



U.S. Department of Education,
Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA)
FSA Enterprise Architecture

*Designing and Enhancing
Existing Enterprise Architecture*



Case Study

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The Challenge

The U.S. Department of Education's (ED's) Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) is the government's first performance-based organization (PBO), operating like a business to deliver financial aid to eligible post-secondary students. FSA is required by the Clinger-Cohen Act and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to make information technology (IT) investment decisions that are consistent with its IT architecture. FSA recognizes that its IT environment must continue to be responsive to the demand of changing business needs and provide quality products and services to its customers. Investments are made on the basis of explicit consideration of costs, risks, and results. FSA requires an enterprise-wide approach for its IT architecture to ensure creation of consistent products and services that are mutually compatible and interoperate effectively.

The Solution

From 2000 through 2004, FSA has progressively carried out the development of its enterprise architecture (EA). FSA's EA enables executives and staff to gain significant understanding of the business capabilities and IT environment of the agency, so that they can support major enterprise-wide decisions that have an impact on FSA's overall architecture. FSA also has established an EA competency and formally uses EA to support Information Technology Management (ITM) and achieve compliance with the requirements of the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996.

Vangent is working with FSA to define an organization-wide strategy that provides a consolidated overview of data and data exchanges, organized as a future vision for the development, implementation, and integration of FSA's major systems. We also work with FSA to implement the various components of the data strategy, including documenting the processes carried out within FSA; defining the approach for the delivery of shared technology capabilities;

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integrating EA with lower-level integration and systems architecture, as well as systems design; and implementing control processes to guide the direction of IT-related initiatives that support business strategy.

Vangent's 2005 work plan addressed three main areas of focus:

- A new emphasis on "governance" and on improving visibility of the FSA EA at the executive level.
- Improvements to the Capital Planning and Investment Control (CPIC) process for FSA and reduction of the level of effort currently required to produce the FSA business cases and Exhibit 300s.
- Improved alignment of the FSA mission statement and goals and the supporting IT Infrastructure, creating a true line-of-sight from the business goals.

Contact Information

Vangent, Inc.
4250 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 1200
Arlington, VA 22203

Email: media@vangent.com
www.vangent.com

The Results

Vangent has an excellent track record in performing the EA function for FSA, providing support to other FSA teams, and maintaining good relationships with those teams and other contractors.

In the two years that Vangent has held the current contract, FSA has assumed a leadership position within ED in the areas of EA and Business Technology Alignment. We have also demonstrated our willingness to work with other vendors to promote the goals of the overall enterprise. Vangent has continued to leverage its expertise and promulgate FSA's success story to other offices within ED.

We are helping FSA reach its EA Maturity goals, and continue to support the Architecture Working Group (AWG) and the Architecture Support Group (ASG), interfacing effectively with other teams and external committees, while continuing to maintain and improve the EA documentation.