

**Department of  
Veterans Affairs**

**Memorandum**

Date: December 19, 2016

From: Acting Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Informatics and Information Governance (10P2)

Subj: Sharing VHA Software Requirements with the Open Source Community (VAIQ 7762220)

To: VACO Staff, Office of Informatics and Information Governance (10P2)

1. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines under which Office of Informatics and Information Governance staff may use an external website operated by the Open Source Electronic Health Record Alliance (OSEHRA) as a venue for communication with the open source community.

2. OSEHRA was founded in 2011 with a mission statement that includes community development and facilitation of the open source healthcare IT community, including VA. As an established conduit for VA's communication with the larger open source community, OSEHRA is currently contractually obligated to employ a method for identifying significant open source packages/applications that merit consideration as possible enhancements to VA Enterprise Veterans Information Systems and Technology Architecture (Vista). As such, a Product Candidate Webpage has been established on the OSEHRA website<sup>1</sup> for the purpose of aggregating suggestions from the community, and evaluating and ranking them based on open source community input.

3. An In Process Review (IPR) workgroup has been established to receive and review the open source community nominations as part of OSEHRA's contract deliverables. This review does not constitute a commitment to deploy any of the suggested software, nor does it commit the IPR to follow the priority order suggested by the open source community. The review is for information only, and will inform the IPR regarding open source software available from the community. Should the IPR decide to place one or more of the candidates into the existing software intake process, the appropriate code will be obtained from the OSEHRA repository.

4. In addition to obtaining community suggestions for input, VHA will utilize the OSEHRA site to communicate unfulfilled software requirements to the open source community. To that end, VHA will provide OSEHRA with a periodic list of unfulfilled requirements. OSEHRA will display the list to the community on a VHA requirements webpage. This will not only help the open source community understand VHA's needs, but may also help them identify existing open source software that addresses those needs and encourages open source contributions.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.osehra.org](http://www.osehra.org)

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5. In order to ensure that the exchange of information on these OSEHRA webpages does not impact any current or future acquisitions, the following guidelines will be used:

- a. The webpages used for displaying community suggestions and VHA unfulfilled requirements will be publicly accessible without login or membership requirements. Appropriate metadata will be used by OSEHRA to ensure that the pages are easily found by conventional search engines.
- b. The webpage used for entry of community suggestions will require site login prior to input of data on the webpage, to prevent automated spam. Registration for the site will be free.
- c. The following message will be displayed on the related OSEHRA Product Candidate webpage(s):

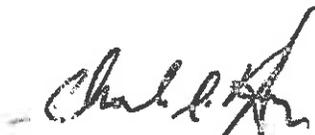
"The information on this page is provided to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) for information only. VHA has no obligation to take any action with regard to the suggestions on this page."

- d. The following message will be displayed on the OSEHRA VHA requirements webpage used for communicating VHA unfilled requirements:

"The information on this page is provided to the open source community by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) for information only. This page is not a solicitation for any work effort or proposals."

6. VHA will publish, in FedBizOps, its intention to post unfulfilled software requirements to the OSEHRA website, and will inform vendors on how to access that site to view VHA's requirements.

7. Whenever other open source websites are identified, VHA will evaluate the feasibility of making similar arrangements with those websites.



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