# New VA.gov

## User research interviews for MVP: Benefits content in Spanish for LEP Veterans and  family members

June 2019

# MVP: Page-level translation
## Some day: Enterprise site-wide localization?

# Let's start small.
# Gather user feedback. Collect data.
# Repeat.

# Need more Veteran demographics

Currently, we have no VEO research on LEP or localized content users; or data on current usage of translated materials (online/print).

"As of 2016, approximately 511,000 immigrants were veterans. Moreover, 11 percent of all U.S. veterans come from an immigrant background; they are either foreign-born themselves or have an immigrant parent."
(Source: http://immigrationimpact.com/2017/11/09/militarys-goals-fail-immigrants-cant-serve/)

# Research goals

To learn about:

- What's the most valuable information to translate first (most needed, most visited, most searched, etc.)

- Best way to ***navigate to translated content***

- Who is our **primary user** of translated benefits content

- What are their needs/expectations

**MVP project goals:**

- To provide English-as-a-second-language (ESL) or limited-English-proficiency (LEP) Veterans, family beneficiaries, or caregivers access to plain language benefits information, so they have equal access to the benefits they have earned. (It's also the law: Executive order 13166.)

# We spoke to 12 participants

- Moderated sessions May 13-17 and May 20-24

- Recruitment goal of 30 participants; around 20 scheduled; successfully interviewed 12

- **11 Veterans** (**4 of them also family members** of a Veteran) and **1 non-Veteran family member**

- Carola Ponce, IxD, moderated (mostly in English, but a few in Spanish); Jen Lee transcribed

# VA.gov benefits info in Spanish today

# MVP for user research sessions

**Home loans and pension benefits**

- 3 pages of each benefit type
- Including family/dependent/survivor related info
- Top trafficked pages of VBA Spanish pages

**MVP**

- Access link to page-level translation
- Did not include IA and navigation
- Improving on, but not expanding, current state

# MVP for user sessions



Access link in Spanish: "Read this page in Spanish"

Page-level link vs. global nav/footer (which is the practice for sitewide translations)

Close to H1 vs. in right rail or resources

IA links not translated (same as current state)

# MVP for user sessions



Access link back to source content: "Read this page in English"

Page-level link vs. global nav/footer (which is the practice for sitewide translations)

Close to H1 vs. in right rail or resources

IA links not translated (same as current state)

# Takeaway #1: family members are our primary users

They look for information for themselves.

As caregivers, they look for information for their older Veterans.

| Our users | User needs | Language/culture sensitive comments? |
|---|---|---|
| Family members | Survivors benefits | Don't say things like verdad [truth]? Language in Spanish can be accusatory - it needs to be more gentle. |
| Veteran - helps friends and family friends he helps translate information for in PR | Beneficiaries | Acronyms are difficult to understand - note: let's define if these need to be in Spanish or English and what the standards are for the translated information. |
| Survivors | Lists of qualifications | |
| Veterans who prefer Spanish | Brochures | COE example - Spell it out - this was a comment from a user about acronyms |
| Users: younger Veterans have very little problem/none navigating and understanding | Status of disability claims | Language: Acronyms in EN don't match the translation |
| | Acronyms are difficult to understand | Language: Standard Spanish, not regional |
| Users: most users had not visited VA.gov; most had visited MHV or eBenefits. | Family members - Reading level 6th grade | Terminology is difficult to understand - miembro activo? |

# Takeaway #2: Navigation to translated content was easy

## Navigation

Staying in EN may confuse limited EN users

links - users expect it to go to Spanish if they're on a Spanish page

User thought survivors' benefit information in a separate page should be part of the accordion categories.

Navigation: Liked being able to compare English to Spanish

## Page information

Page information - most ppl discovered the Spanish without issues

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Most users 'got' that the Spanish link would take them to that page in Spanish.

Most users wished that the nav links were also translated.

- "If I needed a page in Spanish, I would need the menu in Spanish too. "

**MVP challenge: People expect any translated link to go to Spanish.**

# Takeaway #3: Stay in Spanish experience whenever possible

**Opportunities/ideas**

Insight: For MVP - consider Google Translate widget to get MORE pages enabled in Spanish

Opportunity: provide Spanish link with a printable or share link?

When a user is already on a Spanish page, and clicks on a link that has Spanish translation available, use session cookies to take them straight to the Spanish content.

Going from English to Spanish is fine; but then unexpectedly being taken back to English can be confusing or cumbersome.

# Takeaway #4: Start with eligibility and family benefits

Most valuable content for this target audience would be eligibility info (for Veterans) and benefits for family members.

Younger Veterans don't have problems with English.

- Older Veterans (like from Vietnam War period) do.
- And immigrant parents or spouses of Veterans are LEP or just feel more secure getting difficult technical information in their first language.

None of our participants knew that VA had any online information in Spanish.

**Insights**

Insights: content most valuable to translate = for family

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Insight: Language is only one barrier; tech savvy and comfort level with technology is another, different barrier

Insight: Older Veterans (like Vietnam era) are NOT EN proficient VS. younger Veterans who joined when military instituted stronger language requirements

# User quotes

**How do you usually get information about VA benefits and services?**

"On VA website but in English, and will share info with wife but verbally. Like survivor benefit info in Spanish would be useful in case anything ever happened to him, became incapacitated or died.

"I served with many Latino Veterans but they were all fluent in English. But it would be for their family members maybe it could be helpful.

**Are there certain kinds of information you prefer to get in Spanish vs. English?**
"I help my grandfather and grandmother; translate text that is in English to Spanish.

"Not for family but for friends stationed in PR. Recently my mom's friend, he was in Vietnam War and needed help getting benefits. I had to translate everything in Spanish and tell him what was available for him. He had exposure to Agent Orange and had cancer. He used his private insurance. Wasn't signed up for VA health care. So we signed him up for VA health care and looked up exposures on the website.

"It was a challenge for my mom's friend. He didn't understand 90% of this stuff. Too complicated for him [in English]. [His comfort level with English] is very minimal…. All he needed for military service [at that time] was to say yes sir, no sir and that was it.

# Recommendations: Across VA benefit products

Right now, working with Sandy Tadeo, we're identifying VBA benefit pages for translation.

We would like to work with VHA and NCA to do the same for health care and burials benefits.

# User feedback and takeaways

Mural board:

https://app.mural.co/invitation/mural/workqueue2001/1558543337827?sender=caroladsva8096&key=2cc8b8c8-50be-4b5d-85c4-2903a14c8e8c


Participant notes:

https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/tree/master/Products/Global/Benefits%20Spanish%20Localization/user-research/participant-notes

# Github repo – background and context

- Repo: https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/issues/60

- VBA's current Spanish pages (and proposed new VA.gov benefit pages to translate): https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/files/3070983/All_Translated_Contents-VBA-SandyTadeo-040319-jlee.xlsx

- Top organic search pages for Spanish language benefits (VBA benefits): Analytics-organic-Spanish-benefits-April 2018-2019-042919.xlsx

- Top traffic pages - VBA benefits in Spanish: Analytics-top-all-traffic-Spanish-benefits-April 2018-2019-042919.xlsx

# Questions?