

Approach for Instantiating Service Oriented Architecture Governance at the Department of Veterans Affairs

BLUF: SOA Governance is an extension of traditional IT governance, requiring additional processes and novel approaches for providing guidance and management of services. There is a need to implement a comprehensive SOA Governance for the VA. In order to develop SOA Governance for the VA, the initiation of the activities described in 1 -- 4 in this white paper is recommended.

Background: The mission of the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) is to enable VA and its partners to proactively provide the full continuum of services and benefits to Veterans through Veteran-centric processes made possible by effective, efficient, and secure standards-based information sharing. To achieve this, the VA is committed to the development of a system for a full and seamless electronic exchange and record portability of healthcare information in a secure and private format; wherever needed, to ensure the highest quality and effective delivery of healthcare services and veteran benefits such as Memorial affairs. In this effort, the VA is working towards the goal of laying down the foundations for a system that is based on the Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) approach.

SOA promises to deliver a number of important business benefits, including faster delivery of capabilities lower costs, and increased agility. SOA requires fundamental changes to the planning, development, and operation of application systems, and it requires new approaches and new levels of collaboration among project teams within the IT department and across lines of business.

SOA governance will establish VA department standards that will ensure that service-oriented systems deliver the value they are intended to deliver. Governance standards ensure that VA architects and product developers effectively apply service-oriented principles and patterns when building systems.

In a nutshell SOA Governance is about making sure that VA builds the right things, builds them right, and makes sure that what it has built is behaving right.

Approach:

This approach is intended to share information and to generate VA organizational interests in the process of instantiating SOA Governance for the VA. The approach consists of high level activities that need to be executed in order to start the process.

1. **Define the SOA Governance Scope & Strategy:** **The aim of this activity**, which should start right away, **is to develop and maintain information related to the scope and strategy of the SOA Governance. The activity will be executed through the establishment of a working integrated product team (W-IPT) "SOA Governance W-IPT" whose responsibilities include the definition of the scope of the SOA Governance and an overarching SOA strategy.** For example, the team will define the scope; i.e. what VLER needs to do in order to advance its mandate as the program for "data sharing". The SOA Governance W-IPT will

provide documentation for a strategic roadmap that aligns future investments and expected benefits from transforming the VA into a SOA-enabled enterprise. It will also help in the continuous stakeholder communication and buy-in of the SOA institutionalization process. It is envisioned that diverse stakeholder communities will participate in the works of the W-IPT; **but at the minimum and to get started, a core group representing the offices of Veterans Relationship Management (VRM), Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS), VLER, and Enterprise Architecture will start the works of the team and contribute to laying the foundations for related works.**

As the VA rolls out SOA capabilities and day-to-day operations to include services that are being added to the ESB incrementally, this team would identify the appropriate SOA Governance sub work group that should provide relevant SOA Governances for the capabilities and services that is expected to be provisioned.

The initial scope of this W-IPT would be to provide a basis and framework for a SOA Governance Deep Dive (or Lockdown), and the initiation of an Executive Decision Memo (EDM).

2. **Conduct SOA Governance Lockdown:** The SOA Governance W-IPT will **plan and organize a one or two day conference to lock down the SOA Governance** approach and to discuss and finalize the contents of the EDM. The planning activities will start as soon as the SOA Governance W-IPT is formed and resourced. Once the W-IPT advances its work and once the status of the development of the EDM has reached the pre-final stage, the W-IPT would conduct the lockdown conference. It is envisioned this conference may be held within a two-month timeframe and at an offsite location.
3. **Develop an EDM:** In the short term (within two months), the SOA Governance W-IPT described in #1 will work towards the production of an **Executive Decision Memorandum (EDM) to be signed by the VA CIO**. This activity may start as soon as the W-IPT is formed and lays out a foundational roadmap that may include information such as scheduling and allocation of resources. The EDM will include, among others, the following content:
 - a. Governance structure to include the various organizational stakeholders
 - b. Roles and Responsibilities
 - c. Applicable specific definitions and descriptions, etc.
 - d. Provision and process for the creation of SOA Governance sub working groups whose mandate would be to analyze and recommend solutions for specific topical areas related to SOA Governance, as needed. For example, a sub work group might be chartered that specializes in the development and enforcement of compliance issues.
4. **Charter and Stand up SOA Governance Sub Work Groups:** Subsequent to the lockdown and as the EDM is being developed, stand up applicable SOA Governance sub working groups as needed. During the SOA Suite / ESB incremental deployment of capabilities, the sub working groups would, for example, develop the applicable SOA governance documentation that must be used in order for the players (e.g. Product Development) to know the rules of the game that are relevant to successfully utilize SOA within the department.