DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Benefits Administration
Washington, D.C. 20420

FOIA Request 26-09100-F

February 2, 2026

Wesley McCauley
P.O. Box
Valdosta, GA 31796
Wesley@unitedforvets.com

Dear Mr. McCauley,

This is the initial agency decision (IAD) response to your January 8, 2026, request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, submitted to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Benefits Administration Central Office (VBACO) FOIA Office.

In summary, you requested the following information:

1. Any written data, material, reports, pamphlets, memorandums, etc., the Board has concerning the "VBA Feedback Loop" or "BVA Feedback Loop."
2. "The Board concurred on clarification requests or issued new decisions for 26 issues and non-concurred on clarification requests for 43 issues. In addition, the Board referred clarification requests for 16 issues to the signing VLJ for determination of concurrence or non-concurrence. Clarification requests for 7 issues were in a status of "Notified Board." Please provide the BVA docket number(s) for these decisions in question. The attached document may aid in your search and understanding of the information sought.

Your request was received in this office on January 13, 2026. Your request will be assigned to a Program Analyst for processing, and you will be notified of the findings as soon as possible. Please include the tracking number in all future communications concerning this FOIA request.

Your request was sent to the Program Analyst for the Office of Administrative Review (OAR) for a search to be conducted. The Program Analyst searched their database for the search term, "VBA Feedback Loop or BVA Feedback Loop, and for clarification requests or issued new decisions for 26 issues and non-concurred on clarification requests for 43 issues. In addition, the Board referred clarification requests for 16 issues to the signing VLJ for determination of concurrence or non-concurrence. Clarification requests for 7 issues were in a status of "Notified Board." Please provide

the BVA docket number(s) for these decisions in question. The attached document may aid in your search and understanding of the information sought," as stated in your request. After the search, our office received two (2) attachments, totaling twenty (20) pages, that have been determined to be responsive to your request for Question #1.

Regarding Question #2: As these requests are not permanently documented as a part of the claims process. VBA can acknowledge that the clarification requests referenced are no longer pending action. Therefore, we are issuing a "no records" response for this question.

Our review of the documents revealed that they contained information that falls within the disclosure protections of FOIA Exemption 6, 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6).

FOIA Exemption 6 permits the VA to withhold a document or information contained within a document if disclosure of the information would constitute a clear unwarranted invasion of a living individual's personal privacy. Stated another way, VA may withhold information under FOIA Exemption 6 where disclosure of the information, either by itself or in conjunction with other information available to either the public or the FOIA requester, would result in an unwarranted invasion of an individual's personal privacy without contributing significantly to the public's understanding of the activities of the federal government.

Specifically, the information we are withholding, as indicated on the enclosed documents, under FOIA Exemption 6 consists of the name of a VA employee, due to the significant privacy interest of such individuals in avoiding harassment and unsolicited emails. As individuals associated with this information have a personal privacy interest in it.

The coverage of FOIA Exemption 6 is absolute unless the FOIA requester can demonstrate a countervailing public interest in the requested information by demonstrating that the individual is in a position to provide the requested information to members of the general public and that the information requested contributes significantly to the public's understanding of the activities of the Federal government.

Additionally, the requester must demonstrate how the public's need to understand the information significantly outweighs the privacy interest of the person to whom the information pertains. Upon consideration of the materials provided, I have not identified a sufficient magnitude countervailing public interest to outweigh the privacy interest in this case. The individuals associated with this information have a personal privacy interest in the information that outweighs any public interest served by the disclosure of their identities under FOIA. Consequently, we have granted your request in part for this information under FOIA Exemption 6, 5 U.S.C. § 552 (b)(6).

If you disagree with our granted in part under FOIA exemption b6, please be advised you may appeal to:

Office of the General Counsel (024)
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420
Email: ogcfoiaappeals@va.gov

Should you choose to file an appeal, it must be postmarked or electronically transmitted no later than ninety (90) calendar days from the date of this letter. Please include a copy of this letter with your written appeal and clearly state why you disagree with the determinations set forth in this response.

You may also seek assistance or dispute resolution services for any other aspect of your FOIA request, excluding the release determination, from VBA's FOIA Public Liaison and/or Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) as provided below:

VBA FOIA Public Liaison
VBA FOIA Office (20M3)
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420
Email: FOIA.VBACO@va.gov
Fax: (202) 495-5567

Office of Government Information Services (OGIS)
National Archives and Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001
Email: ogis@nara.gov

Please be advised, that this concludes the VBACO FOIA Office response to your request. If you have any further questions, please contact us, and reference your FOIA case number at the top of this page by email at: FOIA.VBACO@va.gov.

Sincerely,

Josephine Sibley

Josephine Sibley
VBACO FOIA Officer
Information Access and Privacy
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Email: josephine.sibley@va.gov

Enclosure: 20 pages

OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW
VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Benefits Administration
Washington, D.C. 20420

VBA Feedback Loop SharePoint Site Standard Operating Procedure

Office of Administrative Review
Program Administration

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Document Change Control

Date of Change	Author(s)	Brief Description of Change
01/10/2025	(b)(6)	Updated to reflect revised VBA Feedback Loop SharePoint site
02/28/2022	(b)(6)	Updated URL's for the VBA Feedback Loop SharePoint site
02/15/2025	(b)(6)	Updated to comply with the new VBA Feedback Loop SharePoint Site. Updated URL's and email address
04/18/2025	(b)(6)	Updated to add Veterans name to the Request to Review Board Decision Form

1. Purpose

This standard operating procedure (SOP) provides guidance for decision review operations center (DROC), Office of Administrative Review (OAR) and Board of Veterans Appeals (Board) personnel on the utilization of the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Feedback Loop SharePoint site.

2. Background

OAR created a SharePoint feedback system to facilitate communication between VBA's field personnel and the Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board). The system serves as a mechanism to facilitate requests by VBA for Board review of identified decisions and remands for potential clarification or corrective action and allows for both organizations to collect data that may assist in understanding and evaluating duty to assist (DTA) errors.

3. Scope

This document applies to Quality Review Team (QRT) supervisors at the DROCs and OAR Quality Review (QR) analysts. This SOP also includes guidance on how to submit questions and/or concerns related to AMA and legacy Board decisions.

4. VBA Feedback Loop Overview

When DROC employees require clarification of a Board decision (remand, grant or denial) from OAR and/or the Board, the employee must submit a written request for review ofthe decision to their respective QRT supervisor. The DROC must then place the pending end product (EP) on hold until a final response is received from OAR with feedback and instructions for processing the case.

If the QRT supervisor approves the requested clarification, the QRT supervisor will complete and submit a *Request to Review Board Decision* form using the VBA Feedback Loop SharePoint site. OAR will grant access to all DROC QRT supervisors and/or their designees for submissions.

The SharePoint site administrator will review the form and assign the request to an OAR QR analyst. The OAR QR analyst will review within 7-14 business days and provide guidance to the DROC via the SharePoint site. The OAR QR analyst will coordinate with the Board as necessary to determine appropriate action to process the case.

During each step of the process, the reviewer may concur (agree) or non-concur (disagree) regarding weather or not clarification is needed. If OAR concurs on a submission, OAR will submit the case and inquiry to the Board. If a QRT supervisor or OAR QR analyst non-concur on a submission, the case must be returned to the original employee who requested the review.

5. DROC Review Request Submission Process

The DROC initiates the submission process and submits all requests for review to OAR via the SharePoint site. DROC claims processors will submit all requests through QRT supervisors.

OAR will not respond to requests for review of a Board decision sent to OAR's corporate mailboxes. OAR will instruct the submitter to send a request to the station's designated POCs for submission to the VBA Feedback Loop SharePoint site.

5.1 DROC Personnel Roles

1. **DROC Claims Processors**
    - Submit requests for review to QRT supervisors with detailed reason(s) for requesting clarification.
2. **DROC QRT Supervisor(s)**
    - Assign the clarification request to a DROC QRT Quality Review Specialist (QRS) for review.
3. **DROC QRT QRS**
    - Review the clarification request reason(s) and forward the reason for concurring or non-concurring to the QRT supervisor.
4. **DROC QRT Supervisor**
    - Review the clarification request and the QRS's reason(s) for concurring or non-concurring. The QRT supervisor is responsible for making the final determination. If concurred upon, the QRT supervisor must complete and submit the *Request to Review Board Decision* form on the SharePoint site for OAR review.
        i. The DRROC QRT Supervisor must add the tracked item "secondary action required" and special issue "OAR Special Issue 4" to the claim in Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) and suspend the claim for 30 days.

a. ***Please note:*** The "OAR Special Issue 4" should only be added to inquiries that are forwarded to OAR for review.

ii. Include details in VBMS notes indicating the claim has been submitted to OAR pending clarification of a BVA decision and no further action will be taken until OAR responds.

iii. The claim will be recalled to the NWQ. Once a response is received from OAR, the DROC will secure the EP from NWQ and complete all directed actions and remove the "OAR Special Issue 4" item and any Feedback Loop Tracked Item.

- All non-concurs must be returned to the employee who submitted the original request with instructions for next steps and/or to continue processing the Board decision.

5.2 Completing and Submitting Request to Review Board Decision Form

After review and concurrence of the claims processor's reason(s) for requesting clarification of the Board decision, the DROC QRT supervisor will input the claims specific information into the *Request to Review Board Decision* form. The DROC QRT supervisor must complete the following fields within the form:

Field	Description
Employee Who Identified Reason(s) for Clarification to the Board	The employee who identified the reason(s) for clarification of the Board decision. This box generates names from the Global Address List (GAL). Enter the last name, first name to generate the employee's name. You may also use the down arrow browse button to the right of the box to search for the name of the employee.
Employee RO	The DROC that is submitting the form.
Claim/File Number	Associated with the Board decision that is being reviewed.
Veterans Name	Input the Veterans forename and surname
Review Type	Select Legacy Board Remand, Legacy Board Grant, AMA Board Remand, AMA Board Grant or AMA Board Review.
Date of Board decision	The date of the Board decision under review.
Board Decision Reason/Instruction	Select one or multiple duty to assist (DTA) reasons in accordance with the request for review.
Claim Label	Select the pending EP and claim label for the case under review.
Add Issues	Click the "Add Issues" button to add the issues related the clarification.
Board Remand Instructions	This field must include the Board's decision directive(s) returned by the Board that require clarification.

Reason(s) for Requesting Clarification of the Board Decision Instructions	This field must include the reason(s) for requesting clarification of the issue(s). The request must be substantiated by citations to applicable laws and regulations. The VBA manual and VBA tools, such as the effective date builder or evaluation builder, do not apply to Board determinations. See below for how to correctly enter a reason for requesting clarification of a Board decision.
Attachments	This field is optional for additional information that is pertinent to the submitted inquiry. This could include emails and/or documents that support the reasons for requesting clarification.
Note	Any additional evidence mentioned must include the date received by VA.

5.3 "Reason for Requesting Clarification of the Board Decision Instructions" Template

OAR will return any request for review of a Board decision that is not in the below format to the submitting station for revision and resubmission.

Issue 1:

Left Knee Condition

Board Decision Instructions

Schedule the Veteran for an examination by an appropriate clinician to determine the environmental social examination for the left knee condition, to include degenerative arthritis. The examiner must opine whether it is at least as likely as not related to an in-service injury, event, or disease.

Reason(s) for Requesting Clarification of the Board Decision

The above directive is not one VA can complete as VBA does not have an examiner who can complete an environmental social examination. Also, the requested exam is not one that will evaluate the range of motion or the severity of the arthritis of the left knee (M21-1 IV.i.3.C.1.b.)

Issue 2:

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Board Decision Instructions

The Veteran submitted a claim for service connection for PTSD on May 29, 2017. The Veteran reports on April 9, 2019 that he received treatment for PTSD in 1975 by Dr. Smith. Request private treatment records for the period in 1975 from Dr. John Smith.

Reason(s) for Requesting Clarification of the Board Decision

Private treatment records from Dr. John Smith, dated February 21, 1975 through June 29, 1975, are located in the Veteran's file. VBA fulfilled its duty to assist in requesting and obtaining these private treatment records (38 CFR 3.159(c)(1)).

Note: *Additional information can be attached to the form by submitting it under the "Click here to attach a file" button.*

Following completion and submission of the form, the SharePoint site sends an email to the DROC QRT supervisor who submitted the form, as well as to the respective station's DROC mailbox with a link to view and monitor the status of the request.

6. OAR Review Submission Process

6.1 OAR Personnel Quality Feedback Loop Role

- **OAR Analysts** are responsible for reviewing the *Request to Review Remand* form and determine if the case should be forward to the Board for further review or sent back to the DROC to continue processing the case.

6.2 Completing the OAR Remand Review Request – Initial Form

After the DROC submits the *Request to Review Remand* form, OAR's assigned analyst will monitor the SharePoint site and assign requests OAR Program Administration analyst as they are received.

Once OAR assigns the request, the analyst will receive an email with a link to the *OAR Remand Review Request - Initial* form. After reviewing the reasons for requesting clarification of the remand and the case the analyst will complete the required sections of the form and concur on non-concur with the DROCs reasons provided.

- **OAR Initial Decision** allows OAR analyst to concur, non-concur or concur in part with the DROCs reasons for requesting clarification of the remand.
- **OAR Response**
    - **Add/Edit Comment Field** allows the initial reviewer to concur, non-concur in part and provide a justification for the decision.
    - **Second Reviewer Field** allows the initial reviewer to select another reviewer to peer review the submitted inquiry.

6.3 OAR Non-Concurrence of DROC Submission

If OAR does not concur with the reasons for requesting clarification of the remand, a summary of the decision will be included in the *Remand Review Request- Final Disposition*. An email will be sent to the submitter and the DROC mailbox.

6.4 OAR Concurrence of DROC Submission

If OAR concurs with the reasons for requesting clarification the remand, the analyst will

provide comments that include the DROCs request as the Board will not be able to view the DROCs submission. Once the form is submitted the Board will review the form and provide a decision. See example below:

> *Left Knee Condition*
>
> *Schedule the Veteran for an examination by an appropriate clinician to determine the environmental social examination for the left knee condition, to include degenerative arthritis. The examiner must opine whether it is at least as likely as not related to an in-service injury, event, or disease.*
>
> *Reasons for Requesting Clarification of the Remand:*
>
> *The above directive is not one that VA can complete as VBA does not have a examiner that can complete a environmental social examination. Also, the requested exam is not one that will evaluate the range of motion or the severity of the arthritis of the left knee.*
>
> *OAR's Response:*
>
> *OAR has reviewed the case and the remand directive and concurs with the fields reasons for requesting clarification of the remand. The environmental social examination is not an exam that can be completed by VBA and it's not an exam that will provide the evaluation needed to provide an accurate and correct rating decision for the claimant.*

Note: *Additional information can be attached to the form by submitting it under the "click here to attach a file" button.*

6.2.1 OAR Concurrence in Part of DROC Submission

If OAR concurs with one or more issues and non-concurs with one or more issues with the reasons for requesting clarification of the remand, the analyst will provide comments that include the DROCs request to the Board. The analyst will also provide comments supporting the non-concurred issues.

7. BVA Review Submission Process

The Board will respond to clarification requests from OAR, to include providing concurrence/non-concurrence. They will also indicate whether corrective action will be taken, as applicable.

8. Canceling A Board Decision Review Request

If the submitter determines a Board Decision Review Request was submitted in

error, the submitter will notify OAR by email to the OAR Quality mailbox at VAVBAWAS/OAR/QUALITY TRAINING. Once an email is sent, OAR will cancel the request and thesubmitter will receive an email confirmation of the cancellation.

9. Board Decision Review Request Status

Following the submission of a *Request to Review Board Decision* form, the user who submitted the form receives an email with a link to review the status of the request on the *Board Decision Review Request Status* page. Users may also use the search box on the status page by searching the claimant's file number to locate a submission and see the current status.

10. Notice of Final Disposition

For non-concurs, OAR will provide feedback to the DROCs. For concurs, OAR will update the SharePoint site with the Board's final decision and any required action for the case. The submitter receives an email with a link to the *Board Decision Review Request Status* page to review the decision and instructions on processing the case.

VBA Feedback Loop

Presented by:

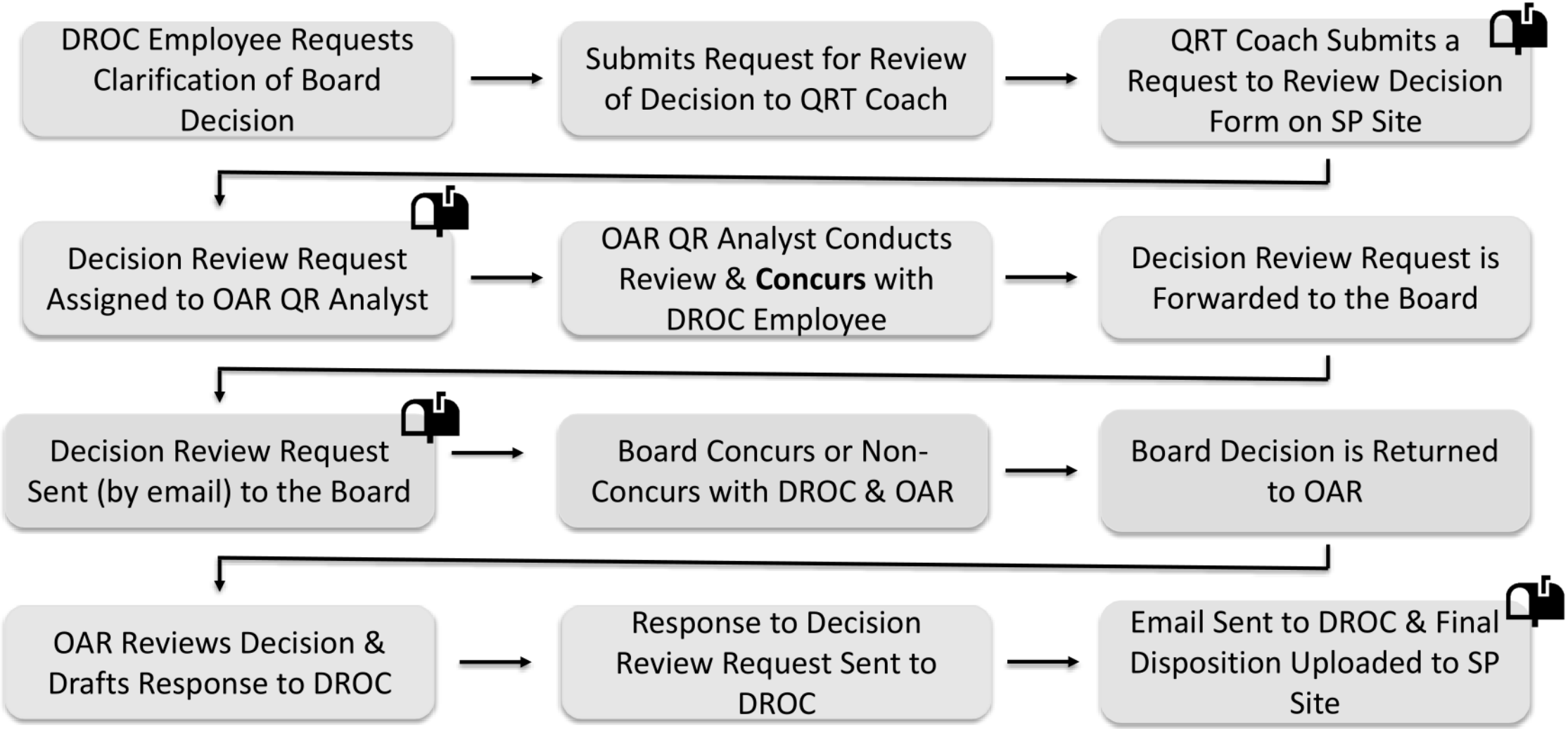
(b)(6)

Management/Program Analyst, OAR

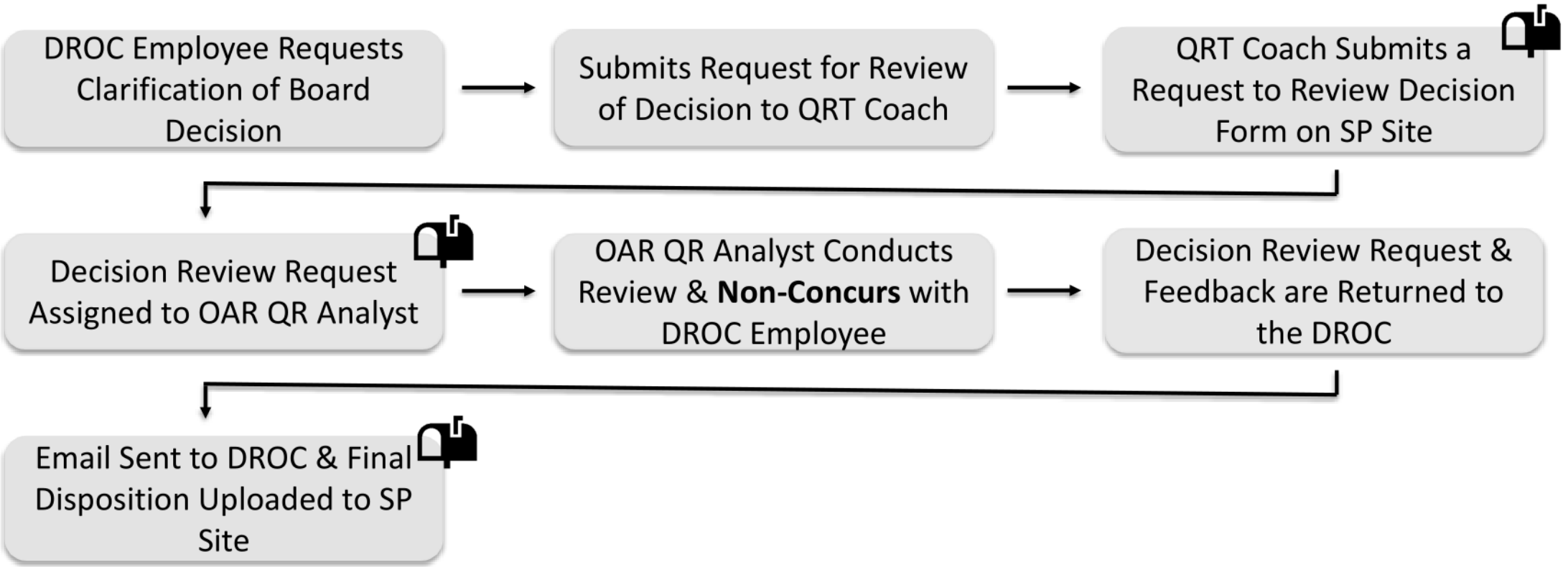
Overview

- The Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 (AMA) provides a quality feedback loop for reducing appeals through improved decision quality.
- OAR leverages this quality feedback loop to obtain feedback data to address processing errors with VBA personnel to improve decision accuracy in compensation claims.
- OAR is using the VBA Feedback Loop SharePoint Site in the interim until a final solution is available.

SharePoint Site Workflow - Concur



SharePoint Site Workflow – Non-Concur



SharePoint Site Access

- Access to the VBA Feedback Loop SharePoint Site is provided to the following individuals:
  - DROC Quality Review Team (QRT) Coaches and Assistant Coaches
  - Office of Administrative Review (OAR) Quality Review Analysts
- Access to forms, pages and data on the SharePoint Site varies dependent upon the above user roles.

VBA Feedback Loop SharePoint Site, continued

Categories of identified issues requiring the Board's attention include:

- Effective dates
  - granting benefits while the Veteran was still on active duty
  - entitlement to earlier effective dates
- Multiple VLJ's providing conflicting decisions
- Incorrect directives related to percentages assigned from the rating schedule
- Remanding and granting incorrect issues
- Missed issues
- Adjudicated by the Board, however no VBA decision was previously issued

VBA Feedback Loop SharePoint Site, continued

Categories of identified issues *not* requiring the Board's attention include:

- Requesting the Board to provide effective dates
- Requesting the Board to provide evaluation percentages for granted issues
- Requesting the Board to re-evaluate their decision because the RO does not agree with the decision
- Asking the Board to provide directives on how to order an exam

Benefits

- Allows for collection and analysis of data related to quality of claims processing
- Eliminates back and forth email communication between VBA employees and Board personnel
- Improves timeliness of clarification requests and effectuation of Board decisions
- Allows for identification of training needs
- Source of collaboration between VBA and the Board

Questions

