



WEB-BASED ARMY SYSTEM WILL STREAMLINE FINANCIAL OPERATIONS AND ENABLE THE SHARING OF ACCOUNTING DATA ACROSS THE SERVICE.

The Army is moving forward with a Webbased financial system that, by integrating all related components and supporting financial management and real property functions, will allow it to share financial and accounting data across the service.

The General Fund Enterprise Business System (GFEBS), which was scheduled to pass another deployment milestone in April, will streamline the Army's financial operations with increased quality, efficiency and effectiveness. GFEBS will also reduce complexity, waste, cycle time and variance, freeing human and financial resources for higher priorities such as analyzing data and achieving strategic Army objectives.

The massive project is in response to a congressional mandate and in concert with the Department of Defense Business Transformation Agency (BTA).

"The overall goals of GFEBS are to provide Army leadership with decision-support information to sustain the Army warfighting capability, furnish analytic data and tools, reduce the cost of business operations, and improve accountability and stewardship," explained Colonel Simon L. Holzman, GFEBS project manager responsible for the life cycle management of the program.

With more than 79,000 financial professionals managing a \$140 billion annual budget at nearly 200 locations worldwide, GFEBS ultimately will be one of the world's largest enterprise financial systems. The system makes it possible for the Army to deliver rapid, real-time access to the financial information needed to enable a fully modernized force.

"GFEBS allows for transparency and credibility in the Army's financial accounting infrastructure, mitigating risks through increasing controls and accountability across commands," Holzman said. "Moreover, GFEBS is collaborating with other enterprise resource planning (ERP) and legacy programs to build a fully integrated business solution for the Army enterprise." GFEBS will help modernize the Army by re-engineering and standardizing business processes, thereby providing senior Army and DoD leadership with timely and accurate information. The capabilities of GFEBS include general ledger; accounts receivable; accounts payable; funds management; cost management; financial reporting; and property, plant and equipment inventory.

"GFEBS enables cost-management activities to take place in real time by integrating financial and related functional, non-financial data for analysis," Holzman said. "GFEBS brings the full scope of Army financial management into one system, including appropriations, authorizations and performance information, allowing the Army to fully assess performance and costs."

BUSINESS CHANGES

Once implemented, GFEBS will be a major change for the way that the Army does business. It replaces Standard Financial System (STANFINS), the most widely used standard accounting system for Army installations, and Standard Operation and Maintenance Army Research and Development System (SOMARDS), the standard accounting system for most Army logistics and acquisition operations. It will impact jobs and roles within all Army organizations, and change everything from the day-to-day activities of Army financial operations to decision-making at the command level.

GFEBS applies best practices from both the government and the private sector by using SAP, a commercial off-the-shelf, Web-based ERP system.

Key components of SAP's suite of software products used for the GFEBS project include R/3

(Release 3 of the client/server system), which contains 12 interconnected but separate modules. These separate modules allow the customers to use only those modules that are pertinent to their project and give them the ability to phase in additional modules as needed. All modules are linked, thereby allowing information to flow seamlessly from one area of the software to another.

Business Warehouse is a reporting and data analysis system that allows development and access of complex reports, user queries and data analysis without degrading system performance of the core R/3 system. Another component is Enterprise Portal, which is the Web-based front-end gateway to the other components such as R/3 and Business Warehouse.

As the system integrator for the program, Accenture has worked with the Army's Program Executive Office Enterprise Information Systems on GFEBS since July 2005, when it was awarded the contract to design, build, deploy and maintain the system. "Accenture is committed to working with the Army to provide a solution that supports accountability and transparency in the Army's financial and real property management," said Charles Harris, project manager for Accenture. "Our client is not only the Army, but ultimately the taxpaying citizens of this nation. GFEBS will provide visibility to manage spending of tax dollars to support our soldiers and protect our country, in times of war and peace."

ADVANCED SUPPORT

As a Web-based network, GFEBS provides commanders and top military leaders with advanced enterprisewide decision-support technology that organizes and standardizes Army financial processes and real property inventories. Previously, Army commands separately established methods and automated systems on different timelines, producing different results. Consequently, the Army as a whole did not have a system in place to accurately manage each command's inventories.

GFEBS provides a solution to this problem. Information is shared at all levels throughout the Army, allowing leadership to understand transactions and prove accountability of congressionally allocated funds, resulting in a transformation of the Army's financial management practice.

“The operational benefits and financial efficiencies that GFEBS yields ultimately will provide greater resources available to meet Army requirements,” Holzman said.

Essentially, GFEBS provides the Army with a fully connected framework, combining shared knowledge and technical connectivity that increases the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the mission. GFEBS has configured SAP software to operate according to statutory and regulatory requirements, embedding best practices that integrate, standardize and automate business and data processes across the enterprise.

“The software can evolve to accommodate changes in the architecture, hardware, software, or changes in laws, regulations and new technology,” Holzman said. “This versatility is the main reason the Army chose an on-demand application that responds to technological advancements, adapts to the Army organizational environment, and provides a stable source of financial information.”

Each module of the system covers a different business function, and each of those functions feeds into the central data warehouse. All modules are linked, thus allowing information to flow seamlessly from one area of the system to another. The system has real-time capabilities—all of the information in the data warehouse is immediately updated after it is changed anywhere in the system. GFEBS is accessed via an enterprise portal.

GFEBS is the financial backbone to a federated approach across multiple Army ERP solutions. Federation allows for certain global content to be defined at the enterprise level (by one system only) and certain local content to be defined and owned at the local level (by each system). Using the GFEBS financial template as the foundation, this approach provides a common design among various ERP systems, with the ultimate goal to integrate the systems into a combined approach after 2011.

Interaction between ERP systems will support certain key business process interchanges and master data synchronization for Army financial management. The loosely coupled ERP systems will minimize disruption to Army processes and retain end-to-end transactional processing within an ERP instance.

GENERAL LEDGER

Currently, the Army maintains numerous disparate information systems to maintain its general ledger of accounts. By switching to GFEBS, the Army will be able to replace much of the redundant functionality in its current financial systems.

In addition, GFEBS complies with the U.S. standard general ledger and the standard financial information structure requirements that support general ledger management and master data. “Eventually, maintenance of the Army general ledger will occur solely in GFEBS,” Holzman explained. “Users will have full visibility of the Army’s financial system, allowing for improved financial, asset and real property management.”

GFEBS will also allow the Army to meet congressional mandates that require replacement of outdated legacy financial management systems and will foster Army compliance with the Federal Financial Management Improvement Act, the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990 and BTA initiatives.

In addition to replacing and interfacing with legacy financial systems, GFEBS provides a core financial enterprise resource planning solution that will be used to manage the Army’s general fund, dramatically improve financial performance, standardize business processes and ensure the Army can meet future needs for combat operations and day-to-day financial management activities.

For example, with GFEBS, information about the distribution of funds will be immediately available with no need to go through external systems to determine available money for projects. The data will be available not only at high-level summaries, but also down to the level of individual projects. It will provide Web-based, real-time transaction and information capabilities and will be accessible by all Army organizations worldwide, including the Army National Guard, Army Reserve and all of the Army’s commands and units.

Developers emphasize that the system also provides help for the warfighter. That’s because GFEBS is a decision-support tool that will provide reliable data to better enable the Army leadership to make decisions in support of operations in the field. “This information includes data that has never been available to Army commanders, supplying standardized and real-time financial, asset and accounting data regarding active and reserve soldiers and over 10,000 equipment items,” Holzman said.

Ultimately, however, the goal behind GFEBs is to standardize the business processes and the financial and real property systems while addressing the uniqueness of the Army's various operations. "These activities will change many business processes, and GFEBs is coordinating with the Army's human resource personnel to change and standardize job descriptions and responsibilities, as appropriate," he added.□

WAVES OF IMPLEMENTATION

GFEBs is being deployed incrementally through a hybrid approach. The initial fielding, or Release 1.1, was a technology demonstration provided in July 2006 to the Army's Installation Management Command (IMCOM) Garrison at Fort Jackson, S.C., home of the Army's Finance School. Fort Jackson also served as the deployment point for GFEBs Release 1.2 in October 2008, a limited deployment to the Fort Jackson IMCOM Garrison and related activities at IMCOM headquarters, IMCOM Southeast Region, Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), and Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA).

GFEBs Release 1.2 affects 221 users from eight deployment sites across several states and the Pentagon, including Fort Jackson Garrison; ICOM SE in Fort McPherson, Ga.; DFAS in Indianapolis, Ind.; ICOM HQ in Arlington, Va.; the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management; and several offices of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Financial Management and Comptroller).

The recent success of GFEBs release 1.2 paved the way for identifying the processes and data operations to subsume the Army's Standard Financial System (STANFINS) in Release 1.3 and Standard Operation and Maintenance Army Research and Development System in Release 1.4.

For GFEBs Release 1.3, full system functionality will be deployed to all sites on the Army STANFINS. Release 1.3 is scheduled to be deployed to the initial users in wave 1 sites in April.

Finance for the Enterprise

Written by Karen E. Thuermer

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[Back to Top](#)