

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
GOVERNANCE DECISION RIGHTS NOTICE**

1. **PURPOSE.** This notice is issued to meet an objective of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Notice 22-15 (September 15, 2022), which states the Office of Enterprise Integration (OEI) is to “undertake a review of Department-level issues requiring governance and make recommendations to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary about the decision rights of both the Principal Governance Bodies and Councils.” This notice provides a policy to enable informed decision-making at the lowest level while maintaining accountability, transparency and collaboration. It also furthers an understanding of what sorts of issues are to be brought before the Principal Governance Bodies and Councils, thereby improving enterprise governance effectiveness.
2. **POLICY.** The following policy guidance presents an approach for determining if a given topic or issue merits consideration by VA Principal Governance Bodies and Councils (also referred to in this notice as Principal Governance Forums): namely, the VA Executive Board (VAEB), VA Operations Board (VAOB), Evidence-Based Policy Council (EBPC) and Investment Review Council (IRC). The intake form used by OEI’s Office of Enterprise Governance Management (EGM) will reflect an assessment of topics proposed according to the principles and considerations set out in this notice.
 - a. **GUIDING PRINCIPLES.** These guiding principles are of primary importance to decision-makers in determining if issues are appropriate for the Principal Governance forums:
 - (1) The needs of Veterans and staff are at the center of all VA does. When members of Principal Governance forums determine bringing an issue forward will lead to a better outcome for Veterans and/or staff, they shall submit attached intake form to EGM (yagovernanceintake@va.gov). Based on the intake form, EGM will determine how the issue should enter a governance forum and calendar the discussion. For example, an EBPC member determines a governance discussion on Tribal Co-pay issues would provide a better outcome for Veterans and submits an intake form to EGM. EGM will then use the form to route the topic to the EBPC Chair for consideration and if approved, EGM will schedule the issue for next available EBPC.
 - (2) Decisions shall be made at the lowest practicable level. The IRC and EBPC shall have the ability to make resource and policy decisions themselves, respectively, without those decisions requiring a review by the VAOB or VAEB. For example, the IRC member from the Office of Human Resources Administration/Operations, Security and Preparedness (HRA/OSP) requires a funding decision to realign funds and fills out an intake form requesting an IRC approval to accomplish the realignment. EGM uses the form to route the topic to the IRC Chair, who agrees to

resolve at the next IRC. Decision to realign funds is then made by the IRC to support the initiative without need to elevate to VAOB or VAEB for approval.

- (3) If the topic or issue is within the jurisdiction and responsibility of one Administration or Staff Office, the matter will be decided within that Administration or Staff Office. For example, clinical decisions are made by the Undersecretary for Health and IT decisions are made by the Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology and Chief Information Officer.
- (4) Topics with strongly divergent points of view are appropriate for Enterprise Governance consideration. Principal Governance Bodies are excellent forums to assemble a wide range of subject matter experts to candidly discuss the complex legal, financial, ethical, political, or other key issues to guide better, more informed and accountable decisions for the Department. For example, the EBPC member from VBA submits an intake form requesting consideration for potential change in benefits available to Veterans with Other than Honorable discharges. This topic will spark discussion from other EBPC members who may have differing views or seek clarification before they can support proposed changes. Rather than put a lengthy packet into VIEWS for concurrence, the EBPC member elects to bring the issue to governance to facilitate an open discussion in a short time with other members.

b. **ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS.** These criteria, while still relevant, are of secondary importance in determining which issues should be brought to Enterprise Governance:

- (1) **Enterprise-Wide Impact.** Topics with enterprise-wide impact are strong candidates for Enterprise Governance consideration. These impacts can be related to a wide range of subjects, including budget, operations, policy, acquisitions, contracts, facilities, information technology systems, personnel, education, training and business processes.
- (2) **Duration.** Topics expected to alter Department-wide policy or operations permanently are strong candidates for Enterprise Governance so that they can be made collaboratively, deliberately, transparently and accountably.
- (3) **Stakeholders Affected.** Similar to “duration” above, the number of Veterans, staff, or other stakeholders affected may also be a criterion to bring an issue to governance. The larger the number of stakeholders affected, the greater the need for a decision to be made collaboratively, deliberately, transparently and accountably.
- (4) **Dependencies.** Topics with critical dependencies for success can benefit from Enterprise Governance consideration through open and candid discussion of such dependencies potentially interfering with the success of

a decision or causing problems to go unaddressed. Examples of critical dependencies are reliance on fielding IT systems, letting contracts, hiring new staff, or improvement to facilities. Dependencies require a coordinated approach with support agreements from other organizations. Discussions within the Enterprise Governance framework will increase collaboration, reduce risks and enable dependent offices to accomplish their goals.

- (5) **Risk.** Similar to “dependencies” above, the federal enterprise risk management (ERM) framework applies to prospective governance topics. ERM provides foresight in identifying, assessing, and managing potential threats. Governance decisions involve taking risks, so members proposing topics will define the risk using templates provided by EGM. In so doing, key potential points of failure are identified along with the proper response (accept, avoid, pursue, reduce, or share) to mitigate the given threat. Effective ERM brings potential risks into the open for discussion and appropriate mitigation.
 - (6) **Alignment with VA Strategic Goals and Priorities.** Issues for Enterprise Governance consideration align with the goals of VA’s Strategic Plan or the Secretary’s priorities. While many of these issues come under their own governance forums (such as Electronic Health Record Modernization having an Integration Council), leadership of these forums will bring critical matters for decision in Governance to achieve better, more informed and accountable decisions.
3. **DECISION DOCUMENTATION.** Once a decision is made in a Principal Governance forum it shall be recorded in the meeting notes and communicated to its membership and other stakeholders. A record of the decision as well as the meeting notes shall be kept in a repository in accordance with Directive 0214.
 4. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE.** Office of Enterprise Integration (OEI) (008), Enterprise Governance Management (EGM) (008D1).
 5. **RELATED DIRECTIVE.** VA Directive 0214, Governance Structure, dated May 14, 2019.
 6. **RESCISSION.** This notice will be rescinded and guidance incorporated into the appropriate handbook no later than one year after the date of publication.

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/
Shana Love-Holmon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Enterprise Integration

/s/
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