The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is currently set to launch an innovator "Challenge" to industry to develop a multi-state, multi-program provider screening application capable of risk scoring, credential validation, identity authentication, and sanction checks, while lowering burden on providers and reducing administrative and infrastructure expenses for States and federal programs. CMS has partnered with NASA, Harvard Business School, TopCoder, and the State of Minnesota to help execute a series of "Challenge" contests to develop a shared service solution that can be provided to States to assist in their provider screening efforts. We are attempting to establish a new paradigm for constructing State Information Technology (IT) systems by opening the market to new players with new technology solutions which can "plug and play" with existing legacy systems, or can operate in a shared, cloud-based environment.

By using a "Challenge" approach, we intend to invite a large and diverse "community of solvers" to produce innovative and creative solutions that can deliver a reliable, scalable, and economic provider screening capability for multiple states (or even the nation), as well other federal health programs. The "Challenge" approach allows us to articulate a set of goals and objectives rather than specifying a particular approach or predicting, based on a proposal, which of multiple competing approaches will produce the best business result. In the end, we reward only for the solution or solutions that work best against our overall goals and objectives.

CMS received funding from the Partnership Fund for Program Integrity Innovation, a program created within the Office of Management and Budget by the 2010 Consolidated Appropriations Act to pilot innovative ideas for improving assistance programs in a controlled environment to conduct this "Challenge". The CMS "Challenge" shall consist of a series of contests that will run over the course of the next 8-9 months. We expect to award $500,000 - $600,000 in prizes during the course of running the competitions that make up the "Challenge". We are eagerly anticipating the contributions of the TopCoder community as they compete to create the most innovative, efficient, and optimized solutions for our specific, real-world provider screening challenges being faced by States today. We also expect to enlist additional States to help us in our requirements elicitation and piloting efforts.

Further information about the State Provider Screening Challenge is available at www.medicaid.gov or http://community.topcoder.com/coeci/.