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Achievements and Best Practices



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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Overview

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is responsible for administering programs in support of Veterans, their families and survivors. Second in size only to the Department of Defense, VA has 370,000 employees and encompasses a network of more than 300 medical facilities, clinics and benefits offices nationwide. To provide high quality Veteran care, VA purchases goods and services, such as medical equipment and facility services. In support of the VA mission, the VA Financial Services Center (FSC) in Austin, Texas is responsible for ensuring timely and accurate payment of \$14 billion worth of those goods and services annually on behalf of the VA medical facilities. The VA FSC and Pegasystems have partnered since 2010 to allow the FSC to continually improve its service and ensure those who have served their country can receive the absolute best care possible.

VA FSC supports the VA mission, saves millions of taxpayer dollars, and champions second largest federal invoice processing system

To ensure the most advanced medical equipment and services are available for Veteran care, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Financial Services Center (FSC) implemented the Invoice Payment and Processing System (IPPS). IPPS is a unified, online invoice certification system that VA FSC uses to process all payments on behalf of medical facilities nationwide, including the purchase of hospital equipment, from pacemakers to hospital beds to facility maintenance services.

IPPS has improved the accuracy and timeliness of vendor payments, which has in turn retained the best vendors to continue doing business with VA. A large pool of high-quality vendors ensures enhanced Veteran care, as it allows access to better supplies and services. Payment accuracy is also critical, as VA remains a good steward of government funding and ensures there are no overpayments or inaccuracies.

VA FSC reduces costs by 33%

As a result of implementing IPPS, VA FSC reduced its invoice processing costs by 33%. With more streamlined and efficient operations, VA FSC was also able to redistribute staff to other mission critical areas across the organization, eliminating the cost of hiring additional employees. Not only was VA able to keep valuable staff members and institutional knowledge, they were also able to save taxpayer dollars.

VA achieves nearly 100% payment accuracy, saves tens of millions of dollars

Saving VA tens of millions of dollars, payments to vendors are nearly 100% on time and accurate as a result of the digital transformation to the IPPS system. With more than 1.2 million invoices being processed each year, VA FSC was able to improve payment accuracy and timeliness by 10% to 15%. This virtually eliminated late fees and overpayment.

“With IPPS, we have been able to improve payment accuracy to nearly 100% and reduce invoice processing costs by 33% – savings that can be used toward Veteran care. Our digital transformation needed to be able to handle the volume and complexity of our operations. We have the second largest invoice processing system in the entire federal government and process \$14 billion worth of invoices annually.”

CLINT LOESER

Director of Financial Operations

Financial Services Center, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Digital transformation improves efficiency, flexibility, and employee productivity

Unifying all payment processing under IPPS, VA was able to replace legacy applications and improve the system's efficiency and flexibility. Previously, multiple siloed systems were stitched together, making communication among systems slow and expensive to maintain. IPPS introduced automation, and sped the payment process by receiving invoices from all available formats, performing advanced business rule processing, automatically routing invoices for approval, and generating the appropriate payment transactions. With more than 15,000 certified VA IPPS users throughout the country, this results in significantly compounded time savings and improved employee productivity.

Better transparency and government compliance

Improving taxpayer visibility, IPPS provides VA with more accurate reporting and easier government compliance. Not only does IPPS ensure improper payments are avoided, but it also helps VA to comply with the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Improvement Act, allowing greater transparency.

In addition to IPPS, VA FSC enlisted Pega for the Eligibility and Enrollment (EE) and Referral and Authorization System (RAS). These systems are used in support for the Choice Act, which affords Veterans more choices for receiving medical care, including services outside of the VA medical network. VA uses EE and RAS for medical claims processing and ensuring outside providers are paid for Veteran care.



Delivering outstanding customer service

Providing outstanding customer service is another key component for maintaining a high-quality vendor community in support of Veteran care. In addition to IPPS, EE, and RAS, VA FSC implemented the enterprise-level Pega Customer Service application, which has allowed VA FSC to consolidate all vendor requests to a single point of contact and consolidate four call centers. VA FSC uses the Customer Service application for a more complete view of each vendor, including customer history and context on how to best resolve a problem. VA also has more real-time data into customer service performance metrics, allowing for better prioritization and continuous service improvement.

Faster delivery in support of veteran care

VA FSC chose Pega because they needed solutions they could get into production faster in support of Veterans. As a result, FSC implemented IPPS in only 10 months. They also needed a platform that would allow VA to continuously improve its systems once they were in place. Finally, FSC needed a solution that could easily be applied and reused across all of VA.

A vision for the future

VA FSC is a Franchise Fund organization with the ability to offer services throughout the federal government. FSC's vision is to support government agencies in addition to implementing an enterprise-wide solution across the VA in support of Veteran-centric care. For example, there are many other VA payments that would benefit from rolling up into the IPPS program including Beneficiary Travel reimbursements and Grant Management. Beneficiary Travel are payments owed to Veterans as reimbursement for their travel to medical centers.

ABOVE: Quantico, Va. (June 28, 2015) U.S. Navy veteran Petty Officer 3rd Class Redmond Ramos pushes off strong to run in the men's 200-meter dash. The Department of Defense Warrior Games are an adaptive sports competition for wounded, ill, and injured service members and veterans. Approximately 250 athletes, representing teams from the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Special Operations Command, and the British Armed Forces are competing in archery, cycling, track and field, shooting, sitting volleyball, swimming, and wheelchair basketball. (U.S. Navy photo by Ensign Joe Scannell/Released)

RIGHT: SAN DIEGO (July 16, 2011) Retired Navy Captain Dr. Wayne Lapetoda pulls a tooth from a homeless veteran during the Veterans Village of San Diego Stand Down 2011. The stand down offered more than 1,000 homeless veterans with free services such as health and dental care, substance abuse counseling, legal and employment assistance and food and clothing distribution. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Dominique Pineiro/Released)

KEY FACTS

- Second largest invoice processing system in the U.S. federal government
- Tens of millions of dollars in savings
- Implemented in only 10 months
- Nearly 100% accuracy on all VA payments
- Reduced invoice processing costs by 33%
- Consolidated four call centers into one
- 1.2 million invoices and \$14 billion payments made annually
- 10% -15% improved payment accuracy and timeliness for 1.2 million invoices
- Better Veteran care and improved employee productivity
- Improved customer service and performance metric visibility

Texas County & District Retirement System

Overview

The Texas County & District Retirement System (TCDRS) helps 294,000 Texas employees plan for the future by providing retirement, disability, and survivor benefits. These individuals are employed by more than 700 counties and districts, organized by water, hospital, appraisal, emergency services and more. TCDRS helps these counties and districts compete with the private sector to hire and retain talented staff by providing competitive retirement benefits at affordable rates. The agency serves a wide range of people, from millennials to retirees, and offers a variety of services. To improve its customer experience and facilitate rapid responses to changing government and financial regulations, TCDRS partnered with Pegasystems.

“Pega is allowing us to become more customer-centric, whether it's providing better self-service to our customers externally or providing the means to our internal users to provide better customer service.”

KRIS VALENTA
Chief Strategy Officer
Texas County & District Retirement System

Improved customer and employee productivity with self-service

The self-service model provided by TCDRS ultimately provides better productivity and service, reducing TCDRS employee workloads and producing more efficient results for customers. Customers can access benefits on their own time, rather than only having the option during normal business hours.

Reduced costs and redundancy through reuse

TCDRS was able to eliminate five costly systems using Pega which allows components and processes to be reused agency-wide, yet allowing for specialization where necessary. Furthermore, the application enabled TCDRS to digitize and deploy common, transparent processes with rapid, agile development.

KEY FACTS

- 100% of beneficiary updates now conducted online
- Eliminated five costly systems
- Reduced customer wait times by weeks with ability to conduct cost-benefit studies in just seconds
- Improved customer service both externally and internally
- 294,000+ Members
- 760+ Employers



TCDRS delivers superior omni-channel customer experience

To provide the very best customer service to Texas employees and improve efficiency, Texas County & District Retirement System (TCDRS) implemented a four-phased strategic initiative. As a result of this effort, all member requests can now be submitted online and are processed automatically or through Pega workflow. Furthermore, employers can now run cost-benefit studies in just seconds, reducing customer wait times by weeks. This is a significant impact for TCDRS which processes more than 20,000 beneficiary updates per year. TCDRS was also able to eliminate five costly systems.

A modern, customer-centric experience

To accomplish all this, TCDRS used the Pega Customer Service application, which allowed it to modernize its services, enabling a seamless omni-channel experience for customers, as well as self-service capability. With omni-channel, TCDRS created a customer-centric model for a wide range of ages, from millennials to retirees. Additionally, the application accelerates the time it takes to get benefits to external and internal customers, ensuring employees receive their eligible retirement benefits as quickly as possible.



Australian Community Support Organisation

Overview

The Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO) is a not-for-profit serving Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, Australia. ACSO provides a wide range of programs for people transitioning from prison back into the community, as well as those who are either in or at risk of entering the criminal justice system. The organization's goal is to reduce crime, prevent recidivism, and improve public safety by managing a full range of services – including mental health and disability programs, drug and alcohol treatment, housing, and employment services – to help its clients achieve independence. Many of ACSO's clients come to the organization directly, while others are referred through its customers, such as the criminal justice system, the Department of Health, and other government agencies.

Managing each client's case requires a complex chain of business processes. ACSO chose Pegasystems to create more effective and efficient administrative and case management programs, with greater flexibility to adapt programs as requirements change. The ultimate goal: to afford ACSO caseworkers and staff more meaningful time with clients.

“When we build programs with Pega, people start talking about the art of the possible – how we can offer more to our customers, our clients, and our funders. It ceases to be an IT-only discussion and becomes a business discussion.”

ZORAN BRZAKOVIC
Chief Information Officer,
Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO)

Improving lives through business process transformation

Before ACSO began migrating its existing systems to the Pega Platform™, its case management processes – intake, assessments, referrals, and treatment programs for each client – were cumbersome and inefficient. Case workers and administrative staff had to pull data from disparate sources, both internal and external, sometimes cutting and pasting from emails and spreadsheets or even retyping from faxes and paper forms. Generating reports was time-consuming and complicated. Now, caseworkers can easily generate highly customized reports and case note compilations. They also have the option of a real-time, dashboard view, where at any given point in time they can view all of the interactions they've had with a given client.

ACSO has also been able to automate aspects of its assessment report process using Pega. For each client, case workers perform comprehensive assessments, consisting of more than 300 questions. In the past, the assessor would write a report based on the answers – a process that took several hours. Now, the system can use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to generate a report, which the assessor can go into and customize, adding context and details as needed. What used to be a three- or four-hour process now takes closer to one hour, freeing up the assessors for more community impact and client-facing work.

A more flexible, collaborative, and outcome-focused development process

Using the Directly Capture Objectives (DCO) capability within Pega, ACSO operations and IT staff can rapidly design and iterate programs in collaboration – ensuring the end results meet the customer needs. Before Pega, designing applications required ongoing back and forth between operations and IT, whereas now IT can bring operations staff into the room and demonstrate the lifecycle of their programs. Operations can immediately see and understand how the program will work, and provide their feedback in real time. When program requirements change or new functionality is needed down the road, IT can easily make the necessary changes in collaboration with operations.

U.S. Census Bureau

Overview

The U.S. Census Bureau serves as the leading source of quality data about the nation's people and economy. Census data is used to inform a variety of social, economic, and political decisions, from congressional seat distribution to community planning to the distribution of more than \$675 billion in federal funds.

To gather this data, the Bureau uses a series of data collection methods, including the Decennial Census of Population and Housing (every 10 years), Economic Census (every five years), Census of Governments, American Community Survey, and other current surveys and programs.

In order to modernize and streamline its data collection and processing operations, the U.S. Census Bureau launched the Census Enterprise Data Collection and Processing (CEDCaP) program. CEDCaP is a forward-thinking, bureau-wide initiative to create an integrated and standardized enterprise solution that will offer shared data collection and processing across all censuses and surveys. The aim of the solution is to lower complexity and deliver significant savings for all censuses and surveys, with a focus on the 2020 Census.

Pega plays a key role in the delivery and realization of the Bureau's CEDCaP vision, and is responsible for implementing several major components of CEDCaP. For the 2020 Census, the CEDCaP Pega capabilities are the internet self-response system (ISR), the field enumeration mobile application, and the field and survey operational control systems.

Census is using the unified Pega Government Platform™ to build and execute these Census Enterprise Survey Operations. With this technology, Census is able to start with the capability targeted at the 2020 Decennial Census. From there, Census can iterate and thoughtfully layer in capability to support economic, demographic, and other survey needs spanning across many modes and input channels.

2017 Census Test

Self-response test distributed to 80,000 U.S. households

The 2020 Decennial Census marks a major shift from a primarily paper-based process to a primarily digital process in data collection from every household in America. According to the 2020 Census Operational Plan, "The Census Bureau estimates that 45 percent of U.S. households in areas that receive mailouts from the Census Bureau will respond via the Internet...Internet response was not available in previous decennial censuses and, therefore, represents a substantial innovation for the enterprise."

In the 2017 Census Test, the U.S. Census Bureau assessed the integration of operations and systems needed for house-

holds to respond to the census online in advance of the 2020 Census. The test also included telephone and traditional paper questionnaire response options for citizens who prefer to use those channels. As part of this test, a national sample self-response test was distributed to 80,000 U.S. households using the Enterprise Censuses and Surveys Enabling (ECaSE) Platform built with the Pega Government Platform. Based on results of the 2017 Census Test and further performance and scale testing, the 2020 Census Executive Steering Committee confirmed their decision to use the Pega application as the ISR (Internet Self-Response) solution for the 2020 Census¹.

The 2018 End-to-End Test

Self-response test distributed to 260,000 U.S. households

The next step in the preparations for 2020 was the 2018 End-to-End Test. The 2018 Census Test supports the goal of the 2020 Census, which is to count everyone once, only once, and in the right place². The enumeration phase of the 2018 Test took place in Providence, Rhode Island, and rigorously tested each of the three self-response methods that the public will be able to use in the 2020 Census: internet, phone and paper².

Thanks to close collaboration with the Census Bureau and other industry partners, Pega was able to successfully deliver the required platform capabilities for the 2018 End-to-End Test, including the initial mobile field application for enumerators, within the tight timeframe required by the Census roadmap to 2020. The model-driven technology of the Pega platform, coupled with agile scrum methodology, allowed for a highly iterative, collaborative, and efficient process where product owners were able to play an active role in ensuring that the application met their requirements.

One key requirement of the platform was to support multichannel use. Despite adding additional response modes to the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau will still need to employ thousands of census takers throughout the country to ensure a complete and accurate census³.

In the 2020 Census, both individual respondents and door-to-door census enumerators will be able to enter census questionnaire responses using mobile devices. In Providence, the Census Bureau tested the iPhones that enumerators will use for all aspects of their work, including receiving assignments, viewing the most efficient order for visiting each household, submitting their hours, and securely recording, encrypting and transmitting each respondent's information⁴.

Security was another critical factor. The 2018 test was supported by secure IT systems that were successfully deployed in a cloud environment for the first time⁵. Security Architects from Pegasystems worked closely with Census security experts and industry-leading cloud service, security, and mobile device solution providers to support Census' goal of providing a secure and robust operating environment that meets all federal requirements.

Laying the Groundwork for 2020

Peak operations of the 2018 Census Test were completed in late Summer 2018. More than half of Providence County responded to the test on their own (52.3 percent), surpassing the projected self-response rate by 3 percentage points, with the majority of self-responses (61.2 percent) received through the internet⁶. The Census Bureau also observed a substantial increase in enumerator productivity from the adoption of technology and automation: In 2010, enumerators completed 1.05 cases per hour worked. In the 2018 test, enumerators completed 1.56 cases per hour worked, a 48.57% improvement in productivity⁷.

“We are very encouraged by these results (of the 2018 End to End Test) and by the performance of the systems and technology we've put in place for the public to safely and securely respond to the 2020 Census.”

Census Director's Blog, Wed Sep 05 2018⁸

KEY FACTS

The Census Bureau is using Pega to help it achieve the benefits of the planned 2020 Census operational design innovations and changes:

- **Up to 45% of approximately 137 million targeted households expected to respond via Internet¹⁰.**
- **These innovations and design changes include:**
 - 61% of self-responses received through internet
 - 48.57% increase in enumerator productivity (from 1.05 cases to 1.56 cases per hour worked)⁷



As 2020 Census operations move forward, the Census Bureau will use the results from the test to refine the use of mobile technology, administrative records, innovations from the geospatial industry, and self-response via the internet and phone⁸. The Census Bureau will work closely with its technology partners to refine and scale their systems to ensure the best possible performance for the 2020 Census.

1. <https://www.census.gov/library/video/2018/2018-01-26-2020-pmr.html>; Atri Kalluri, Chief, Decennial IT Directorate (DITD), at 2020 Census Program Management Review (PMR), January 26, 2018, Transcript (Page 73): <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/pmr-materials/01-26-2018/transcript-2018-01-26-pmr.pdf>
2. Census Director's blog, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/director/2018/09/final-census-test-proves-successful.html?CID=CBSM+DirBlog>
3. From press release: https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/census-demonstrates-readiness-for-2020-census.html?eml=gd&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery
4. Census Director's blog, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/director/2018/09/final-census-test-proves-successful.html?CID=CBSM+DirBlog>
5. Census Director's blog, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/director/2018/09/final-census-test-proves-successful.html?CID=CBSM+DirBlog>
6. From the press release: https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/census-demonstrates-readiness-for-2020-census.html?eml=gd&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery
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