Istio – An introduction for developers

WW Developer Advocate Team

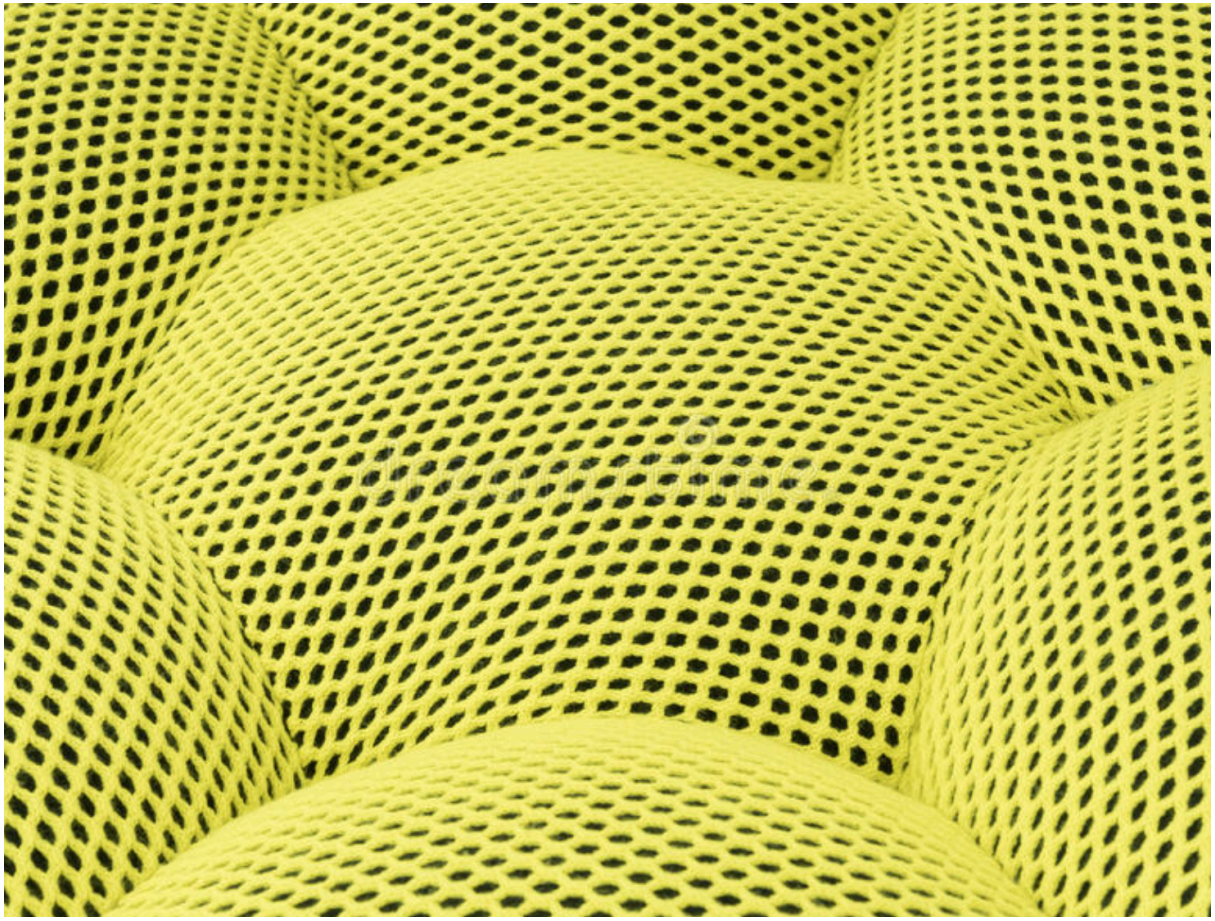
IBM **Developer**

Istio - An open platform that provides a uniform way to connect, manage, and secure microservices.

Istio supports
managing traffic flows between microservices,
enforcing access policies,
and aggregating telemetry data,
all without requiring changes to the
microservice code.

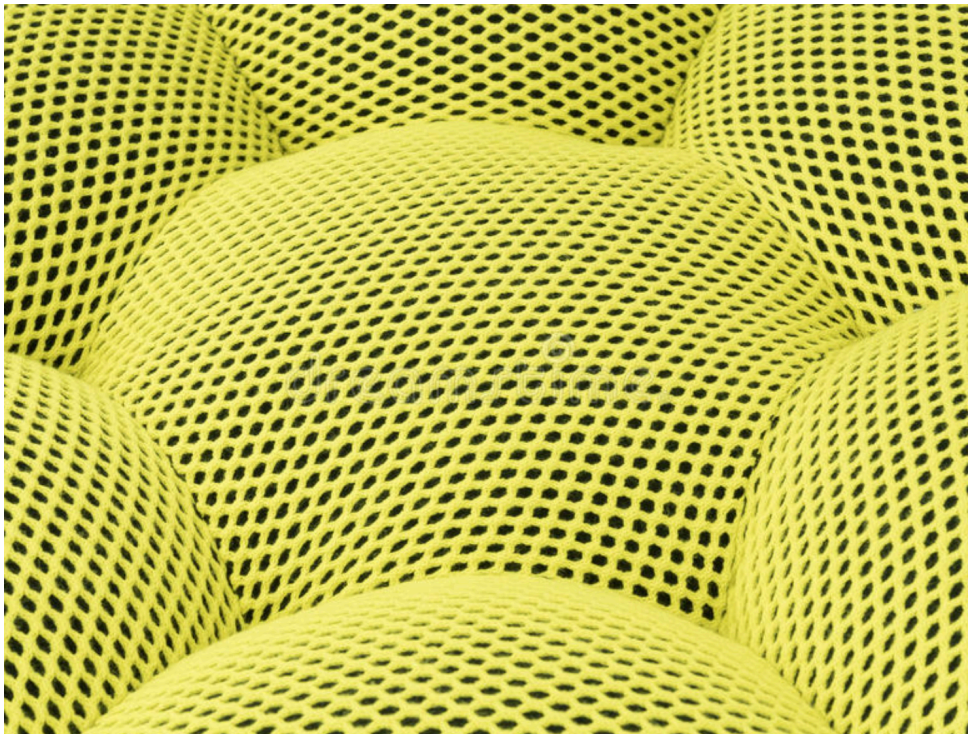
Service Mesh
&
Istio Architecture

What is a service mesh?



A service mesh provides a **transparent** and **language-independent** way to flexibly and easily manage the **communication** between microservices**.**

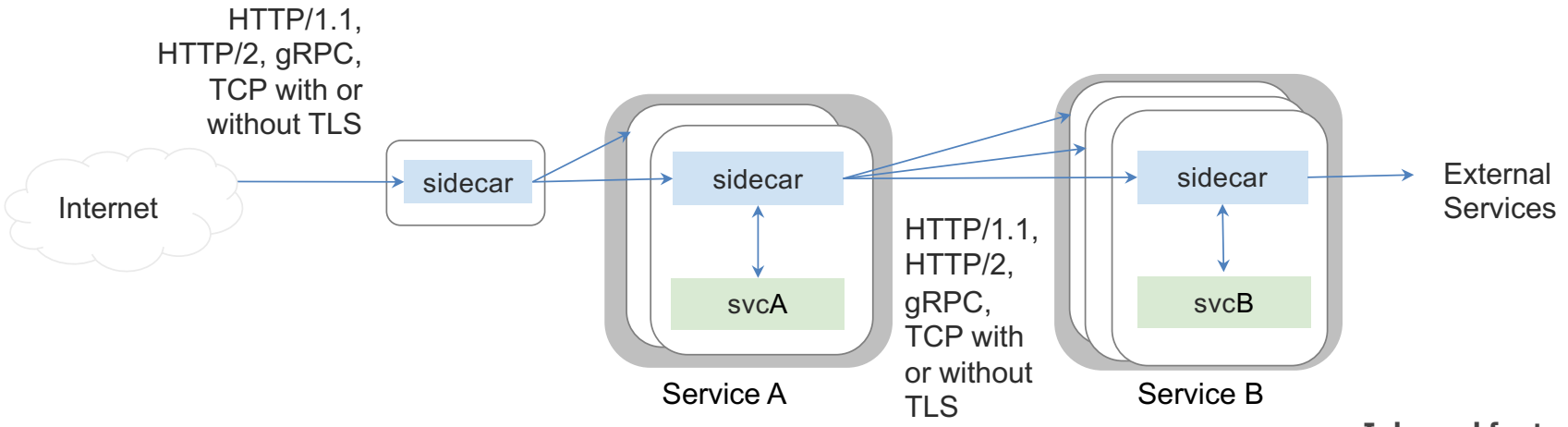
What is a service mesh?



Service meshes can assist you with microservice implementations:

- How can I **find** the service I need?
- How can I **scale** my services?
- How can I test new **versions** of services without impacting new users?
- How can I test against **failures**?
- How can I **secure** service-to-service communication?
- How can I **route** traffic in a specific way?
- How can I test **circuit breaking** or fault injection?
- How can I **monitor** my microservices and collect **metrics**?
- How can I do **tracing**?
- Most importantly, how can I do all these things **without changing individual microservices application code**?

Weaving the mesh



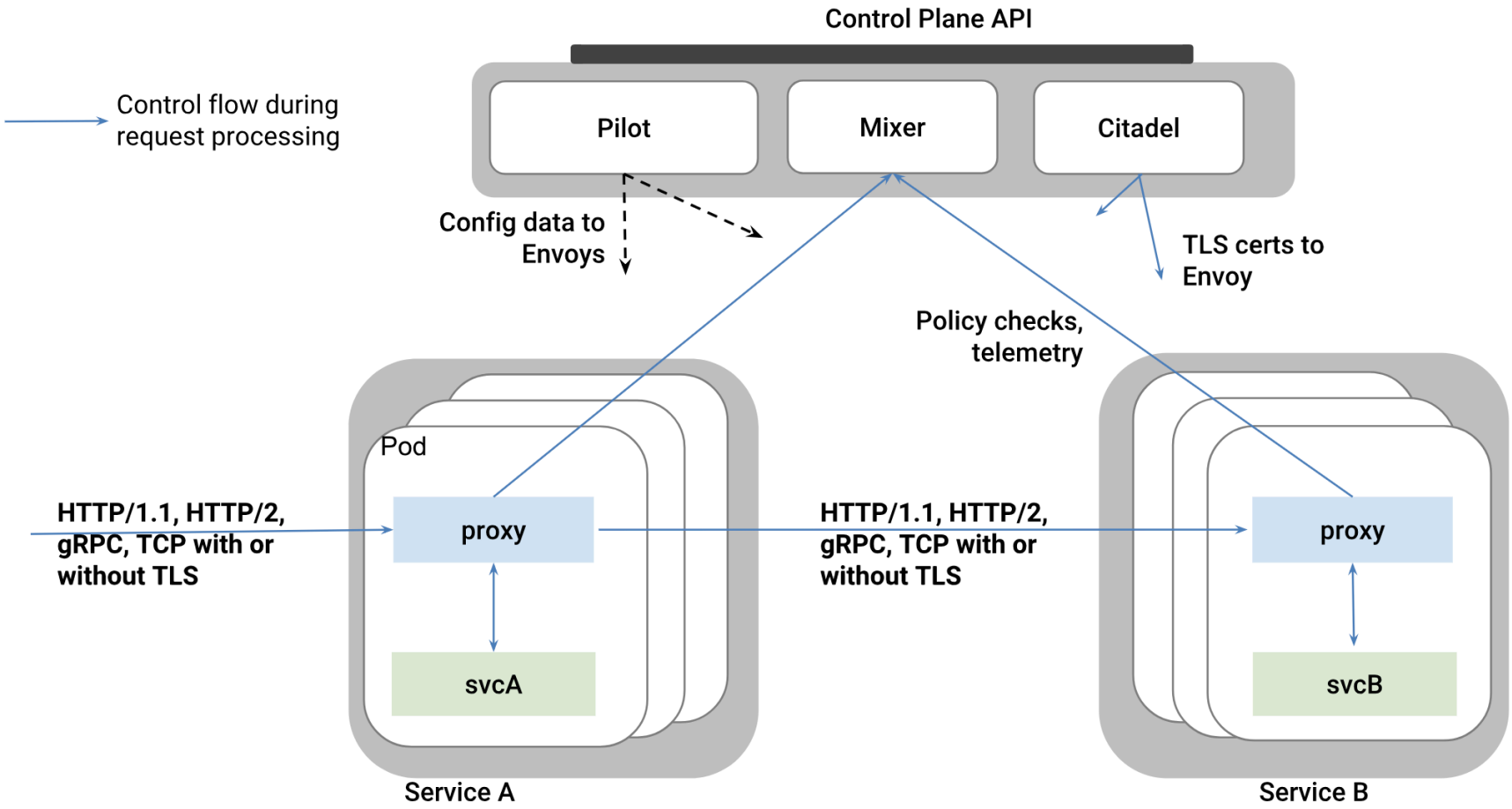
Outbound features:

- Service authentication
- Load balancing
- Retry and circuit breaker
- Fine-grained routing
- Telemetry
- Request Tracing
- Fault Injection

Inbound features:

- Service authentication
- Authorization
- Rate limits
- Load shedding
- Telemetry
- Request Tracing
- Fault Injection

Istio Architecture



Istio Architecture

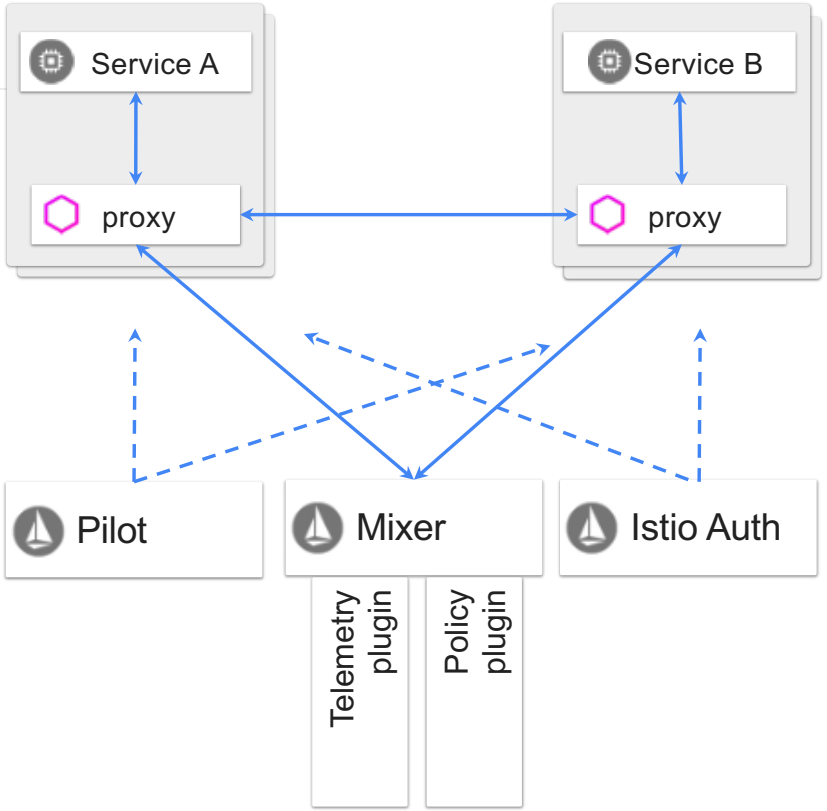
Mixer
Mixer is a platform-independent component responsible for enforcing access control and usage policies across the service mesh and collecting telemetry data from the Envoy proxy and other services. The proxy extracts request level attributes, which are sent to Mixer for evaluation.

Pilot
Pilot provides service discovery for the Envoy sidecars, traffic management capabilities for intelligent routing (e.g., A/B tests, canary deployments, etc.), and resiliency (timeouts, retries, circuit breakers, etc.). It converts high level routing rules that control traffic behavior into Envoy-specific configurations, and propagates them to the sidecars at runtime.

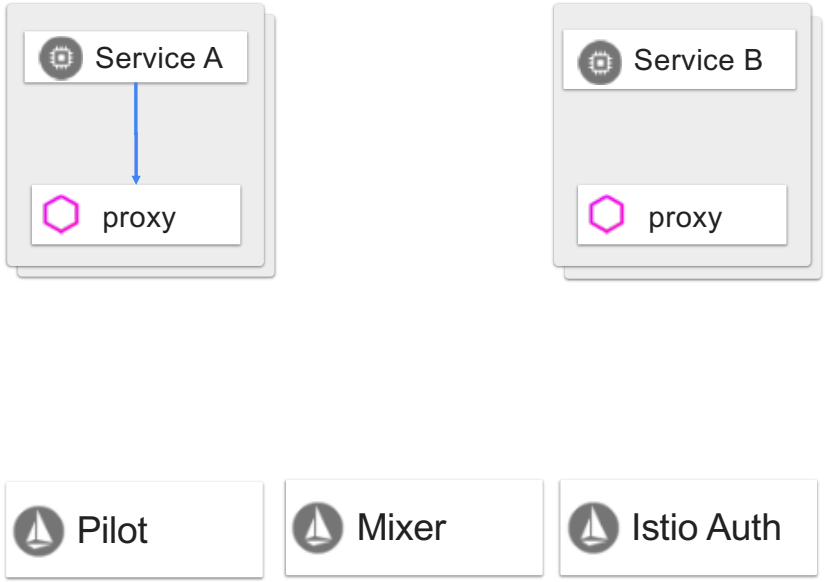
Citadel
Citadel provides strong service-to-service and end-user authentication, with built-in identity and credential management.

Istio Architecture
Putting it Together

Traffic is transparently intercepted and proxied. (App is unaware of Proxy presence)

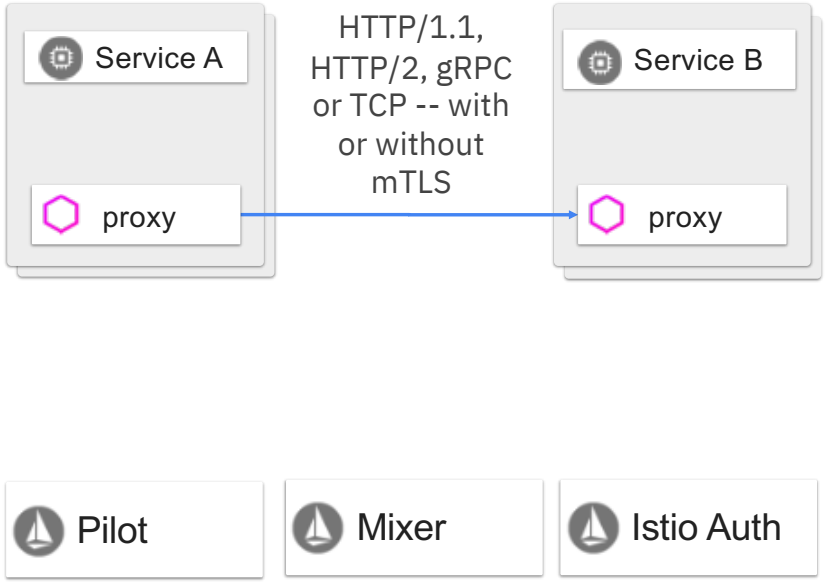


Life of a request



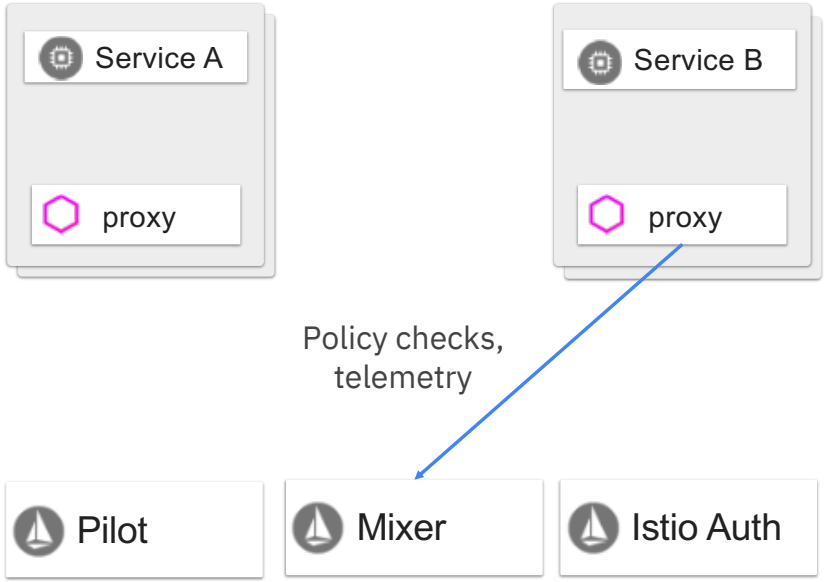
1. Service A places a call to http://service-b.
2. Client-side Envoy intercepts the call.
3. Envoy consults config (previously received from Pilot) to know how/where to route call to service B (taking into account service discovery, load balancing, and routing rules),
4. forwards the call to the right destination.

Life of a request



Envoy (A) forwards request to appropriate instance of service B. Envoy (B) proxy deployed with the service intercepts the call.

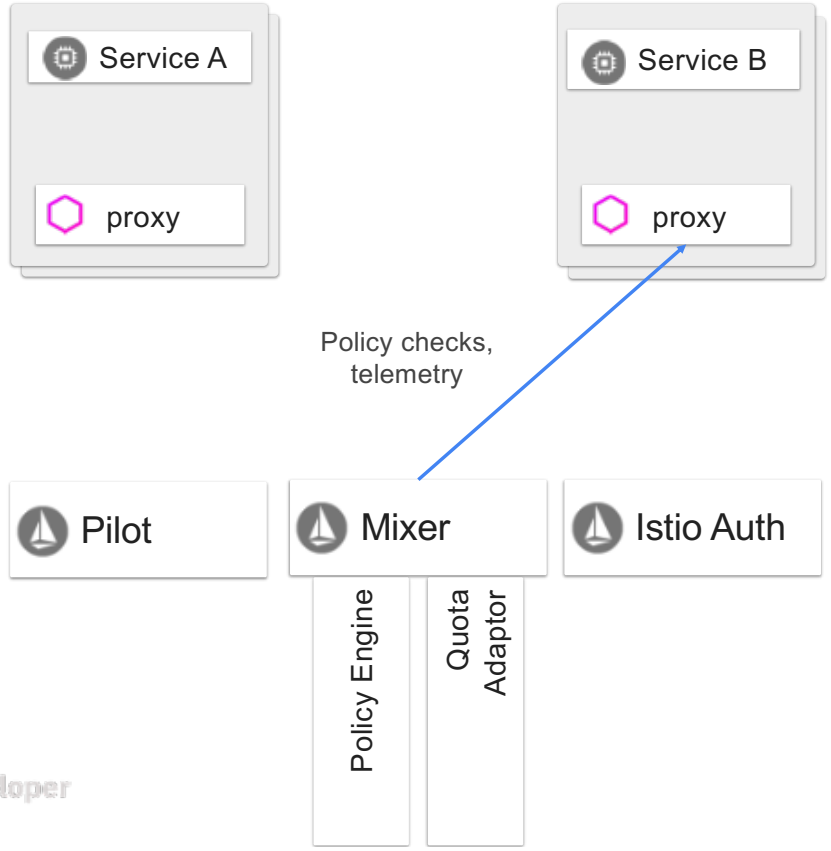
Life of a request



Server-B Envoy checks with Mixer to validate that call should be allowed

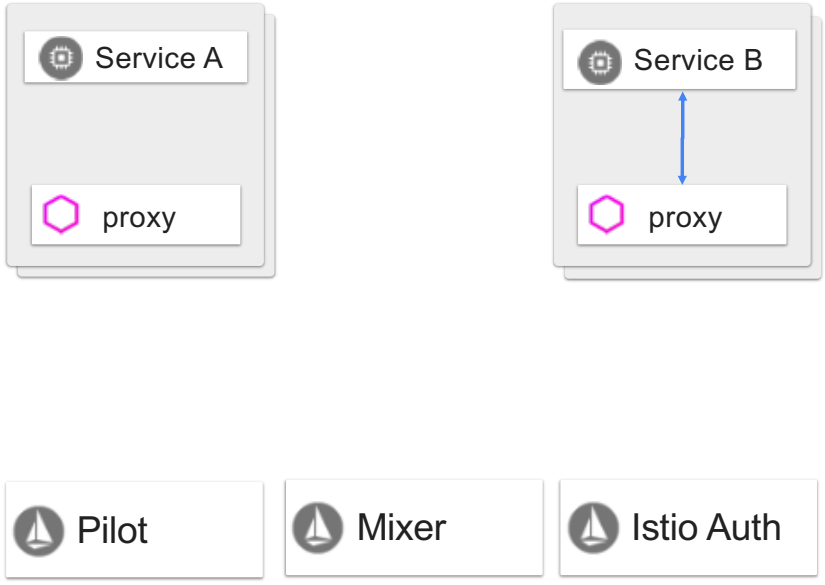
- ACL check
- quota check
- etc.

Life of a request



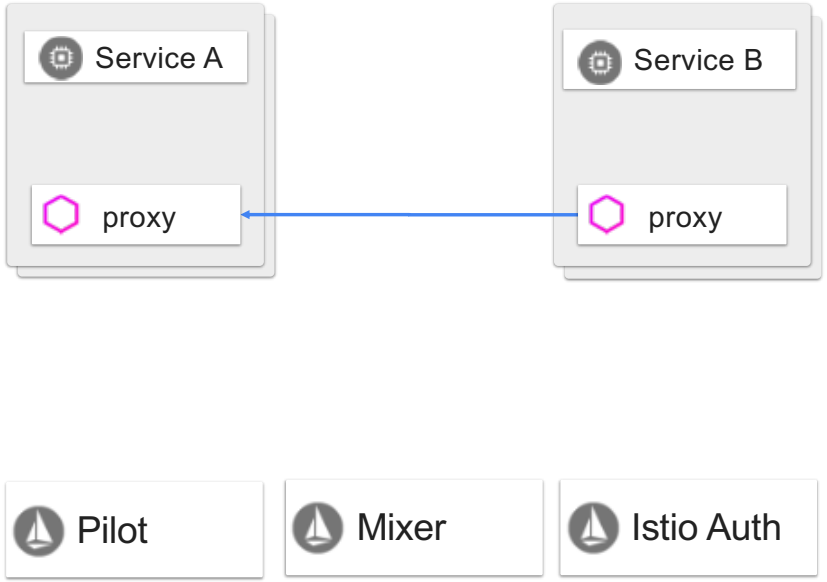
Mixer checks with appropriate adapters (policy engine, quota adapter) to verify that the call can proceed and returns true/false to Envoy

Life of a request



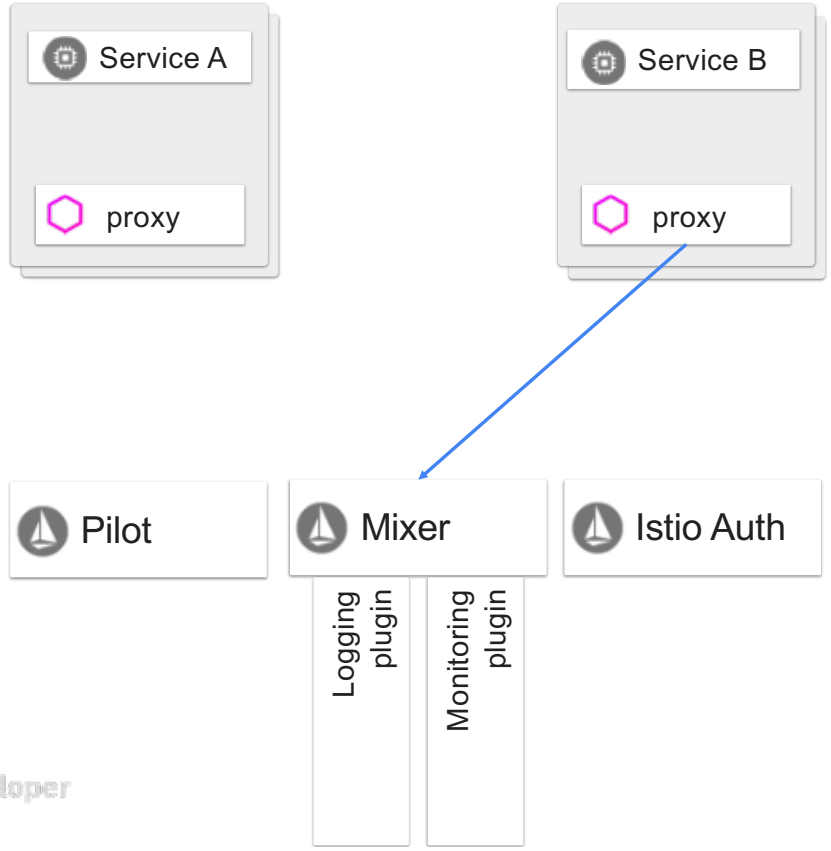
Server-side Envoy forwards request to service B, which process request and returns response

Life of a request



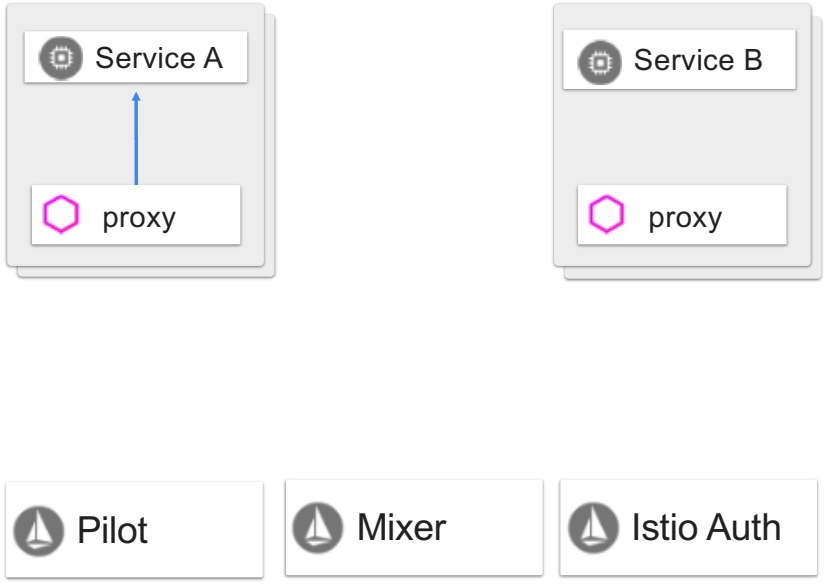
Envoy forwards response to the original caller, where response is intercepted by Envoy on the caller side.

Life of a request



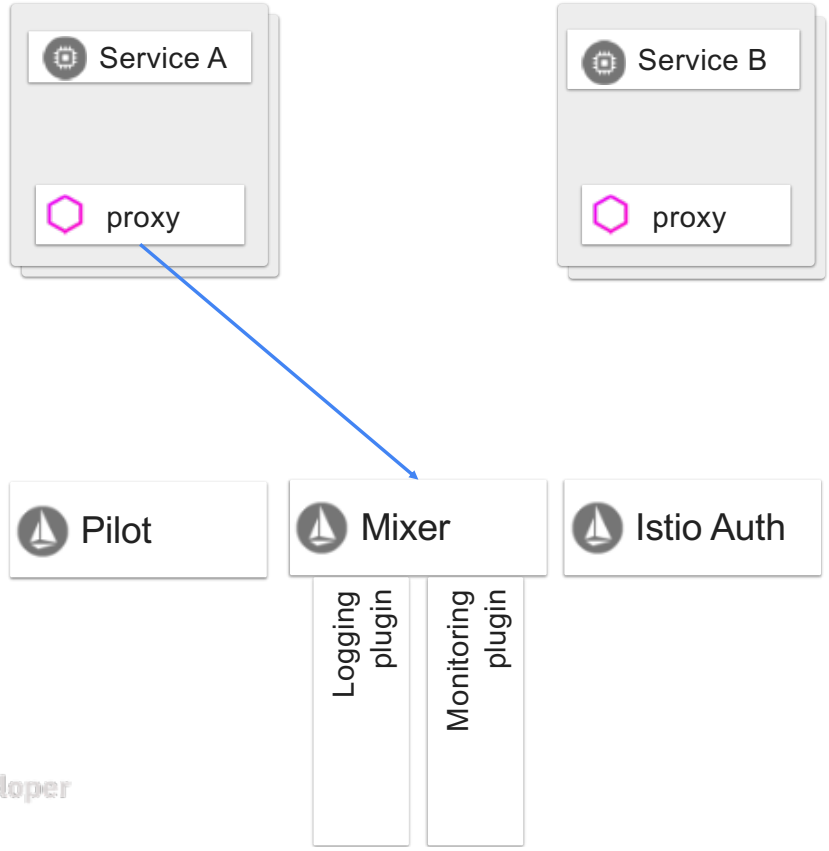
Envoy reports telemetry to Mixer, which in turn notifies appropriate plugins

Life of a request



Client-side Envoy forwards response to original caller.

Life of a request



Client-side Envoy reports telemetry to Mixer (including client-perceived latency), which in turn notifies appropriate plugins

Istio Proxy Sidecar

To create a service mesh with Istio, you update the deployment of the pods to add the Istio Proxy (based on the Lyft Envoy Proxy) as a side car to each pod.

The Proxy then run as a separate container that manages all communication with that pod.

Istio modifies the individual pods and not the deployments

Manual Approach

To create a service mesh with Istio, you update the deployment of the pods to add the Istio Proxy (based on the Lyft Envoy Proxy) as a side car to each pod.

```
istioctl kube-inject -f 03hub-deployment.yaml
```

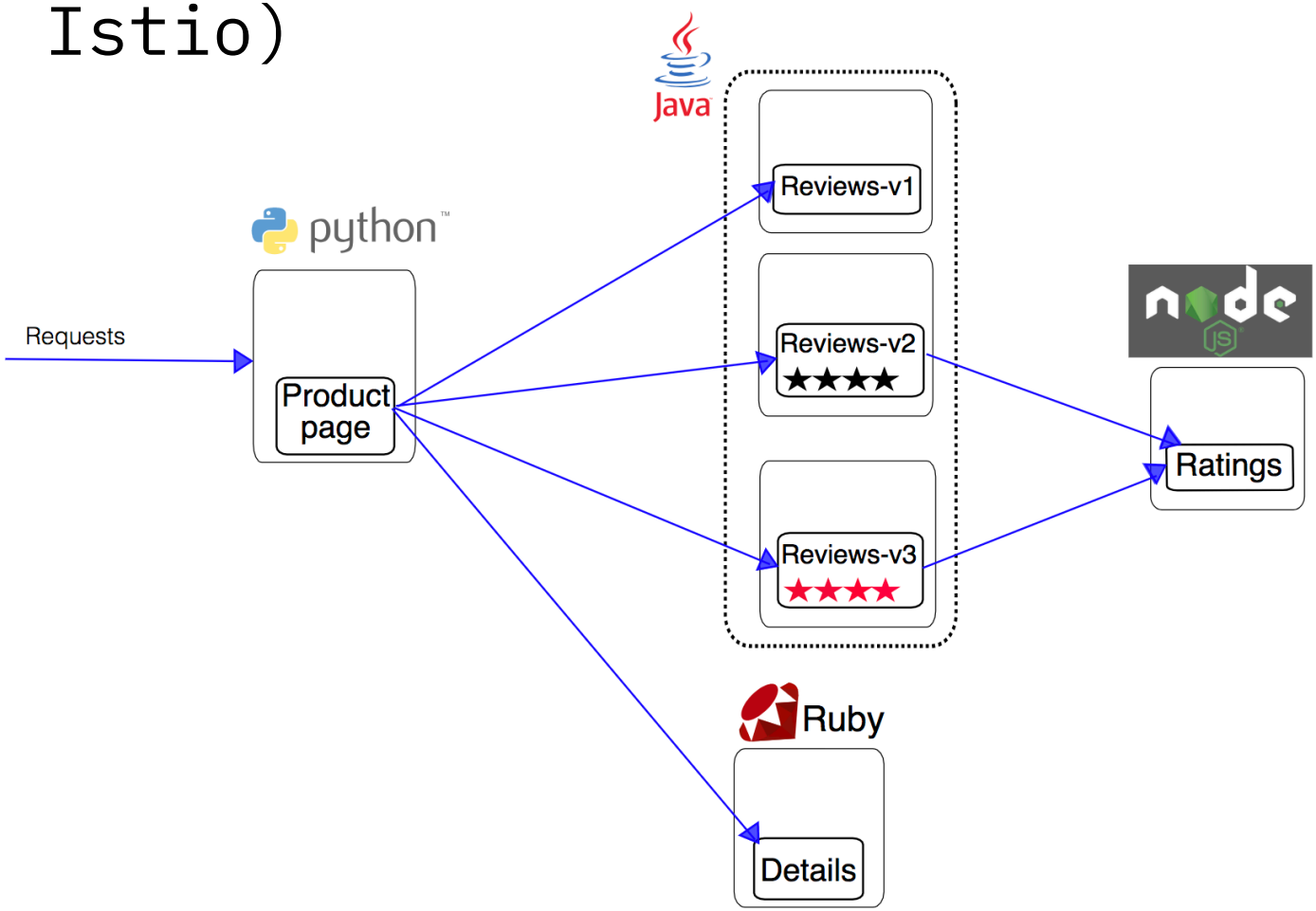
```
image: docker.io/istio/proxyv2:0.8.0
imagePullPolicy: IfNotPresent
name: istio-proxy
resources:
  requests:
    cpu: 100m
    memory: 128Mi
securityContext:
```

Automatic Approach

- Istio sidecars can also be automatically injected into a pod at creation time using a feature in Kubernetes called a mutating webhook admission controller.
- When you install istio, a deployment is automatically created called istio-sidecar-injector-* that injects proxy side-cars automatically to pods installed on namespaces that have a label istio-injection=enabled

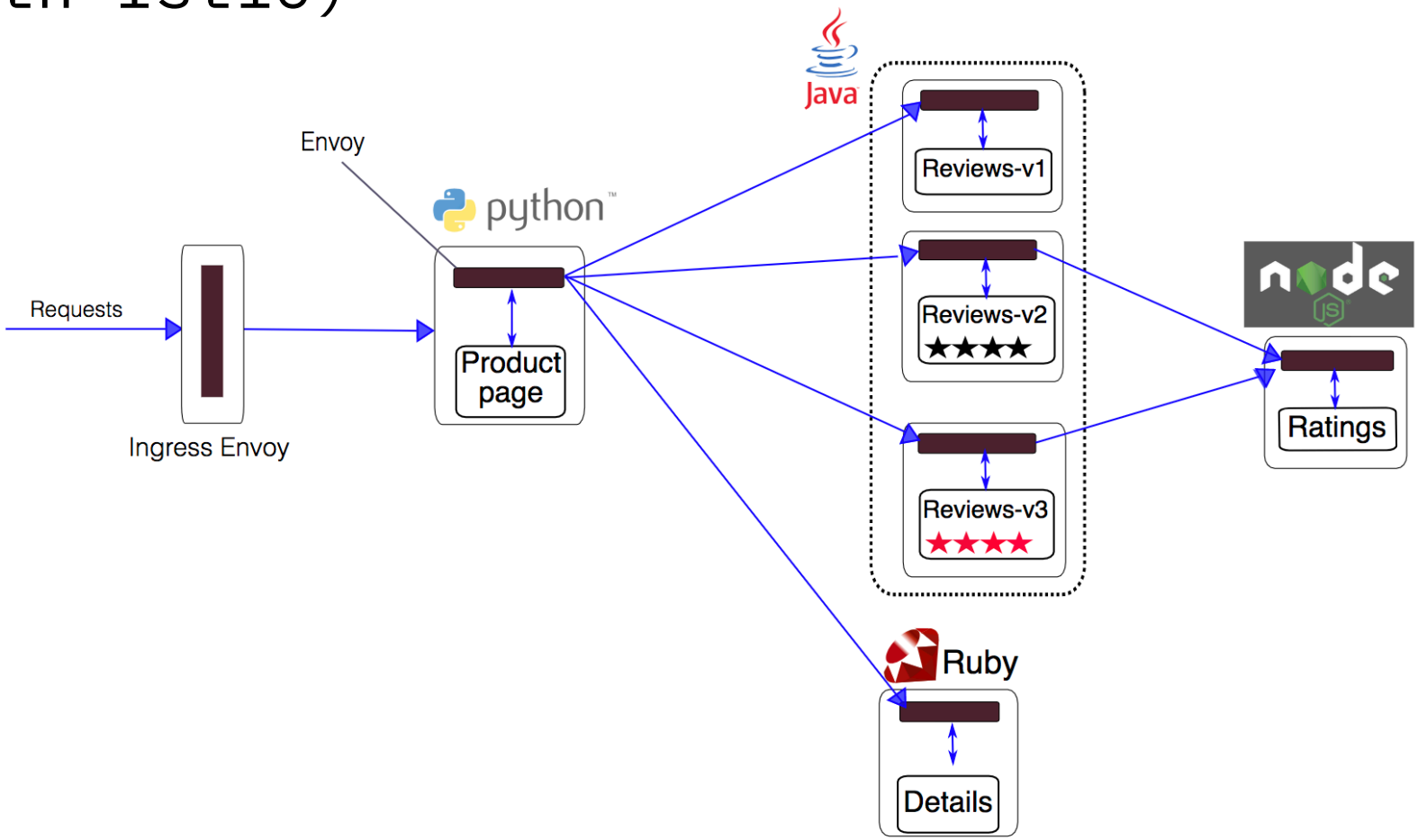
```
kubectl label namespace default istio-injection=enabled
```

Sample Microservices Application (without Istio)



Bookinfo Application without Istio

Sample Microservices Application (with Istio)



Bookinfo Application

Istio Ingress Controller

Control Ingress Traffic

Gateway describes a load balancer operating at the edge of the mesh receiving incoming or outgoing HTTP/TCP connections.

VirtualService defines a set of traffic routing rules to apply when a host is addressed. Each routing rule defines matching criteria for traffic of a specific protocol.

Istio ingress controller gets exposed as a normal kubernetes service load balancer on port 80.

```
kubectl get svc -n istio-system
```

https://istio.io/docs/tasks/traffic-management/ingress/

Traffic Management
&
Canary Deployments

Core Components

The core component used for traffic management in Istio is Pilot, which manages and configures all the Envoy proxy instances deployed in a particular Istio service mesh.

VirtualService defines a set of traffic routing rules to apply when a host is addressed. Each routing rule defines matching criteria for traffic of a specific protocol. If the traffic is matched, then it is sent to a named destination service (or subset or version of it) defined in **DestinationRule**.

DestinationRule defines policies that apply to traffic intended for a service after routing has occurred. Any destination host and subset referenced in a VirtualService rule must be defined in a corresponding DestinationRule.

ServiceEntry configuration enables services within the mesh to access a service not necessarily managed by Istio. The rule describes the endpoints, ports and protocols of a white-listed set of mesh-external domains and IP blocks that services in the mesh are allowed to access. For example for accessing a Watson service.

https://istio.io/docs/reference/config/istio.networking.v1alpha3/

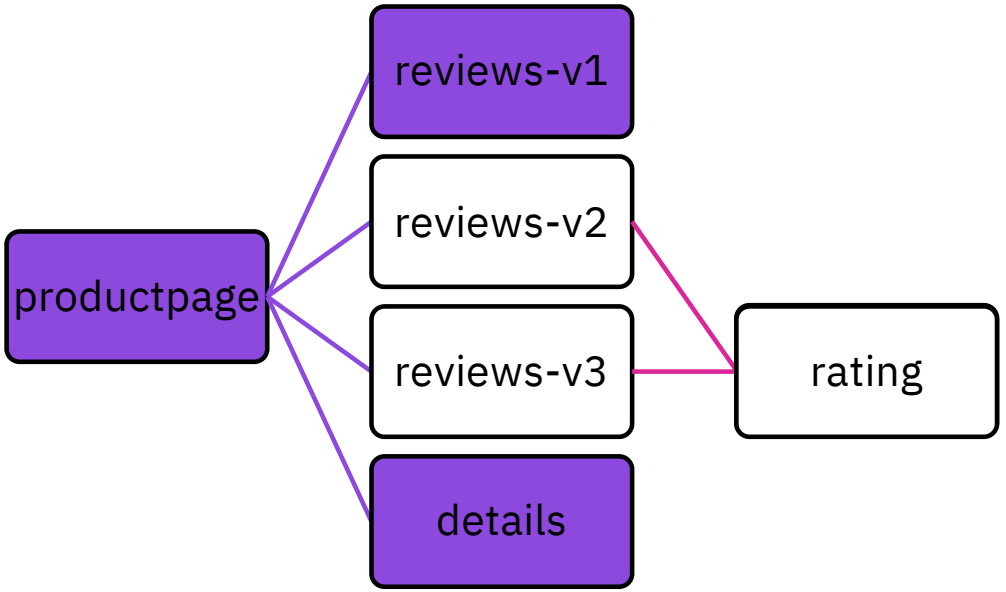
Possible Use Cases

- A/B Testing
- Canary Deployments
- Route based on header
- Fault Injection
- HTTP Retry
- Rate Limits/Polices
- Circuit Breaker

A/B Testing

- A/B testing is a method of performing identical tests against two separate service versions in order to determine which performs better.

- Enforce only v1 of reviews microservice



A/B Testing

A/B testing is a method of performing identical tests against two separate service versions in order to determine which performs better.

Enforce only v1 of reviews microservice

```
istioctl create -f 02route-rule-reviews-v1.yaml
```

02route-rule-reviews-v1.yaml

```
apiVersion: networking.istio.io/v1alpha3
kind: VirtualService
metadata:
  name: reviews
spec:
  hosts:
  - reviews
  http:
  - route:
    - destination:
        host: reviews
        subset: v1
---
apiVersion: networking.istio.io/v1alpha3
kind: DestinationRule
metadata:
  name: reviews
spec:
  host: reviews
  subsets:
  - name: v1
    labels:
      version: v1
```

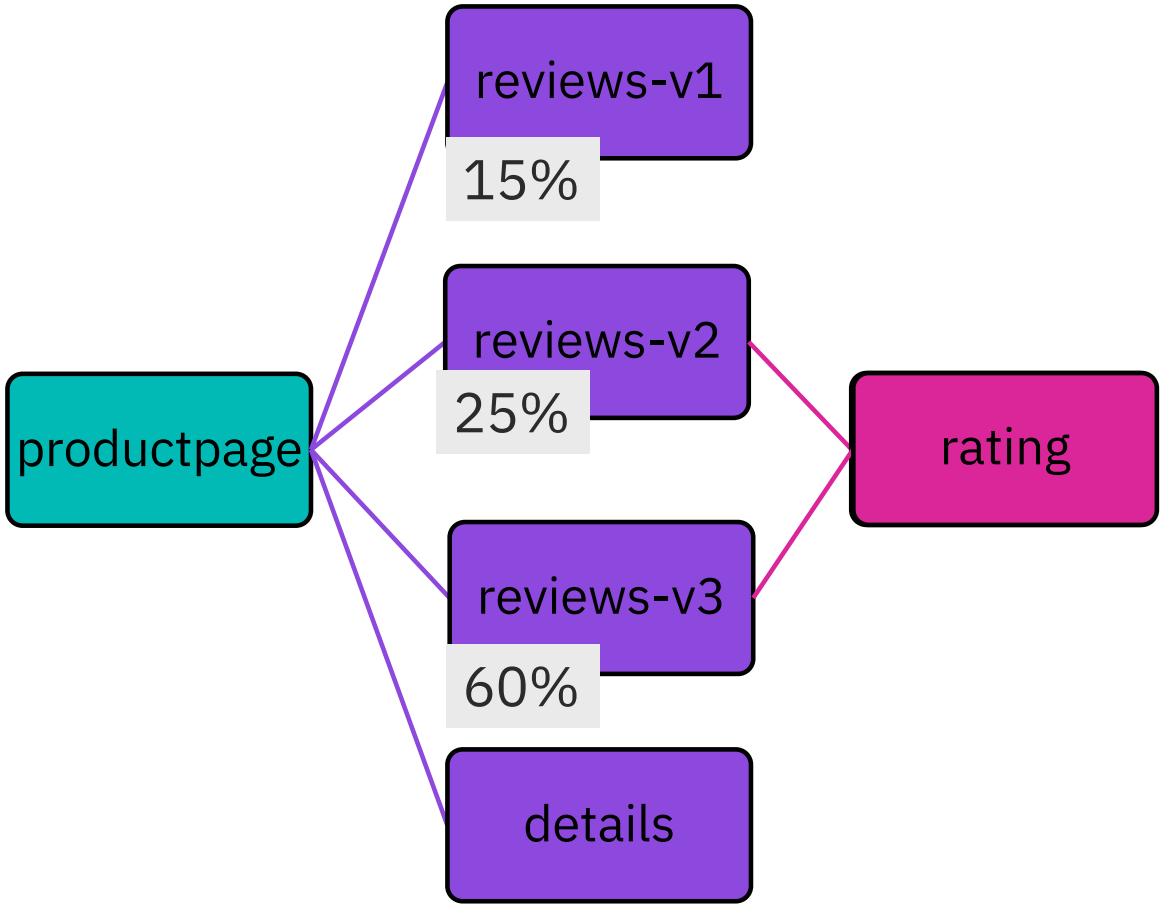
Canary Deployments

- You can do Canary Deployments with Kubernetes replicasets alone, but it’s quite complex.
- Maintaining canary traffic at small percentages requires many replicas (e.g., 1% would require a minimum of 100 replicas).
- Istio’s routing rules also provide other important advantages; you can easily control fine grain traffic percentages (e.g., route 1% of traffic without requiring 100 pods) and you can control traffic using other criteria (e.g., route traffic for specific users to the canary version).
- All the traffic inside the pod is captured by iptables commands and directed to the sidecar proxy. Then the sidecar proxy performs routing, according to routing tables it receives from Istio Pilot (a part of the Istio Control Plane)

Canary Deployments

Enforce the following:

- 15% for reviews-v1
- 25% for reviews-v2
- 60% for reviews-v3



Canary Deployments

Enforce the following:

- 15% for reviews-v1
- 25% for reviews-v2
- 60% for reviews-v3

```
istioctl replace -f 03route-rule-reviews-canary.yaml
```

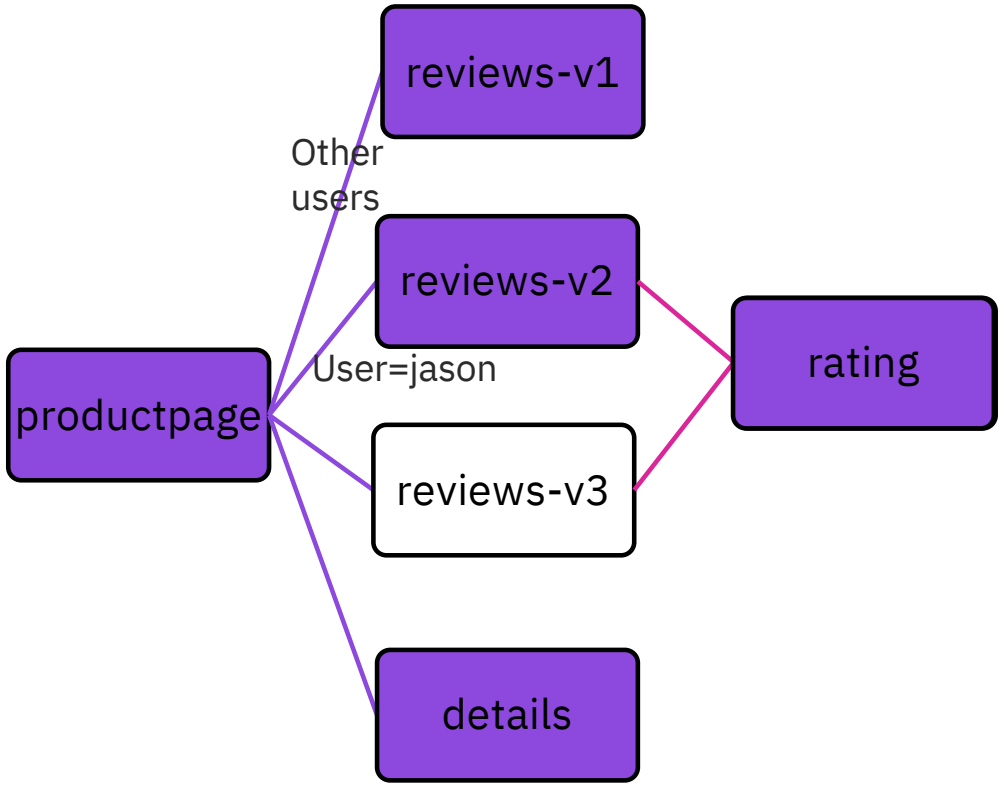
03route-rule-reviews-canary.yaml

```
apiVersion: networking.istio.io/v1alpha3
kind: VirtualService
metadata:
  name: reviews
spec:
  hosts:
  - reviews
  http:
  - route:
    - destination:
        host: reviews
        subset: v1
      weight: 15
    - destination:
        host: reviews
        subset: v2
      weight: 25
    - destination:
        host: reviews
        subset: v3
      weight: 60
---
apiVersion: networking.istio.io/v1alpha3
kind: DestinationRule
metadata:
  name: reviews
spec:
  host: reviews
  subsets:
  - name: v1
    labels:
      version: v1
  - name: v2
    labels:
      version: v2
  - name: v3
    labels:
      version: v3
```

Route based on Header

You can route to microservices based on header (i.e. based on users, geography, browser, mobile,.. etc).

Example: Route requests based on cookie (user=jason) to reviews-v2, else to reviews-v1.



Route based on Header

You can route to microservices based on header (i.e. based on users, geography, browser, mobile,.. etc).

Example: Route requests based on cookie (user=jason) to reviews-v2, else to reviews-v1.

```
istioctl replace -f 04route-rule-
reviews-headers.yaml
```

04route-rule-reviews-headers.yaml

```
apiVersion: networking.istio.io/v1alpha3
kind: VirtualService
metadata:
  name: reviews
spec:
  hosts:
    - reviews
  http:
  - match:
    - headers:
        cookie:
          regex: "^(.*?;)?(user=jason)(;.*)?$"
    route:
    - destination:
        host: reviews
        subset: v2
  - route:
    - destination:
        host: reviews
        subset: v1
```

Fault Injection

Istio enables protocol-specific fault injection into the network.

- Configure faults to be injected into requests that match specific criteria.
- Restrict the percentage of requests that should be subjected to faults.
- Two types of faults:
  - Delay: timing failures, mimicking increased network latency, or an overloaded upstream service.
  - Abort: crash failures that mimic failures in upstream services. Aborts usually manifest in the form of HTTP error codes or TCP connection failures.

Other Traffic Management Capabilities

- **HTTP Retry** describes the retry policy to use when a HTTP request fails. For example, you can define a rule that sets the maximum number of retries to 3 when calling ratings:v1 service, with a 2s timeout per retry attempt.
- **Rate Limits** allows you to deny access to services using Mixer, or specify the rate limits.
- **Circuit Breaker** allow users to set global defaults for failure recovery on a per service and/or per service version basis. It allows developers to write applications that limit the impact of failures, and latency spikes.
- **Automatic Request Timeout** allows to set timeout for services

Telemetry

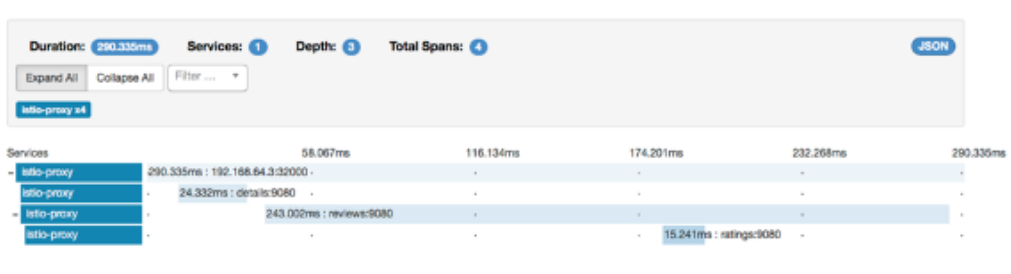
Visibility

Monitoring & tracing should not be an afterthought in the infrastructure

Goals

- Metrics without instrumenting apps
- Consistent metrics across fleet
- Trace flow of requests across services
- Portable across metric backend providers

Istio - Grafana dashboard w/ Prometheus backend



Istio Zipkin tracing dashboard

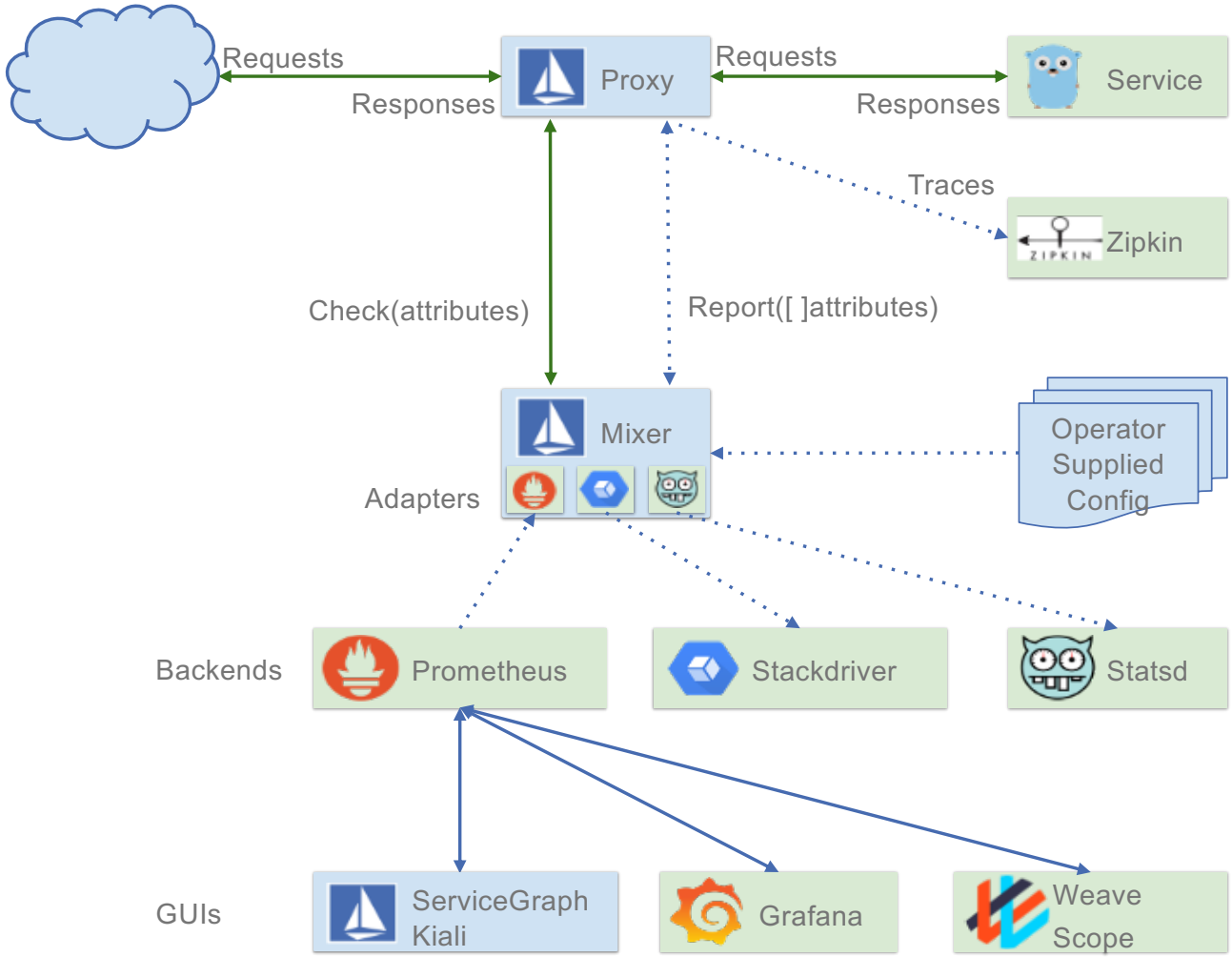
Visibility: Metrics

Mixer collects metrics emitted by Istio Proxy

Adapters in the Mixer normalize and forward to monitoring backends

Proxy send traces to Mixer

Metrics backend can be swapped at runtime



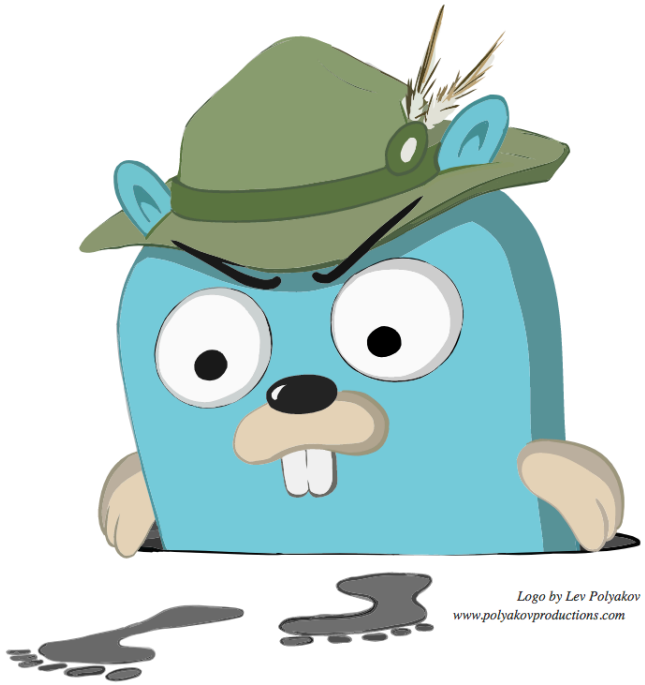
Changes needed to Legacy Applications

Modify request headers to pass span ids

- x-request-id
- x-b3-traceid
- x-b3-spanid
- x-b3-parentspanid
- x-b3-sampled
- x-b3-flags
- x-ot-span-context

Distributed Tracing: Jaegar

- Jaeger, a **CNCF** project inspired by Dapper and OpenZipkin, is a distributed tracing system released as open source by Uber Technologies.
- Jaeger is installed by default with Istio for Tracing.
- It can be used for monitoring microservices-based distributed systems:
  - Distributed context propagation
  - Distributed transaction monitoring
  - Root cause analysis
  - Service dependency analysis
  - Performance / latency optimization

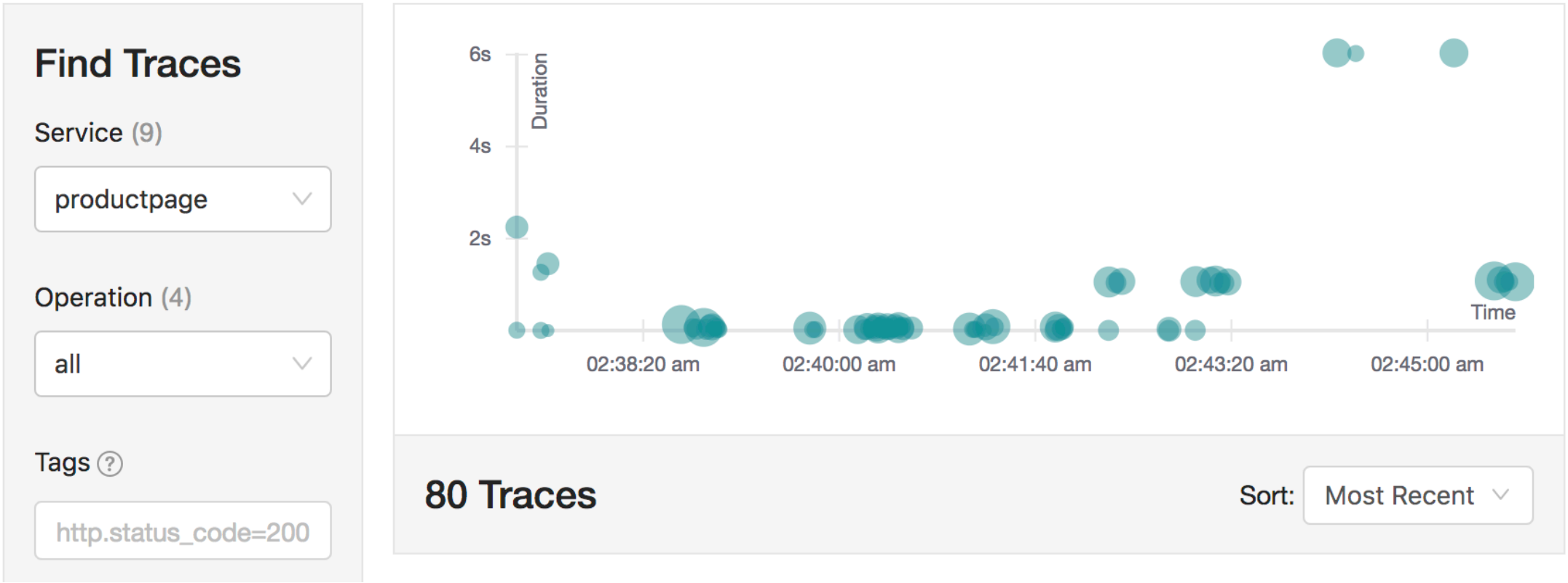


https://github.com/jaegertracing/jaeger

Jaeger

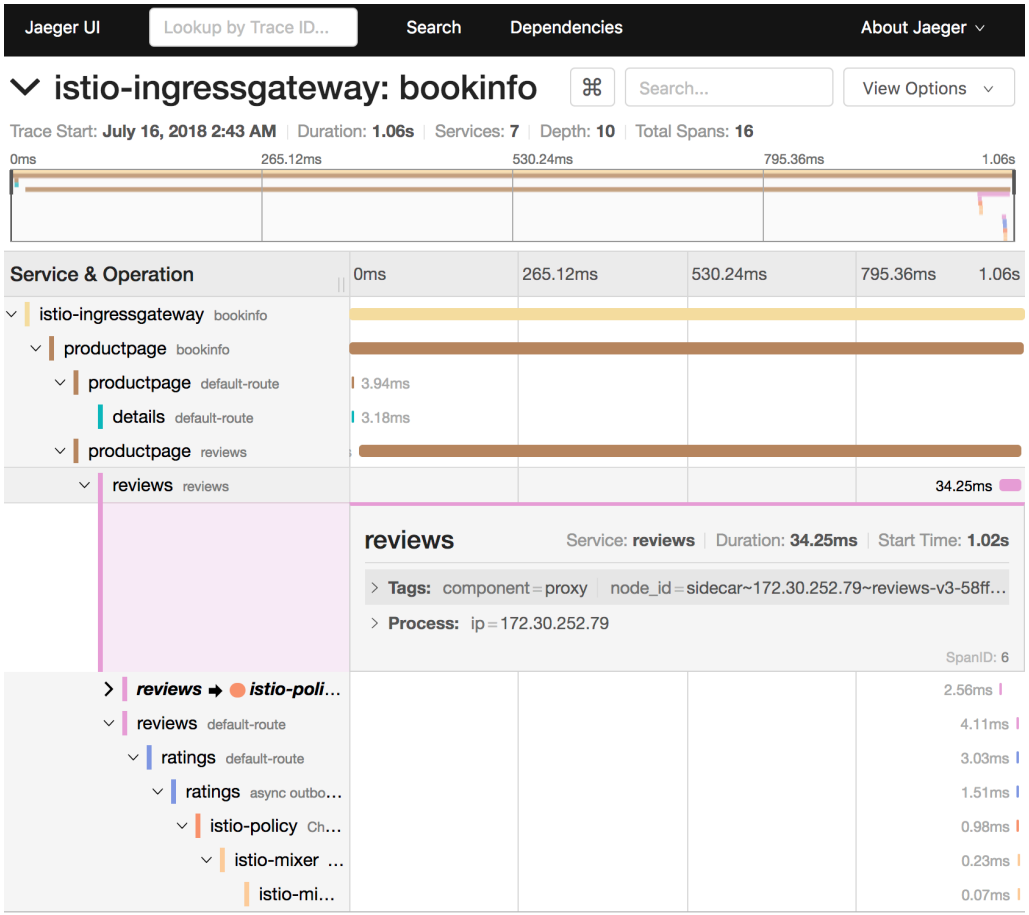
Get the tracing service details to access it.

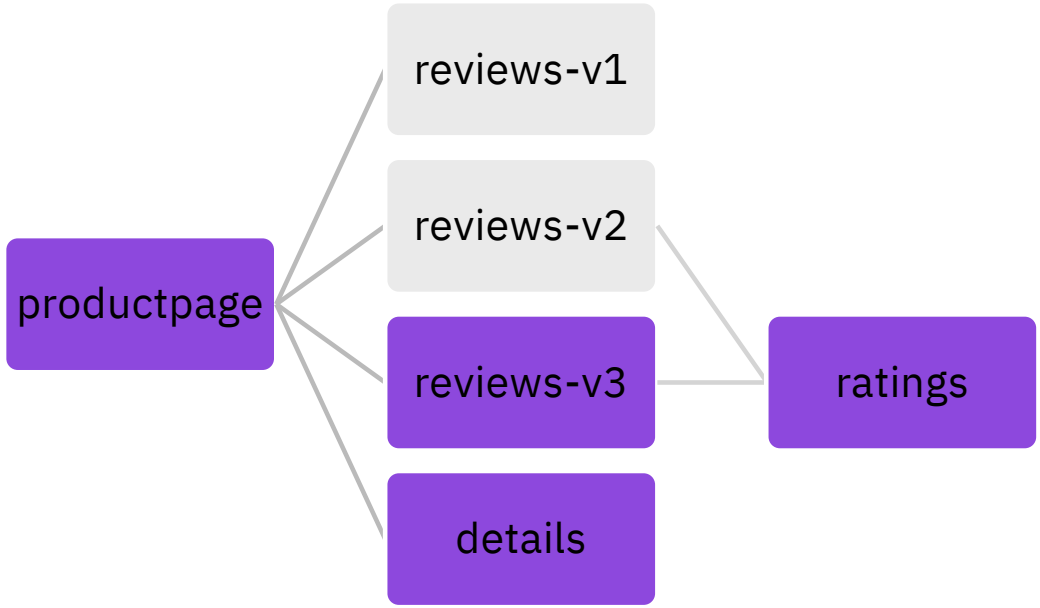
```
kubectl get svc tracing -n istio-system
```



Jaeger

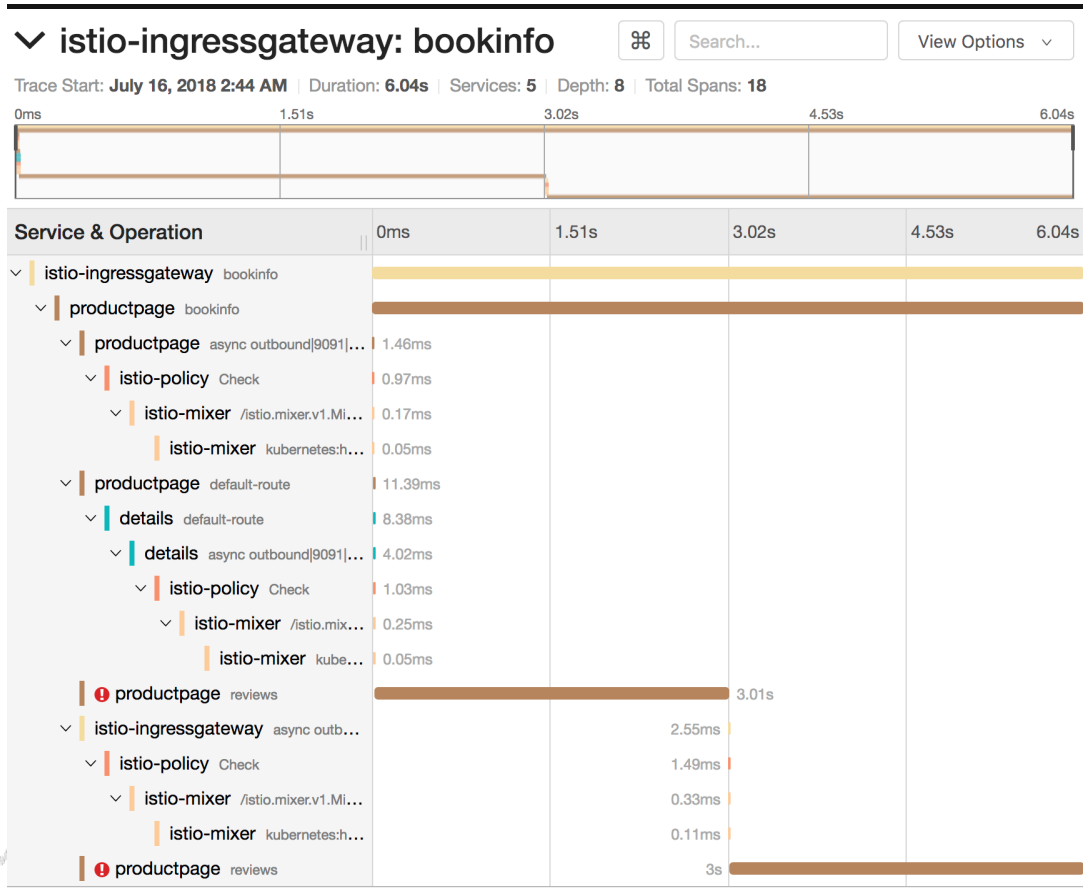
Inspect one of the requests

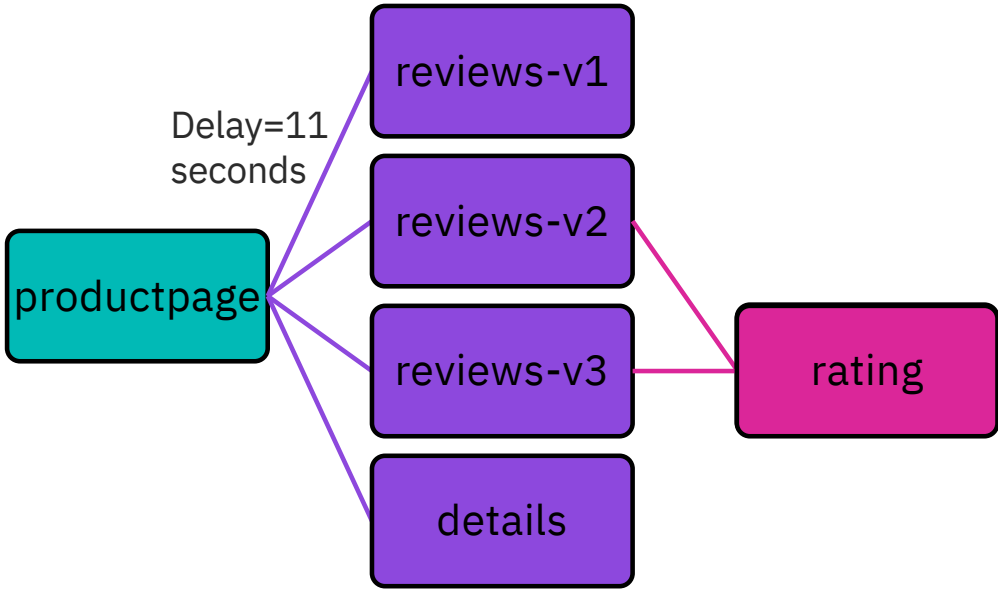




Jaeger

- Find traces for productpage where tags = `error`





Monitoring Visualization: Grafana

- **Grafana** is a data visualization & Monitoring with support for Graphite, InfluxDB, Prometheus, Elasticsearch and many more databases.
- It's used by default in Istio for monitoring visualization.

https://grafana.com/

Grafana

- Port forward to grafana service on Istio

```
kubectl -n istio-system port-forward $(kubectl -n istio-system get pod -l
app=grafana -o jsonpath='{.items[0].metadata.name}') 3000:3000
```

- Access Grafana

http://localhost:3000/

- Generate some traffic

```
while sleep 3;do curl http://169.46.54.122/productpage; done
```

- The Istio Dashboard consists of three main sections:
  - Global Summary View
  - Mesh Summary View
  - Individual Services View

Monitoring: Prometheus

- Prometheus is a CNCF project which is an open-source monitoring system with a dimensional data model, flexible query language, efficient time series database and modern alerting approach
- It's used by default in Istio for metrics monitoring.
- Istio instructs Mixer to automatically generate and report a new metric and a new log stream for all traffic within the mesh.

https://prometheus.io/

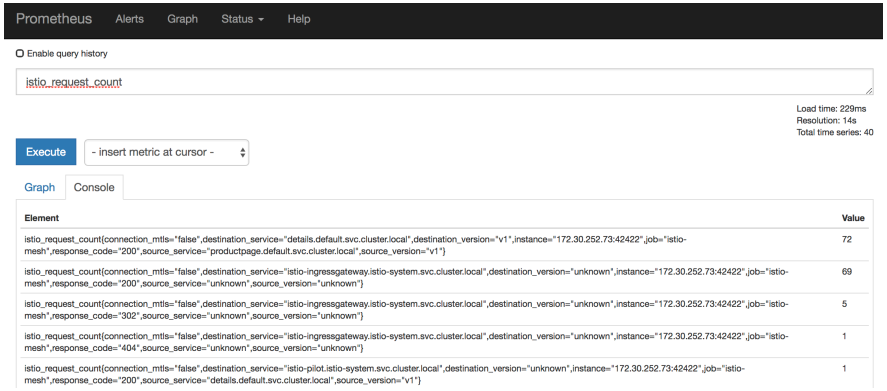
Prometheus

- Port forward to Prometheus service on Istio

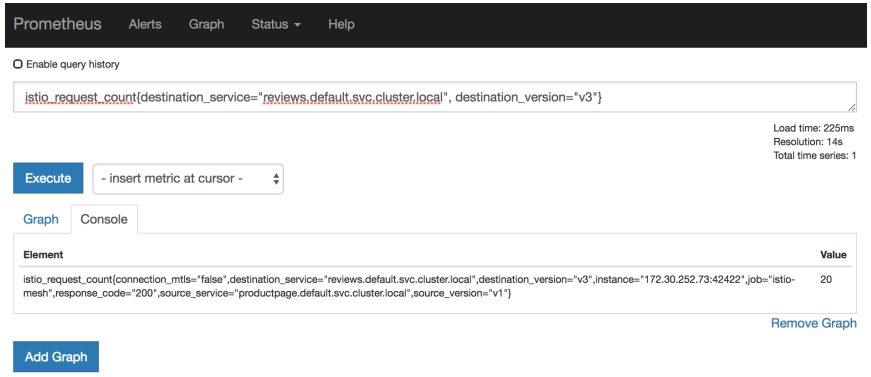
```
kubectl -n istio-system port-forward $(kubectl -n istio-system get
pod -l app=prometheus -o jsonpath='{.items[0].metadata.name}')
9090:9090
```

- Access Prometheus

http://localhost:9090/graph

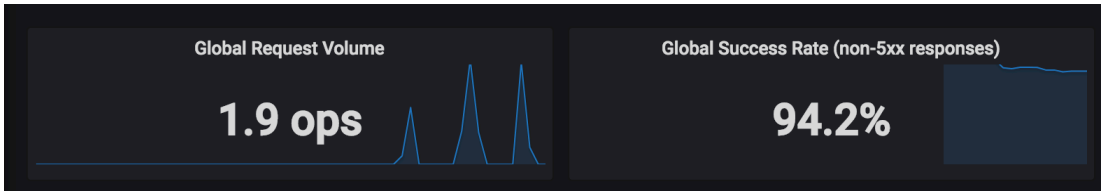


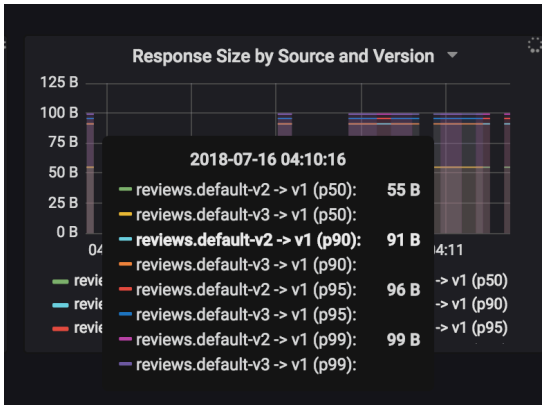
istio_request_count

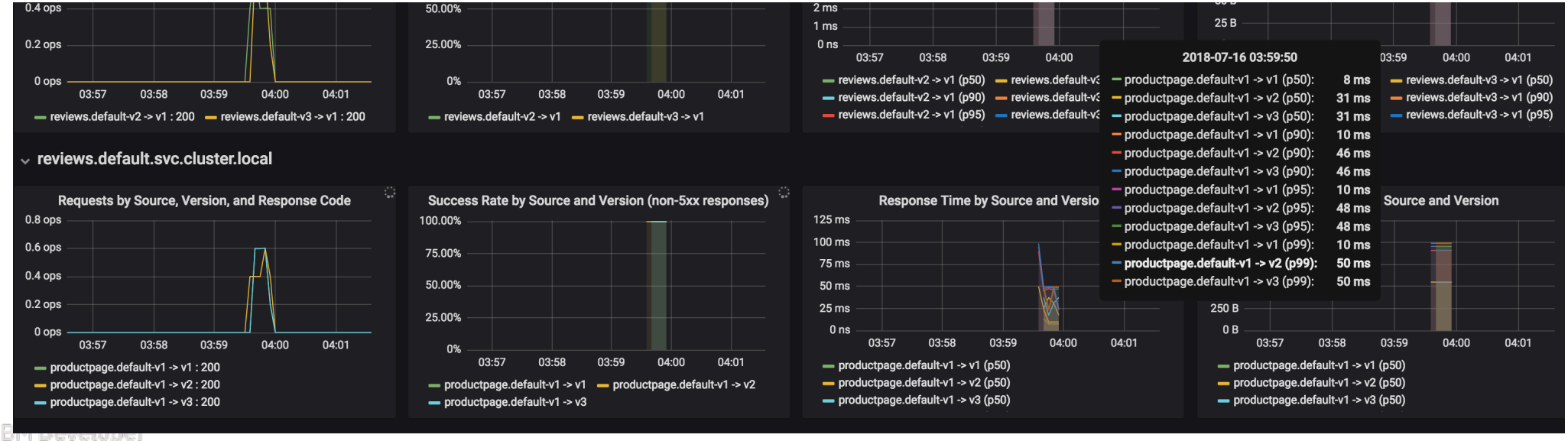


istio_request_count{
destination_service="reviews.default.svc.cluster.local",
destination_version="v3”
}

Prometheus


Global Request Volume
1.9 ops
Global Success Rate (non-5xx responses)
94.2%


Response Size by Source and Version
125 B
100 B
75 B
50 B
25 B
0 B
2018-07-16 04:10:16
reviews.default-v2 -> v1 (p50): 55 B
reviews.default-v3 -> v1 (p50):
reviews.default-v2 -> v1 (p90): 91 B
reviews.default-v3 -> v1 (p90):
reviews.default-v2 -> v1 (p95): 96 B
reviews.default-v3 -> v1 (p95):
reviews.default-v2 -> v1 (p99): 99 B
reviews.default-v3 -> v1 (p99):


0.4 ops
0.2 ops
0 ops
03:57 03:58 03:59 04:00 04:01
reviews.default-v2 -> v1 : 200
reviews.default-v3 -> v1 : 200
50.00%
25.00%
0%
reviews.default-v2 -> v1
reviews.default-v3 -> v1
2 ms
1 ms
0 ns
reviews.default-v2 -> v1 (p50)
reviews.default-v2 -> v1 (p90)
reviews.default-v2 -> v1 (p95)
25 B
2018-07-16 03:59:50
productpage.default-v1 -> v1 (p50): 8 ms
productpage.default-v1 -> v2 (p50): 31 ms
productpage.default-v1 -> v3 (p50): 31 ms
productpage.default-v1 -> v1 (p90): 10 ms
productpage.default-v1 -> v2 (p90): 46 ms
productpage.default-v1 -> v3 (p90): 46 ms
productpage.default-v1 -> v1 (p95): 10 ms
productpage.default-v1 -> v2 (p95): 48 ms
productpage.default-v1 -> v3 (p95): 48 ms
productpage.default-v1 -> v1 (p99): 10 ms
productpage.default-v1 -> v2 (p99): 50 ms
productpage.default-v1 -> v3 (p99): 50 ms
reviews.default-v3 -> v1 (p50)
reviews.default-v3 -> v1 (p90)
reviews.default-v3 -> v1 (p95)
reviews.default.svc.cluster.local
Requests by Source, Version, and Response Code
0.8 ops
0.6 ops
0.4 ops
0.2 ops
0 ops
productpage.default-v1 -> v1 : 200
productpage.default-v1 -> v2 : 200
productpage.default-v1 -> v3 : 200
Success Rate by Source and Version (non-5xx responses)
100.00%
75.00%
50.00%
25.00%
0%
productpage.default-v1 -> v1
productpage.default-v1 -> v2
productpage.default-v1 -> v3
Response Time by Source and Versio
125 ms
100 ms
75 ms
50 ms
25 ms
0 ns
productpage.default-v1 -> v1 (p50)
productpage.default-v1 -> v2 (p50)
productpage.default-v1 -> v3 (p50)
Source and Version
250 B
0 B

Service Graph: Kiali

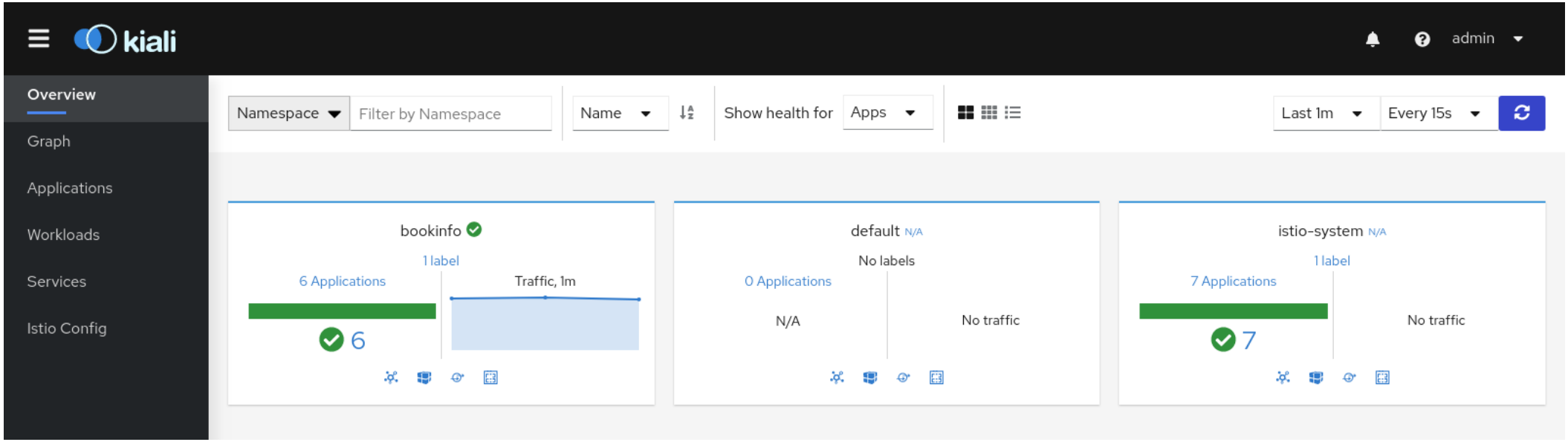
- To view a graphical representation of your mesh.
- It is built on top of Prometheus queries and depends on the standard Istio metric configuration
- Port forward to service graph service on Istio

```
kubectl -n istio-system port-forward $(kubectl -n istio-system get pod -l
app=kiali -o jsonpath='{.items[0].metadata.name}') 20001:20001
```

Kiali

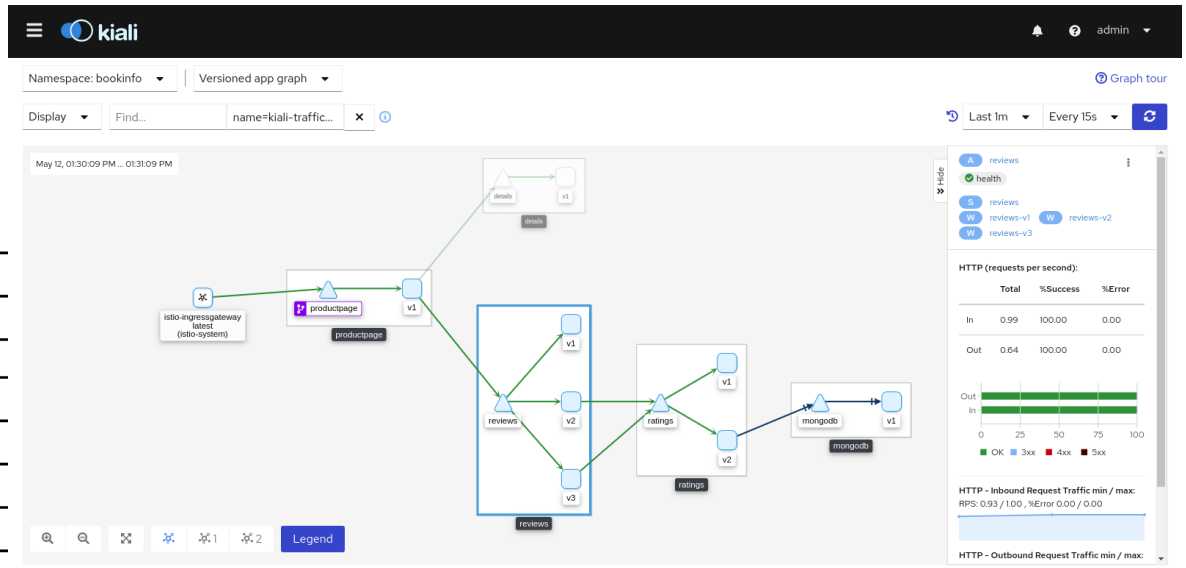
- Access the Kiali service graph dashboard

`http://localhost:20001`



Kiali

- Generate some traffic and access application graph



Incoming Connections	Reqs/sec
istio-ingressgateway.istio-system (unknown)	0.786441

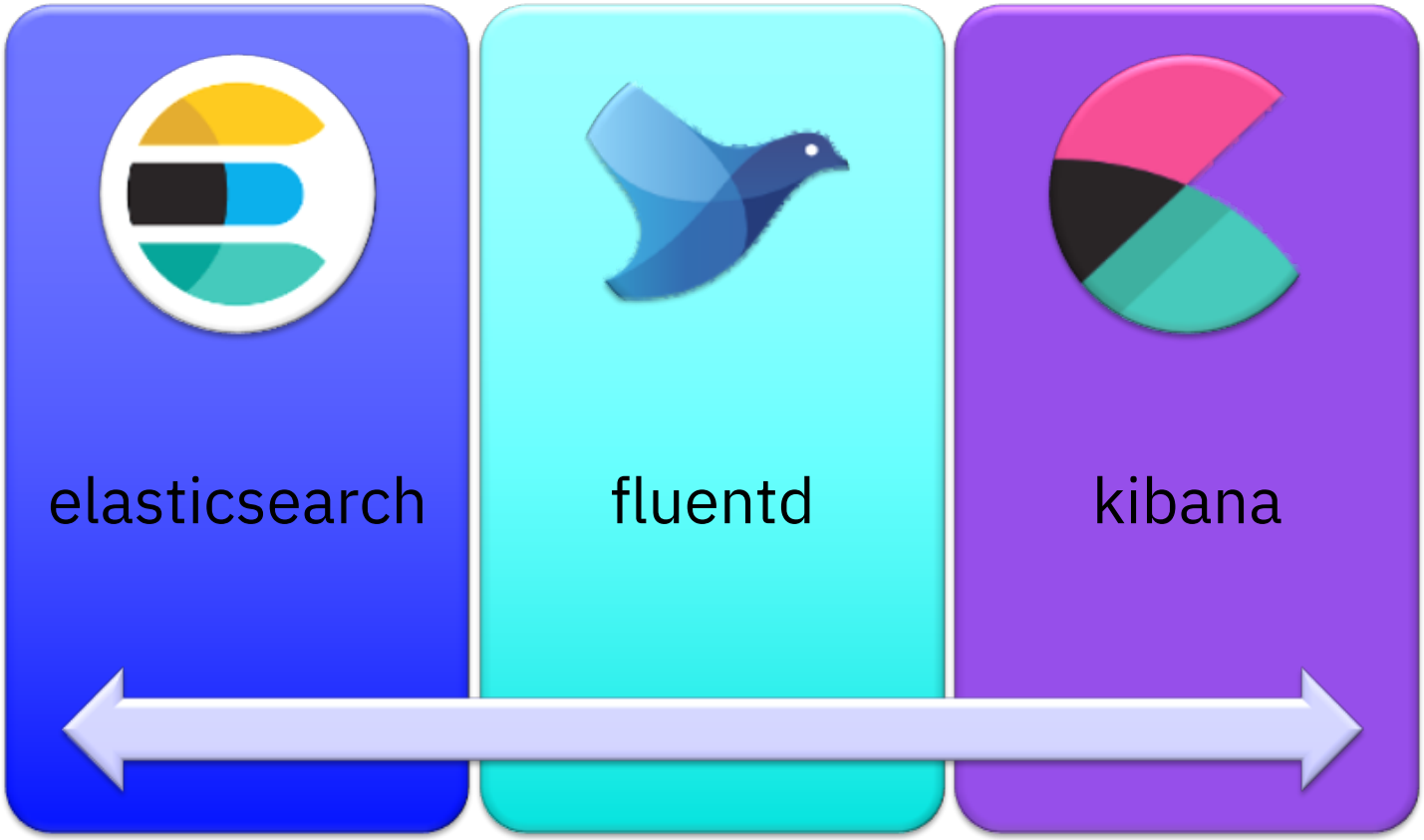
Outgoing Connections	Reqs/sec
details.default (v1)	0.786441
istio-pilot.istio-system (unknown)	0.000000
istio-policy.istio-system (unknown)	0.162712
istio-telemetry.istio-system (unknown)	0.681356
reviews.default (v1)	0.261017
reviews.default (v2)	0.261017
reviews.default (v3)	0.261017

Logging

Log Aggregation

- With an increasing number of systems decoupled and scattered throughout the landscape it becomes increasingly difficult to track and trace events across all systems.
- Log aggregation solutions provides a series of benefits to distributed systems.
- The problems it tackles are:
  - Centralized, aggregated view over all log events
  - Normalization of log schema
  - Automated processing of log messages
  - Support for a great number of event sources and outputs

EFK Stack



EFK Stack

- EFK stack doesn’t ship by default with Istio. However, Istio allows integration with EFK stack through its proxy.
- Deploy EFK stack in your cluster.

```
kubectl apply -f logs/logging-stack.yaml
```

- Now that there is a running Fluentd daemon, add a new log entry in Istio, and send those logs to the listening daemon.
- Create a new YAML file to hold configuration for the log stream that Istio will generate and collect automatically.

```
istioctl create -f logs/fluentd-istio.yaml
```

fluentd-istio.yaml

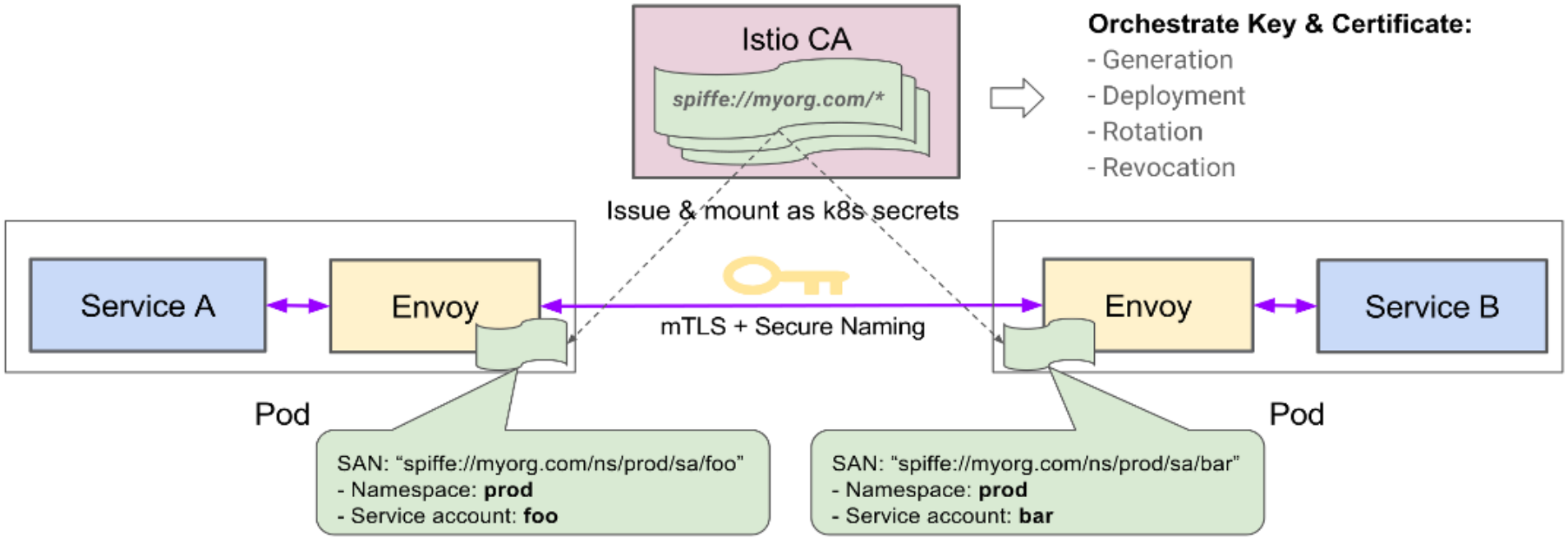
```
# Configuration for logentry instances
apiVersion: "config.istio.io/v1alpha2"
kind: logentry
metadata:
  name: newlog
  namespace: istio-system
spec:
  severity: '"info"'
  timestamp: request.time
  variables:
    source: source.labels["app"] | source.service | "unknown"
    user: source.user | "unknown"
    destination: destination.labels["app"] |
destination.service | "unknown"
    responseCode: response.code | 0
    responseSize: response.size | 0
    latency: response.duration | "0ms"
  monitored_resource_type: '"UNSPECIFIED"'
---
# Configuration for a fluentd handler
apiVersion: "config.istio.io/v1alpha2"
kind: fluentd
metadata:
  name: handler
  namespace: istio-system
spec:
  address: "fluentd-es.logging:24224"
---
# Rule to send logentry instances to the fluentd handler
apiVersion: "config.istio.io/v1alpha2"
kind: rule
metadata:
  name: newlogtofluentd
  namespace: istio-system
spec:
  match: "true" # match for all requests
  actions:
   - handler: handler.fluentd
     instances:
     - newlog.logentry
---
```

Security

Securing Microservices

- Verifiable identity
- Secure naming / addressing
- Traffic encryption
- Revocation

Istio Citadel
Security at Scale



spiffe.io

Istio Citadel

- Istio can secure the communication between microservices without requiring application code changes.
- Security is provided by authenticating and encrypting communication paths within the cluster.
- Delegating communication security to Istio (as opposed to implementing TLS in each microservice), ensures that your application will be deployed with consistent and manageable security policies.
- Citadel is responsible for:
    - Providing each service with an identity representing its role.
    - Providing a common trust root to allow Envoys to validate and authenticate each other.
    - Providing a key management system

Resources

Istio documentation
https://istio.io/docs/

Istio in IBM products
https://www.ibm.com/cloud/info/istio