the types of processes that are supported by IT within the state UI agency? So basically, what is it that your agency does on a daily basis, and how are those activities supported by IT infrastructure and services?	In Colorado, they have a centralized IT department. And so everything goes through that centralized agency. The state IT systems support overall case management; determining claimants' eligibility; making payments; adjudicating issues that affect claimants' eligibility; interacting with the employer community regarding their tax status, regarding claimants' eligibility, wages and charges based on the claimant's filing; workflow automation; document management; event scheduling like appeals. The list just goes on and on. The systems are old. They are inflexible. It takes weeks, sometimes months to reprogram the system when there's changes to the laws, regulations, policies etc. These systems also have a really difficult time handling the heavy loads, as we experienced firsthand during the recent recession. The systems also require significant infrastructure to support collaboration between state employees, interconnecting divisions and departments, and of course the customers. Mississippi has a little bit different perspective on this. MS certainly serves the same constituency in the unemployment insurance program, as CO. Employers who are filing and paying taxes, registering to pay taxes, the benefits processes for claimants, the benefits adjudication, overpayments and recovery. All of these components live within the Mississippi program. But in addition to that, we have to be cognizant of the fact that in our organization, we support other programs of USDOL, such as Labor Exchange, Workforce Investment Act programs. The unemployment insurance program has to interact and interface with those programs. We share data across the Mississippi agency. Actually, Mississippi partnered with USDOL and ITSC on the Reemployment Connections project that launched in a pilot back in March of this year. It has been very successful for us by bringing together the unemployment insurance program, the job placement programs, job – skills gap analysis programs into a single point of entry for the customers. In addition to that, MS also is required to communicate with other agencies, such as the Department of Human Services. Mississippi is looking at creating a consortium of a sort within our state with UI, Workforce Employment and Training and Department of Human Service organization because we all serve the same customers. There are a lot of interfaces that have to be created, managed and maintained. There are numerous rules that surround the unemployment insurance program and external to the program that we have to take into account as we move forward with this process.

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9	What information do you think that is important for the vendor community here to know about related to your experiences in UI information technology and how the UI system evolves through the cloud technology?	For WyCAN, early on, the consortium realized that the four states themselves couldn't support a modernized system. It's a capacity and expertise issue. The consortium states can't hire and keep the necessary staff to maintain these systems. The consortium is really concerned about being able to support, update, maintain and evolve a new system over time and keep it current. The WyCAN states unanimously decided they were going to outsource the maintenance and the support of their new system using cloud services. The vendor, HCL, will support the multistate system, including the software, infrastructure. The vendor will also ensure that all of the security requirements are being met, things like coding systems for each state in support of the multitenant model. Experienced resources are critical for efficient and continuous development of the system. In-depth knowledge and an understanding of the WyCAN security requirements is critical. Legislation, dictates specifics about where data can be stored. That is data at rest, in transit and in the cloud, are subject to the same high standards of security that are required with localized data centers. It's essential to have well-defined service level agreements to manage agency expectations, and continuity of service from cloud providers.
#	What should the vendor community understand about the difference between working in a project on the single state versus the needs of a consortium? How can vendors distinguish between the two and the needs of the two groups?	In a consortium there are three major factors that have to be handled, communication, security, and prioritization. Those are the important issues that we have to deal with. Communication is probably the number-one issue. Communications is extremely important and will become even more important when states move into production. Along the lines of the communications piece, the art of negotiation and the art of compromise play a critical role in this partnership of states. Negotiation is also important for the vendor community to understand as well, everyone needs to understand they can't always have it their way. Security is certainly critical. We deal with a tremendous amount of personally identifiable information. Not only are there federal requirements regarding security, there are also many state security requirements surrounding confidentiality of data. Some of the state requirements may even be more strict than the federal requirements. Federal requirements are covered in the Safeguard Procedures Act and for those of us that have IRS data, there are some relatively restrictive directives from the IRS that govern how that data is maintained and accessed. So security is very important, and you've got to take that into consideration. Prioritization, that is how do you prioritize the system changes in a consortium? In the MRM consortium, there are three states. In WyCAN, there are four states. Legislatures decide that they're going to pass a bill, and it may happen in one or two states in a three-state consortium. The bill is passed, the changes are required on the same date. The effective date of a lot of legislation is July 1, in states. How do you deal with that? How do you make those changes? The only solution for a developer is, to get it done on time, because it will be a requirement from the state(s) that it be done in conjunction with the effective date of the legislation. The governor expects it, the legislature expects it and certainly the executives of the agencies expect it. One other point when looking at a single state development in relation to a multi-state or consortium development, Mississippi took nine years to develop our reengineered unemployment system and our technology surrounding that. MS has a very successful system that is stabilized and operating successfully. Some of these components have been in production since 2007. As MS moves into the consortium model, we realized that probably for us the hardest part of the work had been done: the reengineering of the business processes. For MRM the Mississippi system is the base system, and as we add the other states, we realized that we have to consider the fact that there are unique pieces with each of the other states that have to be dealt with, and implemented if the consortium is going to be a success. Finally as I said communication, security and prioritization are the three major areas you need to take away from this conversation.
#	Given that you're already looking to use cloud technology to support your consortia, what are your thoughts about how the cloud will help you migrate your final development application to additional states?	The benefit is the nonlocalized nature of cloud solutions that allow for the onboarding of other states. WyCAN is the only four-state consortium. We are developing a UI tax, benefits and appeals system. It's a complete, total modernization project. WyCAN is very interested in expanding to other states, once implemented in the four WyCAN states. That doesn't mean that states have to wait until we are totally finished. They can start looking at their requirements and getting prepared to onboard onto our system. We don't really have a limit as to how many states might onboard to our system. Again, the configurability of this system will be what is key factor in determining how many states onboard. The two or three critical issues that we're looking at with these systems is security, reliability and cost. It absolutely has to be reliable and flexible. It can't take as long as it does now to reprogram these systems for both state and federal law changes. The federal changes will go across all states, but individual states will take the federal changes and possibly make additional state changes. Another key point in these consortiums and cloud systems is that the state's data cannot be comingled. So that's a security issue that has to be dealt with, we don't even comingle our data with the other state agencies. It should be noted that it is not just about the new system under the current laws that we have in place at both the federal and state level, but how adaptable and flexible the new system is to handle future changes at either the state or federal level. Cloud technology has to create a stable and highly available system and provide a practical disaster recovery business continuity solution. We live in an environment that demands security – it demands security of the data that we hold. We don't want anybody being able to see our customers private data unless they have the appropriate authorization to access it. So once again security is very important. The ability to maintain the current security patches and service upgrades to the software components of the system is another key need. Note our staffs are overwhelmed with so much other work and just keeping the systems running that sometimes they get behind on upgrading the security patches and the service upgrades. Our vision is that these upgrades and patches are accomplished in a timely efficient manner through a cloud provider. We need to have a full support staff of developers etc. ready and capable of doing whatever we need without the fear of losing them to the private sector, which unfortunately is the norm in many states today. These factors, will create the long-term stability in support of the vision that WyCAN and MRM have for the cloud infrastructure.
#	From a broader state perspective, what is your take on how cloud technology can help support UI infrastructure for the UI system in new ways to help save money and improve quality?	We believe that the development cycles will be shorter, systems will go online faster, they'll be much more cost-effective because we're sharing the costs of maintaining, supporting and operating a joint system. Whether it's a four-state or a three-state or even a two-state partnership all consortium models will allow other states, to onboard and basically get that new system faster and more cost effectively. We'll get extra processing capacity quickly without having to buy it as individual states and the concept is to pay for the processing capacity only when we need it. Most importantly is that states won't have to spend their time and their resources maintaining systems, but instead we can spend our time serving our citizens. We do need the ability to have elasticity in our systems. A good case study in that was the most recent Emergency Unemployment Compensation Federal program (EUC). EUC extended the duration individuals were allowed to collect unemployment benefits. Benefit duration increased from a maximum of 26 weeks up to a range of from 72 to 99 weeks paid by states starting in the middle of 2008 and running through late last year. This federal change caused quite a stress on systems around the country. This was also compounded by a significant increase in the volume of regular benefit claims processed during that time period. This increased workload and the passage of the federal extensions with varying time periods stressed the already fragile UI infrastructure of states nationwide. This points to the need of elasticity to handle a surge in workload and the flexibility to handle mandated law changes quickly. In addition cloud operations also should provide for a much needed disaster recovery infrastructure. States struggle with disaster recovery. In Mississippi, we do have a disaster recovery system, but we didn't until about three years ago. We're talking about a highly available system that rolls over into the DR mode if something happens to the main operating system. But what happens when we have another emergency unemployment compensation program that has a little different twist. Through the cloud concept, we think that we will be more prepared to offer some of those states an opportunity to begin to migrate over and, if nothing else, use components out of the cloud environment that may somewhat ease their pain.

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#	What is your perspective and thoughts on the importance of reporting, and if you had looked at things like metering, chargebacks - have you given any thought to that, either as the long-term strategy or if you guys are currently doing that today? Could you kind of talk about some of your experiences?	It is certainly critical that we are able to understand how much traffic each state is putting through the system. How much it costs each individual state, because costs will be shared and states will pay by usage or workload. When WyCAN was in the process of defining how to do this and what the issues were associated with usage the team was trying to determine how to deal with the peaks and valleys regarding usage of system. Fresh in everyone's memory was a tremendous peak in workload all states experience due to the Great Recession. Compare that with a lower workload most states are now going into. So the question is how do you design a system to be able to handle significant and potentially dramatic shifts in workload. The system has to be elastic enough to expand nd contract quickly. For WyCAN, one of the ways that we thought about doing that is through service-level agreements, and through our base budget, what we get as a base budget from the USDOL as opposed to a metering concept or a usage concept, because the truth is, the vendor also has to have a steady, reliable stream of income. Regarding metering and different pricing models we are looking, a transaction based model. This is a new concept so it'd have to be well-explained and understood by all states.

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#	Working in a consortium - it's a challenge to do projects just with one state. With multiple states working, how did you come up with the governance and managing the project efficiently? And learning through your experience as well?	For the WYCAN states, we have an executive team, which is where the highest level of issues go for resolution. It is composed of two representatives from each state, with one vote per state. States are required to have both the business side and the IT side at the table so IT work isn't being done in isolation from the business side and the business work isn't being done in isolation from the technology community. The concept is to deal with the issues in parallel as opposed to separately. We also have - at the next level down, a steering committee, and then we have our subject matter experts. This is an issue because you don't come together based on size or state law or requirements. We have discovered going through the requirements phase of the project that about 85 percent of the requirements and laws are similar. The remaining 15 percent however probably took us almost as long to grasp, understand and document in the requirements. Governance gets very tricky; prioritization comes into play, lead state comes into play, which state gets onboard or in production first etc. There are some very tricky issues that we have to deal with, and frankly, are still dealing with on a daily basis. For MRM the governance - the MOUs that we established initially, and the consortium executive committee that we have is very similar to the organization in WyCAN. It is essentially the legislative body. If issues arise that aren't addressed by the MOU, it is escalated then through the project director to our executive committee, and we make a decision and we move forward. So the governance is not done and probably never will be done. It's a living, breathing organism that changes from time to time depending on the circumstances and what has to be done. Because it's multiple states – all of the states sign the contracts and the agreements but one state is essentially the liable state and the lead state for those agreements. So in the governance agreements that were hammered out at least for WyCAN, as things rise to the executive level and perhaps votes need to be taken as to which direction to go to, it's very specifically laid out that it has to be a three vote majority of the four states on the board. In addition the lead state must be one of those three votes because ultimately the lead state is the one responsible for the contract.
#	Given your experience with Office 365 and kind of understating the importance of clearly defining a service catalogue, have you thought through maybe where to start from, what types of services you would offer initially? And then, have you given thought to more of a longer-term strategy and to what services you'd like to offer in the future?	Some of our ideas for the proofs of concept have been expressed in the RFI. It is possible that the proof of concept activity will inform what to build out – a process for what that catalogue of capabilities and services might be. We are very interested in the experiences and the insights from industry to help with this. Certain ideas are infrastructure as a service. A functional UI component build-out would make more sense than a full UI system. As described in this RFI the UI systems are quite complex and built component by component. It's not going to be a one size fits all because of states being in many different places. There are probably blended models and hybrids that would serve our community better, and we have tried to educate you the vendor community about the UI communities, and where the challenges are so that you can help us think through what those models might look like. That's part of the openness of this RFI.
#	Question is about the learning from GSA -CSB services - how that has helped GSA learn from that proof of concept and what's the strategy moving forward?	ITSC cannot speak on behalf of GSA. GSA agreed to work with ITSC and DOL to provide a summary of the lessons.
#	How long after you start the review process do you envision proof of concept-type engagement? And are you open to kind of opportunities that, maybe we've had in the past to give some guidance on defining a POC?	There will be a rapid review process, and based on that review some vendors might be asked to come in for an in depth discussion of their proposal. After these reviews we will formulate what these proofs of concept will look like. It might be something offered by one or more of the vendors. The execution of one or more of these proofs of concept will involve developing some high level requirements as a preliminary step. Depending on the complexity of the models the vendor proposals represent will be factor in determining how complicated it is to bring the states to the table because they obviously have to be part of that process. The thinking at this point is this activity will probably be a nine month to one year process.