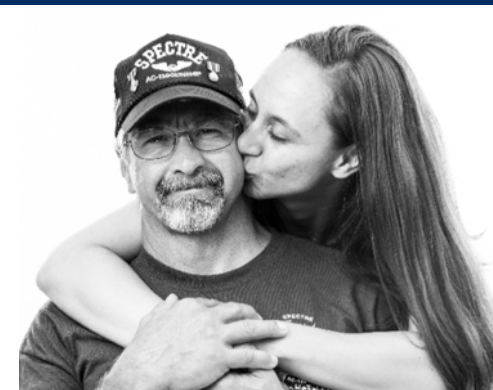


Discovery Research Readout

STEM Wizard & VA Form 22-1995 Update



VA | Vets.gov

1.16.20



What We Wanted to Learn
What We Did
What We Learned
Appendix

What We Wanted to Learn

The Problem | The Product | Why This Testing

The Problem

As an individual seeking education benefits, I want to understand the eligibility criteria for the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM scholarship so I can apply if I'm eligible and I don't waste time applying if I'm ineligible.

If I'm currently ineligible, it'd be helpful to know if it's a scholarship I may be eligible for in the future.

The Education benefits wizard, which is accessible on VA.gov and VA Form 22-1995 are being modified to provide additional information on the purpose of and eligibility requirements for the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship.

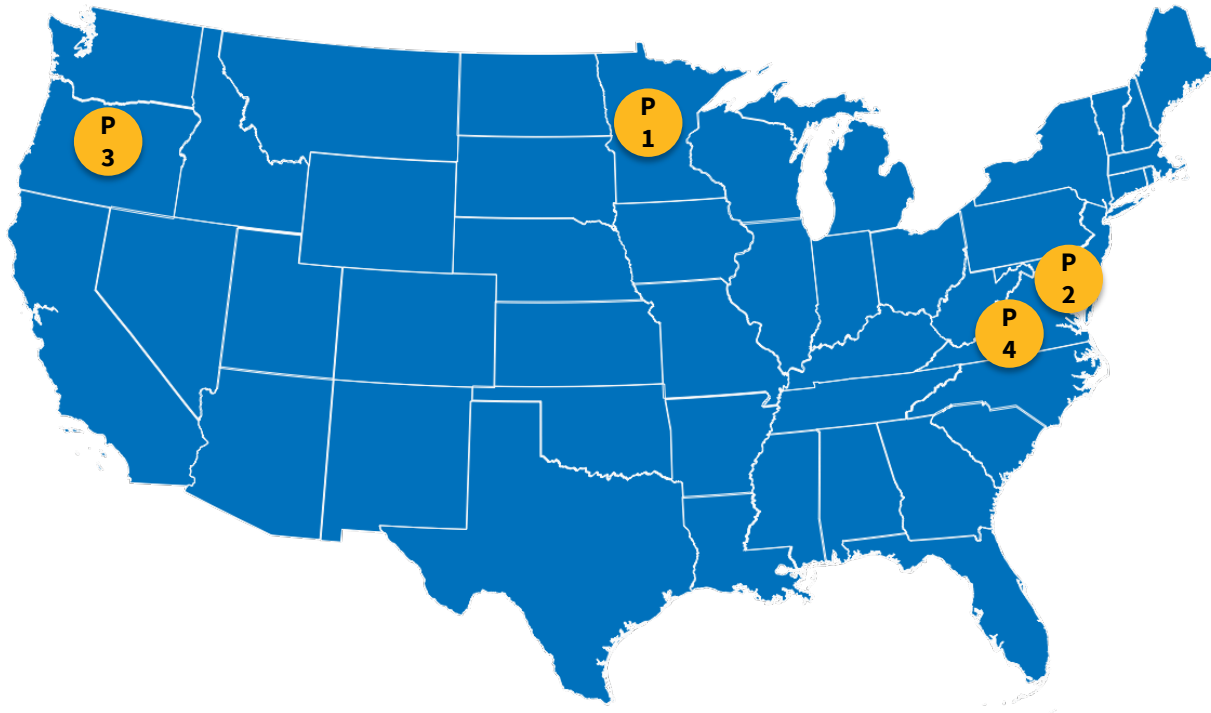
Why This Testing?

We conducted the research to discover user goals, needs, and behaviors related to the Education benefits wizard and the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship application on VA.gov.

What We Did

Participants | Prototype

Participants



2 Women
2 Men

4
Veterans

1
Branch

2
Ethnic
Backgrounds

25-54
Age Range

How do I apply?

You can apply online right now. Just answer a few questions, and we'll help you get started with the education benefits form that's right for you.

[Find your education benefits form](#) ^

Are you applying for a new benefit or updating your current education benefits?

- ☐ Applying for a new benefit
- ☐ Updating my current education benefits
- ☐ Applying to extend my benefit using the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship

The following research methods were used:

UX Review:

- Wizard
- VA Form 22-1995

Structured Interview with:

- Veterans

What We Learned

Primary Finding

Veterans need additional information about the STEM Scholarship to determine their eligibility.

***“I'd like some background on
the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM
Scholarship.”***

-P1

Finding 1

Veterans anticipate the intent of the STEM radio button.



- Veterans accurately described the intent of STEM radio button.
- They knew that extending benefits applies to those who are already using their benefits.
- They understood that the scholarship is for those who need more benefits.

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[Find your education benefits form](#) ^

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- ☐ Updating my current education benefits
- ☐ Applying to extend my benefit using the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship

☐ Applying to extend my benefit using the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship

“The 3rd radio button is for "extending [benefits] based on a scholarship.”

- P4

“I'm already using my benefits and I need more benefits to continue my education.”

- P1

Recommendation

Recommendation

- No change

Finding 2

Knowledge of the STEM acronym varies



- Three of the participants knew that STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and math.
- Those who were most eligible were most familiar with the term.
- The participant who was unfamiliar with the acronym was unable to glean the term's meaning from the content on the page.

How do I apply?

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[Find your education benefits form](#) ^

Are you applying for a new benefit or updating your current education benefits?

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- ☐ Updating my current education benefits
- ☐ Applying to extend my benefit using the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship

“I’m trying to think of what that might be... the only thing that comes to mind is Stem cell research and stuff like that.”

- P3

Recommendation

- For any who may be unfamiliar, mention the 4 areas of STEM study (science, technology, engineering and math) in both the wizard and the application.

Finding 3

Veterans are interested in more information about the scholarship



How do I apply?

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Find your education benefits form ^

Are you applying for a new benefit or updating your current education benefits?

- ☐ Applying for a new benefit
- ☐ Updating my current education benefits
- ☐ Applying to extend my benefit using the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship

- As Veterans considered the STEM option, they had a lot of questions.
- Veterans would use Google, other VA-related sources or Financial aid offices to learn more about the scholarship.
- One Veteran learned about the scholarship from a GI Bill Facebook page.
- Veterans thought having a hyperlink or the ability to view additional content in the wizard would be useful.

Veteran questions regarding the STEM scholarship

- What is the scholarship?
- What are the benefits?
- Who is eligible?
- Are you eligible if you already have an undergrad degree?
- Which GI Bill programs are eligible?
- Does it apply to Montgomery and Post-9/11?
- Can I have remaining Post-9/11 benefits?
- Do you have to exhaust your Post-9/11 benefits first?
- Is my program eligible (i.e., cybersecurity)?
- Does it cover vocational fields, automotive, robotics, technical education or certificates?
- Can I take classes to make my current degree STEM-focused or to add a science endorsement?
- Can I use both Post-9/11 and STEM Scholarship simultaneously?

Recommendations

Recommendations

- Include information about both eligibility and the benefits Veterans will receive in the wizard.
- Include a link to more detailed information about the STEM scholarship (<https://benefits.va.gov/gibill/fgib/stem.asp>).

Finding 4

Veterans are unable to determine their eligibility using the wizard



- Veterans found no information in the Wizard regarding eligibility.
- Veterans would like to know whether they may be eligible before they apply.

How do I apply?

You can apply online right now. Just answer a few questions, and we'll help you get started with the education benefits form that's right for you.

[Find your education benefits form](#) ^

Are you applying for a new benefit or updating your current education benefits?

- ☐ Applying for a new benefit
- ☐ Updating my current education benefits
- ☐ Applying to extend my benefit using the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship

***“I'm wondering... does it apply to
Montgomery and Post-9/11?...
"If I've already graduated, could I
still use [the STEM Scholarship]?”***

- P1

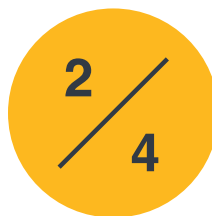
Recommendation

Recommendation

- In the Wizard, provide additional information regarding eligibility for the STEM Scholarship.

Finding 5

Veterans who've heard scholarships can jeopardize GI Bill benefits are cautious



- Two Veterans with Montgomery GI Bill benefits have heard that you can lose your GI Bill benefits if you accept a scholarship indicated that they would be cautious.
- One of the two assumed that you could likely receive the STEM Scholarship without losing your GI Bill benefits because it's offered by the VA.

How do I apply?

You can apply online right now. Just answer a few questions, and we'll help you get started with the education benefits form that's right for you.

[Find your education benefits form](#) ^

Are you applying for a new benefit or updating your current education benefits?

- ☐ Applying for a new benefit
- ☐ Updating my current education benefits
- ☐ Applying to extend my benefit using the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship

“If you are pulling VA Benefits you are not authorized to receive any other scholarships....The last thing you want to do is lose your benefits because you took a different scholarship.”

- P4

Recommendation

- As Post-9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries can receive scholarships, this may be less of an issue.
- Consider adding information to reassure Veterans who may be concerned about conflicts on the STEM content pages.

Finding 6

Those who select ineligible programs are led through the STEM questions

Update your education benefits
Form 22-1995

2 of 6 Education Benefit

Which benefit are you currently using or have you used most recently?

☐ Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33)
[Learn more](#)

☐ Fry Scholarship (Chapter 33)
[Learn more](#)

☒ Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB-AD, Chapter 30)
[Learn more](#)

☐ Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR, Chapter 1606)
[Learn more](#)

☐ Transfer of Entitlement Program (TOE)
[Learn more](#)

☐ Post-Vietnam Era Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (VEAP, Chapter 32)
[Learn more](#)

☐ Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP, Chapter 1607)
[Learn more](#)

[« Back](#) [Continue »](#)

- Regardless of the benefit selected, users see the STEM question and continue through the extra STEM questions if they select "Yes".

Recommendation

Recommendation

- For those who select a benefit other than Post-9/11 or Fry Scholarship, ask an additional question to ensure that they also are eligible for Post-9/11 or the Fry Scholarship.

Finding 7

Veterans are asked to express interest with little background info

- There is little to deter ineligible users from indicating that they would like to apply.

Update your education benefits

Form 22-1995

2 of 6 Education Benefit

Are you applying for the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship? (*Required)

☐ Yes

☐ No

What is the Rogers STEM Scholarship? ▾

« Back

Continue »

Need help?

For help filling out this form,
ask the Education Call Center:

888-442-4551 (888-GI-BILL-1)

Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. ET

[Submit a question to Education Service](#)

If this form isn't working right for you, please call us at [855-574-7286](tel:855-574-7286).

If you have hearing loss, call TTY: 711.

Recommendation

- Include the eligibility criteria as static content on the page, rather than having appear in a collapsed helper text that users need to open.
- Later in the process, allow users to re-consider their decision to apply, or present the question about applying only to those who meet the eligibility requirements.

Finding 8

The 22-1995 STEM "Learn more" copy answers many Veteran questions



- All participants who saw the Learn More copy indicated that it's helpful.
- Veterans were better able to determine their eligibility after reading the Learn more content in VA Form 22-1995.
- Veterans found answers to many, but not all questions in the Learn More copy.

What is the Rogers STEM Scholarship? ^

The Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship provides up to 9 months of additional Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, to a maximum of \$30,000.

Veterans and Fry Scholars may qualify for this scholarship if they're enrolled in an undergraduate program for Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math (STEM), or if they've earned a STEM degree and are getting a teaching certification.

To learn more about the STEM Scholarship, [visit the VBA STEM website.](#)

"I like [the Learn more]...I think it's straightforward and tells you exactly what it is and how much you get."

- P4

"I'm curious why it says 'may qualify'....why would I not qualify for it?"

- P4

Recommendations

- In the application, refine the copy to further clarify eligibility.
- Include the fact that applicants need to have ≤ 6 months of benefit remaining in order to be eligible.
- For users who are ineligible, briefly reiterate the eligibility criteria so they know what circumstances could make them eligible in the future.

Finding 9

Veterans who know they're ineligible seem uninterested in applying



- Once Veterans noticed a criterion that they did not meet, they indicated that they would not be eligible.
- Veterans were eager to find a reason why they might be eligible.

What is the Rogers STEM Scholarship? ^

The Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship provides up to 9 months of additional Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, to a maximum of \$30,000.

Veterans and Fry Scholars may qualify for this scholarship if they're enrolled in an undergraduate program for Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math (STEM), or if they've earned a STEM degree and are getting a teaching certification.

To learn more about the STEM Scholarship, [visit the VBA STEM website](#).

“I’m not a fan of applying for things I’m not eligible for.”

- P4

“Probably not because I don’t have any educational benefits right now.”

- P3

“I’d apply for it anyway since it says ‘Veterans’.”

- P1

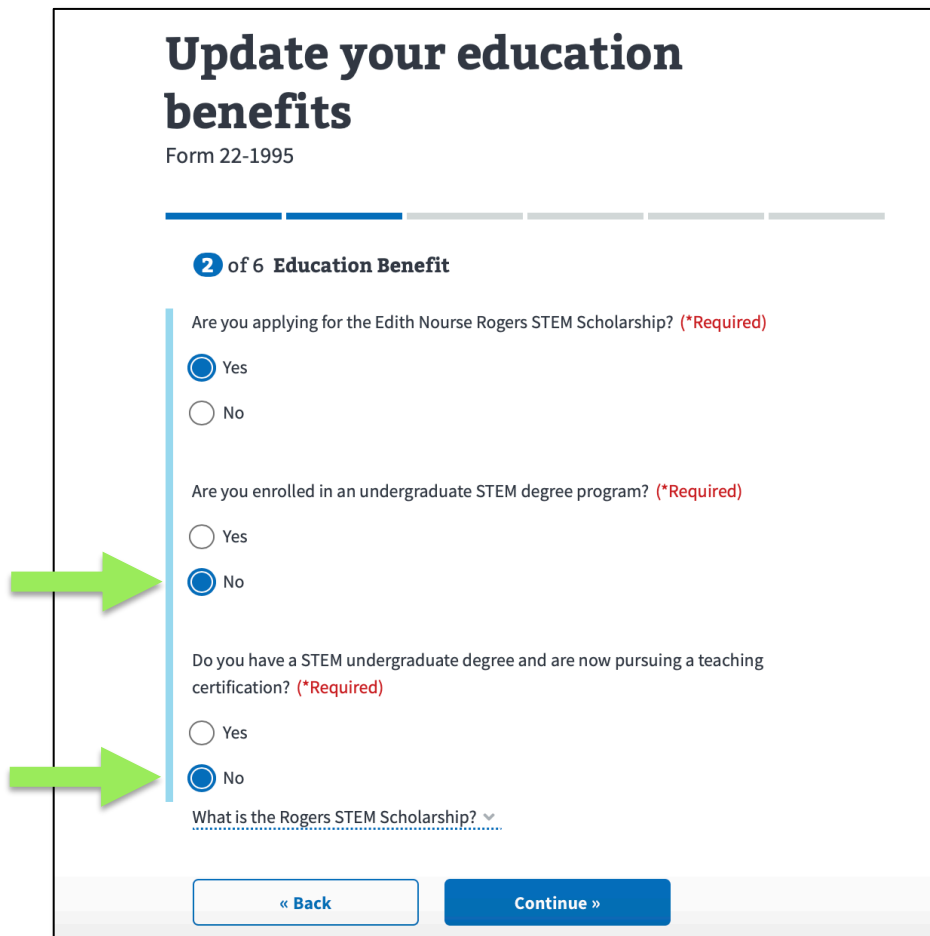
Recommendations

- Be explicit about eligibility requirements throughout the wizard and application.
- In the application, for applicants who are ineligible, briefly reiterate the eligibility criteria so they know what circumstances would make them eligible in the future.
- In the application, warn those who are ineligible based on their answers.

Finding 10

Veterans receive no visual indication of ineligibility

- Even users who select “No” for the following questions are evaluated for the scholarship:
 - Are you enrolled in an undergraduate STEM degree program?
 - Do you have a STEM undergraduate degree and are now pursuing a teaching certification?
- As users answer the eligibility questions, they may not realize they are ineligible.



Update your education benefits
Form 22-1995

2 of 6 Education Benefit

Are you applying for the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship? (*Required)

☒ Yes
☐ No

Are you enrolled in an undergraduate STEM degree program? (*Required)

☐ Yes
☒ No

Do you have a STEM undergraduate degree and are now pursuing a teaching certification? (*Required)

☐ Yes
☒ No

What is the Rogers STEM Scholarship? ▾

« Back Continue »

Two green arrows point to the 'No' radio buttons for the second and third questions.

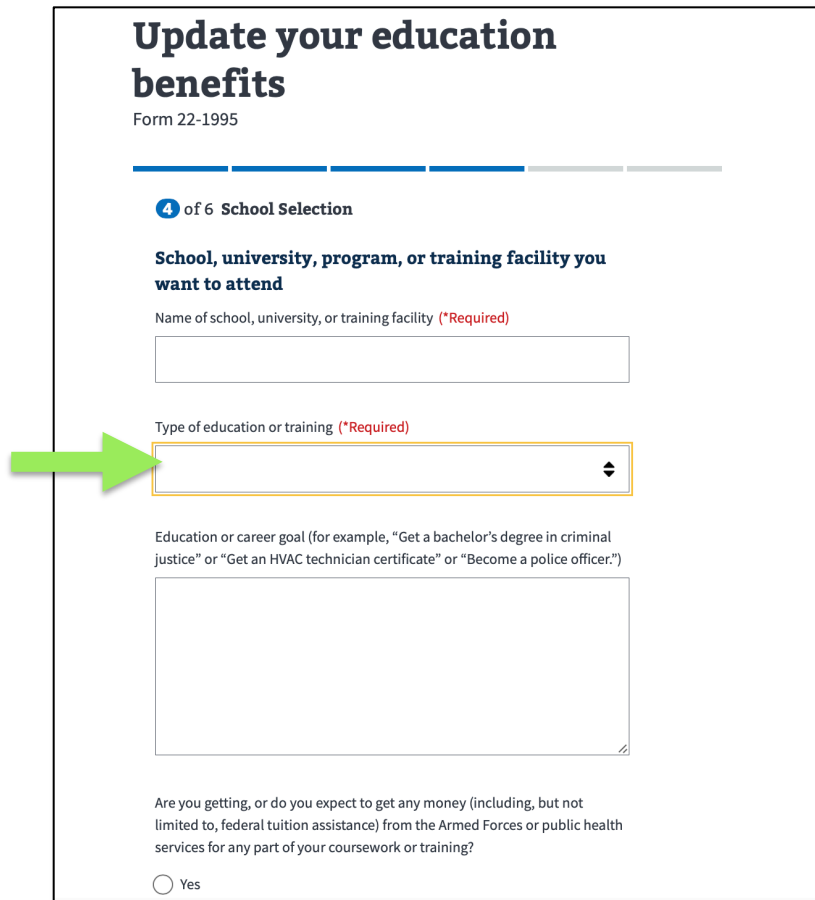
Recommendation

- If users' responses indicate they're ineligible, alert them early in the process so they are aware and can abandon the form if they choose.

Finding 11

“Type of education or training” contains non-STEM options

- On the “School Selection” page, the “Type of education or training” drop-down contains options that would not qualify one for the STEM Scholarship, such as “Apprenticeship on the job training”, “Vocational flight school”, “National test reimbursement”, etc..



Update your education benefits
Form 22-1995

4 of 6 School Selection

School, university, program, or training facility you want to attend

Name of school, university, or training facility (*Required)

Type of education or training (*Required)

Education or career goal (for example, “Get a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice” or “Get an HVAC technician certificate” or “Become a police officer.”)

Are you getting, or do you expect to get any money (including, but not limited to, federal tuition assistance) from the Armed Forces or public health services for any part of your coursework or training?

☐ Yes

Recommendation

- If a user is applying for the STEM Scholarship, limit the options in the drop-down to those that would make one eligible for the STEM Scholarship.

Alternatively, when ineligible options are selected, display a warning to let users know that the STEM Scholarship can only be used for a STEM undergraduate degree or a teaching certificate if one already has a STEM degree.

STEM Scholarship Recipient Feedback

“I just want to say thank you for the STEM Scholarship. It means a lot to my family because I was going to use a loan and now, I don’t have to. Thank you so much to whoever came up with this. Thank you!”

- STEM Scholar Recipient


Findings for other projects

Finding 12

Veterans wonder why one would “Update my current education benefits”



- Veterans wondered why one might update their educational benefits
- Veterans were unaware that the 2nd option would allow them to change their program or place of training.



How do I apply?

You can apply online right now. Just answer a few questions, and we'll help you get started with the education benefits form that's right for you.

[Find your education benefits form ^](#)

Are you applying for a new benefit or updating your current education benefits?

- ☐ Applying for a new benefit
- ☐ Updating my current education benefits
- ☐ Applying to extend my benefit using the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship

“Why would I update my current education benefits? You’re either eligible or not.”

- P4

“Why would you need to update once you start? How often do you need to update? What are you updating?”

- P1

Recommendations

- Update the language of the 2nd radio button to help users understand that the option allows them to notify VA if they decide to change to their program or place of training.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the new language during usability testing.

“I just want to say thank you for the STEM Scholarship. It means a lot to my family because I was going to use a loan and now, I don’t have to. Thank you so much to whoever came up with this. Thank you!”

- STEM Scholar Recipient

Next Steps

Next Steps

1. Create and obtain approval on prototype
2. Conduct usability testing on the revised wizard and VA Form 22-1995
3. Revised prototype
4. Begin development

Participant Details

Key findings:

- Thinks "Apply to extend my benefit" is for those who are already in school.
- Wondered if you would be nullifying your current benefits if you applied for and were accepted for the new scholarship. Would it be better to finish GI Bill before applying?
- Knew the exact definition of STEM - all 4 areas of study.
- **KEY:** Wondered if those on the Montgomery bill were eligible for the STEM scholarship.
- **KEY:** Wondered if you'd be eligible if you've already graduated with a degree.
- Would like the STEM Scholarship to be hot-linked with background information. Would like to know more with a hotlink.
- Knew what degree programs would qualify for the scholarship.
- Wondered if "Veteran" meant "all veterans". She'd apply for it anyway since it says "Veterans".
- RE: Learn More (22-1995) Accurately expected an explanation to drop down when the Learn More chevron was clicked.
- Wondered if vocational tech programs and robotics would be covered.
- Regarding Learn More (22-1995) "I like what is in the drop-down".
- "What classes could I take to make my current degree stem-focused?"
- "Don't want to click the wrong thing to disqualify myself. I'm very hesitant."
- "[STEM Scholarship] seems like a great program."

Key findings:

- Knows that the "Applying to extend" option allows you to apply for the STEM Scholarship (used it in December to apply).
- Based on prior knowledge, knows that STEM Scholarship applicants have to :
 - have close to no benefits left
 - be receiving a B.S. degree only
 - be studying in a stem field
 - be seeking an undergraduate degree, rather than an Associate's degree.
- Has the impression that a lot of people do not know what STEM is. Thinks mainly people in STEM fields know the acronym.
- Accurately expects the Learn More link on VA Form 22-1995 will explain what the STEM Scholarship is and who is eligible.
- "[The Learn More content] explains it really well. It has amount. It has number of months."
- "[The STEM Scholarship application] is really fast, very easy."
- "I just want to say thank you for the scholarship. It means a lot to my family because I was going to use a loan and now I don't have to. Thank you so much to whoever came up with this. Thank you."

Key findings:

- Understands that the 3rd radio button allows you to apply for something specific.
- Unfamiliar with the STEM Scholarship - thinks it might be "a grant thing" for "additional benefits".
- Speculates that the "STEM Scholarship" may relate to Stem cell research.
- People would know what [STEM] means if they are extending their benefit for it.
- Would have extra information right beside the question or below it. Show it just for people who want to know more about it. Others already knows what it means.
- Wouldn't select the 3rd radio button as he doesn't have any benefits right now.
- Could define STEM in parentheses in the question.
- Expects the "Find your education benefits form" button will open up the next page.
- Knows the first radio button is for those who want to apply for a new benefit.
- Know the second radio button is for those who are already in school.

Key findings:

- Knows what STEM stands for and expects those in college or with school age children are familiar with the acronym.
- Would like a hyperlink to content within the VA website or a mouse-over where more information comes down.
- Curious to know
 - Is it something I would be eligible for?
 - Would I be eligible for the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship?
 - Knowing that I'm in a cybersecurity program...is that something that is applicable to me?
 - What is it?
- Would want the Learn more to appear sooner in the process.
- Would want to know whether the scholarship can be used in conjunction with GI Bill benefits.
- Would want to be reassured that applying for the scholarship would not disqualify one from using GI Bill benefits.
- Quickly realizes the scholarship is not for graduate studies.
- Wonders why it say you "may be" eligible. Why would I not qualify?
- Wouldn't apply without being sure he'd be eligible.
- Instinctually knew how to use the Learn more.
- The 3rd radio button is for "extending [benefits] based on a scholarship I would like to do."
- Would want to know that he's eligible before applying



DIGITAL SERVICE at VA

Thank you