



ARCHITECTURE DECISION RECORD (ADR)

Decision Summary: TRM Modernization – Transition from legacy platform to ServiceNow

Approved by the VA Chief Architect (OIT/OCTO) on 8/13/2025

Context

The VA Technical Reference Model (TRM) is being reimagined as a strategic enabler that actively drives software reuse, reduces redundancy, and supports secure, cost-effective technology decisions across the enterprise.

The modernization effort addresses long-standing challenges with the current legacy platform and process, including:

- Manual operations – Current process relies on staff for TRM catalog management (i.e. software version updates) the SNOW catalog updates are provided as a service.
- Security and compliance overhead – Continuous FISMA oversight and an Authorization to Operate (ATO) process required for the custom-built platform.
- Legacy architecture – Built on outdated .NET technology, creating a high operations and maintenance (O&M) burden.
- Slow updates – Inability to keep pace with rapid technology changes, causing data lag.
- Inefficient processes – Multi-stage approvals and lack of integration with other VA systems slow project starts and hinder end-user experience.
- Limited enforcement of reuse – Current process does not consistently drive technology rationalization, allowing redundant products to persist.
- Lack of SAM integration – TRM decisions are not aligned or synchronized with the Software Asset Management lifecycle, limiting lifecycle governance.

Decision

Replace the legacy, custom-built TRM with a modernized capability in ServiceNow, an already funded, FedRAMP-authorized SaaS platform that offers scalable catalog management, process automation, and seamless integration with VA's existing enterprise tools.



Other alternatives were evaluated, but all would have required similar integration to ServiceNow, making ServiceNow the most efficient, cost-effective, and maintainable option.

Rationale

Modernizing the TRM in ServiceNow transforms it from a manual, siloed approval process into an integrated, automated, and strategic capability that accelerates decision-making, enforces governance, and drives reuse across VA.

Key benefits include:

1. Efficiency and integration: Leverages an enterprise SaaS platform with automation, workflow integration, and user-friendly interfaces, eliminating the need for separate ATO management and reducing maintenance.
2. Enforced reuse and standardization: Limits new tool approvals to unique, mission-critical needs and promotes reuse of approved solutions, containers, and microservices.
3. Centralized, curated technology catalog: Maintains an evolving inventory of approved Hosted, SaaS, and PaaS products aligned with enterprise architecture, security, and business needs.
4. Lifecycle modernization: Proactively updates tools, phases out outdated technologies, and uses SAM insights for decommissioning and lifecycle planning.
5. Security and compliance alignment: Enforces zero-trust principles, ensures only secure and compliant software is approved, and synchronizes TRM and SAM workflows for governance and procurement control.
6. Integrated capability: Combines TRM with CMDB, ATO, EA, and demand management into a single platform, enabling unified governance and oversight.
7. Real-time visibility: Provides timely, authoritative data to support faster, more informed technology decisions.

Impact(s)

- Administrative complexity will require specialized training and ServiceNow certification for full administrative control.
- Implementation success will depend on strong cross-team alignment between EA, Security, OIT operations, and ServiceNow platform teams.
- Additional configuration may be needed to adapt ServiceNow's TRM module to VA-specific governance requirements.
- Initial rollout may require significant OCM (Organizational Change Management) effort to transition teams from the legacy TRM workflows.



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For questions or further clarification, contact the Enterprise Architecture team at ea@va.gov.

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