



The Tangible Value of Enterprise Architecture

Since the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996, (which mandates federal agencies' approaches to IT acquisition and management), U.S. federal agencies have been working diligently to develop enterprise archi-

tectures (EA) to serve as a foundation for information technology (IT) planning and implementation. A complex and challenging innovation, EA takes years to learn about and implement successfully. By finding and demonstrating tangible value as early in the implementation process as possible, enterprise architects increase their chances of making EA an effective component of their agency's IT governance processes.

Where are the opportunities for demonstrating this kind of tangible value? ICF Consulting has seen agencies demonstrate the value of EA in at least three ways: through the implementation of an EA program; through the role of EA as a learning tool during organizational transition; and through the use of EA as a foundation for security analysis and planning.

Implementation of an EA program emphasizes the change management aspects of managing IT planning, acquisition, and management more rigorously. Rather than focusing on the tools, models, products, and other technical aspects of EA development, focus on creating the organizational decision-making processes that will use EA information to make better IT decisions. Such a focus means establishing the required information flows and business processes, organizational policies, and decision-making groups, such as an Enterprise Architecture Working Group and a Technology Acquisition Board. Roles and responsibilities of these groups are defined

with an eye toward the effective use of EA information. Members receive required training in interpreting and using the information they will need to make good decisions. New organizational policies help support the new behaviors while discouraging the persistence of old behaviors.

An important aspect of this approach to demonstrating EA value is that the organization can begin to function in the new way without having completed the technical implementation of the EA itself. Instead of waiting for all relevant EA products to be populated in the EA repository, this approach uses the tacit architecture that already exists in every organization. Getting the right people in the room has the same effect as getting the right knowledge into the tool—it makes the EA tangible and available for decision-making. The more an agency sees the value of making disciplined IT decisions, the more credi-

bility the explicit EA will have when it is finally completed and fully documented.

ICF Consulting has seen agencies demonstrate the value of EA in three ways: through implementation of programs to improve decision-making; through the role of EA as a learning tool during organizational transitions; and through the use of EA as a foundation for security analysis and planning.

A second valuable use of EA seen in agencies is the role of EA products as learning tools during a time of organizational transition. For example, ICF Consulting helped a new Chief Information Officer (CIO) use EA products to come up to

speed as quickly as possible on the salient aspects of the information infrastructure. The technical reference model provided a useful introduction to the technology suite in use at the agency, the systems inventory let the CIO know

which systems were central to agency business, and the systems infrastructure diagrams allowed the CIO to see the major system components, including internal and external interfaces maintained by the agency.

Another form of transition relates to business process change. Agency program managers have used the business process models stored in the EA's business architecture as the basis for analysis of their day-to-day operations. Sensing the existence of bottlenecks and other process inefficiencies, these managers used the EA's business process models as a basis for process analysis and improvement activities. The models provided a path for identifying and removing process bottlenecks and inefficient and redundant processes, and aided in identifying areas where additional IT investment might lead to significant process efficiency gains. Of course, resulting business process changes were then entered back into the EA to keep it current.

The third area of demonstrated value for the EA is in security management. EA models such as the node-connectivity diagram and the systems interface descriptions document the places at which the agency's systems interface internally with other systems and externally with other agencies. These interfaces represent one of the major

vulnerabilities for the agency infrastructure. By integrating the EA and the security profile, security analysts can more effectively protect their IT infrastructure.

All three of these uses of IT have demonstrated the tangible value of the EA to the managers of the agencies involved.

Interestingly, the agencies referred to earlier did not need to wait for the EA to be fully implemented before realizing the benefits to be achieved. In each case the development of EA products was conducted with reference to the business processes that would use them. By focusing on the value of the information stored in the EA, these agencies have been able to gradually build a growing management appreciation for this very complex IT requirement.

Lesson learned: find a business challenge where EA can help, use EA to address it now, and demonstrate real business value as soon as possible.

For more information on ICF Consulting's capabilities in enterprise architecture and change management, please visit www.icfconsulting.com/EA or www.icfconsulting.com/change-management. 