

VA eCMS Data Warehouse

Aquilent created a Data Warehouse to provide a centralized repository for procurement and contracting data and to provide the VA with enterprise-level business intelligence (BI) reporting on procurement and contracting activities.

the objective_

As the largest civilian agency in the Federal Government, and with facilities scattered geographically across the U.S., VA has historically had difficulty gaining an enterprise-wide view of contracting activities and actions. With an increased emphasis on transparency for Federal Government agencies, VA had a distinct need for an effective and reliable method to collect, analyze, and report on contracting activities.

the solution_

The VA has created a single enterprise acquisition system called the Electronic Contract Management System (eCMS). With data from this system as a starting point, Aquilent worked with VA to establish a Data Warehouse for consolidation of VA acquisition data, and to implement a suite of reporting services for business intelligence reporting and dashboards. This system is completely accessible via the web, through VA's wide area intranet network. Reports and reporting

services are all fully web-based, and dashboard reports are available via a VA Intranet website called the Acquisition Resource Center (ARC).

Using this solution, Aquilent's team of analysts worked with VA staff to create a suite of reports for local VA organizations as well as senior-level executives at VA Central Office. A suite of reports concerning active contracts are automatically delivered to local VA contracting managers on a weekly basis. An acquisition performance dashboard presents an enterprise-wide view of the status of contracting actions, with color-coded illustrations of contracts and funding at risk. And, a series of dashboard reports graphically illustrate the status of solicitations and contracts for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

In keeping with the Microsoft-based eCMS solution, VA's Data Warehouse is implemented with Microsoft's SQL Server database management system. To support extraction,

transformation, and loading of information from eCMS and other sources, Aquilent utilizes SQL Server Integration Services (SSIS). Reporting is supported through a suite of tools entitled eCMS Reporting Services, which includes use of Microsoft's SQL Server Reporting Services (SSRS) and a sophisticated business intelligence solution from MicroStrategy. This solution off-loads reporting requirements from the operational contracting system (eCMS) and provides a feature-rich framework for reporting, dashboards, and analytics.

the payoff_

This solution provides a starting point for enterprise-wide visibility into contracting actions and activities, across the VA. Notably, this can be accomplished without the need for the typical "stop everything and generate a report" data calls that have historically been the method for collecting enterprise-wide data. And, since information is extracted directly from VA's official contracting system, the accuracy of the data is objective, not based on subjective assessments.

In a wonderful example of serendipity, the Data Warehouse solution became operational at about the same time as the Obama administration demanded increased transparency from Federal agencies. Despite VA's past difficulties with enterprise reporting, the value of the Data Warehouse was clearly indicated when VA was identified as one of 10 agencies reported as on track for distribution of funds for ARRA. VA continues to utilize ARRA dashboard reports for weekly tracking of ARRA contracting activities.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > Created a Data Warehouse of enterprise-wide contracting data.
- > Suite of web-based tools for local and enterprise reporting
- > Dashboards for contracting performance measurement, with drill-down to individual contracting actions
- > Automated distribution of custom reports for local VA agencies and organizations
- > Sophisticated graphical presentation of contracting status and schedule performance
- > Performance dashboards to illustrate VA's success in distribution of ARRA funds

