

DEAMS 'sprints' toward fiscal year end

By Cathy Segal

DEAMS Strategic Communications

The system integrator for the Defense Enterprise Accounting and Management System has transformed its series of improvement workshops into sprints to resolve issues directly related to the upcoming fiscal year closeout, and fix defects and accelerate enhancements affecting system stability in FY 12. September marks the system's second fiscal closeout since deploying full capabilities at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., in May 2010.

The workshops were formed at the functional management office earlier this year to address solutions for discrepancies in each of 10 functional areas based on problem reports received by the DEAMS Help Desk. Subsequent meetings were held to address issues that must be resolved before the fiscal year ends on Sept. 30. The outcome was a list of 40 priority items that are being tracked to resolution.

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Of the original workshop solutions, two have been delivered to the FMO; one has been applied to DEAMS and the other is in testing. The rest have been broken into 40 sprints – eight of which contain the items that are needed for closeout. Accenture, the system integrator, is developing solutions for the sprints as well as post-production sustainment patches; end users and FMO subject matter experts are reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of those solutions before they enter production.

Like the workshops, the sprints are broken down by functional area. Focus areas include orders to cash, procure to pay, travel, the Commanders' Resource Integration System, supplier payments and workflows, transactions for and by others, and General Accounting and Finance System-Rehost. Functions may appear in more than one sprint, as is the case with OTC, which is addressed in six sprints.

According to Leon Hunton, government lead for DEAMS Testing, the workshops served their original purpose of identifying solutions to improve DEAMS, but the sprints attempt to get functionality to the users

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faster than the workshops would have done. “Our goal,” he said, “is to have all of the end-of-year patches in production by Aug. 15 so the users can revalidate the changes and get used to them prior to the end of the fiscal year in September.”

The sprints’ solutions and all other non-emergency patches are being installed on Saturday afternoons when

most users are not on the system. Hunton said that advance warning is given when DEAMS has to be shut down during duty hours to load emergency patches.

The FMO will resume development of the remaining 32 sprints dedicated to system stabilization once the fiscal year is closed out.



DEAMS users, subject matter experts and system integrators discuss proposed solutions to one of the DEAMS fiscal year-end sprints at the DEAMS Functional Management Office July 13. Users and SMEs will test the solutions before they are loaded into DEAMS, and end-users will revalidate them once they're in production.

Data cleansing reaches every AF base

By Cathy Segal

DEAMS Strategic Communications

The Defense Enterprise Accounting and Management System reached a new milestone in June when all Air Force bases became involved with data cleansing.

Data cleansing is the process to extract and standardize raw data from the legacy financial systems, and fix anomalies before converting that data to DEAMS. Anomalies are data elements that do not conform to set business rules; transferring them to DEAMS would cause files to error out and require manual repairs.

Units at and associated with Scott Air Force Base, Ill., had their data cleansed before the DEAMS technology demonstration phase deployed there in May 2010. Data cleansing at the other Air Mobility Command bases began in February 2010; 12 Air Education and Training Command sites followed in July 2010. The rest of the Air Force began data cleansing between July 2010 and June 2011. Deployment outside of Scott Air Force base will begin incrementally once the system is stabilized; full operational capability is expected by 2017.

"This is a significant milestone for us because as deployment for a base or activity draws near there are many tasks and processes that must be performed while time and resources become scarcer," said Meredith Underhill, government lead for the DEAMS Data Standardization and Cleansing Team. "With the tools and time to address

anomalies ahead of deployment, it makes sense to make the data corrections now and avoid a crisis management situation during that busy, exciting period. This also allows all stakeholders within the [Air Force financial management] community to understand the present position of legacy FM data and offer insight, guidance, solutions and motivation in the cleansing process," she added.

Underhill said the initiative to broaden data cleansing to all bases was initiated by the Air Force financial management community. "They got wind of what we were doing and expressed their interest and desire to assess and begin cleansing sooner rather than later," she said.

According to Underhill, who supports DEAMS from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service center in Columbus, Ohio, data cleansing is necessary to not only implement but also operate any information system, and her team is working to ensure that legacy systems records contain accurate, complete, valid and consistent data for several reasons. These include conversion, decision making, insights and trends.

"We want to ensure a clean, timely conversion that requires as little manual intervention as possible," she emphasized. "Decision making within an organization relies heavily on reports created from available data; reporting with data that is incomplete or inaccurate may lead to false conclusions."

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Meredith Underhill, DEAMS Data Standardization and Cleansing

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She went on to explain that data cleansing and standardization provides insight into variances in common-use fields or elements between installations. It also uncovers trends that can be used to increase efficiency elsewhere or that should be adjusted to reduce errors.

Not only does data cleansing contribute to conversion, decision making, insights and trends, it also allows users to actively become part of the change process.

Underhill said that the process leads the charge in familiarizing Air Force and DFAS users with DEAMS concepts and processes. During the procedure, which lasts through the conversion to DEAMS, users will be introduced to a standardized list of values in the Financial Management Data Quality Service, become familiar with Standard Financial Information Structure terms, and understand the differences between legacy and SFIS lines of accounting.

"Cleansing in advance also streamlines the legacy process" Underhill said. "Rather than continually managing work arounds or manual processes, data cleansing helps reduce those efforts by correcting the problem at the source; it's a win-win situation.

"Data users and owners at base level are critical process partners and stakeholders," Underhill said. "As

frontline employees they see everything first, they know the idiosyncrasies of legacy processes and are valuable contributors to our effort and the transition to DEAMS. We rely heavily on the knowledge at the base in this process and are working as a team to ensure that data is converted accurately and timely," she added.

Now that all the bases are being cleansed, the next milestone for each base or activity will be conversion.

"Although we are looking Air Force wide at data quality we also keep a close on eye on the deployment schedule to ensure we give appropriate attention to the next up-and-coming conversion," Underhill said. That schedule will be determined by major command comptrollers within the next year and will be announced as it becomes available.

DEAMS is an Air Force initiative using industry-proven Oracle® software to provide war fighters with timely, accurate and reliable financial information leading to more efficient and effective decisions. It is a single, automated, integrated system to replace outdated stove-piped systems handicapped by multiple interfaces, inefficient technology and limited functionality. Based on standard business practices, it complies with all applicable laws and regulations.

DEAMS Transitions

Arriving

Marty Clark
Kearney & Company
Interfaces

Michael Cross
Government
Interfaces

Janice Hall
Secure Data Inc.
Sustainment

Departing

Don Mumford
Government
Testing



Retirement

Don Mumford watches as his wife, Yolanda, fastens a retirement pin to his lapel during a July 14 ceremony at the DEAMS Functional Management Office. Mumford, a U.S. Air Force Academy graduate, served in the Air Force from 1986-2003. He worked at U.S. Transportation Command from 2003-2006, when he joined DEAMS.

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