

INTRODUCTION TO FEDERAL ENTERPRISE ARCHITECTURE (FEA)



For government agencies, enterprise architecture helps them plan and make decisions in an informed way, impacting decisions affecting numerous people. Federal Enterprise Architecture, commonly referred to as FEA, is the industry standard for government enterprise architecture frameworks.

In this article, we will cover:

- A basic understanding of enterprise architecture and its types;
- The nuts and bolts of the FEA framework; and
- Why it's important for your agency.

If you're in a government organization and are considering FEA to improve operations at your agency, stay tuned for an introduction to FEA.

What is Enterprise Architecture?

Enterprise architecture refers to the process of mapping events, interests, and goals, determining where they intersect. It's a highly visual process that allows stakeholders to align business concepts with outcomes while encouraging transparency throughout the process.

One interesting trait of enterprise architecture is its ability to capture both tangible and intangible concepts and assets. Among the benefits of using enterprise architecture within governmental entities is the creation of a standardized approach for acquiring technology and reduce the cost

burden to citizens.

Version 1 of the Framework was introduced in 1999, and in 2013, Version 2 was released. Over the years, the flexible guide has grown to be the industry standard for enterprise architecture.

Types of Enterprise Architecture

There are four main types of enterprise architecture: The Zachman Framework, FEA, Gartner, and The Open Group Architectural Framework. Each is further described in-depth below:

Federal Enterprise Architectural Framework

As mentioned above, the Federal Enterprise Architectural Framework, or FEA, is a system of enterprise architecture specially designed for the federal government. Let's take each one in turn.

Zachman Framework

The Zachman Framework is the industry standard endorsed by the educational organization Enterprise Architecture Center Of Excellence (EACOC). It assesses the individual business interests and perspectives of six common stakeholder types, matching them with questions that help enterprise architects flush out important context, resources, and interlocking parts.

Gartner Framework

[Gartner's model is unique](#). It asks enterprises to adapt to changes and obstacles as a stakeholder unit, not individually. It is among the most innovative and comes from the great minds at the company by the same name, Gartner.

The Open Group Architectural Framework

The Open Group Architectural Framework, TOGAF, is the most commonly used enterprise architecture across industries. It offers a structured and practical approach to best practices, including vocabulary and methods.

Federal Enterprise Architecture 101

The comprehensive guide to [FEA is available online](#). In this document, the government describes FEA as a fairly linear process: "At its core is the Consolidated Reference Model (CRM), which equips OMB and Federal agencies with a common language and framework to describe and analyze investments."

There are six important domains of enterprise architecture for government agencies:

- Strategy
- Business
- Data
- Applications
- Infrastructure
- Security

These domains are designed to work within a bureaucratic environment to show synchronicities and wastefulness, to help enterprise architects find areas of greater efficiency and cost savings, and to promote collaboration among departments that may otherwise be siloed. Enterprise architecture also reveals any gaps in any one of those domains, which could be costly and dangerous for a government agency if undetected.

Needless to say, sound enterprise infrastructure is mission-critical to the government, which is why the FEA was created, being tweaked and perfected over all these years.

5 Step Collaborative Planning Methodology

Like other forms of enterprise architecture, FEA is incredibly comprehensive and can't be boiled down to one or two things. However, the framework is based on a collaborative planning methodology that takes place in five steps, as follows:

Step 1: Identify & Validate

The point of this step is to identify requirements and understand what change looks like and what drives it. In this planning phase, stakeholder interests are assessed against the operational requirements, identifying and validating what needs to be accomplished.

Planners or architects are critical in this step as they introduce stakeholders to organizers and sponsors, allowing collaboration to occur. Stakeholders and sponsors work hand-in-hand to identify what areas require attention, understand the driving factors behind these areas, and establish validated requirements.

Step 2: Research & Leverage

During the research phase, outside resources are evaluated. Some are evaluated based on their experiences and how they align with the situation being addressed in the framework. Others are evaluated as potential partners. Research on all of these outside resources, organizations, and potential partners is assessed for quality and usefulness. In this phase, the architect or planner is responsible for facilitating the research.

Step 3: Define & Plan

In step one, the agency identified adjustments needed to hit measurable goals, and in step two, research is utilized, providing context and resources. In this step, stakeholders and sponsors flesh out a plan.

The adjustments decided upon can occur across any of the domains previously mentioned, such as strategy, business, data, applications, infrastructure, and security. The plan to adjust has several moving parts. It answers the who, what, when, where, why, and how. For instance, what's going to be done? Who's going to do it? What will it cost?

The existing infrastructure and resources must be evaluated in this phase to determine what's needed to answer the questions informing an integrated plan. In this step, the planner uses best practices and established techniques to create a plan for the required architecture across all domains. It must be assimilated in such a way to not only satisfy compliance but also to meld into the entity's governance.

Step 4: Invest & Execute

This step does what it sounds like, it allows for government agencies to make the right investments required to implement the plan and then execute on it. The architect is in a supportive role in this step, providing stakeholders and governance with what is needed, pulling the trigger on investments, and implementing a rollout.

Step 5: Perform & Measure

In this phase, government officials measure against metrics established in the first three steps to ensure performance outcomes are met. The architect leverages data to assume this role.

Collaborative planning methodology takes into account the various interests of stakeholders and workers, helping them work together to create a plan that is actionable while moving in the direction of government goals and desired outcomes. This methodology helps the government reduce bulk and duplicated efforts to streamline the most efficient organization demanded.

FEA for Your Agency

Why use FEA? Well, if you're involved in government, you know that constituents are looking for efficiency and effectiveness. This methodology helps governments come up with actionable solutions to infrastructure and technology issues with consistent planning and strategic means of problem-solving.

Requisitioning an architect or planner is important for government agencies that want to achieve higher levels of efficiency and transparency within their organizations. This person plays a critical role in every step where they prioritize collaboration between sponsors and stakeholders, removing obstacles in the way of successful communication.

With FEA, government agencies run better or more cost-effectively, which is a win-win for everyone.