(October 22, 2015)

In order to further improve the lines of communication and to respond to the concerns between the National VA Council and you our members, I have established a National VA Council Briefing. This NVAC Briefing will bring you the latest news and developments within DVA and provide you with the current status of issues this Council is currently addressing. I believe that this NVAC Briefing will greatly enhance the way in which we communicate and the way in which we share new information, keeping you better informed.

Alma L. Lee
National VA Council, President

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In This Briefing: OMB issues much-needed update to info management policy

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Technology has come a long way in the last 15 years but one of the main policy documents governing federal information management has not. In response, the Office of Management and Budget released an update to Circular A-130, "Managing Information as a Strategic Resource."
"Agencies depend heavily on information technology to successfully carry out their missions and business functions," OMB Chief Acquisition Officer Anne Rung, Federal CIO Tony Scott and Howard Shelanski, administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, wrote in an Oct. 21 blog post introducing the revised circular. "Thus the information technology environment, including the information systems, system components and supporting business processes must be dependable and survivable."

FEDERAL TIMES
OMB memo ushers major shift in federal procurement

To achieve this, federal systems "must be built to anticipate the modern threat space," by building in cybersecurity from the start.

While security is a major focus of the revision, A-130 also lays out how IT should be budgeted, purchased and managed, including ensuring the privacy of sensitive data and personal information stored on federal networks.

The A-130 circular was last updated in 2000.

"Information technology changes rapidly and the federal workforce managing IT must have the flexibility to address known and emerging threats while implementing continuous improvements," officials said. "This update acknowledges the pace of change and the need to increase capabilities provided by 21st century technology while recognizing the need for strong governance and safeguarding of taxpayer funded assets and information."

FEDERAL TIMES
Officials: Be specific about cybersecurity during acquisition

And federal IT policy has come a long way, too.

The revised circular calls out sections of the Federal IT Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA) passed late last year, the most significant federal IT legislation to pass Congress to-date.

The circular mentions the main thrust of FITARA — increased communication between department CIOs and the rest of the c-suite, particularly agency CFOs — as well as codifying the CIO's leadership role within an agency.

FEDERAL TIMES
FITARA maturity model guides agencies beyond mere compliance

Recently, the federal government has also been moving away from developing IT in-house and relying more and more on third-party companies to supply products and manage systems as-a-service.

The revision supports this shift, as well, requiring agencies to make sure "all IT systems and services operate only vendor-supported solutions." This would preclude agencies from building new apps in outdated languages or creating in-house solutions that don't follow commercial standards.

That same section goes on to say that agencies should plan and budget for migration to third-party platforms, reiterating the administration's drive to cloud and other as-a-service solutions.

FEDERAL TIMES
Should agency IT shops be builders or advisers?

Offering further clarification, A-130 orders acquisition priorities into three tiers:

- First, to the use of available and suitable existing federal information systems, software, technologies and shared services and/or information processing facilities;
- Second, to the acquisition of commercially available off-the-shelf components and/or software-as-a-service solutions; and
- Third, to custom developed software and technologies.

Along with the main policy, A-130 includes three appendices covering privacy and protection of personally identifiable information, electronic transactions — including everything from signing contracts to accepting payments — and cybersecurity.

FEDERAL TIMES
New coalition to advise feds on records management

The circular also deals with information in more traditional formats — like on paper — though the main focus is on agencies should manage IT and information stored electronically.
The draft revisions are up for public comment on CIO.gov for the next 30 days