

## GOVERNMENT SEEKS ADVICE ON VistA MODERNIZATION

### IAC Launches Cross-Industry Task Force in Response

**FAIRFAX, Va.** – (October 20, 2009) In response to a request from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Industry Advisory Council (IAC), today launched a working group to assist the VA in understanding the issues associated with the modernization of its Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA). IAC is a 20-year old government information technology organization formed to provide cross-industry counsel and best practices.

The working group will be chaired by **Ed Meagher**, former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Information Technology, Department of Veterans Affairs and currently the Director of Strategic Health Initiatives at SRA International.

“We are tasked with producing substantive recommendations on ways to modernize a system that works very well but is written in software code that is outdated and difficult to maintain. A new and more open approach would enable various sectors of the health care industry to leverage the significant investment the government has already made in VistA,” said Mr. Meagher. Over 40 IAC member companies, representing the diversity of the government IT industry, are participating in this important project.”

VistA was developed and managed by the VA over the last 25 years and is used throughout the VA’s 153 Medical Centers and 768 VA Outpatient Clinics across the country serving almost eight million veterans. In addition, the US Indian Health Service and commercial and public hospital systems in several states and foreign countries have adopted VistA.

VistA is generally recognized as the most completely integrated and scalable healthcare information system in existence. VistA currently provides each veteran a completely digital medical record that has improved quality, patient safety, patient and provider satisfaction and lowered costs and may have value for the entire national healthcare community. However, VistA, as one of the government’s oldest legacy information technology systems, must be updated and modernized in order to enable the private sector to take advantage of the breadth of healthcare applications included under the mantle of VistA.

Although no decision has been made regarding the future of VistA, the VA’s Chief Information Officer, Roger Baker, has asked IAC to assess the issues, challenges and opportunities associated with modernizing the system. As part of the assessment, IAC will also consider whether there are principles or strategies that would be applicable to other legacy systems currently operated by the government such as those driving Social Security and Medicare.

Key issues to be addressed by the project include, but are not limited to:

- Is VistA a system that could be deployed to a wider community? If yes, what is the most appropriate deployment model: open source code; cloud computing; business process/methodology; other?
- What is an appropriate strategy for modernizing VistA and transitioning it to a more current and innovative architecture
- What are the opportunities and impact of modernizing and deploying VistA upon private industry, the healthcare community and other key groups?

“The recommendations for modernizing VistA have potential far reaching ramifications across the healthcare industry”, said **Andy Robinson**, IAC executive vice chair, Sr. Vice President of Homeland Security and Program Management, ICF International, and internal sponsor of this initiative. “IAC is committed to providing an unbiased approach from some of the best minds across our industry.”

#### **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](http://www.actgov.org) or call (703) 208-4800.

#### **CONTACT:**

Fern Krauss  
Fern Krauss Public Relations  
301-424-9140  
[krauss@ix.netcom.com](mailto:krauss@ix.netcom.com)