Reference Architecture is composed of three architecture information areas:

Principles

Represent the highest level of guidance for technology infrastructure planning and decision-making. Principles are simple statements of an organization’s beliefs about how it wants to use IT resources over the long term (two to five years in the future). Principles provide the primary linkage between business strategies and technology strategies. Principles are derived from business goals and corporate values.

Decision Points

Can be thought of as a “stake in the ground,” an organization’s expressed choice between competing technical alternatives and the justifications for that choice. Development of Decision Points requires extensive knowledge of the available alternatives, and careful consideration of an organization’s requirements in each area in which decisions must be made.

Templates

Are the “blueprints” or models of the application infrastructure; depicting how multiple system or components relate to each other. Templates illustrate the application infrastructure that results from the complete collection of Decision Points.

To get the most value, we recommend that you start with How to Use (where you are now) and proceed to Principles, then Decision Points, and finally to Templates. By proceeding in this way, you will receive the background information necessary to understand how the architecture was developed and the methods used to present the information.

Navigation

Once you have entered a specific Decision Point or Template, you will be presented with a table of contents. This table of contents provides an easy way to navigate within a lengthy Decision Point or Template document.

EVERY TEMPLATE HAS THE SAME FOUR-PART STRUCTURE:

1. Template Applicability -- describes the type of site, environment, or portion of the organization where the particular Template should be followed.

2. Template Map -- shows how this Template fits into the larger reference architecture of which this Template is a part.
3. Template Diagram -- a simplified schematic showing the topology associated with the Template.

4. Template Description -- a written description of the components shown in the Template diagram.

EVERY DECISION POINT HAS THE SAME EIGHT-PART STRUCTURE:

1. Decision Point -- a brief, concise problem statement, describing the key issue for which the Decision Point provides recommended solutions

2. Decision Context -- enables the decision-maker to understand the context of the decision within a larger architectural scope and to relate the decision to applicable business scenarios

3. Evaluation Criteria -- describes the rules and factors you should use in evaluating your situation, and making the decision covered by the Decision Point.

4. Alternatives -- technologies, products, or services available today or in the near term (i.e., announced for delivery within one year) that might be considered to address the Decision Point.

5. Future Developments -- while not yet available, these alternatives should be monitored due to their potential to impact future solutions

6. Decision Tools -- is the main section of the Decision Point. It provides one or more decision-making aids (i.e., tools) that assists you in choosing a recommended solution.

7. Decision Justification -- provides reasoning and justification for each of the recommended decisions produced by the decision tool(s).

8. Relationship to Other Components -- a brief description of other Decision Points in the architecture that are affected or influenced by the choice of alternatives made in this Decision Point