

**VA Enterprise Design Patterns
Cloud Computing**


Microservices

**OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY STRATEGIES (TS)
OFFICE OF INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY (OI&T)**


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Current Capabilities



Future Capabilities



Use Cases



**One-VA Technical Reference
Model**



**The Veteran-Focused
Integration Process**



**Enterprise Design Pattern
Scope**

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Business Problem

The majority of existing Veterans Affairs (VA) applications consist of full-stack, monolithic architectures with limited flexibility to changing business needs. Monolithic applications present the following challenges:

1. Limited agility – Continuous deployment is difficult, forcing developers to redeploy the entire application (e.g. WAR files) in order to update one component
2. Technology lock-in – Changes cannot be made to part of the application code, meaning all of it has to be modified
3. IT infrastructure evolution – Decomposition of monolithic applications into microservices is inhibited by limited availability of Commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) platforms to perform networking and orchestration

Many existing VA software solutions were built using traditional waterfall approaches. The sequential nature of the waterfall approach presents challenges to rapidly changing business needs and reduced development timeframes.

1.2 Business Need

With the adoption of cloud-native DevOps and the need to deliver IT capabilities in an expedited manner, monolithic applications present challenges to keeping up with rapidly changing

business needs. For example, a monolithic application has presentation, business, and data logic located in a single, logical package that is deployed in resource-intensive application servers. Minor changes to part of the architecture require testing and redeployment of the entire package. Software systems developed in a monolithic fashion do not have the flexibility to modify or add new features without a re-design of the whole application.

1.3 Business Case

Microservices address the limitations of monolithic architectures. To help standardize microservice architectures at VA, this Enterprise Design Pattern (EDP) provides a VA-specific definition for microservices. A microservice provides a single business function with the following characteristics:

- Fine-grained: Encompasses a specific service component that delivers an individual business capability (e.g. provide current patient prescriptions)
- Loosely coupled: Functions with little or no knowledge of other business functions; thereby limiting or removing the impact of changes made to one business function on other functions with which it interfaces with
- Independently deployable: Can be used by multiple applications or systems; self-contained by running its own isolated processes and computations
- Vendor-neutral: Leverages open standards for inter-process communication (e.g. HTTP) with other services

Service Oriented Architecture (SOA), as defined in the SOA Enterprise Design Pattern, provides a framework of general design principles for services, while microservices represent an implementation of that framework for specific services. For the context of this document, microservices are best described as “fine-grained SOA” consistent with industry best practices for DevOps.

VA has begun to address the challenges of rapidly changing business needs and reduced development timeframes by embracing agile software development practices with its continued emphasis on consolidating IT infrastructure and use of enterprise IT services, including Enterprise Shared Services (ESS) and cloud-based solutions. In concert with these changes, VA will adopt a microservices architectural style leveraging agile development techniques for both existing and new software projects.

1.4 Approach

The near-term approach to incorporate microservices into existing and future VA software systems is as follows:

1. Determine enterprise standard criteria for microservices approach
 - a. Criteria for using microservices for new applications (Greenfield)
 - b. Criteria for functional decomposition of legacy systems or integration of new applications with legacy systems (Brownfield)
2. Disseminate criteria to project teams for review prior to first project decision review
3. Re-evaluate criteria through lessons learned from previous microservice enabled projects

Performed concurrently with 1 and 2 above:

1. Conduct market research on COTS platforms (including open-source) for supporting a microservices architecture
2. Acquire and deploy COTS platforms for use in the DevOps community
3. Include approved COTS platforms in Technical Reference Model (TRM)
4. Direct usage of COTS platforms through the TRM
5. Re-evaluate product usage through lessons learned from previous microservice enabled projects



2 CURRENT CAPABILITIES AND LIMITATIONS

VA's current monolithic architecture encompasses a waterfall software development life cycle (SDLC), tight coupling of systems, segmented development and operations, vendor lock-in, and large SOA infrastructure services. It also includes an enterprise service bus (ESB), which focuses more on the central infrastructure than the application itself. These issues are addressed further in the following sub-sections.

2.1 Limited Agility

2.1.1 SDLC

Capabilities: VA application development is categorized as in-house or through contractors. In-house and contractor application development was traditionally developed using a waterfall or incremental SDLC. For example, within Veterans Health Administration (VHA), contractors typically develop critical applications. Contractor-developed and in-house applications have the option of utilizing their own environment or VA's development environment (i.e. Mobile Application Environment). Either event requires the final application to be uploaded to the VA environment for compliance review.

VA has recently revamped the IT delivery framework, which follows a lean-agile framework, bringing greater agility to VA's SDLC (see Section 3.7). VA is transitioning to the agile software

development environment and has initiated pilot software projects that are diverse in terms of scope, size/complexity, customers, and stages in the project lifecycle.

Limitation(s): A combination of factors, including the agile initiatives and the enterprise-cloud migration, calls for SDLC that can provide timely business value to VA and occur in an efficient manner. Adhering to the new framework helps VA transition to an agile environment capable of handling changing business needs. While VA has a new IT delivery framework in place, the limitations associated with the previous framework still exist. The new IT delivery framework only addresses future projects.

2.1.2 Tight Coupling

Capabilities: Many of the existing VA applications require a high level of interdependence in order to function properly. The complexity to build new capabilities or address existing issues in operational systems is significant due to these interdependencies. For instance, the VistA Access Enhancements (VAE) team has described their effort as a “complex environment, with many moving pieces.”

Limitation(s): Traditional monolithic design amplifies and enhances the coupling of systems. A higher degree of coupling leads to increased challenges in extending or making changes to an existing system. The problems are exacerbated as the systems become larger. As a result the easiest way to extend tightly coupled systems is to incorporate even more interdependence among the systems. In a tightly coupled architecture, the high interdependence of systems can lead to a single point of failure that can potentially crash the whole system.

Capabilities: Library sharing is a good design approach to modularize different domains into separate libraries. This allows application code that fall under a common domain to share code libraries. This is done within systems and among systems at VA.

Limitation(s): While shared libraries are not incompatible with a service-based approach it does not provide many of the benefits of microservices. Using a different language or platform is difficult when libraries are used as the only form of modularization. This practice limits solutions for specific domains, does not enable the advantages of process isolation, and cannot scale independently as load requires. Shared libraries also mean shared or planned releases, which creates dependencies on process releases across teams.

2.1.3 Development Operations

Capabilities: Development, operations, and quality assurance of VA applications is segmented. This is apparent across VA Lines of Business (LOBs), including the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). As part of the DevOps/Benefits Transformation, a study was performed

to identify existing challenges with VBA's SDLC. VBA discovered differences in the development and operations environments that caused failures, affecting the Veteran's ability to access VA services and benefits.¹ Once an application is released there is only a three-month support period from the development team. After this period, all maintenance and operation becomes the responsibility of the business owner of the application.

Limitation(s): The VA IT ecosystem consists of multiple systems and teams that do not always coordinate together. The current segmented nature prevents an enterprise that integrates development, deployment, and oversight to ensure efficient use of resources.

Large software project development teams working with monolithic architectures encounter inefficiencies as the software is not designed in a modular fashion. It inhibits developers to work concurrently on a common component.

2.2 Technology Lock-In

Capabilities: The VA development tools and integrated development environments (IDEs) are geared toward single application development guided by monolithic architectures. Since monolithic architectures are tightly coupled, any changes made to one part of the architecture affects the entire application. This makes it difficult to utilize different technologies that are better suited for the job when making changes or updates to an existing application.

Limitation(s): Monolithic applications often cannot scale with changes to size and complexity and therefore are not aligned with VA's transition towards agile development. Usually, incorporating changes to one part of the architecture requires a redesign or update to the entire architecture. As a result, updating the application with a new framework would require a redesign, potential schedule delays, or increased cost. Therefore, VA would be committed strictly to the technology decisions made in the initial stages of the lifecycle.

2.3 IT Infrastructure Evolution

Capabilities: The Enterprise Messaging Infrastructure (eMI) delivers customized COTS suite of tools to provide a reliable, secure, high-performance, and globally scalable SOA information exchange system. As the official SOA infrastructure backbone for ESS per the (Enterprise Architecture) Enterprise SOA EDP, all projects are mandated to use eMI for integration with ESS. The eMI delivers a network-centric infrastructure that enhances service delivery and security, allowing VA to efficiently share and communicate information. The "As-Is" architecture for eMI consists of several key components depicted in Figure 1.

¹ VA. (2013) Business Requirement Session (DEVOPS/Benefits Transformation)

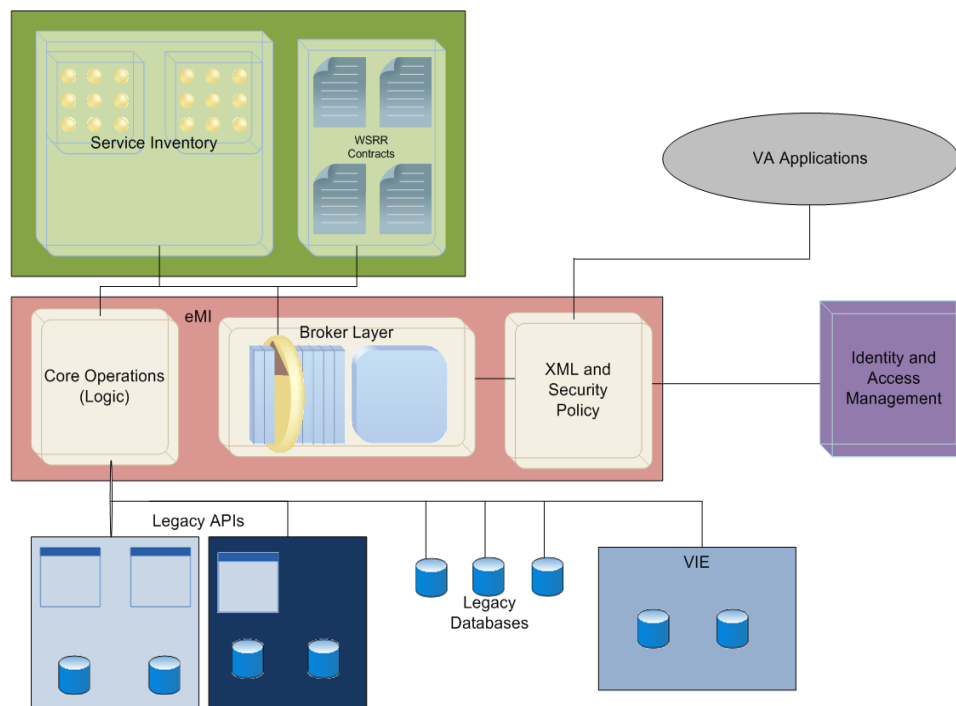


FIGURE 1: “As-Is” eMI ARCHITECTURE²

At the core of the eMI is an ESB messaging engine supported by a security gateway and sophisticated routing services that provide a transfer of messages between services. VA currently has deployed a national ESB as a key component of the IT infrastructure. This provides messaging functions, such as routing and protocol transformation, using a common set of messaging standards as described in the ESS Message Exchange Guide.

Limitation(s): VA’s adoption of ESS to realize an enterprise SOA is still a work in progress.³ A key component of any enterprise’s SOA environment, including VA, is the ESB. With the ESB, developers are encouraged to put more cross-cutting logic into the central infrastructure and less into the services and the applications that consume them. This structure results in heavy dependence on the ESB for non-functional requirements (e.g. security, monitoring, and mediation), and even some business logic. The use of ESBs increases dependencies of services on the infrastructure and results in greater coupling.

2.4 Microsoft Projects

² <http://vawww.oed.portal.va.gov/communities/VAeMI/eMI%20WIKI/eMI%20SOA%20Environm ent.aspx>

³ VA. (2015) Enterprise SOA Design Pattern

VA has a limited number of projects in the design phase that propose utilizing microservices architecture. These projects include the Enterprise Health Management Platform (eHMP) Clinical Practice Environment - VistA Exchange and Application Programming Interface (API) 2.0 projects that are part of the VistA Evolution program.⁴ These projects, along with the guidance from this document, will help establish the use of microservices for future VA projects.



3 FUTURE CAPABILITIES

This section contains guidelines for when to implement microservices architecture and recommendations for how to do so. The future state of VA will enable the use of microservices to promote agile methodologies, avoid technology lock-in, and incorporate more business logic into the application, instead of the infrastructure. Guidance and recommendations mostly originate from industry best practices.

3.1 Microservices Project Evaluation Criteria

The following flow chart helps guide the project team on whether to implement microservices or not.

⁴ VA. (2014) eHMP System Design Document Increment 1 and 2 and VA. (2015) VistA API 2.0 CDO Design Pattern Analysis and Recommendation

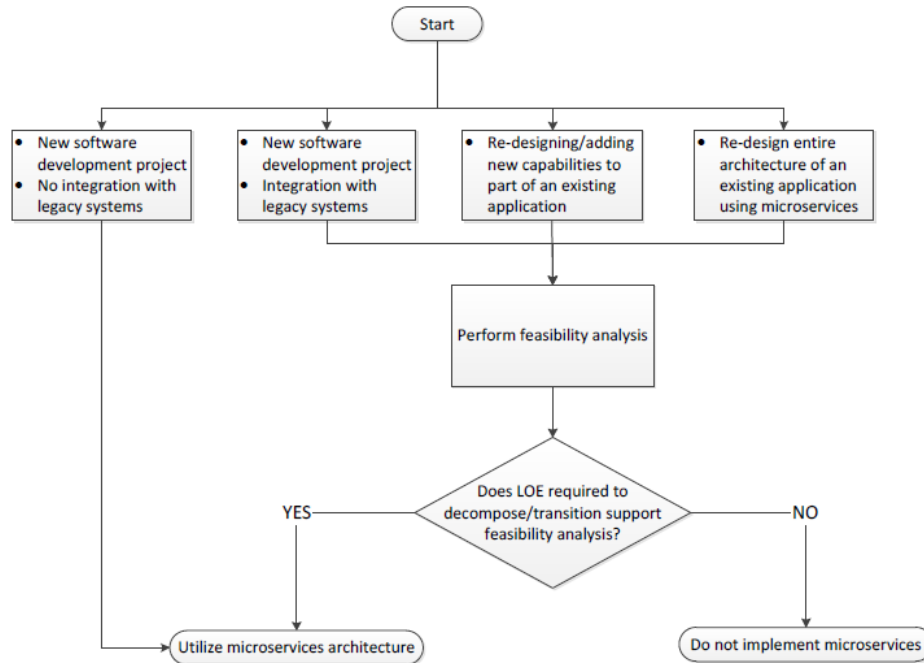


FIGURE 2: MICROSERVICES EVALUATION CRITERIA

When performing the feasibility analysis, project teams will consider evaluation methodology such as:

- Can service(s) be traced to specific business/mission requirements?
- Can service(s) be exposed with an API gateway? Can the API gateway handle the increased load?
- Can service(s) be deployed on a separate infrastructure that is isolated from the monolith?

As part of the Level of Effort (LOE) analysis, a roadmap can be developed that takes into consideration: anticipated costs, duration, and resource needs.

3.2 Microservices Design Considerations

3.2.1 Decomposition of Business Requirements

For new application development, service profiling should be used as a method for architecting a microservice solution. Service profiling refers to the initial phase of the microservices design process where project teams decompose services that will be offered and assembled. Project teams will identify which new services are to be built and ensure that these applications

strongly align to documented and approved business use cases as well as the existing VA enterprise architecture. Focusing on the mission alignment at the start of the lifecycle enables VA teams across different VA departments to synchronize accordingly. This reduces resource inefficiencies by preventing duplication of work resulting from the lack of communication or collaboration between VA teams using monolithic architecture approaches.

The following steps describe how to implement a new application centered on the use of microservices:

1. Project teams break down service needs via enterprise architecture and mission requirements which set standards for the information needed from the service at the atomic or business level
2. Project teams leverage a fine-grained scope at the atomic service level, taking into consideration only the optimal amount of information needed to make the service usable, reusable, portable, and distributable
3. Project teams create a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for the atomic services that specifically states the protocols and functionality the services will provide
4. At the business level, project teams focus on services that require integration of multiple attributes
5. When approaching microservices at the enterprise level, VA organizes technical teams based on what enterprise service needs to be delivered

Utilizing the business needs to identify capabilities suit for microservices helps address the following problem.

Problem(s) Addressed: Limited Agility

3.2.2 *Decomposition of VA Legacy Systems*

For monolithic applications where all capabilities are integrated together, the following steps dictate how to assess and decompose VA legacy systems into re-usable microservices:

1. Determine capabilities from the application that can be separated and moved to separate microservices. The microservice should be designed to be modular and accomplish a single capability to enhance unit testing and performance verification. The following types of capabilities are well suited for microservices, either for legacy systems or new applications:
 - User or account information
 - Authorization and session management
 - Preferences or configuration settings

- Notifications and communications services
 - Photos and media, especially metadata
2. Identify service classes which utilize create, retrieve, update, and delete (CRUD) interfaces and business logic layers that do not have dependencies on other classes. The microservices from the service layer expose the data services from the VA data layer. The interfaces of these services are used to perform the CRUD operations on data.
 3. Perform re-factoring within legacy codebase and deploy it to production.
 4. Define in the SLA, the protocols and functionality the services provide.

The capabilities suited for decomposition of VA legacy systems into microservices help address the following problem.

Problem(s) Addressed: Limited Agility

3.2.3 Monitoring Services

VA will monitor services, taking into consideration the status and performance of the individual microservices, while verifying that the whole application meets user expectations. VA will collect service health reports, and in instances when services are not performing as required, identify and resolve the impact on scaling. This information will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Analytics EDP to improve the performance and identify microservices that may need redesign. VA will institute an activity monitoring framework capable of tracking logins across platforms in accordance with the Enterprise Auditing EDP.

Incorporating monitoring of microservices on an individual and collective perspective helps address the following problems.

Problem(s) Addressed: Limited Agility, IT Infrastructure Evolution

3.2.4 Stateful vs. Stateless Design

When utilizing microservices, it is important to understand which type of design is best suited for an application. Stateless microservices do not maintain any internal state between requests and rely on an external data store for data persistence. Stateful microservices maintain an internal state between requests with an internal data store. Stateless microservices are best used for web front-ends, protocol gateways, and cloud services, while stateful services are best for databases, documents, user profiles, and shopping carts. Stateless microservices are more agile and scalable, minimizing the need to make significant changes or reconfigurations to the application. However, in instances of data intensive applications, stateful services provide data locality, which lowers latency and offers better performance. In general, stateless microservices

should be utilized whenever possible; however, there are some instances where a stateful service design is better.

Regardless of the design, each microservice will utilize the VA data layer for its data storage needs. This can lead to applications that utilize several different data storage types depending on the microservices utilized and the criteria of the application. The VA data layer provides access to all of VA's data storage options. The type of data storage utilized depends primarily on the following three criteria: data temperature, data structure, and concurrency support. Data storage options are detailed in the Data Storage EDP.

The combination of stateful and stateless microservices design coupled with the use of the VA data layer addresses the following problems.

Problem(s) Addressed: Limited Agility, IT Infrastructure Evolution

3.2.5 *Designing for Failure*

While microservices are designed to be small and well-tested, it is important to design them to handle failure (i.e. network latency, data centers shutting down, or other microservice failures). Automatic failure handling techniques, such as the circuit breaker pattern, detect failure and prevent an application from trying to reiterate an action which is likely to fail.⁵ A circuit breaker acts as a discovery service, ensuring that one microservice can identify when another microservice is down and immediately notify the main circuit breaker. This allows the microservice to check the circuit breaker of the microservice it is connected to, and determine if it is broken. If it is broken, the circuit breaker can prevent calls being made to or from that particular microservice.

Another option is having a central logging microservice, which can receive log messages from other microservices for inspection and searching, which would be done through a correlation token created by an API gateway. Regardless of the method, each microservice will have a method for mitigating unforeseen failures.

By incorporating mechanisms to address microservice failures the following problem is addressed.

Problem(s) Addressed: Limited Agility

3.2.6 *Container Standardization*

⁵ <https://martinfowler.com/bliki/CircuitBreaker.html>

As OS-level virtualization container technology is still maturing, it is important for VA to adopt the standards developed from industry. One organization in particular, the Open Container Initiative (OCI), is an open governance structure for creating open industry standards around container formats, container management, and runtime. OCI is leading the effort in container standardization.⁶

VA will utilize containers deployed through a commercial Platform-as-a-service (PaaS) provider. Leveraging a commercial PaaS allows VA to avoid the complexity of building and maintaining the infrastructure associated with developing and launching an application. Refer to the PaaS EDP for further information.

By adhering to industry container standards and leveraging commercial PaaS the following problems are addressed.

Problem(s) Addressed: Limited Agility, Technology Lock-in

3.3 Assessing Tools to Utilize Microservices

3.3.1 Containers-as-a-Service (CaaS)

VA requires a CaaS COTS platform approved for use in the Technical Reference Model (TRM). CaaS addresses the challenges associated with microservices and enables applications to be distributed on multiple platforms. CaaS also addresses the limitations VA currently encounters with its monolithic applications.

- Agility – Shortens the duration between software release cycles that VA requires by aligning with sprint cycles
- Portability – Provides the means to package the application and dependencies together making the container a complete and independent unit, allowing containerized applications to seamlessly transition from the development phase to the testing phase to production
- Control – Allows for standardization of the application environment with native tooling to manage the infrastructure and applications' unifying VA's heterogeneous set of infrastructure, code bases, and systems

Uses of CaaS address challenges associated with microservices and help address the following problems.

⁶ <https://www.opencontainers.org/>

Problem(s) Addressed: Limited Agility, Technology Lock-in, IT Infrastructure Evolution

3.3.2 *Microservices Testing*

When testing microservices, it is important to formulate an effective testing strategy that can provide support at every layer of testing. A key factor in defining a good test strategy is to identify the right amount of testing for each point in the test lifecycle. The following diagram depicts a bottom-up approach of the four phases of testing according to the testing pyramid.⁷

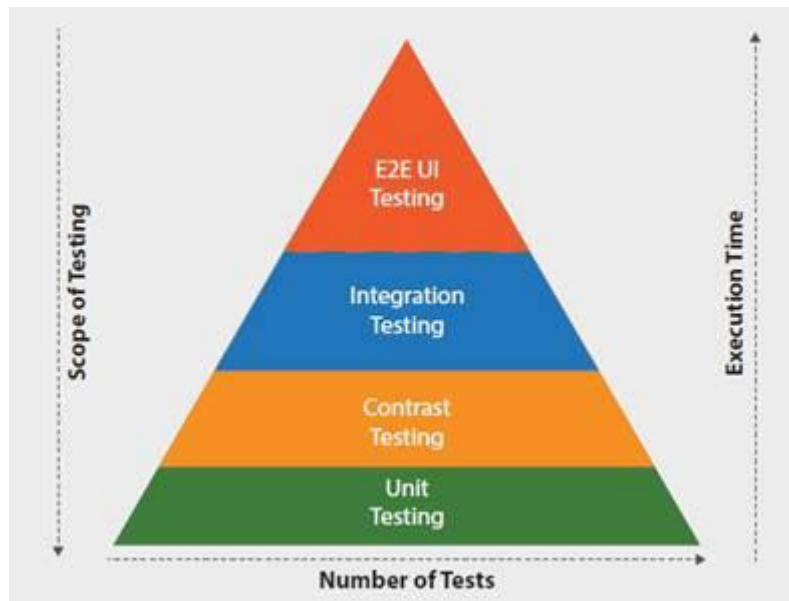


FIGURE 3- MICROSERVICES TESTING PYRAMID

The unit testing phase consists of the largest volume of tests. All tests should be automated, depending on the development language and framework used in the service. There are two methods of contract testing. The correct method depends on the end goal of the microservice and how the interfaces with consumers are defined. The first method is integration contract testing, where a test double (mock or stub) replicates a service that is to be consumed and must be verified with the real service to ensure consistency. The other method is consumer-driven contract testing, where consumers define how they consume the service through customer contracts.

The next phase is integration testing, which leverages a testing environment where individual microservices can be integrated before deployment. VA's Enterprise Development Environment (EDE) has developed a test environment referred to as the EDE Azure External Environment. This environment can be leveraged as a proving ground when building out microservices and

⁷ Infosys. (2016) White Paper – An Insight into Microservices Testing Strategies

integration testing. End-to-end testing is best served in situations where there is an interface to an externally-exposed service and the developer of the service provides a testing or "sandbox" version.

A structured testing framework combined with the use of VA's testing environment helps address the following problems.

Problem(s) Addressed: Limited Agility, IT Infrastructure Evolution

3.3.3 Secure Registry

VA will utilize a COTS product for registering microservices, and will include open source solutions for service discovery. VA will ensure that an open source environment is enabled by maintaining a consistent container format, regardless of vendor, and eliminating restrictions on destinations and orchestration layers. VA will make portable microservices applications for the purposes of maintaining flexibility with the wide portfolio of industry orchestration tools and selecting the best fit for managing run time. At the deployment phase, VA will share proven microservices applications throughout the VA infrastructure to promote reuse. In applying microservices applications across the VA infrastructure, security throughout different environments is imperative. VA will ensure that data remain isolated between environments for independent applications. As important, operator-access permissions across teams will be bounded based on the need to access or collaborate with a corresponding environment.

A registry for secure storage, management, and distribution of microservices helps address the following issue.

Problem(s) Addressed: IT Infrastructure Evolution

3.3.4 Management Capabilities

VA will employ management capabilities to achieve automation and mitigate downtime of microservices. VA will receive performance notifications, and when performance is lagging, will respond with an automated repair process to streamline setup of the microservices. VA will also leverage automation in the microservices architecture deployment process to ensure accurate and streamlined testing. VA will implement backwards compatibility along with rolling upgrades for the purposes of mitigating outages when enhancements are made on the microservices. Version control of microservices will also need to be instituted.

VA will utilize API management for microservices. API management is based on the enterprise architecture and mission requirements, and regulates the external services that can call the APIs, the instances which they can call the APIs, and the protocols used to call the APIs. VA will

collect metrics on API usage to identify the source of API calls as well as any occurrence of latency.

The use of management tools to track performance and manage APIs helps address the following problems.

Problem(s) Addressed: Limited Agility, IT Infrastructure Evolution

3.3.5 *Microservices and Container Workflow*

Figure 4 below depicts the “To-Be” workflow, describing how microservices and containers integrate into VA’s SDLC. Small development teams build, test, and deploy individual microservices utilizing the best codebase to suit their needs. Images are developed and sent to the registry for secure storage, management, and distribution. Management capabilities of IT operations will provision and manage infrastructure resources (e.g. cloud based and/or on-premises). IT operations will also have monitoring capabilities to manage and scale infrastructure and applications as needed.

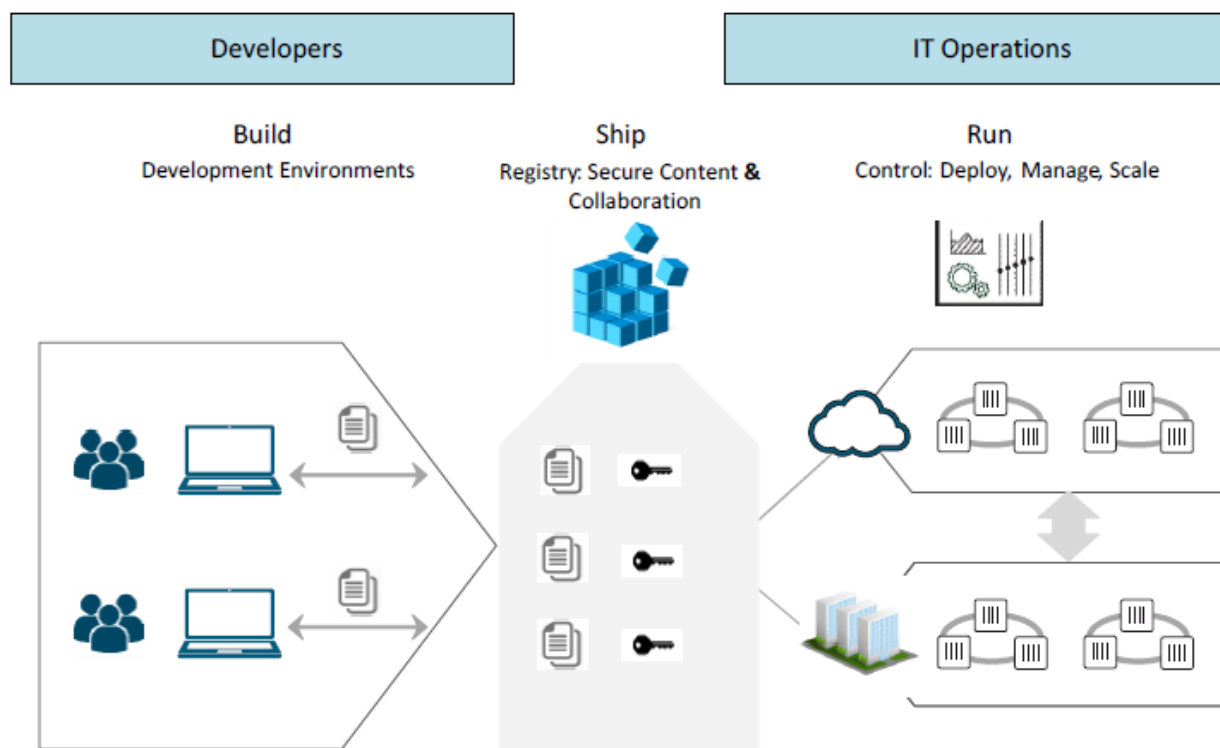


FIGURE 4: “TO-BE” MICROSERVICES AND CAAS WORKFLOW

Integrating microservices and CaaS into VA’s SDLC help address the following problems.

Problem(s) Addressed: Limited Agility, Technology Lock-in, IT Infrastructure Evolution

3.4 Summary of Principles

The following table summarizes the six key principles to leverage the full value of microservices. These guiding principles are applicable to both SOA and microservices.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES

Requirements	Description
SLA	The service provider uses the contract to express the purpose of the microservice and its requirements. It is important that VA's microservices architecture supports different data formats and transportation protocols without re-building services repeatedly.
Exposing microservices from existing applications	VA can either build completely new services or expose parts of existing applications as a microservice. Separating the transport logic from the service logic is a best practice.
Service discovery	VA must discover and use other services, to be published via an API gateway. Details of the API gateway are documented in the Secure Messaging EDP.
Coordination across services	Combining services in a higher level logic serve as applications or business processes, proves to be faster to develop and easier to maintain.
Managing complex deployments and scalability	Automation is key for an agile, flexible, and productive microservices environment. It is important to administer and monitor all VA microservices with a central user interface, and to choose a specific scalable, fault-tolerant, performant runtime for VA specific projects.
Visibility across services	After deploying and running microservices in production, VA should combine events, context, and insights from different services for instant awareness and event correlation.

3.5 Microservices Risks

In addition to the design considerations presented in this section, project teams must also consider the risks associated with microservices as highlighted in the following table.

TABLE 2: MICROSERVICES ADOPTION RISKS

Risk	Description
Migrating data on a live application	Data migration on a live application is situation-dependent and can result in newer data being overwritten with older data.

Risk	Description
Performance overhead	<p>The gains in code deployment and operation independence from microservices also bring greater traffic to the network.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More connection points • Load balancing • Firewall and port management at fine-grained level will be more tedious unless broadly scoped <p>Multiple message formats impact scanning and inspection.</p>
Data segmentation	If improperly designed, microservices can form information barriers.
Developer responsibilities	Developers need great understanding and participation in operations and productions. Microservices-based applications are tightly integrated into their environmental contexts.
More interfaces	Maintaining the SLAs between microservices is important. A change in syntax or semantics to one side of the contract requires all other services to understand that change.

3.6 Alignment to the One-VA Technical Reference Model (TRM)

All components of VA's "To-Be" microservices architecture will use approved technologies and standards located in the VA TRM to comply with the architectural guidance provided in this document. VA will evaluate new technologies, particularly those provided by commercial cloud service providers, and those approved for enterprise consumption will be catalogued in the TRM. The following table highlights the standards profile and approved technologies for microservices

TABLE 3: LIST OF APPROVED TOOLS AND STANDARDS

Tool Category	Example Approved Standards and Technologies
Application Server Software	GlassFish, Weblogic Server
Web Server Software	Apache Tomcat, IBM HTTP Server
Load and Performance Testing Tools	Apache JMeter
System Testing Tools	HP Fortify On-Demand
Build and Deployment Tools	Docker, Jenkins Continuous Integration
Application Development Tools	Eclipse WebTools Platform, XML, HL7 API,
Development Frameworks	Java API for RESTful Web Services,
Enterprise Service Bus	eMI
Service Registry	WebSphere Service Registry and
SOA Governance	CA API Gateway
Load Balancing and Failover	EMC PowerPath

Tool Category	Example Approved Standards and Technologies
Cloud Technologies	OpenStack
Virtualization Software	Citrix Receiver, Red Hat Enterprise



3.7 Alignment to Veteran-Focused Integration Process (VIP)

The Veteran-Focused Integration Process (VIP) is a Lean-Agile framework that serves the interest of Veterans through the efficient streamlining of activities that occur within the enterprise. The VIP framework unifies and streamlines IT delivery oversight and will deliver IT products more efficiently, securely, and predictably. VIP is the follow-on framework from Project Management Accountability System (PMAS) for the development and management of IT projects which will propel the Department with even more rigor toward Veteran-focused delivery of IT capabilities.



4 USE CASES

The following use cases are examples that demonstrate the application of the capabilities and recommendations described in this document

4.1 Use Case #1, Greenfield Development

4.1.1 Purpose

The Greenfield use case describes the high level architecture when microservices are utilized for new applications. An assessment of the baseline monolithic system is not applicable and therefore no refactoring or decomposition is required. Technical teams develop and scale the services independently.

4.1.2 Assumptions

- New development effort with no dependencies on baseline systems
- Service profiling is complete and approved prior to development (see section 3.2.1)
 - The application has a specific scope and an established alignment to enterprise architecture mission/business requirements
 - Teams have been staffed by considering the objective of the services

4.1.3 Use Case Description

The use case for a Greenfield microservices architecture is displayed in Figure 5.

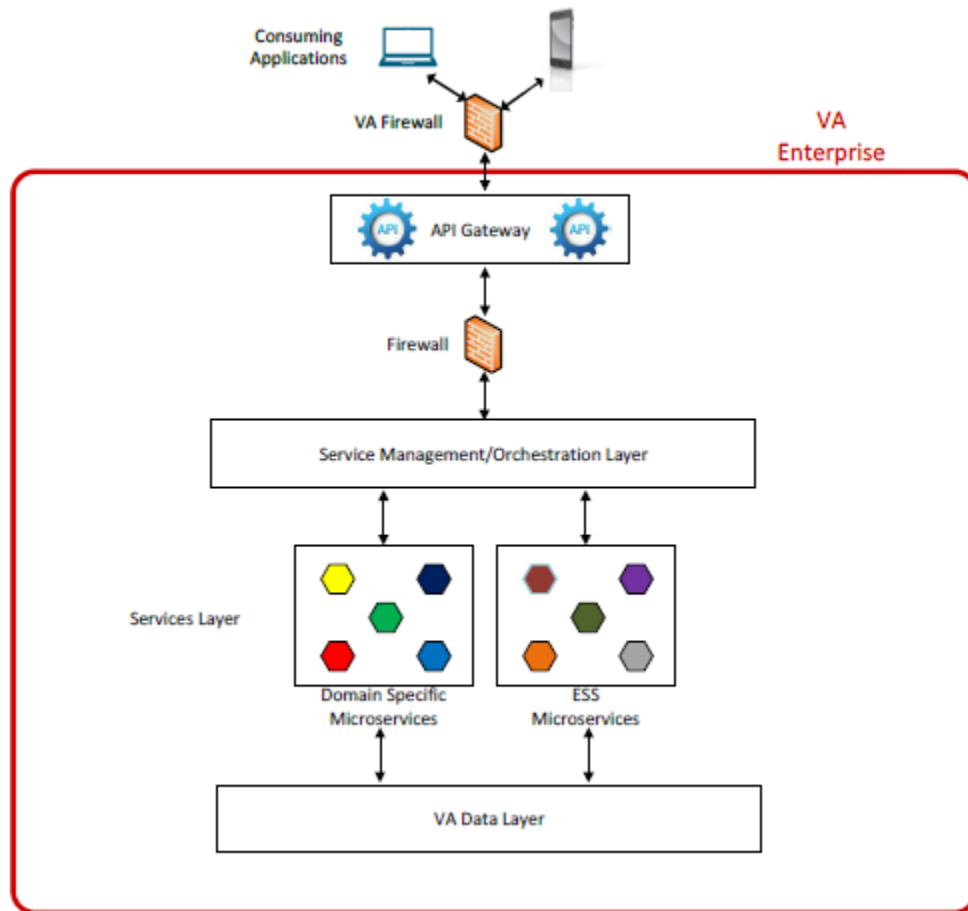


FIGURE 5: USE CASE #1

The steps for the Greenfield use case are as follows:

1. Consuming applications access VA services through the VA firewall
2. The API gateway lies between two firewalls that form a demilitarized zone (DMZ)
3. All microservices will be registered with the API gateway
4. The services management/orchestration layer provides the ability to utilize microservices to deploy and manage applications to many environments
5. The services layer contains all VA microservices, including domain specific and ESS microservices
6. The microservices will utilize the VA data layer containing the Enterprise CRUD (eCRUD) which provides access to the data lake, authoritative data sources (ADS), non-ADS, VA data warehouse, and archival data storage. Further information on the VA data layer is addressed in the Hybrid Data Access EDP.

4.2 Use Case #2, Brownfield Development

4.2.1 Purpose

This Brownfield use case describes the high level architecture when certain capabilities of legacy systems have been extracted and made into microservices or the entire legacy system is redesigned.

4.2.2 Assumptions

- Level of effort for decomposing the baseline system or transitioning the entire system is approved
- Decomposition has identified small/specific services that can be easily tested (see Section 3.2.2)
- Decomposition has identified and removed dependencies among service classes and codebase (see Section 3.2.2)

4.2.3 Use Case Description

The use case for a Brownfield microservices architecture is displayed in Figure 6.

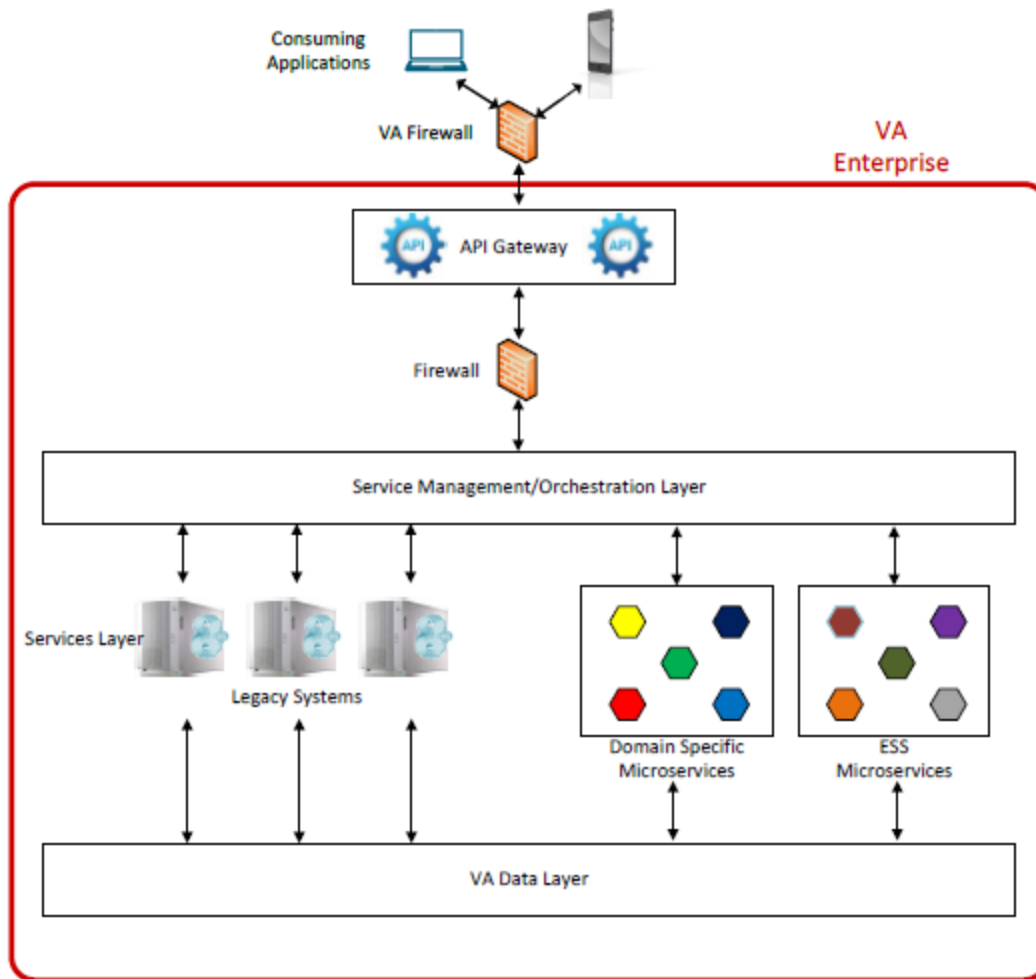


FIGURE 6: - USE CASE #2

The attributes for the Brownfield microservices use case are as follows:

1. Consuming applications access VA services through the VA firewall
2. The API gateway is situated in between two firewalls that form a DMZ
3. All legacy systems and microservices will be registered with the API gateway
4. The services management/orchestration layer provides the ability to utilize microservices in combination with legacy systems to deploy and manage applications to many environments. This layer handles the communication between the microservices and the legacy systems.
5. The services layer contains all the VA microservices including domain specific and ESS microservices as well as services offered by VA's legacy systems
6. The microservices will utilize the VA data layer containing the eCRUD, which provides access to the data lake, ADS, non-ADS, VA data warehouse, and archival data storage



APPENDIX A. SCOPE

This Enterprise Design Pattern establishes a framework that incorporates microservices into the architecture for both existing and new applications to support agile initiatives outlined in the Veteran-focused Integration Process (VIP). Topics include:

- Evaluating software projects suitable for microservices
- Microservices architecture
 - Deployment considerations: Containers and VMs
 - Hosting environments: Regional Data Centers vs. Cloud based
 - Integration with existing VA IT infrastructure, including mobile infrastructure
- Assessing strengths and weaknesses of microservices for VA compared to traditional monolithic application architectures

Topics outside the scope of this Enterprise Design Pattern, but may be referenced, are:

- Cloud Broker
- Traditional SOA infrastructure middleware (e.g. ESB)
- Implementation details about specific COTS products used to implement microservices and containers
- Details regarding privacy and security

Document Development and Maintenance

Internal stakeholders from across the Department, including participants from VA's Office of Information and Technology (OI&T), Product Development (PD), Office of Information Security (OIS), Architecture, Strategy and Design (ASD), and Service Delivery and Engineering (SDE) collaboratively developed this document. Extensive input and participation was also received from VHA, VBA and National Cemetery Administration (NCA). In addition, the development effort included engagements with industry experts to review, provide input, and comment on the proposed pattern. This document contains a revision history and revision approval logs to track all changes. Updates will be coordinated with the Government lead for this document, which also facilitate stakeholder coordination and subsequent re-approval depending on the significance of the change.

APPENDIX B. DEFINITIONS

This appendix provides definitions for terms used in this document, particularly those related to databases, database management, and data integration.

Key Term	Definition
Atomic Service	A mechanism to enable access to a single purpose capability, where the access is provided using a prescribed interface and is exercised consistent with constraints and policies as specified by the service description.
Enterprise Shared Service	A SOA service that is visible across the enterprise and can be accessed by users across the enterprise, subject to appropriate security and privacy restrictions.
Service Oriented Architecture	A paradigm for organizing and utilizing distributed capabilities that may be under the control of different ownership domains. It provides a uniform means to offer, discover, interact with and use capabilities to produce desired effects consistent with measurable preconditions and expectations.

APPENDIX C. ACRONYMS

The following table provides a list of acronyms that are applicable to and used within this document.

Acronym	Description
ADS	Authoritative Data Sources
API	Application Programming Interface
ASD	Architecture, Strategy and Design
CaaS	Containers-as-a-Service
COTS	Commercial-off-the-Shelf
CRUD	Create, Retrieve, Update, and Delete
eCRUD	Enterprise CRUD
EDE	Enterprise Development Environment
eHMP	Enterprise Health Management Platform
eMI	Enterprise Messaging Infrastructure
ESB	Enterprise Service Bus
ESS	Enterprise Shared Services
ETA	Enterprise Technical Architecture
ETSP	Enterprise Technology Strategic Plan
IDE	Integrated Development Environment
IT	Information Technology
LOB	Line of Business
LOE	Level of Effort
NCA	National Cemetery Administration
OI&T	Office of Information and Technology
OIS	Office of Information Security
PaaS	Platform-as-a-Service
SDE	Service Delivery and Engineering
SDLC	Software Development Lifecycle
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SOA	Service-Oriented Architecture
TRM	Technical Reference Model
TS	Office of Technology Strategies
VAE	VistA Access Enhancements
VBA	Veteran Benefits Association
VHA	Veteran Health Administration
VistA	Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture
WAR	Web Application Archive

APPENDIX D. REFERENCES, STANDARDS, AND POLICIES

This EDP is aligned to the following VA OI&T references and standards applicable to all new applications being developed in the VA, and are aligned to the VA Enterprise Technical Architecture (ETA):

#	Issuing Agency	Policy, Directive, or Procedure	Purpose
1	VA	VA Directive 6551	Establishes a mandatory policy for establishing and utilizing Enterprise Design Patterns by all Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) projects developing information technology (IT) systems in accordance with the VA's Office of Information and Technology (OI&T) integrated development and release management process, the Veteran-focused Integration Process (VIP).
2	VA OIS	VA 6500 Handbook	Directive from the OI&T OIS for establishment of an information security program in VA, which applies to all applications that leverage ESS.
3	VA OI&T	Veteran Focused Integration Process Guide 1.0	The Veteran-focused Integration Process (VIP) is a Lean-Agile framework that services the interest of Veterans through the efficient streamlining of activities that occur within the enterprise.
4	NIST	NIST Definition of Microservices, Application Containers and System Virtual Machines	Provides a NIST-standard definition to application containers, microservices which reside in application containers and system virtual machines.

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