Cloud Empowerment at USAID: A Success Story a decade in the making

When it comes to Information Technology (IT) modernization efforts, Portfolio Managers are tasked with developing holistic strategies that keep pace with an agency's evolving business needs without compromising its ability to carry out its mission. The mission of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is to help others, but when it came to technological transformation, USAID had to start by helping itself. Let's take a look at how USAID became the vanguard for smart cloud adoption in support of a complex, global mission.

A Legacy of Innovation

For nearly a decade, USAID has strategically deployed cloud technology to enable and scale their operations both at home and abroad. Working in some of the most challenging locations around the world means USAID often operates in low network connectivity bandwidth environments that each present their own unique security vulnerabilities. In seeking solutions to operating in these harsh operational conditions, USAID became an early adopter of cloud technology in 2010, when they moved to cloud-based email, messaging, and collaboration tools. In 2012, USAID completed nearly all of the goals of the Data Center Optimization Initiative (DCOI) when it established a single Enterprise Data Center.

Data Consolidated, Optimized, and Secured

Most recently in 2018, the USAID saw success when they migrated the Enterprise Data Center to a hybrid off-premises, public cloud solution with full disaster recovery capability. The new USAID Enterprise Data Center/Disaster Recovery (EDC/DR) solution provides government Infrastructure as a Service as well as redundancy for USAID's network and business-critical systems. USAID also gained the ability to capitalize on more modern technology like scalable, on-demand resources, no restrictions for memory, processing, and storage, and the ability to restore data in several hours versus days or weeks. The use of "tagging" in the cloud environments will enhance USAID's ability to comply with FITARA and Technology Business Management (TBM) reporting requirements. Finally, the cloud solution is FedRAMP-authorized, ensuring the new infrastructure services meet rigorous security standards.

Working With GSA

(possible to make this a bulleted list of the services GSA offered?)

USAID utilized the General Services Administration (GSA) Schedule 70, for their Enterprise Data Center (EDC) and Disaster Recovery (DR) infrastructure acquisition. Leveraging the schedule's Cloud Special Item Number 132-40, USAID sought to acquire Public and Government Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) as standardized, highly automated infrastructure services owned by Cloud Service Providers (CSPs) and offered to USAID on-demand. Before

the award, the USAID engineering team performed an Analysis of Alternatives (AoA) backed by thorough market research.

A high-level design with the ability to connect to both Public and Government IaaS CSP was proposed. It would have two co-locations on opposite ends of the country to ensure operational and geophysical redundancy. The acquisition was structured so that the co-location IaaS solution was purchased as a commodity, owned by the CSP. In this modern, virtual data center, USAID leverages the High Availability (HA) as a Disaster Recovery without additional costs.

Solution Acquired, Results Analyzed

The end result is a fully-scalable and virtual data center, with dynamic policy-driven services and improved performance for end users, all at a 30% lower cost for operations and maintenance. With Cloud, USAID now has the ability to leverage multiple data centers' hosting systems, services, applications, and storage without reliance on any particular geographic location. This is critical given that USAID leads the U.S. Government's international development and disaster assistance work in over 80 countries around the globe. These efficiency gains have enabled reinvestment in more advanced and innovative technologies. USAID has matured to being 100% cloud enabled, utilizing all service models. With no legacy systems to support, the agency can move to new, modern solutions in a much more agile fashion than other Federal departments that are weighed down by aging systems and infrastructure.

What Does Your Mission Require?

As a facilitator of USAID's Cloud accomplishments, GSA and its Cloud Acquisition Team also wants to help your agency leverage the capabilities of cloud to meet its long-term mission and strategic goals. See opportunity in your organizational needs to not only modernize your IT infrastructure, but also to adhere to federal mandates like the new CloudSmart Strategy.

To help discover ways that GSA can enable your agency's mission through cloud, contact cloudinfo@gsa.gov or visit our Cloud Information Center at gsa.gov/cic today.