# TELESIS Team Delivers on Agile Transformation at SBA

## Being Agile is more than Hiring an Agile Contractor

*Founded in 1998, TELESIS Corporation is a results driven, Woman-Owned Small Business providing IT solutions to the United States Federal Government. TELESIS is dedicated to exceeding client expectations in delivering 24x7x365 IT Service Desk solutions; cyber security solutions; applications development; network and security operations center support.*

*TELESIS offers GSA Alliant SB; 8A STARS II; GSA IT Schedule 70; CIO SP3 SB contracting vehicles and a team of over 300 highly skilled and dedicated employees to serve our Federal customers. For more information, please visit **www.TELESIShq.com**.*



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If you're a government agency implementing Agile software development, the good news is that you're likely making the right choice for your organization. The bad news is that it's not enough to just hire an Agile contracting team and let them do their thing. As the US Small Business Administration (SBA) learned in the **SBA One Modernization** effort, implementing Agile successfully requires organizational change on the agency's part, as well as skilled Agile professionals from organization's like TELESIS, to be successful.

At the SBA, their first effort to replace their aging 8(a) certification system began in 2011 with a two year long waterfall software development project that spent nearly a year gathering requirements and nearly two years to deliver a pilot system to production. During that time, the program more than doubled in cost before the SBA abandoned the effort and cancelled the contract. Realizing that a change was needed not only in vendors but in approach, SBA engaged US Digital Services to recommend a change. The result was the **SBA One Modernization** effort, a multi-million dollar Agile software development program to rebuild 8(a) and the agency's other small business certification applications, awarded to TELESIS.

At the outset, the TELESIS team envisioned the effort as both an Agile transformation and major system overhaul, recognizing that significant organizational change would be necessary in addition to new technology. For the Agile transformation, TELESIS staffed an all-Agile team comprised of over a dozen certified Agilists (CSM, CSPO, and CSP) with a combined sixty years of Agile experience. At the program's outset, TELESIS implemented Scrum, from daily stand-ups and iteration planning sessions, to backlog grooming, reviews and retrospectives, while also adopting aspects of Lean, DevOps and SAFe to maximize team performance.

TELESIS engineered the organizational change. Leveraging US Digital Service and SBA liaisons, TELESIS ensured that SBA team participants were trained in Agile fundamentals so that concepts like user stories, iterations/sprints and story points could be incorporated into discussions and SBA staff could participate with the team as equal partners. TELESIS established a new governance framework for the organization's Agile practice that would both support and encourage Agile practices, like self-managed teams, transparency in communication and problem-solving and rapid release to production.

For implementation, the TELESIS team took a number innovative steps to accelerate development and delivery. First, the team built a highly-scalable all-cloud infrastructure on Amazon Web Services (AWS) that leveraged Chef for rapid deployment and consistency. Second, the team created a continuous integration and continuous delivery pipeline (CI/CD) using Jenkins, Code Deploy, and scripting to deliver code to lower environments on a nightly basis. Third, the TELESIS team automated unit and functional testing with RSPEC and Selenium to increase product quality and shorten turnaround times between releases. To date, the team maintains 75%+ automated unit test coverage and 90%+ automated functional test coverage. Finally, the team selected a largely open-source technology stack that included Ruby-on-Rails, Postgres, nginx, CentOS Linux and Talend Open Studio, which not only sped implementation but also substantially reduced implementation costs.

**Results**

The results were impressive. The TELESIS team delivered a working prototype in six weeks, its first release to production in just four months and launched its first certification, Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB), to production in just seven months. After launch, applications to the WOSB program shot up 600% during the first month alone, while SBA staff praised the TELESIS team for rapid delivery, awarding an "**Excellent**" rating to boot.