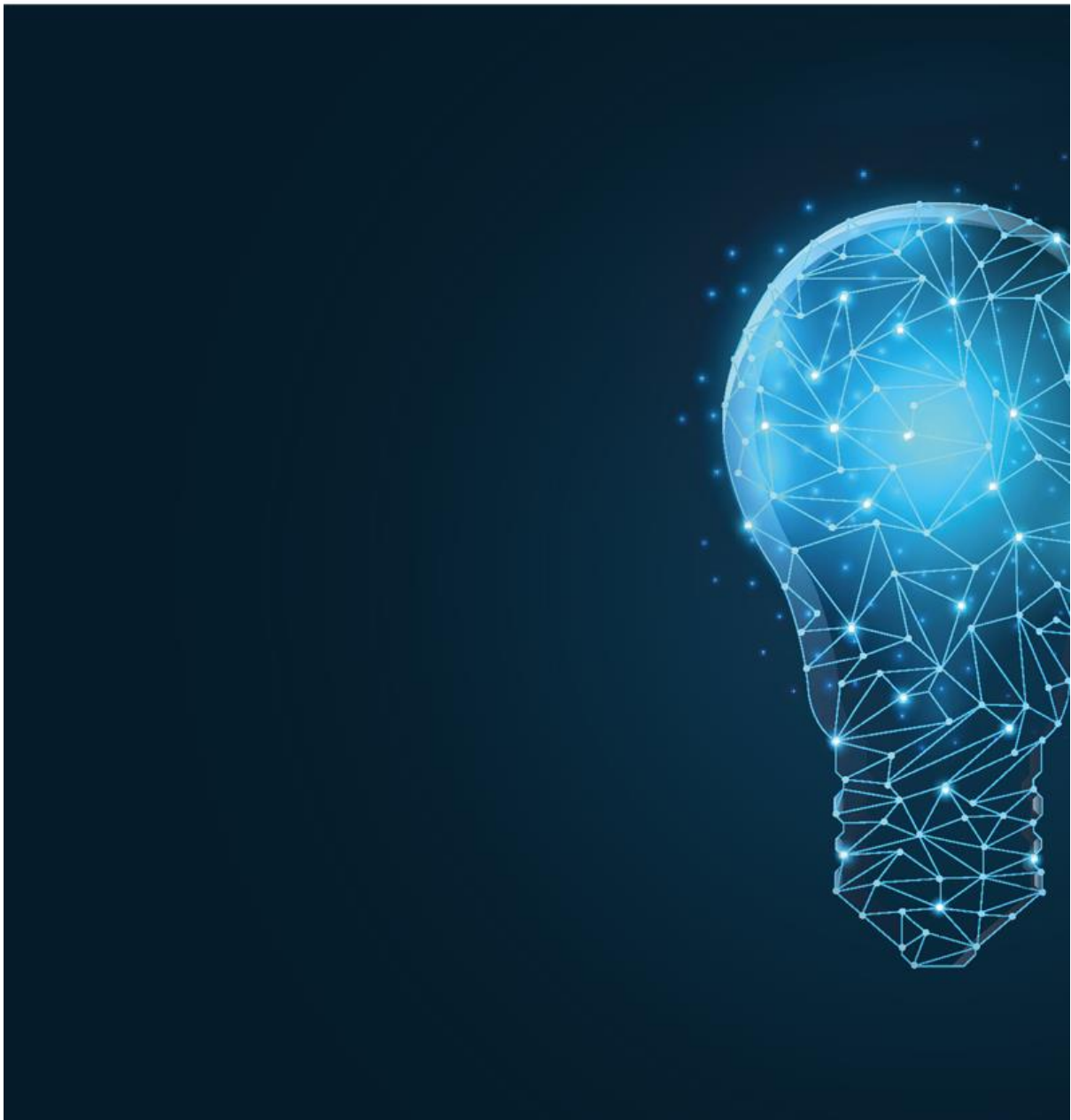**Data standards project overview**

March 2020

Background

In late 2018, LawscotTech held four events around inviting participation from across academia, professional practice and the technology sector and asking attendees to raise key challenges to the profession. A theme raised at each event was regarding a lack of common data standards in the Scottish legal profession. It was noted that the lack of such standards made it harder for technology companies to enter the market; for firms buying technology services to get maximum benefit from these services; and that across the market – regardless of size of entity – this led to increased costs and lack of efficiency (which, in turn, harmed consumers and clients).

After exploring this area further in two subsequent workshops, attended by a range of different stakeholders from across the industry, further key themes emerged.

There was consensus from the workshops that a well-designed methodology for data standards would encourage interoperability between systems and key stakeholders, increase accuracy and efficiency and reduce risk, in turn providing a better experience and improved services for clients and firms.

It was also agreed that we need to focus on an area which will ensure benefit across members and their clients and to achieve this we should look at rapid prototyping of ideas on a specific case study to demonstrate benefit of the project quickly.

What do we mean by data standards?

For the purpose of this project, data standards refer to the standardisation of data and information in relation to processes and systems in legal firms. Other interpretations of the data standards concept, which are important but not part of this initial project, include improving access to data and making case law more accessible.

Project scope

In order to demonstrate benefit quickly, it is proposed that we focus on the creation of a standard and subsequent improvement in interoperability and efficiency in one particular area of work and/or process.

Project objective

The project objective is to explore standardisation of data and processes in a specific area of law/process; to enable interoperability of systems and drive efficiency, make it easier for new technologies to enter the industry, encourage innovation and to deliver benefit to firms and their clients.

Next steps

In order to identify the area of work/process this project will focus on and engage a wide range of members and relevant stakeholders, our next step is to run an open and interactive service design event with the aim of determining the area of focus which would realistically deliver most benefit within a reasonable timeframe, and what these benefits might be.

Following the event, we will engage further with all relevant members, specialists and stakeholders in the chosen area to develop a data standards approach and framework. We will also collaborate with other groups working in this area in the UK to ensure we get maximum

benefit with coordinated efforts, for example the SALI alliance amongst others.

Future development

As part of our research for this project, we have considered how standardisation has been implemented in other industries, in particular the financial sector. We benefited from the insights Criterion, a not-for-profit organisation who have been delivering professional standards and governance for the financial services industry for 30 years. Based on this, some of the key considerations that we need to consider if we want to continue to push standardisation beyond this project include:

- Developing standardisation more widely would require significant resource
- Once standards have been set up, they need to be maintained and governed
- This is a long-term commitment
- We would benefit from working with an organisation specialising in this field such as Criterion