

Utility/Platform Working Group: Enterprise Technology Platforms¹

The Utility/Platform Working Group* has reviewed the issue of platforms that fall outside the scope of custom software development and the need to include them online in a manner similar to the Software Factory Utilities and CODE VA Platforms websites.

STATUS:

CODE VA hosts custom development-focused utilities and platforms. The platforms included on CODE VA are the four existing certified Custom Software Platforms; each geared toward software development for VA engineers and product teams. These tools are managed by their respective owners, while the site listings are managed by the CODE VA team.

PROBLEM:

Several approved, vetted “platforms” exist and are available to VA teams. These platforms are not focused on software development; they are geared toward other uses such as service/incident management. These platforms do not meet the definition of software utility.

However, these platforms **should be listed and made available** to VA product teams in the “one-stop shop” manner desired by stakeholders. Listing and ‘advertising’ these approved-for-use platforms is necessary to encourage VA users to select and use them, rather than seek out and test other solutions that are not on an approved list. Ensuring that approved software platforms are standardized and easily accessible is critical for OIT to keep the list of available tools manageable and well-understood.

However, the current CODE VA site is not the proper location for these tools to be co-located. CODE VA is and will continue to be focused on custom software development and engineering activities.

SOLUTION:

The solution should be driven based on the goals and objectives for standing up a separate site. What is/are the capability(ies) that a user is going to get by using one of these Enterprise Technology Platforms? Without understanding the use case(s)/audience(s), determining a solution is likely putting the cart before the horse.

¹ Enterprise Technology Platforms have been documented by the AES EA Team via Architecture Decision Record (ADR).

Having said that, we have identified two possible solutions to document Enterprise Technology Platforms:

1. These miscellaneous platforms can be listed on an existing site, such as the VA EA Intranet site: <https://vaww.ea.oit.va.gov/>.

Links within CODE VA Platforms and Utilities sites can bring users to this site when they are searching for a particular tool...i.e., “[Looking for non-development software? Go here.](#)”

2. A partner site can be launched on Backstage, with a similar look and feel as CODE VA, but perhaps designed with a reverse color scheme or other indicator to remind the site visitor that the listed platforms are non-development platforms, and is separate from CODE VA.

These platforms can be categorized or managed in some way TBD. This site can also be linked via the CODE VA sites, making it easy for project teams to navigate between the two areas.

The first suggestion is likely the simplest; a site already exists, and it would be relatively easy to update a page or add a page to list the miscellaneous platforms along with some instructive text for the reader.

The second suggestion is more involved, as it requires spinning up a new site. However, OIT may have other goals and communication needs/improvements regarding non-software development tools. If this is the case, a new site listing these types of available tools and resources could serve as a launching point for improving the availability and accessibility of these software packages across the VA.

CONSIDERATIONS

There are multiple questions that should be answered prior to determining the path forward for miscellaneous platforms.

1. Utilities are managed by Utility Owners. The four certified platforms have dedicated teams running them.

- a. What is the expectation for managing the miscellaneous platforms, once they are co-located and accessible via a one-stop shop?
 - i. Will the documentation for these platforms need to be listed or linked?
 - ii. Will the “owners” need to participate in any way?
 - iii. Who monitors changes and makes updates to these software platforms and/or relevant documentation?
 - iv. Will these platforms need “rating systems” or user interaction similar to Utilities?
 - v. Who decides which platforms get to be listed on this site?