

## **Leveraging Shared Services to Improve Customer Support and Reduce Costs**

By: Mr. Douglas Haskin, Deputy Product Director  
Transportation Information Systems

Department of Defense (DoD) personnel have made progress in a broad federal effort to identify and implement efficiencies as part of a task to decrease costs while maintaining quality. The Product Director, Transportation Information Systems (PD TIS) began designing Transportation Coordinators' – Automated Information for Movements System II (TC-AIMS II) in the late 1990s based on new requirements to upgrade and replace the legacy system, Transportation Coordinator Automated Command and Control Information System (TC ACCIS). From the start, TIS provided dedicated customer support via a fully staffed 24/7 Customer Service Center (CSC), providing telephone and e-mail support to TC-AIMS II users worldwide. PD TIS also invested significant resources in other stovepipe, dedicated resources for accomplishing the mission of fielding and sustaining TC-AIMS II. TIS established a dedicated warehouse to receive, prepare, and ship equipment to end users, as well as unique processes for software replication, software distribution, and a trouble ticketing system used for managing and resolving field incidents. While these approaches were logical during the development and initial fielding of TC-AIMS II, as the system approached Full Operational Capability (FOC) in 2011, program leadership began to focus on reducing the sustainment cost of the system. A primary means of achieving this goal was to identify and implement shared services.

In late fiscal year 2010, TIS began evaluating TC-AIMS II sustainment cost drivers, with leadership identifying several possibilities for reducing costs. Some of these cost drivers required such a significant upfront investment that the Return on Investment (ROI) was not favorable. Ultimately, TIS selected several cost drivers for migration to shared services that required smaller upfront investment costs while offering potentially large cost savings in future years. The selected cost drivers were the CSC ticketing system, CSC Tier 1 support, collaboration tools, license management, system warehousing / preparation / shipping, and software replication and distribution.

TIS began identifying viable alternatives after determining the cost drivers. Some TIS staff previously used the Single Interface to the Field (SIF), a product of the Program Executive Office, Command, Control, and Communications – Tactical (PEO C3T), which offers a variety of Web-based solutions. SIF, along with PEO C3T's Support and Operations Center (SOC) located at Ft. Hood, Tex., became candidates for the evaluation. Also selected for the evaluation was the Hardware/Software Integration Facility (HSIF) from Software Engineering Center – Lee (SEC-Lee), as well as some offerings from PEO Enterprise Information Systems (PEO EIS). TIS even collaborated with the U.S. Army Reserve Command (USARC) to consider utilization of their Standard Army Management Information System (STAMIS) Computer Exchange (SCX) as a warehousing and shipping alternative.

After evaluating various options using multiple criteria that included total cost, expected impact to the user community, quality of service, and scalability, TIS ultimately selected PEO C3T's SIF and SOC, as well as SEC-Lee's HSIF as replacements for the TIS-dedicated services. The following services have been migrated to date:

- Customer Service Center ticketing system: TIS migrated to a web-based system with improved capabilities, better accessibility, and lower cost. Previously, TIS maintained the ticketing system in the TIS contractor building. Sustainment costs included hardware and software maintenance, network connectivity, Information Assurance (IA) vulnerability corrections, and system administration. PEO C3T's SIF organization worked closely with TIS to migrate active tickets to the IRM, archive existing historical data, and implement the IRM into TIS business practices. The advantages of this migration have been lower sustainment costs and better customer accessibility to the problem resolution status, as well as having commonality with other like systems. Unit personnel are already familiar with the SIF for supporting Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems. Prior to the migration, the TIS system was only usable by internal staff; now the system is available to all TIS customers worldwide.

- Customer Service Center Tier 1 support: TIS re-scoped its CSC mission to reduce manpower requirements driven by an operationally-focused support posture, while still maintaining 24/7 support to the field. In order to do this, TIS collaborated with PEO C3T's SOC at Ft. Hood. The SOC provides 24/7 support to various C4ISR systems, primarily systems within PEO C3T. TIS has been successful in training the SOC personnel to perform Tier 1 tasks for TC-AIMS II that include, but are not limited to account creations, account changes, password resets, and software requests. The SOC now serves as the single point of entry for all TC-AIMS II trouble tickets. The program also scaled back its existing CSC to extended business hours (six 12 hour days compared to seven 24 hour days previously); however, leadership identified TIS personnel for "on call" backup to the SOC for critical Tier 2 support during non-business hours. The migration to the SOC has produced positive results for TIS, including reduced manpower costs and better visibility of issues that may impact multiple systems--for example, a widespread network outage that affects other systems.

- Collaboration Tools: TIS attempted to stand-up a viable collaboration site using Microsoft SharePoint on multiple occasions. In each of those instances, TIS was hindered by hardware, software and hosting costs and a lack of staff expertise. The staff was already familiar with SharePoint, but not with SharePoint's initial setup or site administration. TIS began utilizing the SharePoint capability offered by PEO C3T's MilTech Solutions in early fiscal year 2012 and has already started using its workflow capabilities to improve accountability and review times for documents in staffing. Additionally, MilTech provides this service at a much lower cost than previous efforts were projected.

- Software Requests: The SIF again was the choice for TIS to improve and automate software requests. In the past, TIS staff e-mailed, printed, faxed, and sometimes signed forms by hand in order to manually process various software requests. The SIF offered a solution that did more than automate a manual process – it improved the process and offered users the opportunity to download selected software instead of requesting physical media such as CDs or DVDs. Users are now able to use their CAC to login to the SIF Software Ordering and Download (SOD) tool, search for TC-AIMS II software, and immediately download certain unrestricted items, such as reference data or submit a request for permission to download or receive other software through the mail. This process has improved accountability, streamlined service to the customer, and reduced costs over the previous processes.

- System Warehousing / Preparation / Shipping: TIS selected the Software Engineering Center – Lee (SEC-Lee) to provide warehousing of equipment, system preparation (software loading, packing, etc.), and shipping services. Prior to this, TIS maintained a dedicated warehouse in Springfield, Va. Now, in SEC-Lee’s Hardware/Software Integration Facility (HSIF) located near Ft. Lee, Va., TC-AIMS II equipment shares warehouse space with multiple other systems. The location is still close enough that TIS staff can visit with minimal travel costs required, but far enough away from the D.C. metro area to significantly decrease warehouse rental costs. The various HSIF customers also share the costs of manpower and facility costs such as electric and security. TIS personnel now have access to a Web-based inventory control system that is used by the HSIF, which is a significant improvement over the previous TIS process that used a spreadsheet. Furthermore, the HSIF’s shipping volume allows them to get lower rates for shipments compared to the rates that TIS previously obtained.

- Software Replication and Shipping: TIS also chose the SEC-Lee HSIF to duplicate TC-AIMS II software for distribution and ship it to the end users. TIS had previously performed this task at its Springfield, Va., contractor facility. Due to the cyclical nature of the major software releases, this often meant a very high operation of the DVD burning equipment for a short period, followed by several months of non-use. As a result, the equipment was not fully utilized, and due to the infrequent usage, operators had to learn the process all over again every time. The HSIF provides a higher capacity machine that offers additional options, such as laser etching instead of paper labels. By collaborating with SEC-Lee, TIS improved the quality of the product and reduced the costs associated to provide these services.

Overall, the shared services capabilities have enabled TIS to improve support to TC-AIMS II users – generally deploying or deployed Army units in support of the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO). Expanding the accessibility to services has allowed, in most cases, any United States government civilian, military or contractor Common Access Card (CAC) holder to gain access to the Web-based services. These same customers have also seen improvements in the form of a higher quality product and reduced turnaround times for service requests. These efforts have greatly helped achieve the strategic goal of consolidation of support services and reductions in sustainment costs. All of the migrations have impacted virtually every TC-AIMS II stakeholder and have been transparent, thus producing overwhelmingly positive results.

As always, PD TIS remains committed to providing effective and timely support to our user community. Deployed U.S. military service members, DoD civilians, and contractors operate TIS systems to support Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan. Additionally, CONUS and OCONUS garrisons utilize TIS systems to manage and plan unit movements. While decreasing costs was an important objective for TIS, it could not be at the expense of decreased levels of support to these valuable customers. By working through existing shared resources, TIS has been able to successfully reap the benefits of an “economies of scale” approach to decreasing sustainment costs, while maintaining and improving the level of service expected by our customers.