Next Steps to Support VHA Migration to Vets.gov Locator

As we move toward increased cooperation and a merging of the online experience across va.gov and Vets.gov, it is imperative that these data sources be consistent. VHA currently uses the Facilities & Leadership (F&L) Web Service to populate much of its content on VA Medical Center (VAMC) websites. In order to migrate away from the F&L, it must have a similar API available from U.S. Digital Service (USDS), providing data in sync with the Vets.gov locator — as soon as VHA migrates away from public use of the F&L and its data, we will no longer maintain data in the legacy system.

## Build Facility Locator API

USDS will build an API for the Vets.gov locator, using the current data available, built with growth and evolution in mind. For example, it may only include facility location and contact information right now, but might include facility director information in the future. This API will replace the Web Service described at <https://www.va.gov/webservices/fandl/documentation/fandl.cfm>.

The Vets.gov Minimum Viable Product API shall include:

1. Facility address
2. Facility phone number
3. Facility hours of operation
4. Facility driving directions URL (Google maps URL)
5. Facility URL

USDS will work with the VA Data Governance Council (DGC) to ensure it is pulling data from Authoritative Data Sources for its locator.

## Identify Authoritative Data Source for Leadership in Facilities

VHA will identify an authoritative source for VHA facility leadership information. Most important for accountability and transparency is the VAMC Director, but other levels of staff such as VAMC Chief of Staff may be needed. While VHA identifies this need, it is likely a requirement for VBA and NCA as well. VHA Digital Media will take lead on this effort. It will reach out to sister offices in VBA and NCA to determine if they have a similar need. Staff will coordinate with the DGC as appropriate.

## Identify Authoritative Data Source for VAMC Patient Advocate Information

VHA will identify an authoritative source for VAMC patient advocate(s) information. VHA Digital Media will take lead on this effort. Patient advocates are the lead providers of VAMC customer service and as such, their contact information must be easily identifiable. If there is no centrally managed authoritative source available, VHA will work with OIT and USDS to develop VAMC templates or similar resources to allow Patient Advocate information to be locally directly on VAMC websites. Staff will coordinate with the DGC as appropriate.

## Determine a Maintenance Strategy for VHA Facility URLs

The Vets.gov locator includes VHA Facility URLs currently. However, the mapping is generated via F&L reports, so a new method must be identified to maintain this information over time. VHA Digital Media and USDS staff will work together collaboratively to identify a method to maintain this information over time and make it available via an authoritative source.

## Improve Facility Locator API with New Data Elements

USDS will make facility leadership information available via the Facility Locator API. If a centrally managed source is available for VAMC Patient Advocates, that data will be made available via the API as well.

## Explore Enhancing Services information on VA Websites

VHA Digital Media is beginning planning for a project to make services information on VA websites easier to use. VAMC websites do not use a standard terminology or set of services. Local web editors choose terms and level of detail. It is unclear if there is consistent terminology in the provision of care at facilities. VHA Digital Media intends to explore this issue and would be interested in collaborating with USDS on this effort as appropriate.

## VHA Migration

USDS will work with VHA and OIT staff to successfully migrate VAMC websites from pulling data from the F&L Web Service to the Vets.gov locator API.