



Playbook: Digital First for Annuity Standards Creation, Governance, and Implementation

Insured Retirement Institute (IRI) – Operations & Technology

Purpose

A collaborative framework to design, govern, publish, and adopt industry-wide open standards and best practices for the annuity industry, with the goal of aligning business needs, technology, and implementation across carriers, distributors, and solution providers.

Roles

Digital First Steering Committee (DFSC)

Executive leaders across carriers and distributors with decision authority. They define the strategy and champion adoption across member firms.

Strategy Implementation Committee (SIC)

Directors/VPs and senior operations leaders from first-mover firms. The execution arm of the DF strategy; reviews proposals; creates Working Groups; collaborates with the Governance Subcommittee.

Business Champions

Leaders from member firms who bring operational context, advocate for business needs, and support change adoption. They represent business priorities, help shape use cases and requirements, and drive alignment.

Working Groups

Business Champions, SMEs, data architects, solution engineers, and Technical Writers. They refine the business case, define measures of success, identify required data, build the technical specs aligning with the IRI Style Guide.

Governance Subcommittee

Small group of data architects and senior technical representatives. They validate consistency, ensure release readiness, create/maintain GitHub repositories.

What DFA Produces

Standards: Consistent data exchange across firms, including a shared data model, API/event structure, or other reusable technical specifications to support system-to-system integration.

Best practices: Operational or process-focused, creating alignment on a consistent approach across firms.

1. Business Case & Intake

- Identify a cross-industry problem or high-value experience that would benefit from a standardized, reusable solution.
- All sides of the market need for implementation should be aligned.
- The Business Champion submits a business case for SIC review. The business case must include:
 - Problem statement and proposed outcomes
 - Definition of success and measurable outcomes
 - Use cases and journey maps
 - Data producers, consumers, and third-party dependencies

2. Strategy Implementation Committee (SIC) Review

- The Business Champion presents the business case to the SIC
- SIC confirms if it should be a new standard or best practice
- Working group is formed with firms planning to implement within a year.

3. Working Group Execution

The Working Group defines scope and target outcomes.

API/Event Standard: Standardized data exchange, real-time integration, or reusable technical interfaces.

- Define use cases
- Data requirements
- Success measures
- Draft the technical specification (YAML) aligned to the IRI Style Guide

Best Practice Path: Aligned process, sequencing, or operational guidance.

- Scope and assumptions
- Roles and responsibilities
- Process sequencing and dependencies
- Measures of success

4. Governance and Availability

- **Delegate Assignment:** The Governance Subcommittee assigns a delegate to each Working Group to serve as the primary contact and help streamline alignment and review.
- **Governance Review:** They review the final draft and works with the Working Group to ensure alignment with IRI standards and documentation guidelines.
- **Final Approval:** The Strategy Implementation Committee (SIC) reviews and approves the deliverable prior to release.
- **Publication & Access:** Approved standards and best practices are published in open-access repositories to support industry-wide adoption.
- **Versioning & Updates:** Managed through a structured governance process with documented versioning and revision history.

5. Adoption & Continuous Improvement

- Participating firms implement the standard or best practice, supported by IRI go-to-market activities.
- Outcomes are measured against defined success criteria
- Implementation plans are tracked on the IRI Dashboard

Updating/Revising an Existing Standard

Any industry participant can suggest an update to an existing IRI standard.

- **Step 1:** Identify the standard you want to change and why.
- **Step 2:** Submit the suggestion to the SIC via IRI.
- **Step 3:** If determined valid by the Strategy Implementation Committee and Governance Subcommittee, the group drafts the proposed revision.
- **Step 4:** Depending on what the proposed change is, either the SIC or the Governance Subcommittee will approve the changes. (Larger edits may require additional discussions.)
- **Step 5:** The standard is released as a new version with revision history recorded.

Donating an existing message

All submissions must go through governance review before being adopted. This ensures that all messages remain consistent, interoperable, and easy to implement across organizations. During this review, the proposed message will be evaluated to ensure it aligns with the established style guide. This may include:

- Aligning field names with the approved data definitions
- Updating terminology to match the style guide
- Ensuring the message structure aligns with the existing standard framework
- Removing duplicate concepts or alternate naming for the same data element

Links:

[Operations & Technology - IRI Website](#)

[Journey Map](#)

[Library of Standards](#)

[DFA Specifications](#)

[DFA Business Case Form](#)

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