VA Lighthouse Governance Model Microconsulting

# Objectives

Uncover best practices for an authentication framework and rollout by analyzing strengths and weaknesses from public and private sector APIs.

## Goals of Research

1. Generate best practices for creating a governance model and getting it adopted
2. Research authentication models by looking at comparative experiences with OAuth style identify-proofing mechanisms
3. Create a user experience that makes it easier for a user to login and manage their data

## Primary Research Questions

1. How do I as an API platform builder create an authentication framework that is easy for other developers to implement?
2. How do I as the VA implement a secure and highly available identify-proofing and data management/authorization solution with a seamless user experience?

## Secondary Research Questions

1. How do I as the VA management team publish API standards and drive their adoption throughout the organization
   1. What kind of tools do they need to make that integration process as simple as possible?

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# Background for participants

*[When the participant is ready, the moderator will begin the session with the following introduction.]*

Thank you for joining us today. On the call with me is our note taker [NAME] and [name of observers/others listening in]. We’re working with the VA (Veterans Affairs)’s to improve how APIs are built and used.

Before we begin, I’d like to make a few things clear and explain how the session will work:

* There are no right or wrong answers — and I won’t be offended by any opinions you express.
* [NAME] will be taking notes. We have to share what we learn from you with the rest of our team. Our notes will help us to make sure that we capture your feedback accurately.
* This conversation will last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.
* Your participation in this discussion is voluntary. You may stop at any time.
* If it’s okay with you, we’ll be recording our conversation today so we can capture all your thoughts accurately. If that is not alright, just let me know and it’s not a problem.
* Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. We are here to learn from you.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

*[The moderator will begin audio recording.]*

## 

## Warm up questions (2-3 questions, 5 mins)

Goal: Get the participant comfortable with answering questions by starting things out light.

* Tell me about your role and responsibilities.
* How do APIs fit in?
  + If not familiar explain APIs: An API, or Application Programming Interface, is a flexible way to give and receive information by allowing software systems to communicate with each other. In this case, the VA could provide a set of tools for providing appeals data that gives your developers all the building blocks necessary to automate collection of appeals data directly from VA’s system to your own.

## Best Practices and Governance Models (10-15 min)

Goal: Get at how consumers and owners currently manage their APIs, strengths and weakness of current model. What does/doesn’t make working with an API go well? What can we learn from that?

* *Developer:* How do you decide what APIs to develop? Can you walk me through that process?
  + How does that relate to end-user needs?
  + How do you assess whether an API is ready for production?
  + What’s been your experience with API standards or approval processes?
  + How have you rolled out standards with APIs (esp in a bureaucratic setting)? What was that like?
  + How do you balance standardization across an organization while allowing for flexibility and innovation?
* *Developer:* What’s been your experience with implementing APIs and what problems have people had with it?
* *Developer:* What’s a good onboarding experience for an API developer?
* *Developer:* Are you familiar with governance models? Do you use one with regards to APIs?
  + If yes: What’s involved in that model? What does it look like in action?
  + [If they work with a governance model] How did you get the model adopted?
  + Are there things that could have improved that process?
* *Developer:* If you could change something about your current API processes, what would it be?
* *Developer:* Do you know of an API governance model in the private sector that works well?

## Authentication frameworks (10-15 min)

Goal: Recommendations we can make for a governance model that will manage an authentication framework. Topics like authorization/security/2FA/OAuth, how are those managed/conceptualized?

* For any APIs you build, how do you manage security/privacy concerns?
* What are some things to keep in mind when creating/working with an API that manages authentication?
  + Are there specific considerations?
* How familiar are you with identity proofing solutions?
  + How do you feel about adding those those?
  + How do you make a good user experience of it?
* Do you have experience insulating API owners from the implementation details of end-user authorization? What was that like?
* What has been your experience with OAuth and/or Open ID Connect?
  + How do you make a good user experience of it?

## Closing Questions (2-3 questions, 5 mins)

Goal: wrap-up conversation guide gently, leave opportunity for participants to unload any last thoughts or ask questions.

* Is there anyone else that you think would be good for us to talk to?
* Is there anything we haven’t talked about today that you think I should know?
* Any last thoughts?