

Achieving Data Compatibility Across the Department of Veterans Affairs

case study

The Business Issue

With approximately 235,000 employees and an annual operating budget of nearly \$70B (FY05), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the Federal Government's second largest department. The VA's mission is to serve the veteran community—which in 2004 consisted of approximately 25 million veterans and 45 million dependents—by providing medical benefits, financial assistance for education, home loans, insurance, and burial and memorial benefits.

The VA is a large, complex enterprise whose business processes, procedures, and supporting information technology (IT) systems emerged and evolved as the VA's mission expanded, as the number of veterans grew, and as technology changed. Each organization within the VA tended to have its own set of processes, procedures, and IT systems that were tailored to that organization's part of the overall VA mission. As a result, business processes and procedures across the enterprise were duplicative and often contradictory—the IT systems lacked interoperability and were difficult to maintain, data quality was poor, data entry was error-prone, with the same veteran data being entered multiple times into multiple systems, and data collected or corrected by one organization was inaccessible by other organizations within the VA. Correcting these inefficiencies represented a potential for significant cost savings within the VA and an opportunity to dramatically improve service to the veteran. The VA needed a scalable and practical solution to unify their enterprise, enhance data visibility and accessibility, improve interoperability, and reduce redundant elements within the enterprise.

The FGM Solution

As part of a multi-contractor team supporting the VA, FGM was a charter member of the Engineering Architecture Council (EAC) and provided enterprise architecture and systems engineering services for all enterprise-level tasks. Through the EAC, FGM was a lead contributor in developing and then incrementally evolving VA's Enterprise Architecture (EA), known as the OneVA EA.

The OneVA EA is a unified, enterprise-wide architecture and implementation roadmap that integrates and consolidates redundant business processes, functions, IT systems, and databases across the VA. FGM assisted the three VA administrations in collecting requirements, data, and project artifacts to populate the appropriate rows and columns of the Zachman Framework—a structured methodology for developing, evolving, and analyzing an EA. FGM also worked with the VA to develop migration strategies for moving their legacy systems to the OneVA EA while preserving day-to-day mission critical operations and functions, and was a key resource routinely called upon to address special topics such as security, privacy, EA compliance, and core IT services, and to incorporate emerging technologies such as Java™, Java 2 Platform Enterprise Edition (J2EE®), portals, and eXtensible Markup Language (XML).

Integrating and consolidating
redundant business processes.



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The Results

The initial impact of the OneVA EA effort was impressive, and it was a major factor in changing the VA's rating on the Presidential Scorecard for IT from red (2001) to green (2002). In 2003, the OneVA EA led to 100% acceptance of the VA's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Exhibit 300 submissions, because each submission was scored at 4 or higher. In addition to these tangible near-term improvements, the OneVA EA provides several other immediate and ongoing benefits to the VA by:

- Articulating the VA roadmap for developing and implementing an evolutionary, high-performance IT architecture that is directly aligned with program and business goals;
- Providing a framework for supporting cost effective data integration and information sharing across program/business lines to provide a "single" source of consistent, reliable, accurate, timely, and secure information to veterans and their families, employees, and other stakeholders;
- Presenting a planned approach to IT development horizontally across the enterprise, which fosters coordination and integration, and is fundamentally driven by the business needs of the enterprise;
- Tying together IT investments, Capital Planning and Investment Control (CPIC) initiatives, preparation of OMB Exhibit 300s, and compliance with the Federal Enterprise Architecture (FEA); and
- Demonstrating at a technical and management level how security, privacy, IPv6 transition, and technology refresh are to be incorporated into the enterprise.

The OneVA EA is the primary, authoritative resource within the VA for enterprise IT throughout the entire life cycle (i.e., planning, programming, budgeting, development, integration, test and certification, deployment, and in-service support). Used by key departments to develop processes and to ensure mandatory IT compliancy, the OneVA EA also helps project managers meet critical project milestones by providing them with insight into project management activities.

Still in use at the VA today, OneVA EA actively guides the VA's IT investments and serves as their blueprint for the incremental evolution of the processes, procedures, and IT systems that support their enterprise.



About FGM

FGM, Inc., is an information technology company delivering sophisticated, technology solutions that improve business efficiency across the enterprise.

As a trusted partner of the Department of Defense, U.S. Government civilian and international agencies, and businesses throughout the world, FGM is an agile provider of technical solutions that enable mission-critical operations and decision-making.

FGM's integrated solutions help our clients improve their business performance through information technology transformation services focusing on architecture, information management, and systems integration.

Headquartered in Reston, Virginia, FGM also has offices in California, Colorado, Hawaii, and Nebraska. With over 200 talented professionals, FGM is a thriving employee-owned corporation.

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Featured Capabilities

- Enterprise Architecture

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