

OPO Stakeholder Group – Final Report

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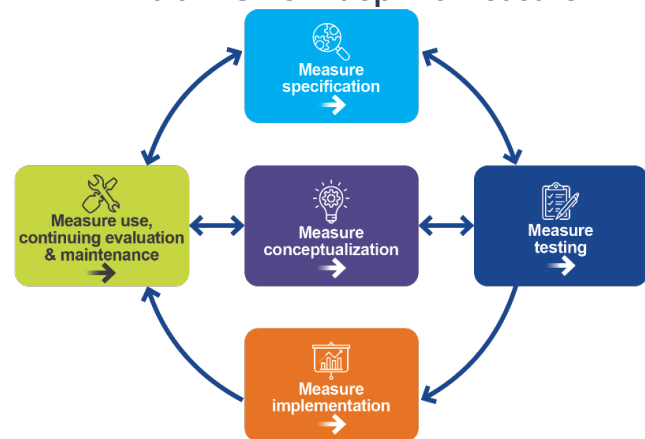
Econometrica, Inc., and the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations (AOPO). (2026). *OPO Stakeholder Group Final Report, August 2026*. <http://www.aopo.org/>

Introduction

Project Background

The Association of Organ Procurement Organizations (AOPO) tasked Econometrica with supporting its urgent need to develop new or alternative Organ Procurement Organization (OPO) measures for process improvement. In response to this need, Econometrica used a consensus-based process to develop, test, and validate a suite of metrics to measure OPO performance. These new metrics will propose alternative data sources (i.e., other than mortality data) to determine expected donor rates and recognize other important activities undertaken by OPOs to promote organ procurement. To carry out this initiative, Econometrica followed the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Blueprint Measure Lifecycle, which outlines five steps for developing performance and quality measures: conceptualization; specification; testing; implementation; and use, continuing evaluation, and maintenance (Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1. CMS Blueprint Measure



To support this work, Econometrica conducted an environmental scan to better understand the challenges OPOs experience with organ recovery and placement and to identify opportunities for appropriate OPO performance measures. One aspect of this environmental scan was convening an OPO Stakeholder Group. Econometrica conducted **five OPO Stakeholder Group meetings**, both in person and virtually.

Purpose of OPO Stakeholder Group

The goals of the OPO Stakeholder Group were to serve as a mechanism to gather input, test performance measures, and provide project and testing updates.

The OPO Stakeholder Group's primary objectives were as follows:

- ▶ Serve as a mechanism to gather input from OPOs, keep OPOs informed on the status of the project, and test the measures.
- ▶ Support the development and finalization of a universal logic model that connects OPO activities and processes to desired outcomes.
- ▶ Identify new candidate measures and offer input on measure definitions.
- ▶ Enable the candidate measure development effort that will be shared with the Technical Expert Panel (TEP) for further input.
- ▶ Participate in the review and testing phases of the project.

OPO Stakeholder Criteria

APOO assisted Econometrica in ensuring that there were OPO stakeholder members from each of the 53 participating OPOs, including a primary contact and secondary backup contact. The following criteria were provided to OPOs to identify individuals who would serve as OPO stakeholder contacts:

- ▶ Currently works for an active OPO within the United States and has at least 5 years of experience in OPO operations.
- ▶ Currently holds a key role with expertise in the organ recovery and procurement process for their OPO.
- ▶ Has expertise and knowledge of current OPO measures and can help inform the development process for new measures.
- ▶ Is available to participate in five stakeholder meetings, with each lasting for 1.5 to 2 hours.

Meeting Objectives for OPO Stakeholder Meetings

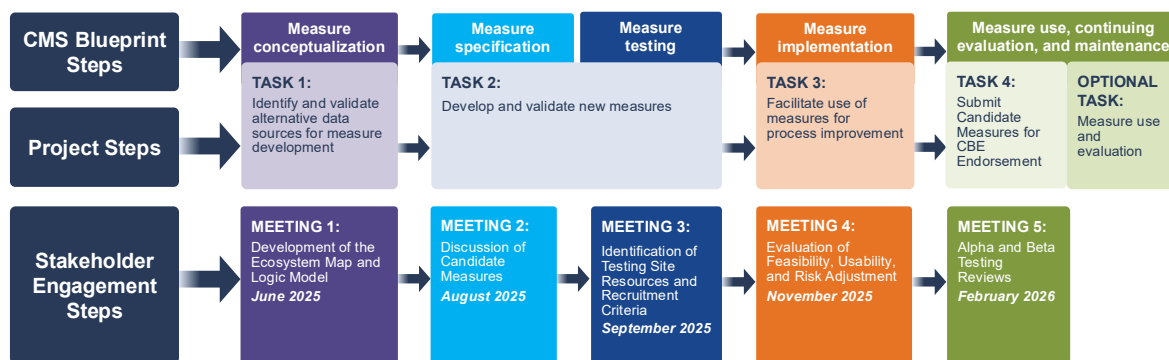
The OPO Stakeholder Group was convened five times, both in person and virtually. The meeting dates and objectives are outlined in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2. OPO Stakeholder Meeting Dates and Objectives

Meeting	Meeting Date	Meeting Objectives
1	June 23, 2025 (Hybrid)	Outline the purpose and aims of the Stakeholder Group; refine and gather feedback on the ecosystem map of partners in the donation and transplantation space; and refine and gather feedback on the logic model that connects OPO activities and processes to desired outcomes.
2	August 12, 2025 (Virtual)	Review and gather feedback on the updated logic model; review and gather feedback on the development of the ecosystem map; review and gather feedback on the progress of the measure framework development and identified measure areas; and discuss next steps for how the input provided will be shared with the TEP for further refinement.
3	September 17, 2025 (Virtual)	Review the measure development process and completed milestones; review the final logic model, measure criteria list, and measure draft areas; review the process and outcome candidate measures; finalize recommendations for future measures and risk adjustment of outcome measures; and gather feedback on the measure testing approach.
4	November 12, 2025 (Virtual)	Discuss candidate measure feedback from OPO stakeholders and TEP members; present a final list of measures for testing; understand the measure testing approaches and next steps; discuss risk adjustment and risk stratification; hear from an OPO about performance improvement; and discuss plan for performance measure maintenance and sustainability.
5	February 18, 2026 (Virtual)	Present measure development timeline and completed milestones; provide a status update on measure testing; present the updated approach for CBE endorsement of candidate measures; and understand the measure development project direction and next steps.

Exhibit 3 outlines how stakeholder meetings aligned with the CMS Blueprint and project steps.

Exhibit 3. OPO Stakeholder Engagement Alignment With CMS Blueprint and Project Steps



Key Question

In order to synthesize the information gathered from five OPO Stakeholder Group meetings, Econometrica used the following research question to guide analysis: *In what ways did the OPO stakeholder meetings foster cross-OPO collaboration around performance measure development, testing, and shared learning, and how might this collaboration shape future OPO improvement efforts?*

Methods

Econometrica worked with AOPO to conduct recruitment and outreach activities to confirm the final list of OPO stakeholder contacts, which consisted of one primary and one backup representative from each of the 53 participating OPOs. While each OPO has a primary and backup representative, only one individual from each OPO was expected to attend and participate in each scheduled meeting, for a total of 53 individuals per meeting.

Data Collection

Data for this analysis was conducted through the meeting notes that were generated from each meeting. Meeting summary documents were generated from recordings and transcripts and summarized the meeting objectives, attendees, discussions, and key takeaways.

Thematic Analysis

All meeting recordings were summarized and transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis, following the six-step framework outlined by Braun and Clarke,¹ was employed to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the data. This iterative process involved familiarizing ourselves with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Through this rigorous analysis, two primary themes emerged, which are detailed in the following Findings section.

Findings

Through thematic analysis of meeting notes, we identified patterns that reflect OPO collaboration and opportunities for future improvements. The findings are organized into two overarching themes:

1. **Cross-OPO Collaboration and Shared Learning:** Highlights how OPO stakeholders strengthened shared learning through peer dialogue, collaborative measure development, and efforts to build trust across OPOs and external partners.
2. **Opportunities for Future Improvement Efforts:** Highlights how future improvements focused on promoting shared accountability through transparent data, sustaining performance measurement efforts, and enhancing public awareness and communication.

Theme 1: Cross-OPO Collaboration and Shared Learning

Peer-to-Peer Engagement, Dialogue, and Learning From Variation in OPO Practices

Across all meetings, OPO representatives shared perspectives from their own OPOs' unique experiences within their donation service area (DSA), asked questions of one another's practices, responded to peers' experiences, and engaged in various group discussions. Group discussions included sharing practices related to OPO operations, referral processes, hospital relationships, data collection, definitions, implementation approaches, and many other areas. While variation in OPO practices was identified, discussions also revealed many similarities across the different OPOs. The operations, procedures, and practices shared by OPOs were used to develop and finalize the [logic model](#) and [ecosystem map video](#). The [logic model](#) helped visually illustrate and measure inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts and conceptualize what can or should be measured. The [ecosystem map video](#) helped visually represent entities within the donation system and their interconnections; identify gaps, strengths, and opportunities within the ecosystem; illustrate relationships across sectors; enhance strategic decision-making; strengthen partnerships; and maximize impacts. OPO

¹ Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

stakeholders also noted multiple times across meetings that they valued and benefitted from hearing about other OPOs' practices and procedures and learning how OPOs conduct and prioritize process improvement initiatives.

Collective Input Into Measure Development and Shared Problem-Solving Across OPOs

OPO stakeholders used the meetings to jointly provide feedback on draft measures, measure definitions, data sources, specifications, risk adjustment, risk stratification, and testing approaches. This feedback supported the development of the final [logic model](#), measure criteria list, draft and final measure areas, measure definitions (including descriptions, numerator, denominator, data sources, expression of measures, measure sources, and rationale), risk adjustments and stratifications for measures, and the plan for pilot testing the measures. Information on measures—including criteria for evaluating potential and final measures, measure fact sheets, and measure spotlights—can be found on [AOPPO's Measures web page](#). In addition to providing feedback, OPOs shared common challenges, barriers, operational issues, and implementation concerns. These discussions included references to OPO strategies, workflows, approaches, and lessons learned that may help guide process and performance improvements.

Building Trust and Reducing Competition

Stakeholders participating in these meetings provided OPOs across the nation with a space to collaborate and share ideas and practices, which may not have been as common in the past due to limitations in trust and transparency, competitive dynamics, regulatory pressures, and shifts in incentives across OPOs.

During the meetings, stakeholders discussed the need to define success and noted that OPOs used to be more collaborative but have become less so due to competition. Stakeholders also shared concerns about a general lack of trust in the registry and negativity in the media, which impact efforts to build trust among the public, other staff, and external partners in the system. To address these challenges, stakeholders emphasized the importance of partnering with trusted community voices to help build confidence in OPOs and the broader donation system.

Stakeholders noted that discussions during the meetings helped develop a shared understanding of measure development progress and processes, including unified definitions, measure intents, risk adjustment and stratification, measure testing approaches and results, and plans for measure endorsement and implementation.

Theme 2: Opportunities for Future Improvement Efforts

Data Transparency and Shared Accountability

OPO stakeholders used the meetings to discuss potential improvements in access to data, increased transparency, clarification and understanding of measure testing

results, and the use of performance improvement to support learning and accountability.

Stakeholders discussed how performance measures can be sustained through work with the Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients or potential engagement with hospital electronic medical records to provide hospital death data directly to CMS and the Health Resources and Services Administration, as well as the potential collection and storage of data by the National Healthcare Safety Network. This feedback reflected stakeholders' concerns about current measures and how OPOs are evaluated based on only a few data points. Additionally, hospital information provided directly by hospitals could help establish shared accountability and supplement OPO self-reported data, which often has a perception problem.

Sustainability of Performance Measurement Efforts

OPO stakeholders used the meetings to discuss how measures can be sustained and maintained in the future, including through potential future measures for development, future measure refinements, measure endorsement processes, long-term governance, and continued evaluation of measures.

While stakeholders provided input on measures to develop and prioritize immediately, additional measures were identified as important to OPOs and reserved for potential future development cycles. Additionally, the meetings addressed how measures should continue to be maintained and evaluated, including through quality strategic plans, scheduled endorsement reviews, annual updates to measure specifications and resources, communication and education on performance measures, and organ donation and healthcare research and literature reviews. Stakeholders also provided feedback on how measure maintenance may be influenced by current political environments, including potential opportunities and challenges for communication, the potential role of data transparency in shaping public trust, and how communications and media may affect public understanding and narratives about OPOs and organ donation. Stakeholders also noted future shared accountability of measures with donor hospitals and transplant centers.

Public Awareness and External Communication

Stakeholders discussed opportunities to improve public, policymaker, hospital, media, and transplant community understanding of OPO roles, performance, and system partners.

Stakeholders provided feedback and suggestions on the importance of fact-checking information communicated to the public through education and media outlets; training and educating frontline staff on how to address concerns about cases in real time and combat misinformation; and sharing stories about donor families and recipients and healthcare professional heroes who are trusted by the community. Stakeholders also shared how data, storytelling, and transparency in data can greatly support community trust and perception of OPOs.

Meeting Outcomes

The OPO Stakeholder Group meetings focused on aligning with the project's steps and the CMS Blueprint Measure Lifecycle and resulted in the completion of activities related to measure conceptualization, specification, testing, implementation, and use, continuing evaluation, and maintenance. As mentioned in the identified themes above, meeting outcomes resulted in generating and validating the [logic model](#) and [ecosystem map video](#); identifying measure areas, criteria, selection, and specifications (as detailed in [AOPO's Measures web page](#)); and discussing unintended consequences and next steps for the measures. Meeting outputs also supported the development of the [Quality Improvement Framework](#), which outlines the unified framework to advance quality, accountability, and collaboration across the organ donation and transplantation system.

While the OPO Stakeholder Group was convened to support activities required under the CMS Blueprint Measure Lifecycle—including logic model development, measure conceptualization, specification, testing, and implementation planning—discussions consistently revealed broader benefits beyond the formal measure development process. Stakeholders frequently exchanged operational practices, learned from one another's experiences, identified common successes and challenges, and discussed opportunities for future collaboration and improvement. As a result, the analysis was designed to examine not only the tangible outputs generated through the stakeholder process but also the ways in which participation fostered cross-OPO collaboration, shared learning, and future improvement efforts across the organ donation system. The key question for analysis was therefore developed to better understand these broader impacts and document insights that may be valuable to OPOs and other external partners in the organ donation system beyond the immediate goals of measure development.

Limitations

This analysis did not have any significant limitations; however, some minor limitations were identified for consideration. First, five meetings were conducted in a time frame of 9 months, from June 2025 to February 2026. While 53 OPOs participated within the stakeholder group, attendance at meetings varied, and a small number of OPOs were often not present. Additionally, some OPOs within the nation did not participate within the OPO Stakeholder Group. Lastly, individuals represented in the OPO Stakeholder Group varied in roles from their OPOs and were often senior leadership staff.

Recommendations

Based on insights from this analysis, there are opportunities to develop additional measures in future measure cycles that were identified as important to OPO stakeholders, including shared measures with donor hospitals and transplant centers. These measures can be used to support performance improvement for OPOs and lead to overall improvements in the organ donation system. Additionally, there are opportunities to continue providing collaborative spaces for OPOs to connect, share, and learn from one another's successes and challenges and to foster an environment of trust within the OPO community and with public and external partners.