



U.S. House Committee on Energy & Commerce
Hearing on “PPACA Implementation Failures: Didn’t Know or Didn’t Disclose?”
Supplemental Written Testimony of Andrew Slavitt
Quality Software Services, Inc.
December 3, 2013

Additional Questions for the Record

The Honorable Michael C. Burgess

Q: We have heard that various companies, contractors, insurers, etc. had daily contact with CMS just prior to launch. What was your experience in this regard?

A: QSSI had routine contact with CMS on a daily basis prior to the launch of the Federal Marketplace on October 1.

Q: Would you say your contact with CMS should have started earlier? Or maybe more to the point, should your contracts been awarded earlier giving you more time to work on these issues?

A: The base contracts to develop the Data Services Hub and the Enterprise Identity Management System were awarded to QSSI on September 11, 2011, and February 7, 2012, respectively. QSSI has no reason to question the timing of the contract awards.

Q: Would you say that you were given tight or unrealistic deadlines in development?

A: QSSI does not believe that the deadlines for development of the Data Services Hub or the Enterprise Identity Management System were unrealistic. As noted in the testimony of Andrew Slavitt on October 24, 2013, QSSI believed that there was insufficient time to complete all of the integrated performance testing of all of the system components.

Q: We have also heard that “to address lists” of problems of various severity levels were created. Was that your experience?

A: CMS and the contractors working on the Federal Marketplace, including QSSI, frequently identified lists of issues to be addressed during the course of the development of the Federal Marketplace. As noted in the testimony of Andrew Slavitt on October 24, 2013, QSSI was one of several testers used to test the functionality of the Federal Marketplace. In QSSI’s testing role, it was tasked with identifying defects and errors in code that was provided to QSSI by others. QSSI reported the results back to CMS and the relevant contractor, who in turn was responsible for fixing coding errors or making any necessary changes. QSSI has

provided the Committee with numerous communications from QSSI to CMS and other documents reflecting the results and status of QSSI's testing.

Q: Were you aware of identified issues still unresolved on October 1?

A: Yes.

Q: If the Administration had shared more information with you would you have been able to recognize that there was going to be a problem? Or did you say in fact, this is going to be a problem? If so to whom?

A: As noted in the testimony of Andrew Slavitt on October 24, 2013, in its testing role, QSSI was tasked with identifying defects and errors in code that was provided to QSSI by others. QSSI reported the results back to CMS and the relevant contractor, who in turn was responsible for fixing coding errors or making any necessary changes. QSSI identified defects and system issues with the Federal Marketplace and reported them to CMS. QSSI has provided the Committee with numerous communications from QSSI to CMS and other documents reflecting the results and status of QSSI's testing.

Q: When the website went live on October 1, did you feel you had submitted your best work?

A: QSSI is pleased with its work product and efforts. The Data Services Hub has performed well since the launch of the Federal Marketplace. The Data Services Hub has successfully processed hundreds of thousands of transactions daily among the various federal and state marketplaces, trusted data sources, and issuers. Although the EIDM tool was overwhelmed by high concurrent volume on launch, by October 8, even at high levels of registration, the EIDM tool was processing those volumes at error rates close to zero and was keeping pace with demand.

Q: Were you confident things would work or were you waiving red flags?

A: QSSI was confident that the Data Services Hub would work as designed. QSSI sought earlier scalability and integration testing for the EIDM tool's integration with the Federal Marketplace application. When QSSI was able to conduct the tests, it reported the results to CMS. QSSI was also one of several testers used to test the functionality of the Federal Marketplace. In QSSI's testing role, it was tasked with identifying defects and errors in code that was provided to QSSI by others. QSSI reported the results back to CMS and the relevant contractor, who in turn was responsible for fixing coding errors or making any necessary changes. As noted in the testimony of Andrew Slavitt on October 24, 2013, QSSI believed there was insufficient time to complete all of the intended testing of the Federal Marketplace and this was reported to CMS. QSSI has provided the Committee with numerous communications from QSSI to CMS and other documents reflecting the results and status of QSSI's testing.

Q: Were you working up against an unrealistic deadline and told to hand in whatever work you had done?

A: CMS worked to identify system requirements and adjust those requirements as necessary to support the schedule. QSSI was able to deliver its system components based on those requirements. As noted in the testimony of Andrew Slavitt on October 24, 2013, QSSI believed that there was insufficient time to complete all of the integrated performance testing of all of the system components.

Q: Based on what you know, how extensive are the problems with healthcare.gov?

A: QSSI identified a significant number of defects relating to the Federal Marketplace. QSSI has worked to assist CMS and other contractors to identify and to address those defects and make other infrastructure enhancements to improve the healthcare.gov system. QSSI has seen improvements in the system and expects to see continued ongoing incremental improvements.

Q: Will the entire system have to be re-built? Or can small integrated fixes address the problems?

A: QSSI believes that healthcare.gov is fixable, and is seeing steady improvement in its performance.

Q: Is the November 30 deadline set by HHS to fix all of the issues realistic?

A: As of November 30, QSSI has observed significant improvement in key milestones, and is continuing to work to improve site performance.

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis

Q: Did you or anyone in your company ever express to HHS or CMS that the website's launch should be delayed, or that the website might crash or have serious problems at launch?

A: Prior to launch, QSSI did not have sufficient visibility to assess the overall status of healthcare.gov. QSSI was one of several testers used to test the functionality of the Federal Marketplace. In QSSI's testing role, QSSI was tasked with identifying defects and errors in code that was provided to QSSI by others. QSSI reported the results back to CMS and the relevant contractor, who in turn was responsible for fixing coding errors or making any necessary changes.

Member Requests for the Record

The Honorable Marsha Blackburn

Q: Does your current system keep detailed error logs that can be referenced with the difficulties that are surrounding healthcare.gov? Would you please submit those?

A: QSSI has provided the Committee with numerous communications from QSSI to CMS and other documents reflecting the results of QSSI's work in its testing role, as well as a Defect List that was provided to CMS.

The Honorable John Dingell

Q: What actions have you taken to fix the website after the October 1 launch?

A: In the days that followed the launch, the QSSI team worked around the clock to enhance the EIDM tool to meet unexpected demand. Specifically, QSSI (i) implemented a new software configuration and optimization that increased the efficiency in system interactions; (ii) added capacity by doubling the number of servers; (iii) replaced the virtual database with a high-capacity physical one, which allowed more efficient, effective processing and significantly reduced "error rates," or account registration failures; (iv) swapped out a directory component for another component that was able to process more transactions; (v) implemented further software enhancements that improved the efficiency of database look-ups; and (vi) deployed a patch release with four software fixes to address users that were having a hard time logging in to their accounts. As QSSI understands it, this effort largely succeeded. By October 8, even at high levels of registration, the EIDM tool was processing those volumes at error rates close to zero. QSSI has continued to work with CMS and other vendors to plan for even higher peak levels of activity.

As General Contractor, since October 25, QSSI is working with CMS and other contractors to identify and to address defects and make other infrastructure enhancements to improve the healthcare.gov system. QSSI has seen improvements in the system and expects to see continued ongoing incremental improvements.

Q: What suggestions do you have for there to be changes and improvements in the way the website is being dealt with by the Federal Government and what changes would you deem useful in seeing to it that the matter goes forward as it can and should?

A: CMS has brought in additional support and resources to enhance and improve the functionality of the healthcare.gov website in numerous respects, and QSSI continues to support CMS in those efforts.

The Honorable John Shimkus

Q: What are the names of the personnel at CMS who you provided the risks that you identified in your analysis of other contractors' code?

A: As noted in the testimony of Andrew Slavitt on October 24, 2013, QSSI identified defects, system issues and risks with the Federal Marketplace and reported them to numerous individuals at CMS, largely to personnel in the CMS Office of Information Services. QSSI has provided the Committee with numerous communications from QSSI to CMS, which reflect the names of the individuals at CMS who received those communications.

Q: What are the names of the personnel you communicated with in regards to end-to-end testing before the launch of the website?

A: QSSI reported to CMS all tests that were performed on the Federal Marketplace. CMS was fully aware of each test that was performed, all of which occurred in a CMS-controlled environment. QSSI has provided the Committee with numerous communications from QSSI to CMS, which reflect the names of the individuals at CMS who received those communications.

The Honorable Diana DeGette

Q: Would you please submit the problems you identified to CMS?

A: As noted in the testimony of Andrew Slavitt on October 24, 2013, QSSI identified defects, system issues and risks and reported them to CMS, largely to personnel in the CMS Office of Information Services. QSSI has provided the Committee with numerous communications from QSSI to CMS, which reflect the testing results reported to CMS.

The Honorable Lee Terry

Q: Since Nebraska is part of the federal exchange, is it possible to have a breakdown of how many people from the state have tried to access the site? How many people have tried to access on any particular day?

A: QSSI is not able to determine how many people from Nebraska, or any other state, have tried to access the Healthcare.gov site to date, or on any particular day.

The Honorable Mike Rogers

Q: Are you currently making changes in code to improve the functionality of healthcare.gov?

A: QSSI is not making coding changes to the Federal Marketplace. Code changes addressing Federal Marketplace defects are made by another contractor. QSSI is assisting with the prioritization and process management for that contractor. In accordance with post-October 1 planned functionality, QSSI is developing additional functionality for the Data Services Hub, including a new functionality for the

submission of applications from the call centers. QSSI has also on occasion developed changes in the Data Service Hub code to address specific identified issues or changes in the business requirements.

Q: How many organizational boundaries does a piece of data cross when the data hub is populating information?

A: A query originates in a marketplace, Federal or State, and is transmitted to the Data Services Hub, which is housed at the Terremark Data Center. The query is directed to a trusted data source, such as the Social Security Administration. The response to the query is returned from the trusted data source to the Data Services Hub, and the response is then directed back to the originating marketplace.

Q: Was an end-to-end security test of the whole healthcare.gov system done during the security verification?

A: QSSI was not responsible for end-to-end security testing of the healthcare.gov system. Another contractor was engaged by CMS to conduct security testing. QSSI does not know whether this contractor performed end-to-end security testing of the healthcare.gov system during the security verification.

Q: What are you doing to secure healthcare.gov from advanced persistent cyber threats?

A: Pursuant to government regulations, QSSI developed the Data Services Hub and the Enterprise Identity Management System in accordance with applicable National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) security standards. In addition, QSSI took action to address development-related issues identified in the Security Risk Assessment.

Q: Who is the independent contractor who is doing security testing on healthcare.gov?

A: QSSI understands that the Mitre Corporation was contracted by CMS to perform Security Risk Assessments.

Q: Did you red-team or security stress test healthcare.gov in the two weeks before the launch?

A: QSSI was not responsible for conducting security stress tests of healthcare.gov.

Q: What entity certifies the security of healthcare.gov on a daily ongoing basis? Does CMS or an independent contractor certify the security? If an independent contractor, who is that contractor?

A: CMS determines whether to approve the Authorization to Operate for a system, with assistance from security experts from other contractors.

Q: Are the system administrators for QSSI security trained in spear phishing?

A: QSSI is not a system administrator for Healthcare.gov. Nevertheless, QSSI personnel are familiar with security mitigation strategies.

The Honorable Steve Scalise

Q: How many errors have you logged since you have been tracking the errors in the system?

A: In QSSI's testing role, it was tasked with identifying defects and errors in code that was provided to QSSI by others. QSSI reported the results back to CMS and the relevant contractor, who in turn was responsible for fixing coding errors or making any necessary changes. QSSI has provided the Committee with numerous communications from QSSI to CMS and other documents reflecting the results of QSSI's testing.

The Honorable Robert Latta

Q: In your testimony, it appears one of the reasons for the high concurrent volume at the registration was a late decision requiring consumers to register for an account before they could browse for insurance products. Who made that decision?

A: It is QSSI's understanding that CMS made the decision not to include an "anonymous shopper" function.

Q: Your testimony also states that you were tasked with identifying errors in the code that was provided to us by others. You reported that results back to CMS and the relevant contractor who was internally responsible for fixing the coding errors or making any necessary changes. Who at CMS were you supposed to report back to?

A: As noted in the testimony of Andrew Slavitt on October 24, 2013, QSSI identified defects, system issues and risks and reported them to CMS, largely to personnel in the CMS Office of Information Services. QSSI has provided the Committee with numerous communications from QSSI to CMS, which reflect the names of the individuals at CMS who received those communications.

The Honorable H. Morgan Griffith

Q: When was the last time you did testing and then notified CMS and the relevant contractor that there were coding errors or necessary changes that needed to be made? Who were you working with on that?

A: QSSI provided CMS and the relevant contractor with daily updates on the results of its testing of the Federal Marketplace. As noted in the testimony of Andrew Slavitt on October 24, 2013, prior to launch, QSSI identified defects, system issues and risks and reported them to CMS, largely to personnel in the CMS Office of Information Services. QSSI has provided the Committee with numerous communications from QSSI to CMS, which reflect the names of the individuals at CMS who received those communications. Since launch, QSSI has continued to test code and provide results to CMS.