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Government Acquisition:
How to Address 4 Data Integration Challenges

Are data obstacles standing between your agency and an efficient government acquisition process? If so, find out how you can overcome integration challenges with a better data strategy.

Data integration challenges bedevil IT teams at government agencies in a whole host of ways—but they're especially important to address when it comes to government acquisition management. While procurement policies like the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) are in place to ensure uniform guidelines for efficient government acquisition and spending, legacy systems that don't integrate can work against these goals. For federal agencies and their public sector peers, a delay in getting access to data or sometimes an inability to access data at all can have significant consequences:

- **Delayed Delivery**
  Inefficiencies in the acquisition cycle prevent on-time delivery of critical goods and services.
- **Risked Resources**
  An inability to plan, track, and manage awards accurately risks losses in the billions of dollars.
- **Wasted Time**
  Manual acquisition processes are inefficient and leave room for inaccuracy.

Learn from experts and your peers on how to improve the acquisition process.
Get the eBook: Streamlining Government Procurement with a Modern Acquisition Management Solution

4 common data obstacles in government acquisition

Let's examine four common data integration challenges affecting government acquisition and how you can address them with automation. Modern technologies like data fabric challenge some traditionally held beliefs regarding speed, talent, and security.

Data Strategy is Secondary

When acquiring software for government organizations, each agency is bound by the requirements list detailed in the FAR. But those requirements on their own weren't created with a strong overarching data strategy in mind. As a result, agencies have pieced together disparate technologies that meet requirements, rather than buying technologies that contribute to a

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unified IT infrastructure. As a result, data silos multiply. Data becomes difficult to access without a large investment in a new data architecture or strategy.

Additionally, with older software systems that don't have prebuilt APIs, it can be even more time-consuming and expensive to try to integrate data. All these details combined make it difficult for IT teams to manage technologies and provide users the data they need.

Users Have Limited Access to Data During the Acquisition Process

Anyone in government creating an acquisition package needs data to make informed decisions, but the limits of technology described above make that difficult. This low visibility creates an inefficient and drawn-out process, making it challenging for users to accurately manage the acquisition process. For users, going through procurement this way can feel like working on a puzzle where the pieces don't fit together.

Security Barriers Create Additional Challenges

Also creating headaches for both IT professionals and agency users involved in acquisition, many barriers prevent access to important technology systems. Government data security measures purposefully aim to keep sensitive data safe—anyone wanting to access acquisition-related data has to fill out paperwork and wait to be given access. While implementing a new data strategy or buying new technology doesn't make this necessary security precaution go away, working with vendors who are certified in the federal environment can make it easier to streamline data-related processes.

Modernizing Systems One by One is Unrealistic

Modernizing agency technology solutions one by one might seem like the only answer. But replacing older technology in pockets doesn't necessarily fix these problems—it's a band-aid solution that won't deliver the results your agency seeks. A new approach to connect your data is needed.

How to address government data integration challenges

How can IT teams make data easier to manage and access during the acquisition process?
One answer is to consider a data fabric approach.

With a data fabric, you don't have to start from scratch with your acquisition technology because you can easily connect directly to your existing systems. A data fabric is an architecture layer that connects data across disparate systems and creates a unified view. It is a single, virtualized data layer, connecting multiple data sets, whether on-premises or in a cloud service.

A data fabric makes data easily reusable across your agency via codeless data modeling capabilities that let users connect to existing sources of data. Users can mix and match data sources within the data fabric to create new insights without needing to create new views in the original data source. This sort of unified data model means your team can avoid complex, time-consuming database work while gaining a complete view of all their disparate systems.

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One major benefit of data fabric for government IT teams: instead of managing security controls in each software system, you can manage security controls directly in the data fabric. So if users need access to secure data for acquisition planning, you can create security patterns with unique conditions so that only those users can see the particular data. A platform with a data fabric makes permission setting much easier—you simply allow users to see the data they need to see, all in one place.

A data fabric also saves you from complex database tuning for speed because it automatically detects patterns and reshapes your data for optimum performance.

How does data fabric fit into a modern automation strategy?
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3 benefits of a solution with a data fabric for government acquisition

More Data For Users
A solution built on a platform with a data fabric will let you give broad access to the data that agency users need during the acquisition process. For example, during the market research phase, you can easily integrate data from sources like SAM.gov. Users can see all the data in the application, rather than spending time and risking inaccuracies by going out to find this data manually. And during the award stage, users can easily verify the status of their vendor all in one app. Government automation technologies add even more efficiency to the process.

Better Communication
With a system that connects your data and displays it all in one place, you enable users to communicate with all process participants, preventing delays from a lack of contact. Each participant has a holistic view of the data they need to see on one single screen in the application.

Efficiency
When users can get what they need in one place, they save time. Integrating information with a data fabric also helps you maintain your current legacy software. Why? Because of data fabric's no-code integration capabilities, you can use it to access data across your tech stack. You don't have to modernize your existing systems until you're ready to. With data fabric, you gain all this while also providing more data securely to users who need it— the end result is a more efficient acquisition process that aligns completely with FAR requirements.

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