



BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION AGENCY

Improving the Bottom Line. Supporting the Front Line.

STANDARDIZE essential operational data, processes, and business rules in order to significantly improve the Department's ability to process and share information throughout the enterprise in support of warfighter mission execution and management decision making.

Accomplishments

- **Challenge:** The Department has long struggled to exchange financial information in a timely and accurate way. One of the principal reasons for this struggle was a lack of data standards to foster automated information sharing. Although DoD began an extensive effort to develop enterprise data standards for financial management in approximately 2002, solid results proved elusive.
- **Approach:** In 2005, BTA assumed the leadership for completing the first phase of the Standard Financial Information Structure (SFIS). BTA's focus was to quickly identify a manageable list of elements that could be defined and agreed upon in order to stop an unproductive debate and allow the Department to progress with implementation and use of these standards. BTA established a cross-functional, cross-organizational team charged to complete the task in 90 days, ensuring alignment between "pure" financial data requirements and standards that crossed into other functional areas.
- **Results:** This team successfully published phase one of the standard with 59 data elements in October of 2005. Since that time, two additional phases have been completed, increasing the total number of elements in the SFIS standard to 72. The team has continued to meet on a regular basis to not only look at opportunities for additional data elements, but also to ensure the elements are meeting DoD's needs, as well as to ensure alignment with the Common Government Accounting Code (CGAC), an OMB-led standardization effort for the federal government. BTA further recognized that many standardization efforts fail because they focus too much on defining the standard and not enough on how to implement the standard in processes and systems throughout the enterprise. For this reason, BTA invested significant effort on the implementation side of SFIS, defining configuration level models that demonstrated how to embed SFIS elements within the structure of large scale business system implementations underway across DoD. BTA has also supported the investment review process by ensuring that all business system investments that carry any SFIS elements comply with the new standard. Defining data standards is absolutely needed by DoD, but it is equally important to properly address the challenges associated with implementation, because without implementation, the standard by itself provides little value.

Opportunities

To date, the Department has focused much of its standardization efforts on data, populating the DoD Business Enterprise Architecture not only with the SFIS standards, but also with data standards in other areas such as real property.

Opportunities to extend these enterprise level data standards exist in areas such as procurement, acquisition, and logistics, with some of those efforts already underway and supported by BTA. There are two additional areas where standardization is necessary and yet to be fully pursued.

- The first is standardization of business processes. BTA has identified 15 core end-to-end business processes in use throughout DoD. Most of these have been defined in a standard way at a very high level. To effectively reduce variability and improve performance across the Department, these processes must be defined in greater detail. The biggest challenge is that most of these processes cross functional areas and lack individually identified owners. Until alignment is achieved across these organizational units, progress is likely to be limited.
- The second is a more technical level of standardization, but one which could yield significant benefits regarding risk, cost, and effectiveness of enabling systems to communicate with each other. Typically, when DoD systems need to share information, programmers build a unique interface, requiring a new design, new development, and new testing for something that has already been completed (often many times over) elsewhere in the Department. BTA has put together an effort that, at least for systems within the BTA's enterprise portfolio, defines and requires the use of standard interfaces for system interaction. Some of these standards have already been defined, such as for the Wide Area Workflow application, and are currently being implemented. Several additional interoperability standards for BTA's enterprise systems will be completed in 2009.