# SDWIS Modernization User Interviews (September 2019)

**Information about interviews:**

* 22 total interviews (16 States):
  + 10 Primacy agencies that use SDWIS State and/or CMDP.
  + 3 Primacy agencies that do not use S/S or CMDP (SDWIS Free).
  + 5 EPA Regions (SDWIS Coordinators and Regional Data Managers).
    - All 5 have Direct Implementation responsibilities.
  + 4 SDWIS Prime Advisory Board Members (all represent a State/Primacy agency).
* Conducted at staff level, with an intent to capture the perspective of everyday users.
* Interviewees’ experience with SDWIS modernization ran the gamut from those involved since the beginning (mid 90’s), those involved during the “NextGen” phase, those currently serving on the Prime UAT, and those who have not been heavily involved with Prime development.
* 1-1.5 hours depending on interviewees.

**SDWIS Prime Development themes:**

* Most interviewees expressed little surprise that SDWIS Prime development was paused. Several people cited the length and complexity of the build as the reason for this.
* Regarding the question of providing Prime as a centralized service or distributed software, respondents did not seem to have a strong preference. Many mentioned a potential savings on hosting & support if EPA hosted at NCC, but ultimately it would not be a major factor in their decision making because the choice is to adopt Prime and pay those costs, or spend significant resources creating or updating their own system. One additional consideration would accounting for version control (i.e. many primacy agencies were not up to date with SDWIS State) across primacy agencies in a distribution model.

**Prime transition and expected benefits:**

* Consistently, interviewees were enthusiastic about the BRE and its ability to help expedite compliance determinations and eliminate human error. Several suggested that if Prime does not proceed, salvaging the BRE would be worthwhile and appreciated. “Prime without the BRE is just not very useful.”
* As mentioned above, a centralized Prime would save primacy agencies resources devoted to hosting and support. Agencies with centralized IT experience significant delays with SDWIS State maintenance and a centralized Prime would eliminate those.
* SDWIS free states cited other potential benefits of moving to Prime: being able to consult with more primacy agencies for support and add-ons because of a shared platform.
* Generally, SDWIS free states seemed the most disappointed in Prime suspension; many legacy systems are dated and in need of an update. Without Prime, significant resources will be needed to update their system or implement SDWIS State with necessary add-ons. SDWIS Free states expressed an understanding of addressing the security issues but none thought updating SDWIS State should be EPA’s preferred longer term option.
* User interface – users cited that having more information on one page could limit need to use sub-menus, scrolling.
* Several interviewees expressed keen interest in being able to flow information in and out of Prime for to ease interfacing with Prime and allow for continued use of interfacing applications.

**SDWIS State Update:**

* Enthusiasm for addressing the SDWIS State security issues was strong due to ongoing and intensifying security issues without the update. Even if Prime development resumes, the update helps primacy agencies prepare for transition without having to use resources to continue to run an older version of SDWIS State.
* SDWIS free states predictably less enthusiastic about these updates.
* Long-term SDWIS State users expressed sentiment that SDWIS State works well for running their program, and with some updates it could be “100% workable.” Some respondents did mention that new staff have a harder time acclimating to SDWIS State than they would expect with an updated user interface. It is notable that proficiency with using SDWIS State can take years and many interviewees cited increasing turnover as an issue.
* One requested update was to eliminate data discrepancies between SDWIS State and SDWIS Fed.
* Another is that SDWIS State may not be able to cover changes in regulations without an update.
* Many interviewees referenced a need to update RTCR in SDWIS State.

**Benefits of SDWIS State:**

* Eliminated use of paper, how it was done before SDWIS State.
* Helps with SDWIS Fed reporting.
* “It works.”
* Contains all data, including historical, for SDWIS State users.

**Challenges with SDWIS State:**

* Many interviewees referenced a need to update RTCR in SDWIS State – creates false outputs and requires reprocessing.
* Some respondents mentioned that new staff have a harder time acclimating to SDWIS State than they would expect with an updated user interface. It is notable that proficiency with using SDWIS State can take years and many interviewees cited increasing turnover as an issue.
* One requested update was to eliminate data discrepancies between SDWIS State and SDWIS Fed.
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**Interaction with EPA/Support:**

* Many cited the importance of training in both SDWIS State and Prime, and EPA fed coordinators have been firm that training should be in person.
* Many have also cited the importance of timely and thorough data entry instructions.
* The importance of communication, especially with those not closely involved with SDWIS development, was a common theme. Respondents asked for clear, regular, honest communication at an appropriate level of detail that users know how to find on demand.
* Regarding communication, suggested to continually ask “when can we share this with the states?” even when we don’t know full resolution/answers yet.
* One suggestion was to involve Fed Coordinators more with development moving forward, because coordinators are closest to the data that gets reported, and they interact regularly with states and tribes.
* CMDP support is challenging; one recommendation to run it through a contractor like SDWIS State.