

# **OPTN Modernization Discovery Task Summary**

## **OPTN Communications Services Re-Engineering**

### **Introduction**

HRSA is leading a historic modernization of the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN), designed to improve transparency, performance, governance, and efficiency. As part of this effort, HRSA engaged an independent contractor, Deloitte, to assess the state of OPTN communications and identify opportunities for improvement. Deloitte analyzed communication processes and practices across the OPTN environment using:

- Public-facing websites and digital content
- Samples of newsletters, e-blasts, and policy announcements
- Readability and accessibility assessments of OPTN, HRSA, UNOS, and SRTR websites
- Interviews with stakeholders representing patients, clinicians, OPOs, advocacy organizations, and OPTN governance
- Discussions with HRSA and vendors supporting OPTN operations

### **Disclaimer**

This document summarizes the findings and recommendations of the contractor. It is provided for informational and transparency purposes only and does not represent the official policy or endorsement of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) or the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). All final decisions regarding solicitations, requirements, and implementation rest solely with the U.S. Government. Additionally, HRSA will ensure that the OPTN, through close collaboration with the Board of Directors and other stakeholders, advises, reviews, and provides necessary input to enable HRSA to match vendor services to the needs of the OPTN.

### **Contractor's Current-State Findings**

Deloitte observed that stakeholders expressed dedication to the OPTN mission but also shared concerns that communications are often difficult to navigate, inconsistent in message or tone, or insufficiently responsive to audience needs. Common themes included:

- Patients and families struggling to understand modernization and its implications
- Clinicians and OPOs missing updates or receiving inconsistent information

- Advocacy groups seeking a more unified and accessible voice
- Confusion among all groups about the roles of HRSA, OPTN, UNOS, and contractors
- Desire for clearer, proactive, reliable communications that build trust

Across stakeholder groups, Deloitte identified six overarching communication challenges affecting patient understanding, provider awareness, public trust, and operational efficiency:

**1. Lack of Clear, Documented Processes**

- Most communication workflows rely on informal, person-dependent steps, contributing to variable review times, unclear responsibilities, and inconsistent outputs
- Stakeholders described a need for predictable, documented processes

**2. Limited Audience Segmentation**

- Communications frequently target all audiences simultaneously
- Providers, patients, advocates, and OPOs noted difficulty finding information relevant to them

**3. Minimal Tailored and Accessible Content**

- Many OPTN education materials are written above the recommended reading level and use highly technical language
- Patients and families reported difficulty understanding materials during already stressful circumstances

**4. OPTN Brand Confusion**

- Stakeholders routinely conflated OPTN and UNOS
- Mixed branding on websites and documents further blurred distinctions between governance, vendor responsibilities, and federal oversight

**5. Inconsistent Messaging**

- HRSA, OPTN volunteer governance, UNOS, and other stakeholders sometimes share updates that differ in timing, emphasis, or detail, creating information gaps

**6. Limited and Reactive Information**

- Stakeholders described learning of key developments (e.g., policy updates, modernization activities) with little notice
- Many desired a predictable cadence of updates and more transparency into decision processes

# Contractor's Future-State Recommendations

Deloitte identified four future-state recommendations to strengthen patient-centered communications:

## 1. Strengthen Communication Operations

- Create an OPTN-wide concept of operations for communications
- Develop SOPs for content development, review, clearance, and dissemination
- Establish shared knowledge management systems to improve consistency
- *Intended benefits:* improved consistency, timeliness, and clarity across all communications touchpoints

## 2. Build a Proactive Communication Strategy

- Develop a unified strategy that identifies campaign goals, audience needs, and key messages
- Develop communication frameworks for major topics such as modernization, allocation policy changes, and patient education
- Create audience personas (e.g., patients, OPOs, clinicians, donors) and segmentation frameworks
- Use analytics to measure reach and refine messaging
- *Intended benefits:* shift from reactive updates to predictable, structured communication

## 3. Expand External Engagement & Digital Channels

- Redesign the OPTN website with improved navigation, plain language, and user-tested features
- Implement digital feedback mechanisms (e.g., surveys, social listening)
- Launch social media channels dedicated to OPTN content to increase reach
- Strengthen presence at scientific and patient-facing events
- *Intended benefits:* increase accessibility and encourage more meaningful two-way engagement

## 4. Refresh and Standardize OPTN Branding

- Define the OPTN's brand identity, tone, and visual system separate from UNOS
- Standardize tone, visuals, and messaging by providing brand guidelines for vendors and governance bodies
- Ensure consistent branding across vendors and communication products
- *Intended benefits:* build public trust and improve recognition of official communications

# Considerations

## **Limitations and Interpretation**

Deloitte did not have access to internal OPTN-contractor communication processes or personnel, and many processes lacked SOPs—limiting the precision of mapping for some workflows. Thus, findings should be viewed as best-effort observations, not a comprehensive or final depiction of all OPTN processes.