



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 7, 2018

VA Announces Launch of ‘Lighthouse Lab’ at Health Information & Technology Conference

Initiative Provides Platform for Software Developers to Create Mobile and Web Apps for Vets to Better Manage Their Health-care Information

WASHINGTON — Shared at a key health-information and technology conference in Las Vegas on March 5, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the launch of a “beta” version of its [Lighthouse Lab](#), a computer platform offering software developers access to tools for creating mobile and web applications that will help Veterans better manage their care, services and benefits.

The annual [Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society \(HiMSS\) Conference](#), held March 5–9, attracts more than 45,000 professionals and will feature VA Secretary David Shulkin as a keynote speaker. Shulkin will be joined by Vice Adm. Raquel C. Bono to expound on what VA is doing to deliver 21st-century coordinated care for service members and Veterans.

“One of my top five priorities is to modernize our systems, and the announcement of the Lighthouse Lab supports VA’s move toward adopting commercial off-the-shelf products,” said Shulkin, who is scheduled to discuss medical care for Veterans, as well as changes and innovations at the department on the last day of the event. “Lighthouse represents VA’s commitment to providing a digital experience in line with what Veterans are getting from the private sector by rapidly bringing cutting-edge solutions into VA that can help us accommodate our Veterans’ unique needs.”

Considered the “front door” to VA’s vast data stores, Lighthouse is [the department’s application programming interface \(API\)](#) management platform, and functions similar to a waiter’s role in a restaurant — the critical link communicating orders to the “kitchen.” For VA, the kitchen is the system that will prepare the order then deliver it back to the waiter, or API.

VA is seeking a small, initial-user group to begin building the Lighthouse Lab developer community. Participation will include helping to test APIs, building out documentation, developing governance standards and testing developer support workflows.

Lighthouse’s architecture supports VA’s move toward adopting commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) products and innovative acquisition approaches, such as micro-purchasing agreements with a \$3,500 threshold for technology solutions that can be rapidly deployed to Veterans.

To that end, VA is releasing three initial micro-purchasing request for proposals (RFP) on the Lighthouse [Github repository](#) and expects awards will be decided by the end of March. Micro-purchasing awards allow VA to increase the number of contracts awarded to small businesses and diversify the development ecosystem at VA. Later this spring, VA will issue the next Lighthouse RFP.

In alignment with VA’s Lighthouse Lab, Administrator Seema Verma, who leads the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), also [announced](#) her agency’s [MyHealthEData](#) initiative on March 5 at the HiMSS conference. MyHealthEData is being led by the [White House Office of American Innovation](#), and will give patients more control of their medical data.

VA Secretary Shulkin applauded CMS’ commitment to putting patients first and the launch of [Blue Button 2.0](#), a software developer-friendly API similar to VA’s Lighthouse Lab, that enables Medicare beneficiaries to connect their claims data to applications, services and research programs.

“We partnered on the original Blue Button and are partnering on Blue Button 2.0,” Shulkin said. “This will further allow a patient to access and share their health-care information, which will be of great value to Veterans and other citizens.”

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