Section 1.3 Adopt – Select

Key Differentiators

Because many products will include many of the same functions, especially if they are certified, using the responses to the Request for Proposal (RFP) (1.3 RFP Analysis) can be very difficult for narrow the field of vendors to the few for whom you want to conduct further due diligence. The complete response to the RFP ensures that all functionality is addressed in your ultimate contract with the vendor of choice, but it is overwhelming for narrowing the field. Use this tool to help do an objective, side-by-side comparison of the vendors on key selection differentiators.

Instructions for Use

1. Identify the key differentiators that are most important to your organization. These should not include more than 10 to 20 items, including key functionality, technology, implementation support, and vendor viability.

    a. In order to determine key differentiators, you need to be well-educated on the potential capability present in the type of application under consideration. For example, if you are looking for a product that will ease the burden of documenting a nursing assessment, you may want the patient or a family member/caregiver to provide information in advance that is structured along the line of questioning necessary and that will automatically populate an electronic health record (EHR). This is not a current criterion for certification, so it is one that will differentiate products.

    b. In some cases, a key differentiator may be a group of related functions. For example, a hospital closed-loop medication management system may entail several functions that must work together. The integration of such functionality may be a key differentiator.

    c. Some organizations prioritize their list of key differentiators, and in some cases even weight them. The level of specificity applied is up to you.

2. Once you have identified all key differentiators, use them to analyze each vendor as you review the responses to the request for proposal.

    a. As you structure your review of responses from the RFP, review the key differentiators again with the steering committee to make sure everyone understands them and how to score.

    b. Scoring should be as objective as possible; hence, the scoring scale is not a ranking from low to high, but a rating on specific factors. Review the scoring scale and make sure that everyone understands the ratings and how to use the scale.

    c. In some cases, the RFP may not be the best source for determining how well a product meets your needs. For example, if five vendors responded to the RFP, you may find that one vendor has provided a model service level agreement (SLA), another vendor may have described its service process, and the remaining three may have merely responded that they provide 24/7 service through a help desk. Not until you conduct site visits and reference checks will you be able to learn more about the quality of the service. In fact, the vendor with the model SLA may not be meeting the agreement frequently, whereas a vendor with a more simple response may reportedly do a better job.

    d. The goal of using the key differentiators to analyze responses to the RFP is to narrow the field of vendors to two or three for which you will do further due diligence (e.g., on-site demonstrations, site visits, and reference checks).

3. Once you have analyzed each vendor's response to the RFP, use this key differentiators tool again to record your assessment of the product based on the remaining steps in due diligence. Then, plot the average of all scores to get a complete picture.

Key Selection Differentiators Vendor Analysis
The example provided is for an ambulatory EHR selection process. Replace the statements with your own and for the type of HIT you are analyzing.

Rating Scale:
0 = product does not address and no indication that it will
1 = product does not incorporate today but appears very likely to be available in near future
2 = product is marginal and lacking in some but not all aspects of the differentiator
3 = product is satisfactory
4 = product fully meets or even exceeds the differentiator

Key Differentiators (*list in order of importance*)	Analysis of All Vendors' Responses to RFP				
	Vendor A	Vendor B	Vendor C	Vendor D	Vendor E
I. Comprehensive functionality					
a. Charge capture (e.g., 4% improvement in lab charges)					
b. Scheduling (appointments, rooms, staff, supplies related to each other)					
c. Telephone messaging (e.g., refills, results)/portal strategy					
d. Messaging with hospital/other providers					
e. Quality (specific evidence-based guidelines)					
f. Patient safety (drug-allergy, drug-drug, drug-lab alerts)					
g. Efficient data entry (e.g., reduce transcription by 50%, high % physician adoption)					
h. Plans to support quality measure reporting for HITECH incentives					
II. Technology					
a. Interface experience					
b. Flexibility for in-house changes					
c. Browser-based					
III. Implementation/ongoing support					
a. Turnover strategy (phasing)					
b. Training (super/end users)					

Key Differentiators (*list in order of importance*)	Analysis of All Vendors' Responses to RFP				
	Vendor A	**Vendor B**	**Vendor C**	**Vendor D**	**Vendor E**
c. Upgrades (requirements, pacing, implementation)					
d. Overall support (responsive, resolution timing)					
IV. Vendor characteristics					
a. Vendor clinical staffing					
b. Financial stability					
c. Contract provisions for company change					
d. Pricing strategy					
Totals:					

Key Selection Differentiators Vendor Comparison

The exact same tool as for the vendor comparison should be used for due diligence, transferring over a summary of the findings from the RFP analysis.

Rating scale:

0 = product does not address and no indication that it will
1 = product does not incorporate today but appears very likely to be available in near future
2 = product is marginal and lacking in some but not all aspects of the differentiator
3 = product is satisfactory
4 = product fully meets or even exceeds the differentiator

Vendor:	Summary of All Due Diligence				
Key Differentiators (*list in order of importance*)	**RFP**	**Demo**	**Site Visit**	**Reference Checks**	**Average Score**
I. Comprehensive functionality					
a. Charge capture (e.g., 4% improvement in lab charges)					
b. Scheduling (appointments, rooms, staff, supplies related to each other)					
c. Telephone messaging (e.g., refills, results)/portal strategy					
d. Messaging with hospital/other providers					
e. Quality (specific evidence-based guidelines)					
f. Patient safety (drug-allergy, drug-drug, drug-lab alerts)					

Vendor:	Summary of All Due Diligence				
Key Differentiators (*list in order of importance*)	**RFP**	**Demo**	**Site Visit**	**Reference Checks**	**Average Score**
g. Efficient data entry (e.g., reduce transcription by 50%, high % physician adoption)					
h. Plans to support quality measure reporting for HITECH incentives					
II. Technology					
a. Interface experience					
b. Flexibility for in-house changes					
c. Browser-based					
III. Implementation/ongoing support					
a. Turnover strategy (phasing)					
b. Training (super/end users)					
c. Upgrades (requirements, pacing, implementation)					
d. Overall support (responsive, resolution timing)					
IV. Vendor characteristics					
a. Vendor clinical staffing					
b. Financial stability					
c. Contract provisions for company change					
d. Pricing strategy					
Totals:					

For support using the toolkit

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