

ARCHITECTURE AND ENGINEERING TEAM IS IDENTIFYING OKRS TO MOVE OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY’S MISSION FORWARD

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What is the difference between Google saying, *We will make Gmail a success and, We will launch Gmail in September and have a million users by November?* Answer is, OKRs. Google is but one of many success stories of an organization implementing OKRs to drive growth. In its first year of operation, and with a mere 40 employees, Google’s Chief Executive Officer adopted the OKR Framework, and it continues to define the way Google operates today. Now, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Information Technology (OIT) offices and groups, like the Account Management Office (AMO) Architecture and Engineering Service (AES) Team, are using the OKR Framework, to plan and measure their success in achieving VA’s mission.

The acronym OKR stands for, “objective,” and, “key result,” referencing the two main components of the framework that help organizations implement and execute strategy. OKRs drive focus on results that truly signify moving an organization toward achieving its vision. Each objective guides members of the organization toward a simply stated, “what they want to accomplish”, and subsequent key results are measurable outcomes that signify when an “objective is reached”. The AES Team is in the process of identifying OKRs to align with organizational strategic themes to assist all members of the team clearly define what they want to accomplish, how they will know when they have succeeded and the discrete tasks to accomplish each Objective.

Partnerships and stakeholder support are critical aspects of what the AES Team does and demand a significant portion of the team’s time and resources. It can be challenging to balance those planned projects designed to move the Team forward with the requirement to be a responsive Enterprise Architecture asset to the rest of OIT and the VA. OKRs help the team identify where and when to allocate resources ensuring stakeholder needs are being met while still driving the Enterprise Architecture mission forward.

One example of the AES Team applying the OKR Framework is the expanded use of the Business System Architecture Vision & Integration (B-SAVI) artifact. First developed by the Office of Business Integration (OBI) within the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the AES Team has adopted this architecture model, intending to make it an VA-wide visualization tool, by developing architecture artifacts for VA organizations beyond what OBI has already created for VBA. The AES Team started working with the National Cemetery Administration and the Memorial Benefits and Services Product Line to create a B-SAVI on current state business operations and supporting systems for the delivery of memorial benefits. Once the current state is created, the AES Team will continue collaboration to document future state reflecting future business operations and those systems that will be available in FY2027. The AES Team is also working with OBI to begin creating future state architecture visualizations for several VBA lines of business. From these current and future state visualizations, a roadmap sequencing activity can be created. OKRs provide the discipline to drive that progress and ultimate success.

For more information on the AES and VA EA and the ways that they can support you and your team, please email ea@va.gov.

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