

Overview of VisualSP Classic Architecture

support.visualsp.com/knowledge-base/overview-of-visualsp-on-premises-architecture/

December 21, 2017

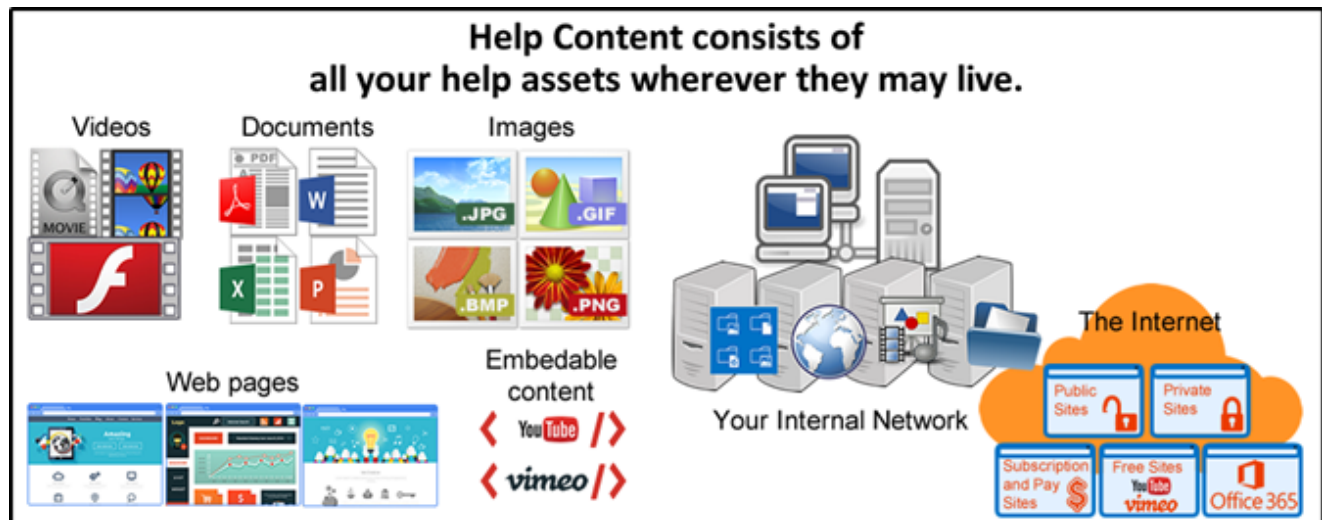
Applies to: **VisualSP Classic**

Architecture

To effectively manage help content in the VisualSP Help System, you need to understand where help items and help content are stored, as well as how help items are provided to and consumed by a particular site collection. Let's take a look at the architecture of the VisualSP Help System and understand some important terms.

Help Content

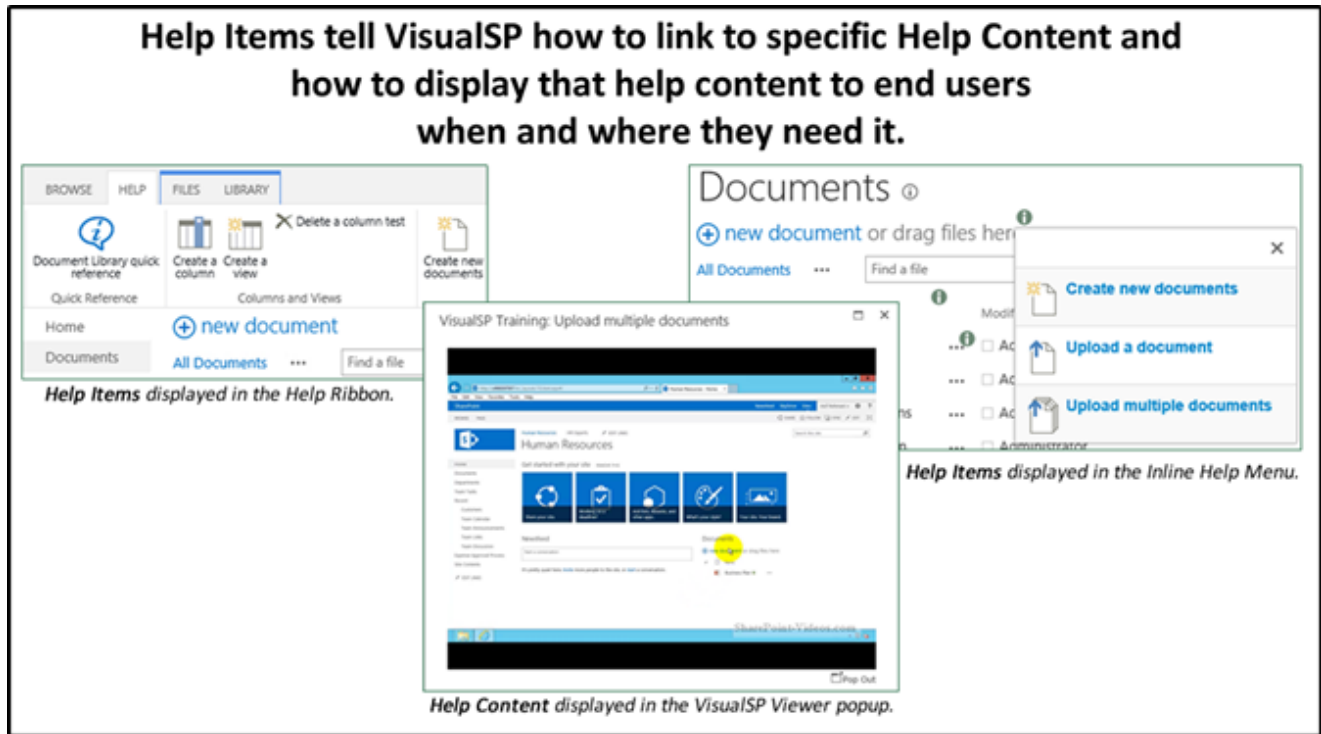
Help Content is the instructional content and resources that users need. Individual media items are often referred to as **Help Assets**. The VisualSP Help System supports a variety of different media types such as: videos, images, documents, web pages, and Adobe Flash. You can even use custom EMBED or OBJECT tags to display content from sites like YouTube, Vimeo, and many other sites. Help content can live in any location that your users can access whether locally on your intranet or anywhere on the Internet. If your employees can access it, it can be used as help content.



The VisualSP Help System comes with many professional videos, images, and documents to help your end users make better use of SharePoint. These Help Assets are typically added to the Site Assets library of the VisualSP Farm Hub when VisualSP is first installed.

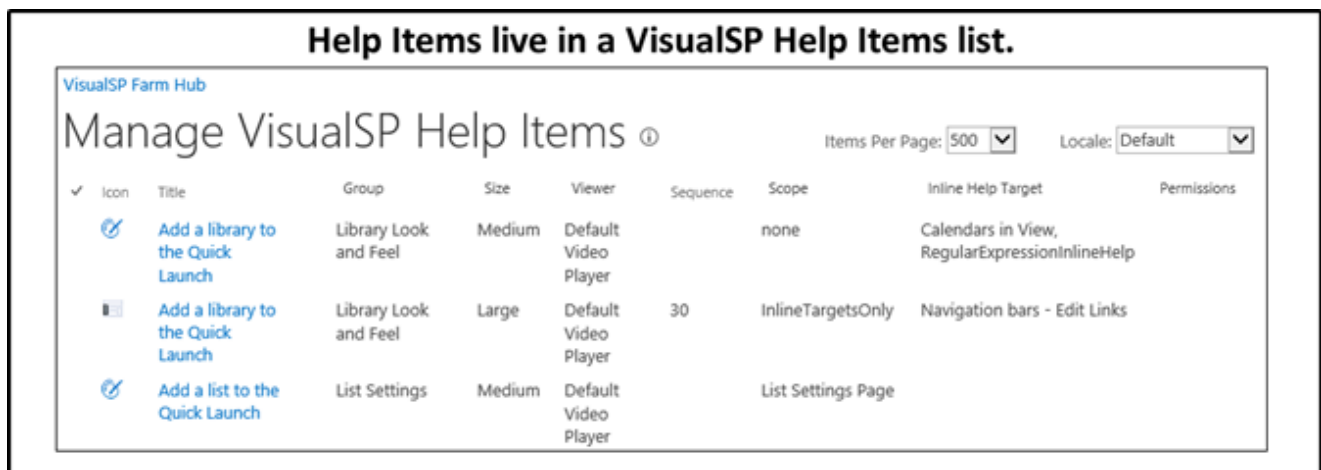
Help Items

A Help Item is a definition of how to display a particular Help Asset within the VisualSP Help System. It links to the Help Content but doesn't *contain* the Help Content. A Help Item also defines how the content will appear to the user, such as which viewer to use and if it will be displayed in the VisualSP dialog box or opened in a new window. It defines all the aspects of how the links to the content are displayed in the VisualSP Help Ribbon and/or Inline Help.



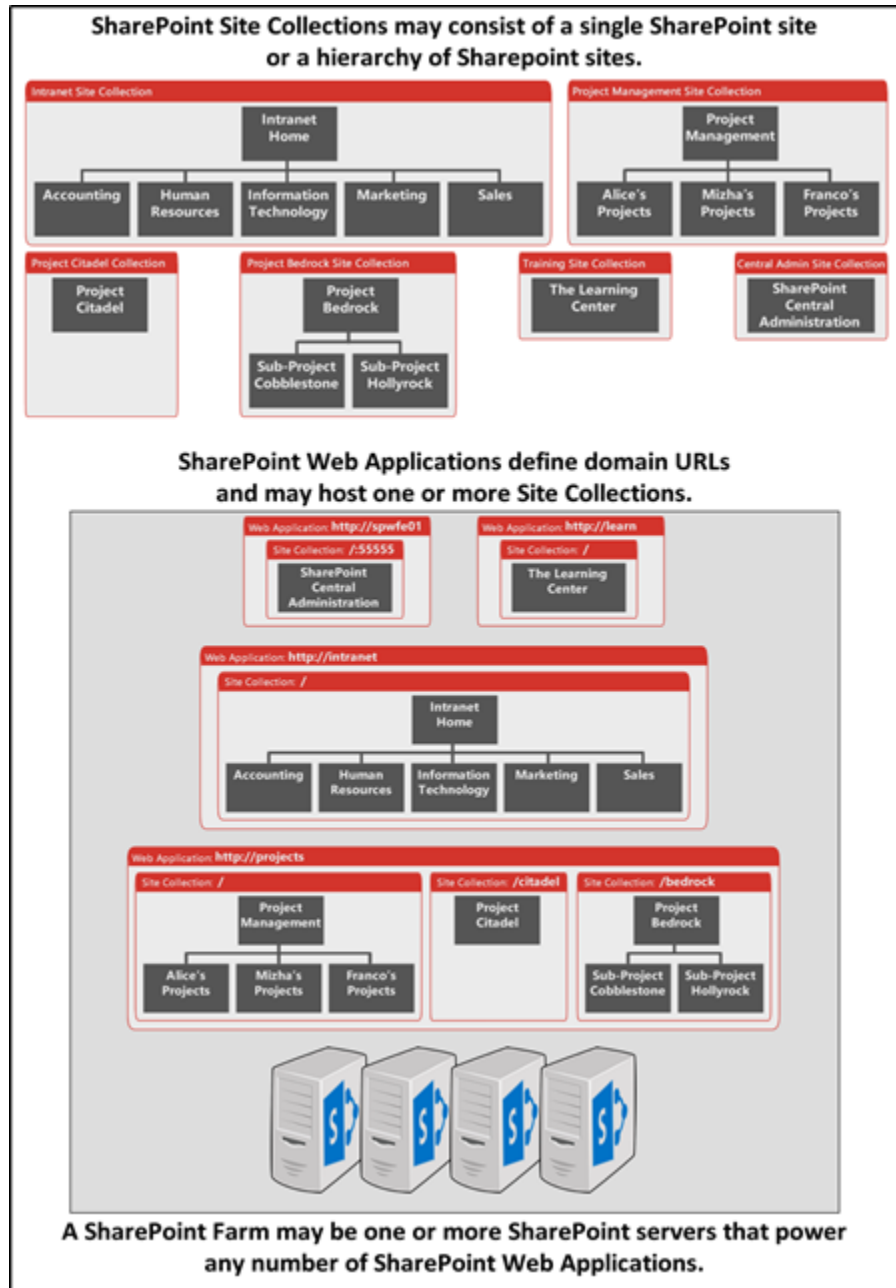
Manage VisualSP Help Items List

Help Items are stored in a special SharePoint List called the **Manage VisualSP Help Items List**. When VisualSP is installed, and the provided Help Content is uploaded, pre-defined Help Items are also added to the Manage VisualSP Help Items List in the VisualSP Farm Hub.



Site Collections, Web Applications, and the SharePoint Farm

All SharePoint sites have to be in a SharePoint Site Collection. A SharePoint Site Collection is a group of SharePoint sites that share a common set of resources between them. It typically consists of many sites that are arranged in a hierarchical manner. However, it could also be a unique and separate, single SharePoint site. The Site Collection is the lowest level at which the VisualSP Help System can be managed.

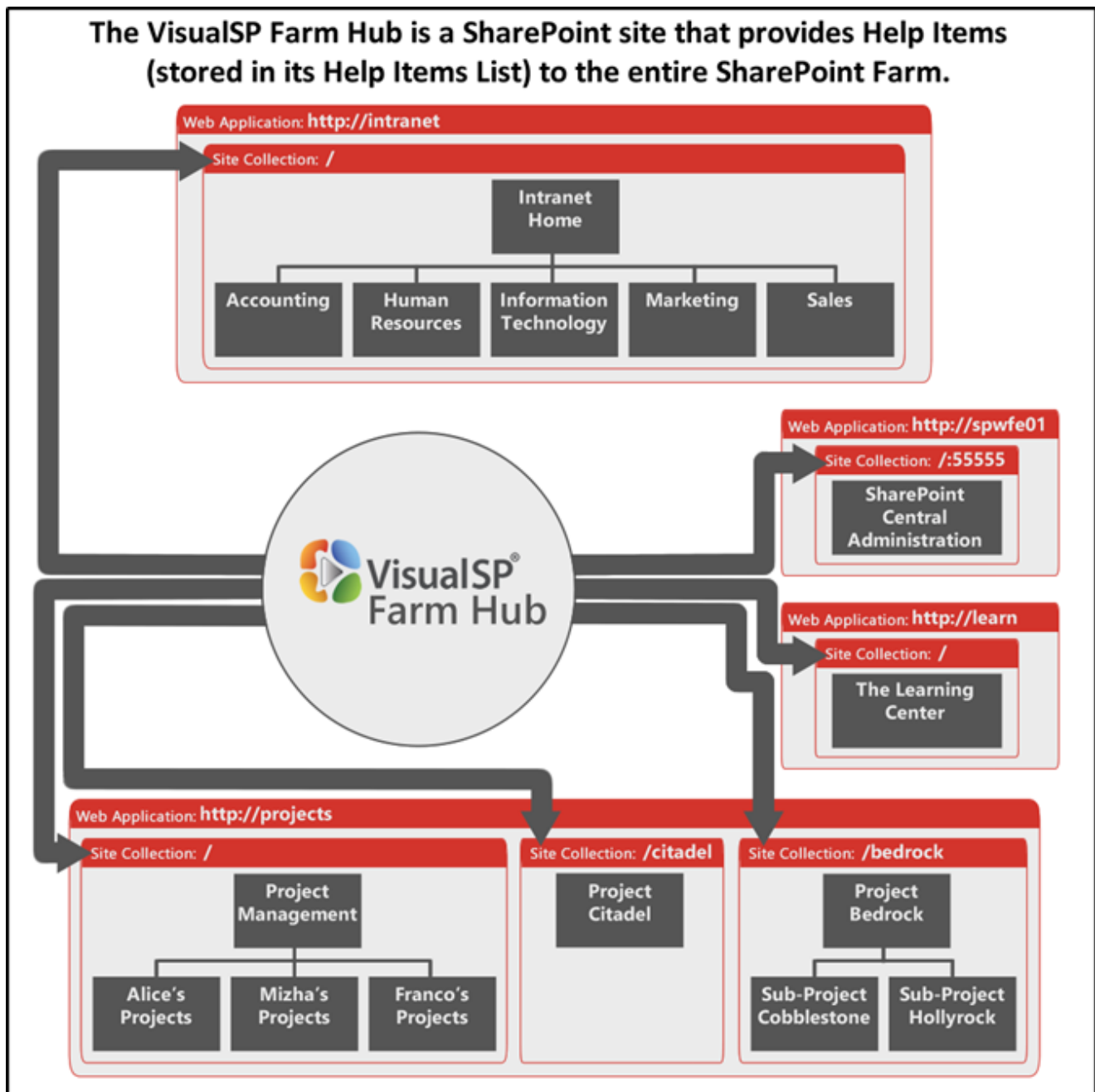


If you are unfamiliar with what a SharePoint Web Application is, just think of it as a base URL in SharePoint, that is, everything in the URL before the first forward slash (/). For example, you may have one web application with URLs that begin with **http://intranet** and another web application with URLs that begin with **http://projectswb**. These are two

different web applications and each may contain numerous site collections. A SharePoint Farm may be one or more SharePoint Servers that work together to power and manage any number of SharePoint Web Applications. Most organizations have only one production SharePoint Farm, but some organizations have multiple SharePoint Farms, depending on their needs.

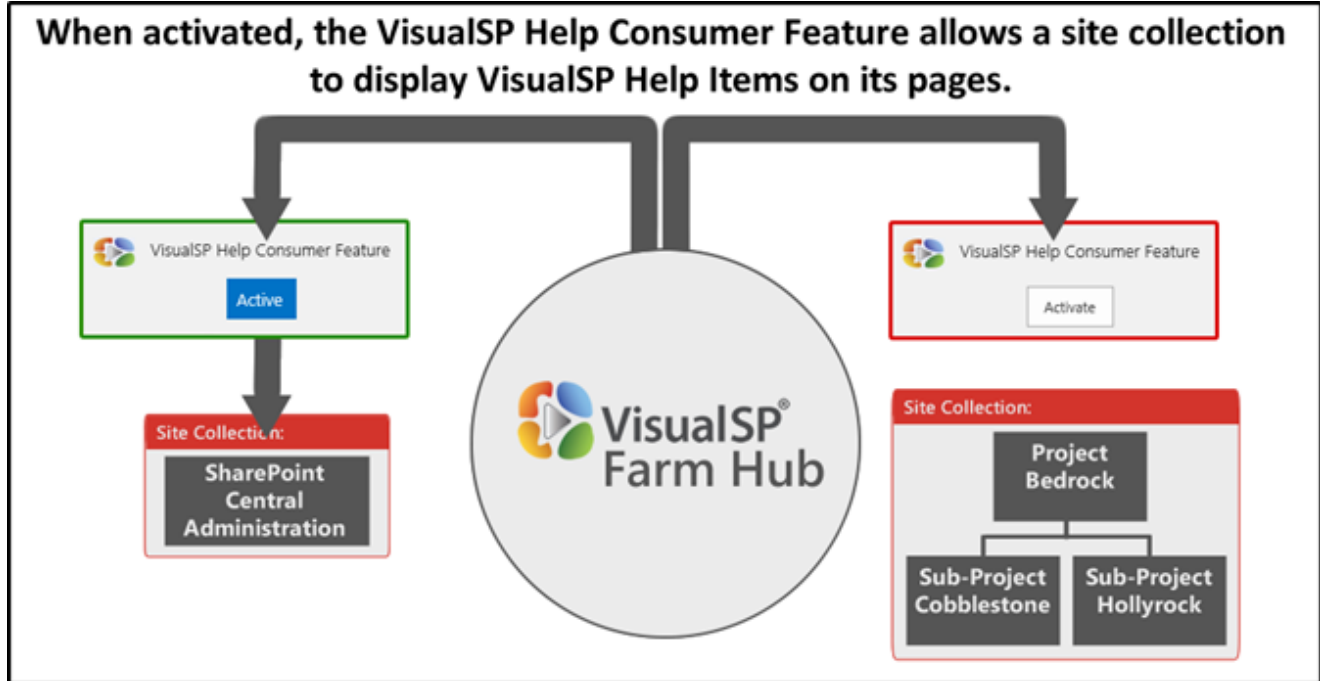
The VisualSP Farm Hub

When VisualSP is first installed, the SharePoint Administrator creates a site collection to serve as the VisualSP Farm Hub. This site collection is designed to serve as the central location for storing and managing help items and help content the SharePoint Farm.



VisualSP Help Consumer

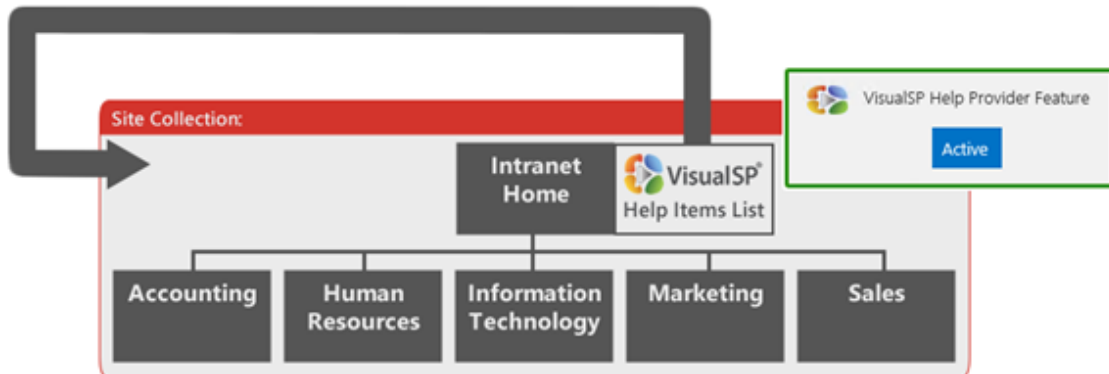
The VisualSP Help Consumer Feature must be activated on a site collection before it can display VisualSP Help to its users. Once activated, Inline Help can also be enabled or disabled for that particular site collection.



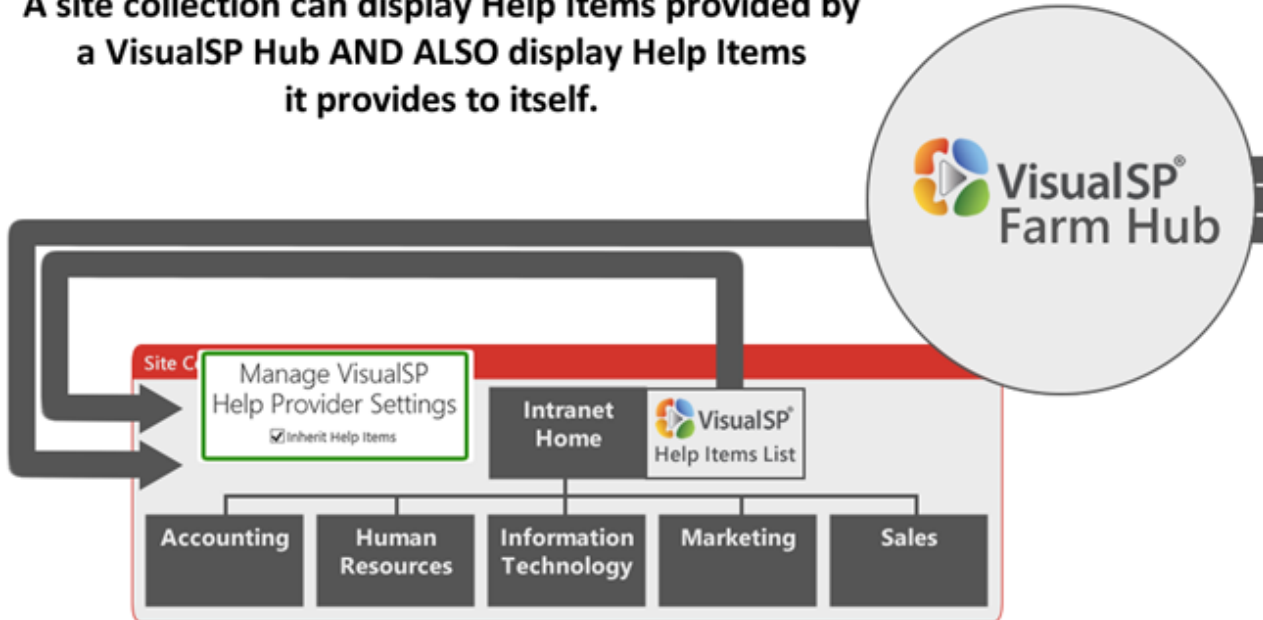
VisualSP Help Provider

This is a SharePoint Site Collection Feature that tells VisualSP how to serve up (or provide) the items in the VisualSP Help Items list to itself as well as other site collections that may inherit from this one. In the VisualSP Help Provider, you can enable inline help to be provided, enable or disable caching, and change the inline help icon to a custom icon. Each Site Collection typically inherits help items from the VisualSP Farm Hub. If the VisualSP Provider Feature is activated on the site collection, the site collection may also have its own unique Help Items in addition to the Help Items it is inheriting.

**When Activated, the VisualSP Help Provider Feature creates a VisualSP Help Items list in the site collection.
Help Items added to this list will be provided within this site collection.**



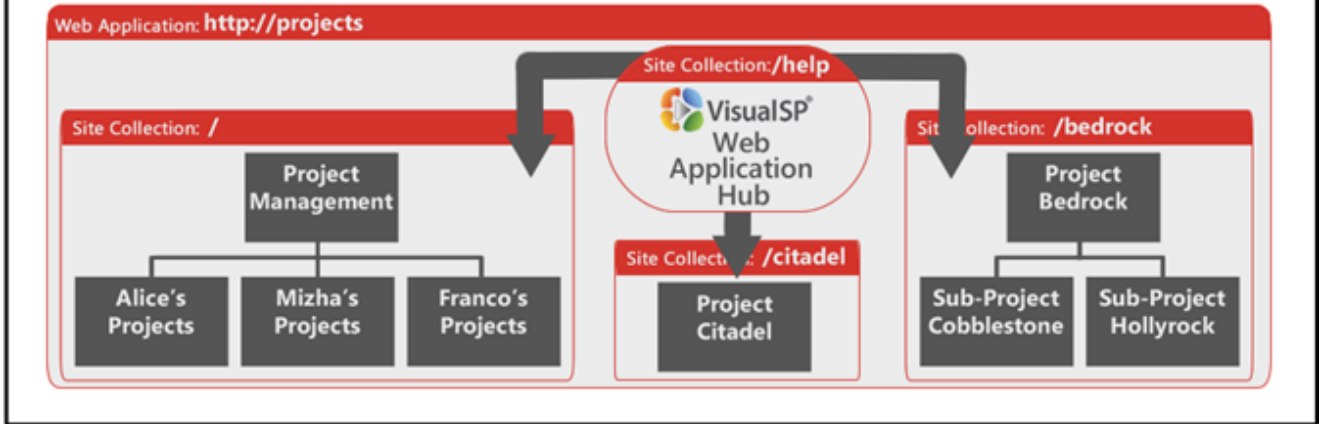
A site collection can display Help Items provided by a VisualSP Hub AND ALSO display Help Items it provides to itself.



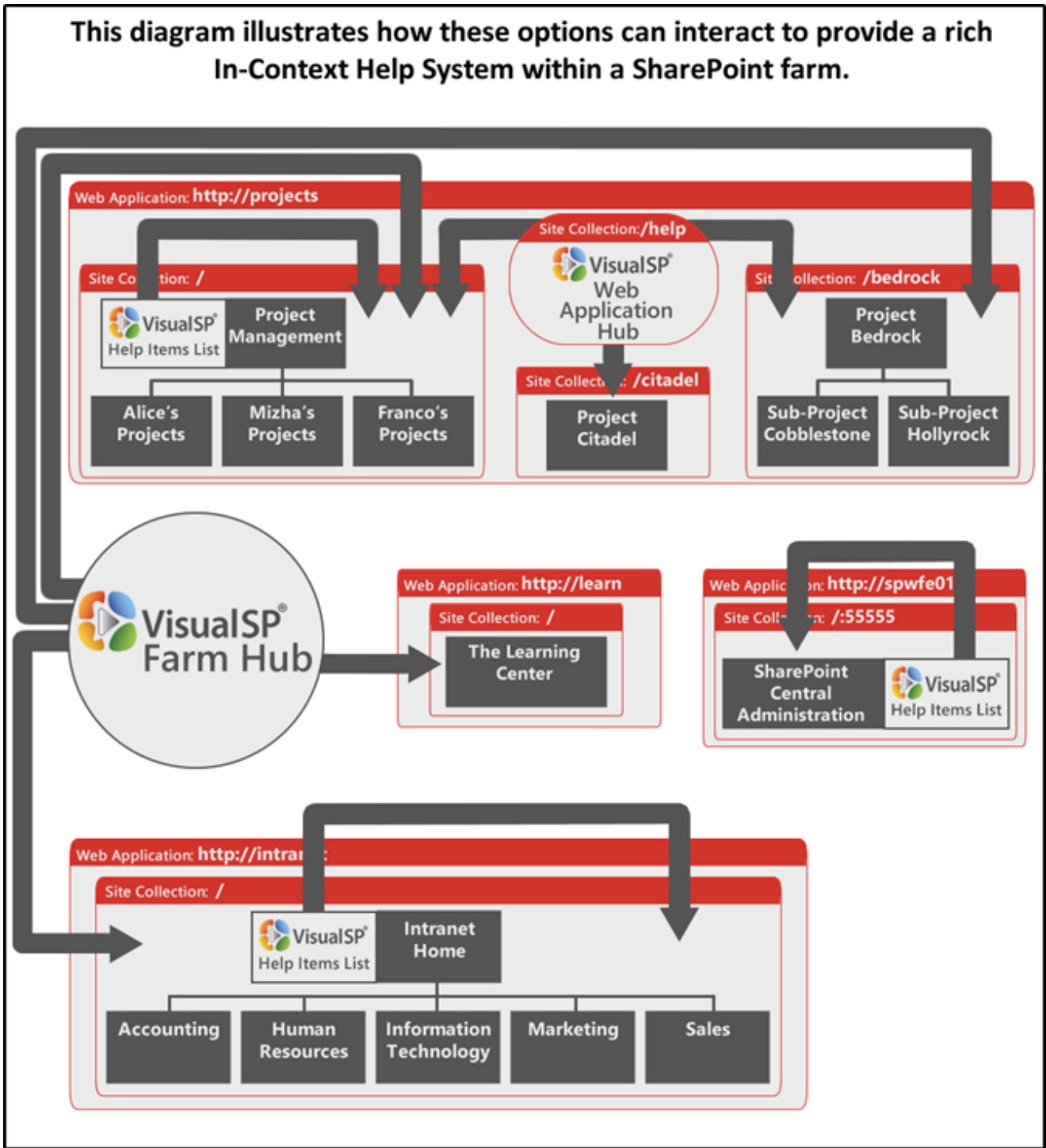
VisualSP Web Application Hub

A SharePoint Farm can have only one VisualSP Farm Hub, but it can have as many VisualSP Web Application Hubs as it does SharePoint Web Applications. Each VisualSP Web Application Hub, can provide help content to all the site collections that are in that particular web application. It typically inherits help items from the VisualSP Farm Hub and may also have its own help content and help items that are unique to that particular web application. Each site collection may also have its own Help Items as well.

Each web application may have one site collection designated to be a VisualSP Web Application Hub. Help Items in this site collection will be provided to all site collections that are part of that web application.



Example Diagram of a Fully Deployed VisualSP Help System



Updated on April 3, 2020

Tagged: VisualSP Classic