CDM MAKING STRIDES – 85 PERCENT OF STAKEHOLDERS SAY PROGRAM HAS IMPROVED FEDERAL CYBERSECURITY

Culture, training, and legacy systems integration cited as top challenges as the program moves forward

Alexandria, Va., September 25, 2019 – MeriTalk, a public-private partnership focused on improving the outcomes of government IT, today announced the results of its new report, "CDM Referendum: How is the Program Performing?" The study features insights from more than 160 Federal and industry stakeholders, as they share their experiences with the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation (CDM) program and suggestions for its future direction.

Established in 2012, the CDM program provides cybersecurity tools, integration services, and dashboards to help Federal agencies improve their security posture. Seven years later, 85 percent of stakeholders say CDM has improved Federal cybersecurity, and 64 percent of Feds give DHS a grade of A or B for its management of the program.

Drilling deeper into the program's goals, 80 percent of respondents note that CDM has been effective in increasing visibility into the Federal cybersecurity posture, while 79 percent say the program has improved response capabilities. Stakeholders say CDM is also making progress in reducing the agency threat surface (78 percent) and streamlining FISMA reporting (75 percent). Looking ahead, 64 percent say that the new CDM dashboard contract will enable better visibility into sensor data.

When asked what CDM does well, the most popular responses were "maintaining open lines of communication" (37 percent of Feds; 43 percent of industry) and "enabling collaboration between agencies" (44 percent of Feds; 32 percent of industry). The program is making progress, but there is still room for improvement in these areas, as well as in continually updating CDM

guidance, encouraging public/private partnerships, driving timely adoption, and adapting to agency feedback.

"While this study demonstrates we have made important progress in improving Federal cybersecurity, cultural and training challenges remain obstacles to full CDM adoption and integration," says Congressman Gerry Connolly (D-VA). "As cyber attackers continue to target the Federal government, CDM is a critical tool in protecting our IT systems. It must become a priority for senior IT leadership."

"The data revealed in this study reaffirms the need to support CDM's sustained success, so our nation's cybersecurity posture can continue reaping the benefits it's provided to our Federal networks over the past seven years," says Congressman John Ratcliffe (R-TX.). "This is why I've teamed up with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to advance legislation that will make CDM permanent and expand its reach, as we continue using it as a critical tool to combat growing cyber threats in the years to come."

CDM's biggest challenges are culture (59 percent), training IT and security staff (54 percent), and difficulty integrating legacy systems (48 percent). The same issues topped the list of agency CDM challenges in MeriTalk's 2014 "CDM: Under the Hood" study. Survey respondents also cite early adoption roadblocks, with 64 percent saying CDM is rolling out too slowly. Budget is also a concern, with just 27 percent of Feds saying their agency can maintain CDM progress with current budget allocations.

"We are aware of the survey results and appreciate all efforts to encourage the use of the CDM program, which is a key component of our efforts to secure and defend the Federal government's information technology against advanced cyber threats," says a CISA official.

"How do you spell Federal Cybersecurity? It's CDM," says Steve O'Keeffe, founder, MeriTalk. "Federal agencies and industry say the program's making great strides – but also provide critical feedback to CISA at DHS as well as appropriators and legislators on the Hill. Listening to the community makes CDM stronger – which improves Uncle Sam's cybersecurity."

Feds and industry agree that DHS should focus on helping agencies address gaps in early CDM adoption (53 percent) and expanding CDM applications in cloud environments (49 percent) over the next three years.

"CDM Referendum: How is the Program Performing?" is based on an in-person and online survey of more than 160 Federal civilian government IT managers, vendors, contractors, and systems integrators in August 2019. The study is underwritten by Fortinet, Splunk Inc., and Tenable. The margin of error of ±7.62 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. To download the full report, please visit https://www.meritalk.com/study/cdm-referendum/.

About MeriTalk

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