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## **Deploying and Modernizing VistA – A Case Study for Legacy System Transition Project Operating Principles and Guidelines**

### **ACT-IAC**

The American Council for Technology (ACT) is a non-profit, educational organization whose mission is to help government use information technology to improve operations and serve the public. The Industry Advisory Council (IAC) was established by ACT to improve government by providing an objective and vendor-neutral forum for soliciting advice and assistance from the private sector IT industry.

### **THE ISSUE**

The Department of Veterans Affairs operates a healthcare management system – the Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA) – that is used by hospitals around the country to support major healthcare functions. The system was developed (and currently continues to use) an early programming language (MUMPS). The VA is interested in exploring how this legacy system could be upgraded and deployed to the broader health care community. The issues associated with upgrading this system could have implications for other agencies using similar types of legacy systems. The VA's Assistant Secretary for Information Technology has asked IAC --- thru ACT – to address these issues.

### **THE PROJECT**

See the charter for a more detailed description of the project, the deliverables and the schedule.

### **OPERATING PRINCIPLES**

ACT-IAC has adopted the following principles to guide the organization's activities. This project will abide by these principles:

- Government IT issues drive the agenda
- All activities will be ethical, open, and transparent
- All activities will be objective, fair and vendor/technology independent
- Lobbying and business development are prohibited

It is intended that this project will be conducted in a manner to foster consensus. All deliberations should focus on the government's needs and the public good. Participants should not promote proprietary solutions or technologies. To facilitate this collaboration:

- A collaborative workspace will be provided to the working group to support its activities. This site will only be open to the working group.
- Working group discussions will be confidential and members will not attribute comments to individual members of the working group.
- Documents and proposals discussed by the working group will not be discussed or distributed to other parties without the explicit approval of the working group.
- Conference calls, briefings, committee meetings and other working group activities are ONLY open to the individuals who have been appointed to the working group. Substitutions are not permitted.
- Working group members are expected to participate on a continuing basis. Members who are unable to participate on a regular basis may be removed from the working group.
- Working group members are expected to respond to all requests and tasks in a timely and productive manner.
- Minutes will be kept of all project meetings and posted on the collaborative work space. The minutes will identify those who were present, the key issues discussed and any decisions reached.

Working group members are expected to participate in a manner that fosters consensus. Every effort should be made to reach consensus and avoid the need for taking votes on specific issues. Should a vote be required, each company on the working group will have one vote.

It is also intended that the VISTA project will be conducted in an open and transparent manner as demonstrated, at a minimum, by the following:

- The charter and working group membership will be made available to the Federal IT community.
- As appropriate, the working group should strive to share key updates on the project with the wider Federal IT community. The working group may, if it wishes, also invite comment or input from a wider community if it contributes to the accomplishment of the project's mission.
- The final product and any recommendations made by the working group will be released to the public.

It is intended that the VISTA project will be conducted in an ethical manner. All participants in this process will comply with the IAC Code of Conduct and all federal ethics rules and regulations.

The project will focus on implementation and operational issues. The project will not address whether VISTA should be upgraded or deployed to a broader constituency. Those are policy issues beyond the scope of IAC's mission.

## **OVERSIGHT**

The IAC Executive Committee has the responsibility to oversee this project and its activities. The Executive Committee's authority includes the right to review and approve the final product prior to release and the right to remove members of the working group if they are not abiding by the above principles.