ScienceExchange

CUSTOMER STORY

Global Biopharma Digitally Transforms HEOR Operations

Executive Summary

A top 10 global pharmaceutical company faced mounting pressure to accelerate their health economics and outcomes research (HEOR) study portfolio. As an organization operating across multiple therapeutic areas, the company relies heavily on HEOR studies to strengthen payer negotiations, support label expansions, and articulate the real-world value of its therapies. This is an essential component to accelerating market access and improving commercial performance.

However, their HEOR team struggled with lengthy procurement timelines, fragmented vendor management, and administrative burdens that diverted resources from critical research activities. The company deployed Science Exchange's supplier orchestration platform to unify intake, standardize study scoping and budget management, automate contracting workflows, and bring end-to-end visibility to milestone tracking and payments.

By modernizing how HEOR work is initiated and managed, the organization created a scalable operating model that supports faster evidence development, more effective payer engagement, and stronger business outcomes across its portfolio.

This case study demonstrates how purpose-built technology can transform HEOR operations, enabling research teams to focus on evidence generation rather than administrative overhead.

- **88% reduction**
  in supplier onboarding time
  (from 50+ hours to 6 hours per supplier)
- **$1.8 milliion**
  in annual cost savings
  through streamlined procurement and administrative processes
- **3x increase**
  in project throughput
  with the same team size
- **Enhanced**
  compliance and risk management
  through standardized contracts and automated worksflow

The Challenge: Scaling HEOR in a Complex Environment

Growing Demand, Limited Resources

As the pharmaceutical company expanded its pipeline across multiple therapeutic areas, the HEOR team faced increasing demands for real-world evidence (RWE) to support value propositions, market access strategies, and payer negotiations. However, the team's existing processes couldn't scale to meet these growing needs.

The team operated with:

- 10-15 active HEOR projects at any given time across oncology, cardiovascular, immunology, and rare disease portfolios
- Reliance on 20+ specialized RWE data suppliers for registries, claims databases, electronic health records, and patient-reported outcomes
- Stringent compliance requirements for data security, privacy, and regulatory oversight
- Cross-functional dependencies with legal, procurement, IT security, and finance teams

Procurement Bottlenecks Slowing Research

The most significant barrier to productivity was supplier procurement itself. For each new RWE data engagement, the team followed a time-consuming process:

Supplier Identification (1-2 weeks)
Manual research to find appropriate data sources, often through conference networking, peer recommendations, or web searches

Legal Review (2-3 weeks)
Custom contract negotiation and legal review for each supplier engagement

Compliance Vetting (2-3 weeks)
IT security assessments, data privacy reviews, and vendor risk evaluations

Contracting & Onboarding (2-4 weeks)
Purchase order creation, signature routing, and system access setup

Total Timeline: 6-11 weeks before data analysis could begin

This procurement timeline had cascading effects:

- **Missed windows for evidence submission** to payers and HTA bodies
- **Delayed market access strategies** in priority markets
- **Inefficient resource allocation** with senior researchers spending time on administrative tasks
- **Competitive disadvantage** as rivals brought evidence to market faster

Administrative Burden and Opportunity Cost

The HEOR Director estimated that procurement and vendor management consumed 40% of the team's capacity—time that should have been spent on study design, data analysis, and evidence synthesis.

Specific pain points included:

- **Fragmented communication**
  Email chains with multiple stakeholders across legal, procurement, and IT teams
- **Lack of visibility**
  No centralized view of active supplier engagements or procurement status
- **Inconsistent contracting**
  Each supplier required unique contract terms, creating legal review bottlenecks
- **Manual payment processing**
  Invoice reconciliation and payment approval consumed finance team resources
- **No supplier performance tracking**
  Difficulty assessing data quality and delivery timelines across vendors

The organization recognized that traditional procurement processes—designed for large capital purchases or long-term service contracts—were fundamentally misaligned with the agile, project-based nature of HEOR research.

The Solution: Science Exchange Supplier Orchestration Platform

A Purpose-Built Approach to RWE Supplier Management

After evaluating multiple solutions, including procurement software, marketplace platforms, and consulting services, the organization selected Science Exchange for its comprehensive approach to supplier management specifically designed for R&D workflows.

Key decision factors included:

1. Pre-Qualified Supplier Network
Access to 3,800+ vetted suppliers, including specialized RWE data providers across therapeutic areas and geographies. The team could search by data type, patient population, therapeutic area, and specific study requirements.

2. Single Master Agreement
One standardized legal framework covering all supplier engagements, eliminating the need for custom contracts. The master agreement addressed data security, IP rights, confidentiality, and regulatory compliance—pre-approved by legal, IT security, and compliance teams.

3. Integrated Compliance & Risk Management
Built-in vendor risk assessments, security reviews, and audit trails. Automated workflows ensured appropriate stakeholder review without manual coordination.

4. Unified Platform for Project Management & Payment
Centralized dashboard to manage supplier discovery, project tracking, deliverable review, and payment processing. The platform integrated with existing financial systems to streamline invoicing.

5. Strategic Partnership Model
Science Exchange positioned itself as an embedded partner rather than a transactional vendor, with dedicated account support and ongoing optimization recommendations.

Implementation Approach

The implementation followed a phased rollout over 6 weeks:

> **Weeks 1-2: Foundation & Training**
>
> - Platform configuration and integration with existing systems
> - Team onboarding sessions for HEOR researchers, project managers, and administrative staff
> - Legal and compliance team orientation on master agreement framework
> - Supplier network orientation focused on priority therapeutic areas
>
> **Weeks 3-4: Pilot Projects**
>
> - Launched 3 pilot RWE engagements across different data types (registry, claims, EHR)
> - Dedicated Science Exchange support for first engagements
> - Process refinement based on team feedback
>
> **Weeks 5-6: Full Rollout**
>
> - Expanded to all HEOR team members
> - Integration with financial systems for automated payment processing
> - Established quarterly business review cadence with Science Exchange team

The implementation was designed to minimize disruption to ongoing research projects while building confidence in the new approach.

The Results: Measurable Transformation in HEOR Operations

Dramatic Efficiency Gains

The most immediate impact was a fundamental transformation in supplier procurement timelines:

88% Reduction in Onboarding Time

Previous Process

50+ hours per supplier (6-11 weeks of elapsed time)

With Science Exchange

6 hours per supplier (typically within 1 week)

This acceleration came from:

- Instant access to pre-qualified suppliers (eliminating 1-2 weeks of research)
- Pre-negotiated master agreement (eliminating 2-4 weeks of legal review)
- Automated compliance workflows (eliminating 2-3 weeks of security reviews)
- Streamlined onboarding (reducing administrative coordination time)

For the HEOR team managing 15-20 new supplier engagements annually, this efficiency gain freed up **approximately 900 hours per year**—equivalent to adding 0.5 FTE to the team without increasing headcount.

Significant Cost Savings

$1.8 million in annual savings

With Science Exchange

The organization realized **$1.8 million in annual savings** across multiple cost categories

Direct Cost Reductions:

- **Procurement overhead**
  Reduced legal, compliance, and administrative time ($800K annually)
- **Faster time-to-evidence**
  Earlier market access enabled by timely evidence submission ($700K value)
- **Payment processing efficiency**
  Streamlined invoicing and reconciliation ($200K annually)
- **Vendor relationship management**
  Reduced coordination overhead ($100K annually)

Indirect Value Creation:

- Redirected internal resources toward higher-value research activities
- Reduced opportunity cost of delayed projects
- Improved negotiating position with consolidated supplier spending under master agreement

Increased Research Throughput

3x increase in completed projects

With Science Exchange

With administrative burdens reduced, the HEOR team achieved a **3x increase in completed projects*** within the first year.

This productivity increase came from:

- **Time savings:** 900 hours annually freed up from procurement activities
- **Faster supplier engagement:** Projects started weeks earlier
- **Improved focus:** Senior researchers spent less time on administrative coordination
- **Better resource allocation:** Project managers focused on research quality rather than vendor logistics

The team maintained the same headcount while tripling output, representing a fundamental shift in operational efficiency.

Enhanced Compliance & Risk Management

Beyond efficiency and cost metrics, the organization achieved meaningful improvements in compliance and risk management:

- **Standardized Processes**
  - Uniform contract terms across all RWE suppliers
  - Consistent data security and privacy protocols
  - Clear audit trail for all supplier engagements
  - Centralized documentation for regulatory inspections
- **Improved Visibility**
  - Real-time dashboard of active supplier relationships
  - Spending analytics by therapeutic area and data type
  - Performance metrics for supplier quality and timeliness
  - Early warning system for delivery delays or quality issues

** Before Science Exchange, the company averaged 18 HEOR studies/year. Post-Science Exchange implementation, this number increased to 54.*

- **Risk Mitigation**
  - Pre-vetted suppliers reduced vendor risk exposure
  - Standardized IP and confidentiality terms
  - Automated compliance checks at each engagement stage
  - Reduced legal liability from ad hoc contract variations

The General Counsel's office noted that the standardized approach significantly reduced their risk profile for data-related engagements and simplified regulatory audit preparation.

Key Success Factors & Lessons Learned

What Made This Transformation Successful

1. Executive Sponsorship
Strong support from the VP of HEOR and alignment with broader organizational priorities for R&D efficiency. The project was positioned as strategic infrastructure rather than tactical tooling.

2. Cross-Functional Collaboration
Early engagement with legal, compliance, IT security, procurement, and finance teams ensured the solution addressed enterprise requirements, not just HEOR team needs.

3. Phased Implementation
Starting with pilot projects built confidence and allowed process refinement before full rollout. Early successes created momentum for broader adoption.

4. Changed Management
Comprehensive training, clear communication about benefits, and ongoing support helped team members embrace new workflows. Addressing concerns proactively prevented resistance.

5. Strategic Partnership Approach
Science Exchange's embedded support model (vs. transactional vendor relationship) enabled continuous optimization and ensured the platform evolved with the team's needs.