

INDUSTRY RECOMMENDS “GAME CHANGING” APPROACH TO VISTA MODERNIZATION

IAC Task Force Unanimous in Recommending “Reengineered” VistA System Provided in an Open Source Environment

FAIRFAX, Va. – May 6, 2010 - The Industry Advisory Council (IAC) is today releasing a report it provided to the Department of Veterans Affairs with recommendations on how to modernize VistA (VA Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture). VistA is an integrated health information system that supports the eight million veterans served by the VA’s 153 Medical Centers and 768 VA Outpatient Clinics. VistA is recognized as the premier electronic health information system in the nation.

Developed over the past 32 years, VistA is a legacy system that must be updated and modernized if it is to continue to meet the needs of America’s veterans. The Honorable Roger Baker, VA’s Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology, asked the American Council for Technology-Industry Advisory Council (ACT-IAC) for recommendations on how to modernize VistA. IAC assembled a working group, comprised of experienced healthcare and IT professionals from 34 companies in the information technology industry. That group worked over the last six months to finalize a report which was sent to Mr. Baker on Tuesday, May 4, 2010. The report is available at <http://www.actgov.org/vistareport>.

The key recommendations of this extensive 100-page report are:

- VA should commit to and announce as a matter of strategic policy a plan to move to an open source, open standards model for the reengineering of the next generation of VistA.
- VA should contract with one or more Federally Funded Research and Development Corporations (FFRDCs) to:
 - Provide a detailed set of technical recommendations for the development of a VistA 2.0 Open Source Ecosystem;
 - Assemble a fully functioning application development environment for use in the VistA 2.0 Open Source Ecosystem;
 - Develop one or more demonstration applications using the Open Source Ecosystem and the application development environment; and
 - Provide an appropriate Concept of Operations which includes a business model, charter, bylaws, operating principles and organizational blueprint for an independent, not-for-profit Open Source Foundation to manage, operate and maintain the VistA 2.0 Ecosystem.
- The current VistA should be placed on an aggressive program of stabilization with limited tactical upgrades and enhancements driven by patient safety and other mandated requirements.

The objective is to provide an environment within which VA employees, large prime contractors, healthcare professions, innovative small companies, healthcare software vendors, and entrepreneurs can all contribute to improving “the best care anywhere” being provided by VA today.

Ed Meagher, chair of the IAC VistA Modernization Working Group, stated, “Our task was complex. We were asked to produce substantive recommendations to modernize a system that works very well but is outdated and difficult to maintain. The individuals who participated on the working group contributed hundreds of hours to this effort. Through many hours of debate, compromise, and collaboration, we not only produced a viable set recommendations, but were unanimous in those recommendations. That unanimity is a real credit to the cohesiveness of this working group. That we recommended an open source solution is a real ‘game changer’ from the business as usual approach to systems development.”

Andy Robinson, IAC Executive Vice Chair, oversaw the project on behalf of the IAC Executive Committee. Mr. Robinson said, “This report is significant for three reasons. First, it provides VA with a strategic pathway and an actionable plan for modernizing VistA. Second, it provides VA with a unanimous set of industry recommendations. Third, it demonstrates the value of collaboration between government and industry and the unique value that ACT-IAC provides.

“The Federal IT community is populated by individuals from government and industry who share a common vision of improving government’s ability to serve citizens. The ACT-IAC process of collaborative innovation that produced this report can serve as a model for tackling other tough issues facing the government,” he concluded.

NOTE: A phone press conference will be held on Thursday, May 6 beginning at 10:30 a.m. Mr. Meagher and members of the working group will discuss the recommendations and answer questions. To request a call-in number and code please contact Fern at 301-424-9140 or Miranda at 703-208-4800 X224.

About ACT-IAC – Government and Industry IT: One Vision, One Community

The **American Council for Technology** (ACT) is a non-profit educational organization created by government executives to assist government in serving the public through the effective and efficient acquisition of information technology (IT) resources. ACT provides education, programming, and collaboration opportunities to enhance and advance the government IT profession. **ACT** established the **Industry Advisory Council** (IAC) to provide an objective, vendor and technology-neutral and ethical forum where government and industry can collaborate on improving government through technology.

ACT-IAC has been recognized as the premier public-private partnership in the government IT community and as an example of how government and industry can work together. For more information, visit www.actgov.org or call (703) 208-4800.

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