



ARCHITECTURE DECISION RECORD (ADR)

Decision Summary: Establish CODE VA as the Unified VA API Catalog

Approved by the VA Chief Architect (OIT/OCTO) on 1/9/2026

Context

The current state of Application Programming Interface (API) management within VA involves multiple, disparate sources for API discovery and cataloging. This fragmentation leads to inefficiencies, difficulties in API governance, and challenges in ensuring consistent API usage and documentation standards. A unified approach is needed to streamline these processes and improve overall API management and discovery.

CODE VA (code.va.gov) is the central hub for VA engineering teams to discover and access APIs, explore software factory tools and templates, and follow standardized developer guidelines to build and deliver secure, scalable solutions for Veterans.

Decision

Establish CODE VA as the official unified [VA API Catalog](https://code.va.gov/catalog) (code.va.gov/catalog). This catalog provides a “one-stop shop” for API documentation, metadata, and discovery mechanisms including references to APIs that are located outside of CODE VA. A comprehensive, searchable catalog of all APIs provides information about versions, endpoints, usage guidelines, and associated documentation, ensuring consistency and ease of access for all VA engineering teams.

Rationale

- **Efficiency:** A single source of truth will reduce the time and effort required to locate and understand available APIs.
- **Consistency:** Ensures uniformity in API documentation and standards across the organization through the use of the official API standards at <https://code.va.gov/docs/default/component/va-api-standards>.



- **Governance:** Having APIs in a central location makes it easier to ensure adherence to API policies compared to being distributed across multiple API catalogs.
- **Collaboration:** Enhances collaboration among development teams by providing a shared resource for API information.
- **Maintainability:** A centralized API inventory makes it easier to maintain information about the APIs from a single location.

Impact(s)

- Product teams should consolidate and include existing API documentation in CODE VA. This is done by creating a new yml file in their existing GitHub repository and adding it to the CODE VA catalog. <https://code.va.gov/docs/default/component/code-va-docs/starter-guide/#add-an-item-to-the-catalog>.
- API development lifecycles and processes will be updated to streamline and automate updates to the CODE VA API Catalog.

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

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**Disclaimer: The Architecture and Engineering Services (AES) team's recommendation in this ADR is provided solely as an architectural guidance and does not imply AES ownership of operational, licensing, or cost responsibilities associated with the adoption of the recommended tool.*