

Deputy Secretary

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528



**Homeland  
Security**

May 3, 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR: DHS Component Heads

FROM: David P. Pekoske *David P. Pekoske*  
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Deputy Secretary

SUBJECT: Adoption of the National Information Exchange Model within the  
Department of Homeland Security

### **Purpose**

This memorandum outlines the Department's adoption of the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM).

### **Background**

When the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was formed, each Operational Component brought legacy systems to the new organization. Many of these legacy systems are still in place today, which has led, at times, to fragmented and uncoordinated data management. We must take steps to coordinate our data at the enterprise level, and ensure it can be securely and properly accessed for priority mission and business needs.

We have realized as a Department that our data exchange and management and the efficient sharing of information are mission-critical aspects of DHS. For example, access to data sets across the Homeland Security Enterprise for the National Vetting Center is absolutely vital to the Center's success. Additionally, the Department's National Operations Center relies on timely data to ensure it can provide support to DHS senior leadership.

The Information Sharing and Safeguarding Governance Board (ISSGB), has recommended to me, unanimously, that the Department adopt the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM) for all new data exchanges created by DHS operational components and Headquarters. While it would be inefficient to make all, existing data exchanges NIEM conformant, we can take steps to ensure NIEM conformance for all future data exchanges created at DHS. The adoption of NIEM for all new data exchanges will provide a critical foundation for future information sharing and exchange across the enterprise that best enables DHS to accomplish mission responsibilities while appropriately complying with information safeguards and privacy protections.

**Policy Action Direction**

Therefore, I am directing the following actions:

1. The Under Secretary for Management (USM) and DHS Chief Information Officer will take actions to:
  - a. Require that all future, major information technology (IT) acquisitions creating new data exchanges, be they for DHS internal use or with external stakeholders, include in their requirements conformance with the latest version of NIEM and alignment to one or more governed NIEM domains;
  - b. Ensure that older, legacy data exchanges which are not, in whole or in part, NIEM conformant, be exempt from this requirement for new data exchanges created by new, major IT acquisitions;
  - c. Provide for an exceptions mechanism, which, in limited and justified circumstances, may allow for new, non-NIEM conformant data exchanges to be created;
  - d. Ensure that use of NIEM First is enforced by the Program Accountability and Risk Management Division, of the USM, in coordination, as appropriate and required, with the Offices of the General Counsel, DHS Privacy, and DHS Civil Rights and Civil Liberties; and
  - e. Undertake whatever routine and ongoing outreach and communications required to all DHS internal and external stakeholders, to ensure understanding of and concurrence with this new requirement.

The ISSGB will serve as my primary oversight body for NIEM implementation and compliance with this Policy. The ISSGB shall submit a report to the Deputy Secretary providing an update on NIEM implementation and compliance with the overall Policy no later than October 2019.