

January 18, 2000

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- 1. PURPOSE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive establishes an Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC) as an advisory committee to the Chief Information Officer. The ITAC is established to work cooperatively with the VHA Information Office (IO) to ensure that the Information Technology (IT) Program supports VHA goals and to provide guidance concerning priorities for IT initiatives.
- 2. BACKGROUND:** IT in health care has become complex and is a foundation of the delivery of service. VHA leadership must be adequately informed about VHA IO requests, which are often in the range of millions of dollars. A formal advisory committee (ITAC) is needed because the selection and use of IT activities is integral to VHA programs and operations, the cost of these projects is significant, and there is a need to ensure that all IT investments support corporate goals. The VHA IO will provide the ITAC with descriptive information in lay terms to facilitate understanding and actions. The ITAC will assess current IT assets and the need for additional resources and will recommend priorities for initiatives and activities.
- 3. POLICY:** The ITAC is established as an IT advisory group for the Under Secretary for Health through the Chief Information Officer.
- 4. ACTION:** The ITAC, following an appropriate level of review, will provide the Chief Information Officer with fully developed issues, proposals and recommendations about IT that impact enterprise-wide business objectives across its full array of services. The ITAC will work collaboratively with other committees and groups, e.g., Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Chief Information Officers, Data Quality Subcommittee, the Business and Administrative Solutions, and Clinical Workgroups, Data Consortium, etc., concerned with IT-related issues to ensure that IT issues and priorities are addressed fully and in a coordinated way. The ITAC may form additional workgroups as needed and will do so only after it has assessed whether an existing group cannot properly address issues.

 - a. **Responsibilities.** The ITAC will:
 - (1) Develop and promulgate guiding principles to achieve IT initiatives that are in sync with corporate and VHA strategic plans and program priorities to successfully meet business goals;
 - (2) Perform analyses on all requests to ensure the alignment of VHA IO program activities with VHA priorities;
 - (3) Assist in the ongoing review of VHA IO development principles, including providing advice or setting priorities when needed;

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(4) Identify gaps in IT programs and services and make recommendations;

(5) Evaluate the impact of changing priorities in a rapidly evolving IT field in order to provide recommendations;

(6) Evaluate and confirm that any planning in which it is involved and all recommendations it brings forward for infrastructure, equipment, and personnel resources among various projects are appropriate to the needs and goals of the organization;

(7) Review and provide input to out-of-cycle or supplemental VHA IO resource requests for prioritization prior to forwarding to the VHA Screening and Evaluation Committee and the Chief Information Officer; and

(8) Review and provide input to the annual forecast of VHA IO budget needs and the associated resources that would be required by VISNs and field facilities.

b. **Tenure.** There will be a bi-annual evaluation of the ITAC based on established criteria to assess the Committee's value.

c. **Membership.** Membership of the Committee will include representatives from the field and VHA Headquarters. Individuals other than members may attend meetings as subject matter experts or observers.

(1) **Chairperson.** The Chairperson is a VISN Director, and is responsible for presenting recommendations to the Chief Information Officer.

(2) **Committee Manager.** The Committee Manager is a member of the VHA IO senior staff, and is responsible for preparing the agenda and responding to questions about the ITAC.

(3) **Membership.** Members will be appointed by the Under Secretary for Health. Membership will include: Network Directors, Deputy Directors, Chief Information Officers, Chief Financial Officers (CFOs), VHA Program Office staff; Associate Chief Information Officers (ACIO); Computer Specialists; and medical center Directors, Chiefs of Staff, Clinical Application Coordinators, Chiefs of Information Management Resources Service, Chiefs of Health Information Management Service, other package application coordinators, and Medical Care Cost Fund staff.

d. **The ITAC Screening Committee.** A subcommittee of the ITAC will review completed IT requests that are provided by VHA IO and recommendations from the appropriate VISN Chief Information Office Council (VCIOC) subcommittee. The ITAC Screening Committee will either recommend approval or disapproval of the requests. If the request is considered outside of the Committee's approving authority, it will be forwarded to the ITAC for action or returned to the requestor for further information.

e. **Frequency of Meetings.** ITAC meetings will be held quarterly, or on call of the chairperson.

f. **Documentation.** Minutes will be kept for all meetings and will be forwarded to the Chief Information Officer for review by the first week of the month following meetings. Approved copies of minutes will be distributed to all members, the Deputy Under Secretary for Health, the VHA Chief of Staff, and the National Leadership Board. Decisions on ITAC recommendations that require follow-up by the ITAC Committee Manager will be tracked and updates will be provided to the Under Secretary for Health through the Chief Information Officer.

g. **Procedure.** The ITAC develops, for decisionmaking, IT issues for the Chief Information Officer. It does this by:

(1) Conducting its business and developing its materials consistent with procedures and practices of the Chief Information Officer;

(2) Receiving and fully developing proposals for IT initiatives or policy recommendations and forwarding its recommendations to the Chief Information Officer; and.

(3) Developing and gaining Chief Information Officer approval for charters for work groups to assess IT issues.

5. REFERENCE

a. Information Technology Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2000-2005.

b. Office of Management and Budget Circular A-11, Section 43, "Data on Acquisition Operation and Use of Information Technology."

6. **RESPONSIBILITY:** The CIO (19) is responsible for the contents of this Directive.

7. **RESCISSION:** None. This VHA Directive expires January 18, 2005.

S/ Frances Murphy, M.D. for
Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D.
Acting Under Secretary for Health

Attachment

Distribution: CO: E-mailed 1/19/2000
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ATTACHMENT A

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REQUEST PROCESS

1. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has implemented a formal submission and evaluation process for all Information Technology (IT) proposals. It is important that all IT requests requiring VHA Information Office (IO) resources follow this procedure to ensure that national IT activities are focused on VHA's most pressing needs. This process will help to prioritize the access to a limited pool of resources and funding.
2. IT proposals include all requests that require IO resources, with the exception of software "bugs," reported through National Online Information Systems (NOIS). *NOTE: Proposals will be evaluated and reviewed on a quarterly basis.*
3. The Information Technology Advisory (ITAC) Screening Committee, a subcommittee of the ITAC, comprised of Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) staff, medical center staff, and VHA Headquarters stakeholders, will be responsible for recommending approval, disapproval, or higher-level review of all requests. Projects that involve significant cost or field impact will be reviewed by the full ITAC. *NOTE: ITAC is a committee reporting to the Chief Information Officer, and is established to work cooperatively with the VHA IO to ensure that the IT Program supports VHA goals and to provide guidance concerning priorities for IT initiatives.*
4. There will be a formal "call for IT requests" twice a year. Out-of-cycle critical requests will be reviewed monthly by the ITAC Screening Committee to ensure they are addressed in a timely manner.

5. THE PROCESS

a. **Requestor**

(1) The requestor of IT services is responsible for initiating the request for IT services from the VHA IO. All requests are to include costs, related IT products, scope, project sponsorship, potential funding sources, impacts and/or benefits to the field, and special training needs.

NOTE: To ensure that a thorough analysis is conducted, the requestor will work with VHA IO representatives to provide adequate information regarding the request.

(2) All submissions must be endorsed by a VISN CIO, VHA Headquarters Project Office, IO Associate Chief Information Officer (ACIO), or a member of the VHA National Leadership Board.

b. **VHA IO.** The VHA IO will provide staff support to complete the analysis for IT requests. Analysis will detail recommendations, timeline for project completion, benefit and/or impacts to the field, costs for software development and deployment, equipment costs, and training costs, as appropriate. This document and a document outlining the recommendation, costs, and impacts will be distributed to the ITAC Screening Committee and the appropriate VISN Chief Information Office Council (VCIOC) Subcommittees for evaluation.

c. **ITAC Screening Committee.** The ITAC Screening Committee will review the completed application packet provided by the VHA IO, as well as any recommendation from the appropriate VCIOC Subcommittee. The ITAC Screening Committee will obtain additional expertise to review the applications as needed. Depending on the complexity of the request, the ITAC Screening Committee will either recommend approval or disapproval of the request at this stage of review and evaluation. Projects that involve significant cost or field impact will be reviewed by the full ITAC.

d. **Appeals Process:** Requests that are recommended for disapproval at the ITAC Screening Committee level may be appealed to the ITAC for review. Requests that are not recommended at the ITAC level may be resubmitted for evaluation the following fiscal year.