



Insight. Collaboration. Value.

CSREES Uses Enterprise Architecture to Facilitate Change and Improve Communication

Because it administers a very complex \$1.2 billion grants program for thousands of recipients, the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), in the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), sought a more efficient system to improve work processes, identify inefficiencies and redundancies in systems, and integrate the organization at a functional level. The agency selected an enterprise architecture solution from MEGA International, and has gained specific benefits in productivity, cost savings, and improved information access.



Agency Solves Challenges in Agriculture, the Environment, and Health

CSREES is an important agency within the USDA, the leading federal bureau on food, agriculture, and natural resources issues. CSREES advances knowledge for agriculture, the environment, human health, and communities by supporting research and education through a grants program of \$1.2 billion each year. These grants go to thousands of recipients for research and education in some 60 program areas.

Since it was created 12 years ago, CSREES has focused on critical issues affecting people's daily lives and the nation's future. The research and education concentrates on quality-of-life problems such as improving agricultural productivity, creating new products, protecting animal and plant health, promoting sound human nutrition and health, strengthening children, youth, and families, and revitalizing rural American communities. The results empowers people and communities to solve problems and improve their lives.

CSREES collaborates with the more than 100 colleges and universities that comprise the nation's land-grant universities, non-profit associations, commodity groups and grower associations, professional societies, multi-state research committees, private industry, citizen groups, the military, and other groups.



Need to Understand and Manage Processes and Information

Because CSREES administers such a large grants program, it became more essential to fully document the entire process, which is quite complex. However, CSREES had a very basic enterprise architecture that did not provide a comprehensive picture of the agency's efforts and most records were still on paper.

The agency recognized the value of developing a complete enterprise architecture; it would improve knowledge and understanding of CSREES processes and responsibilities within the organization, and meet new departmental regulations on EA that were evolving. This presented a significant opportunity to improve productivity and efficiency by reducing the amount of transactions occurring using paper and fax.

Once the agency realized the value of EA, and how important it would be to discover, understand, align, and control information throughout the agency, it moved ahead quickly to develop an EA program.

EA Solution to Meet Stringent Criteria

CSREES developed certain criteria to evaluate EA solutions from various vendors. Excellent reporting capability was one of the most important standards. The agency was concerned that some architecture tools are good for modeling, but make reporting very cumbersome and inefficient. Producing Web another ioutput in order to post for everyone in CSREES to view without relying on email circulation was essential. Ease-of-use was important measure, and CSREES wanted a product that could be deployed quickly and easily, so they could begin modeling right away, without having to attend multiple days of classes, or cope with a difficult deployment. A superb graphical display was also on the list of must-haves; it would be important that people throughout the agency quickly understand the visual models. Finally, as a federal agency, there were financial parameters that had to be followed.

With well-defined criteria, CSREES conducted an evaluation of EA software products from the major providers to federal government agencies. After the review, CSREES selected the MEGA Modeling Suite as its EA solution, to help the agency align its technical infrastructure and support systems with the functions and services provided to constituents. CSREES uses five of the modules from the MEGA Modeling Suite: MEGA Process, MEGA Architecture, MEGA Designer, MEGA Publisher, and MEGA Exchange.

CSREES selected MEGA International because of the company's ability to meet the defined criteria and provide a complete, cost-effective solution of software, training, and consulting, and the full breadth of EA modeling, reporting, and impact analysis.



Enterprise Architecture Well-Received by Employees

CSREES has three units within the agency: operations handles infrastructure, applications deals with development, and policy planning and training focuses on issues such as strategic and capital IT planning and technical training. All three units have adopted the EA solution, and CSREES has three data repositories ... baseline, current, and target ... with 20,000+ objects.

Most of the 350 agency employees are business users who rely on the output of the data repository through the Intranet to better understand information such as the business models, technologies, the state of the application infrastructure, and strategic goals for programs.

The project leaders worked diligently with all of the groups in CSREES to help them understand and benefit from the EA solution. Each group is different; some are as large as 70 people, so the process to develop the completed information is complex. As the process began, each agency group had an opportunity to review a draft of information for their area and collectively fine-tune the information to make it complete and accurate.

New Solution Improves CSREES Operations

CSREES has seen several benefits of its move to enterprise architecture. It has greatly facilitated communication and change within the agency. Specific benefits have been realized in productivity, cost savings, and faster response times. It has enabled better use of resources and increased efficiency, and sharpened organizational performance. The agency has reduced costs by identifying and eliminating redundancies and inefficiencies. And, access to information has improved significantly.

Increased employee productivity by reducing repetitive tasks. The agency is using all of the grant process maps to train employees, which saves considerable staff time. It is no longer necessary to write new documents about processing a grant application because the steps are mapped out by the tool, with the application and data in the same model. By doing away with repetitive tasks, CSREES has freed up staff to take on new projects. Because a new and deeper level of information is now available, the focus has shifted to how systems can be modernized or altered to deliver a specific functionality.

Reduced costs by eliminating unnecessary or unused software. CSREES has been able to identify where applications are duplicative or unneeded. In just one case, a scan of the network with the EA tool showed that different individuals throughout the agency were using 10 different multimedia tools. By consolidating on a single tool, CSREES significantly reduced software support costs. In just one month, the agency eliminated 70 different applications, 10 percent of the 700 pieces of software in use at the time. In addition to the cost savings, the agency eliminated two additional problems – the additional in house tech support needed to support ad hoc software, sometimes without training on it, and the down time caused when a staffer's software would go down. With applications consolidated, tech support can be fully trained on official applications and provide faster assistance to keep agency operations running smoothly.

Improved response times for critical operations information. There are many uses for the consolidated and reusable information now available through the EA solution. Business units regularly request



reports, and need fast turnaround. Presentations of operating statistics must be prepared for Executive Council meetings. Projects like server consolidation require information from throughout the agency that will be useful in planning. The EA solution has streamlined these processes to eliminate the walking of paper from the second floor to the third floor.

There has been very positive response from people within CSREES. After the first few agency groups deployed the solution, others began to clamor for it. The process of instituting EA facilitated discussions among business units about how they could change and improve processes. According to CSREES, it has really changed how the agency works.

MEGA Offering

MEGA International is a global leader in enterprise architecture, offering solutions to improve company performance and ensure regulatory compliance. The company provides executives with the ability to understand, discover, align, and control information at the enterprise level through its prominent modeling software, proven methods, and expert consulting in business process analysis, operational risk management and IT alignment.

MEGA International helps executives establish the Enterprise Architecture approach necessary to manage enterprise information in a consistent way. Based on an Enterprise Repository that encompasses both business and IT architecture views, using a powerful modeling suite, MEGA Consultants provide a simple and powerful Enterprise Architecture solution to any project for driving change within your organization.