

OVAL Board Meeting (4/27/2015)

Attendees

Blake Frantz – Center for Internet Security
Adam Montville – SACM
David Solin – jOVAL.org
Scott Armstrong – INADEV Corporation
Randy Taylor – ThreatGuard, Inc.
Kent Landfield – McAfee, Inc.
William Munyan – Center for Internet Security
Jack Vander Pol – SPAWAR, U.S. Navy
Steven Piliero – Unified Compliance
Morey Haber – BeyondTrust, Inc.
Chris Wood – Assuria Limited

Matt Hansbury – MITRE
Danny Haynes – MITRE
Mike Cokus – MITRE

Meeting Summary

Welcome

The Board members were welcomed to the OVAL Board call. This call was held as a follow up to previous Board calls to further discuss the upcoming OVAL transition.

Discussion

Dan Haynes began the call with a recap of main transition discussion from the last meeting, which focused on the OVAL transition and actions required to move it forward. Over the course of the past few months, the board has been engaged in discussion on how to best transition OVAL. That conversation continued during the meeting.

At the last meeting, one Board member requested a discussion take place with DHS concerning MITRE's expected SACM role so that the OVAL Board could align their efforts with MITRE's activities. MITRE agreed to coordinate with DHS and to discuss this topic at a future OVAL Board meeting. MITRE gave an update on this and reported that discussions with DHS on this topic have not been completed but would be addressed soon.

MITRE has provided a description of the minimal tasks which need to be performed to maintain OVAL. At the last meeting, the Center for Internet Security (CIS) agreed to evaluate this minimal approach and draft a proposal concerning which tasks they would be willing to take on and under what conditions. The proposal was forwarded to the Board mailing list and was presented during the meeting.

Blake reported that CIS could take on all except three of the items in MITRE's minimal-effort list of tasks. These three items were discussed to determine the Board's stance on whether omitting them was acceptable.

OVAL Interpreter. The Board was in agreement that maintaining the OVAL Interpreter was not a critical task. It was noted by one Board member that he thought that the OVAL Interpreter may be required for the SCAP validation program. Dan indicated that it was no longer a requirement and that the program would not be impacted if no one took on the maintenance of the OVAL Interpreter.

Developer Days. The group also agreed that organizing and hosting face-to-face developer days events, for OVAL, was no longer required. The rationale for this was that OVAL vendors typically attend other conferences and can convene OVAL meetings in these venues, when needed, as well as schedule ad-hoc conference calls to discuss issues that typically would have been discussed at developer days events in the past.

Adoption Program. The group had no objections to omit support for the Adoption Program. One member said that the Program was useful in promulgating OVAL usage, but no longer has an important role in the OVAL Community.

CIS confirmed an interest in taking on the moderator role, and reiterated that external funding would be required. Several Board member organizations have indicated some willingness to provide funding, and CIS discussed options for how to do this. One option was to provide funds via a tax-deductible donation to CIS. Another option was to develop a membership model. This funding issue is still an open topic. MITRE needs to follow up with Board members, who have previously expressed interest in providing funding to CIS, to get actual amounts and see if we can get close to the required amount of external funding. CIS has also showed interest in hosting the OVAL Repository, but, this topic is currently on hold pending completion of the OVAL Language transition plan.

The topic of how to handle the migration of the OVAL mailing lists was discussed by the group. The proposed concept was to take advantage of GitHub's issue tracker as a means of discussion on particular topics. A potential limitation with this is that the notification system for these issues only notifies those that are either owners of the issue or have commented on the issue. Due to this limitation, the general consensus is that a specific mailing list, or lists, should continue to exist. A Board member also suggested that it may be worth considering a model where a specific organization is responsible for maintaining a platform schema (e.g. Red Hat, Cisco, Oracle would maintain their platform schemas) when it comes time to planning the specifics around how the OVAL Language would be moderated moving forward.

Another topic of conversation was the timeline of the transition. MITRE reiterated that the July 31st cutoff date is a hard one and that no other timeline has been created yet. Dan stated that MITRE will make available all of the tools that are used to create releases, so that any member of the community can use them. It was noted that this does not mean that official releases will be created by anyone at any time, but rather that the tools to do so will be generally available for development and testing purposes.

One Board member asked about how the OVAL web site would be handled with the transition of the effort. Matt Hansbury explained that the MITRE OVAL web site would be migrated over to a static web site to avoid ongoing maintenance cost. Links to relevant places like the GitHub Pages site, any new OVAL web site (hosted by CIS, for instance), and any OVAL repositories would be provided. Matt also mentioned that MITRE is already migrating some documentation over to the GitHub Pages site. Blake, from CIS, noted that he would plan on setting up a CIS web site for OVAL as part of the transition.

The topic of funding for the potential transition of moderator to CIS was discussed in greater detail. Blake noted that the new estimate of external funding to take this on was \$100,000 for the first year. He pointed out that CIS planned to lower the ongoing cost for the effort over time, by leveraging the OVAL Community, and that this figure is expected to be the high water mark. Some question of how specifically this funding would work was asked and Blake suggested that CIS was giving this thought. He mentioned that the simplest approach was to treat the funding as tax-deductible donations, as CIS is a non-profit, but that they were open to other approaches, as was mentioned previously.

One Board member asked if NIST was aware of any potential impacts an OVAL transition would have on SCAP. Since no NIST representative was on this call, Kent Landfield agreed to follow up with NIST on this topic.

Finally, the topic of legal aspects came up. MITRE noted that DHS was in discussion with its legal team to determine how to proceed. The outcome of this was recognized as a factor in both the timeline and overall success of the transition. MITRE agreed to mention this to DHS.

In summary, the group agreed that the necessary actions for moving the transition forward were:

1. CIS must determine and share how they plan on operating the funding model for taking on OVAL and share this with the Board.
2. MITRE to ensure that the legal aspects of the transition are considered both by MITRE and their DHS sponsor.
3. (assuming CIS does take on OVAL moderation) MITRE to work with CIS to transition relevant parts of OVAL.

Actions

1. MITRE to coordinate with DHS to hold a Board call to discuss DHS's SACM strategy with the OVAL Board.
2. MITRE to talk to its DHS sponsor on the topic of the state of the legal aspects of the OVAL transition.
3. CIS to determine funding options and share with the OVAL Board.
4. MITRE to reach out to organizations, on the Board, to get an idea of how much funding they would be willing to contribute.
5. MITRE to plan another follow up meeting in two weeks (5/11).
6. Kent Landfield to engage Dave Waltermire of NIST to discuss possible impact of transition on SCAP.