

Takeaways from the New Army Cloud Computing Strategy

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The Army Office of the Chief Information Officer/G-6 recently released its enterprise cloud computing strategy outlining the service's concept for using cloud computing in the years ahead. The Army Cloud Computing Strategy (ACCS) reveals that the service remains committed to several basic steps that will enable it to deliver cloud-based capabilities across the enterprise. These steps include:

- Continuing to enhance the throughput capacity of its networks by implementing multi-protocol label switching routers.
- Selecting applications that will either be killed or selected for migration to a cloud-based environment.
- Utilizing data center services provided by the Defense Information Systems Agency to the furthest extent possible.
- Expanding the development and deployment of cloud-based technologies for disconnected and tactical environments.
- Ruthlessly standardizing IT hardware on common standards that comply with the Army's various Common Operating Environments.
- Implementing the governance processes and procedures necessary for selecting cloud services appropriate to the mission requirement being fulfilled.

In addition to formalizing the foundational aspects for Army's adoption of cloud, the ACCS makes several things clear about the Army's intended use of cloud that have implications for the acquisition of those services in the future.

First, cloud computing adoption in the Army will be overseen by the Army Application Migration Business Office – Product Director Enterprise Computing at the Program Executive Office Enterprise Information Systems. PD EC has been authorized to assist commands with the system and procurement planning necessary for moving applications to the cloud, meaning that vendors should keep close tabs on what's happening there. It is worth thinking about how Army customers will acquire cloud services with PD EC designated as the coordinating organization. The acquisition of enterprise technology services is PEO EIS' primary function, strongly suggesting that PD EC will either put a multiple award contract in place to provide vendor migration and other cloud services, or it will use vehicles that are pending and/or are already in place across government.

In this context the follow-on to IT Enterprise Solutions – 2 Services looms large. Not only are PEO EIS vehicles mandated for Army customers, the PEO is also looking for ways to streamline its contract operations. Adding cloud to the services provided by ITES vendors would effectively kill two birds with one stone by using a vehicle already in the process of being competed for the work. This said, the award of ITES-3S is a long way off and protests are guaranteed to hold it up even longer. PD EC is therefore likely to use other procurement tools, like GSA's IT 70, the Alliant contracts, and/or a blanket purchase agreement to fulfill cloud requirements.

The second revelation from the ACCS is the first detailed listing I've seen of the types of systems that the DoD classifies as having a "low" data impact level. These systems, including testing and development efforts, library systems, and public websites are classified at data impact level 2 and are the most likely to be moved to the cloud first. After these systems, the bar rises fairly quickly to data impact level 4 for many training systems, morale systems, and lodging systems.

In short, being certified at the data impact "low" level isn't likely to generate vendors much cloud business at the DoD. It is much more preferable to be certified at the moderate and high levels of 4 and above. That is where the real money will be.