REI Systems created an intuitive design and open source platform which offers valuable insight into the health of Information Technology programs across the U.S. Federal Government.

Client Overview

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) oversees budget development and management of government-wide topics including IT, Procurement, Financial Management and Performance. In order to assist the President to implement his vision and priorities across the Executive Branch, in 2009, OMB engaged REI Systems (REI) to support a series of initiatives designed to produce more openness, accountability, and transparency in government operations.

Challenge

Federal CIO Vivek Kundra was faced with an enormous challenge. He wanted to be able to collect critical data describing the status and health of over $75 billion in annual IT spending in the Federal Government - and he wanted it available in a way that opened the data to a broad audience and in a visualization tool that he could use at monthly “TechStat” meetings with Departmental CIOs. To add to the challenge, REI was asked to design, develop and launch the IT Dashboard within 60 days in order to meet Mr. Kundra’s commitment to Congress.

Solution

The task began with identifying the target audience for such a tool. REI quickly uncovered the challenge that while it would primarily be intended for use by Federal CIOs, the information would also be made transparent to the public. As a result, REI worked closely with multiple stakeholders to ensure the work would withstand scrutiny from the White House, Congress, agencies whose investments and performance would become visible, and eventually the public.

In light of the criteria provided, REI leveraged web capabilities based on their proven expertise and earlier successes with implementing Recovery.gov and USASpending.gov. The recommendation centered on an open source platform powered by the Drupal Content Management System. REI’s Agile development methodology provided intense customer engagement throughout a rapid development cycle delivering the final product ahead of schedule. The final solution has become a reliable and effective tool for OMB and Federal agencies to measure and manage IT portfolios through simple drill-down, trend analysis, and data visualization.

WHAT THEY’RE SAYING ABOUT REI

“Indeed, like Scottrade or Mint.com, the IT Dashboard provides sleek tools to understand the federal budget in an accessible way, from Flash-enhanced bar-graphs and pie-charts, to spending trends and by-agency cost ratings and evaluations.”

– FAST Company Magazine
Results

REI’s unique approach enabled the launch of a revolutionary portfolio management tool within 45 days, beating the 60-day target. Presently, the IT Dashboard provides detailed information covering 800 investments at 27 agencies, and is actively used by the Administration and Congress to make budget and policy decisions. Most importantly, it has already helped OMB make timely cost-saving decisions.

Within two months of its launch, IT Dashboard enabled Federal CIOs to evaluate the health of all IT projects. In January 2010, Mr. Kundra began using information from the IT Dashboard to engage agency CIOs in face-to-face TechStat sessions to review IT investments and formalize plans to address projects in trouble. According to Mr. Kundra, these reviews have led to over $3 billion in life-cycle cost reductions. Within IT Dashboard’s first two years of deployment eleven major IT programs were de-scoped and four projects were terminated. Insights gained from the IT Dashboard have also reduced time to delivery from over two years to eight months.

In response to high demand from Federal agencies and the software development community, REI worked with OMB and Civic Commons to make the source code of the IT Dashboard available to the public in March 2011. This release sets a standard for monitoring IT portfolio performance and enables communities of interest to adapt their versions of the IT Dashboard to meet their own unique needs.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

- Instrumental in saving over $3 billion within its first two years of launch
- Went from concept to delivery within an astounding 45 days
- Open sourcing of the application source code has contributed to effective code reuse and possible improvements of the product through development community contributions
- Mobile-friendly version addresses the growing need for mobile use