# VA Digital Modernization Strategy

## THE CHALLENGE

Every month, over 10 million people access VA's digital tools and content. Many of these users have a frustrating experience, encountering a complicated tangle of websites, forms, logins, brands, and outdated tools that reflect VA's stove-piped organization. We give users little reason or ability to "Choose VA." Instead, every month millions of people have an experience that shows them "it is business as usual at the VA."

**We can change this.**

Within the first term of this Administration, VA can dramatically upgrade its user-facing digital tools, becoming the first federal agency to deliver a digital experience on par with the private sector. We can integrate disparate content, tools and brands into one experience. We can eliminate duplication and refocus resources on delivering a single, excellent digital experience customized to each individual user. And, we can put this modern experience into a mobile-friendly format similar to what every consumer-facing Fortune 500 company offers its customers.

This document provides a summary of VA's digital strategy, including a description of the end state vision we will achieve and the actions we will take to execute this modernization vision.

## THE VISION

From shopping for car insurance, to changing a mobile phone plan, to scheduling a dentist appointment, Americans increasingly expect the places where they do business to offer easy-to-use digital tools for routine transactions. Veterans, caregivers, service members, VSOs, and VA's other users are no different; they expect VA to offer an online experience on par with the private sector companies they interact with in their day-to-day lives.

To understand what this means, it is useful to understand the digital experience offered by large private-sector consumer service organizations. Veterans expect nothing less from VA. These examples share many attributes:
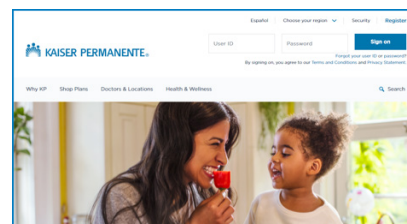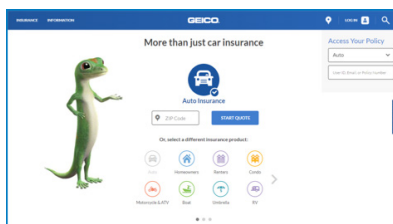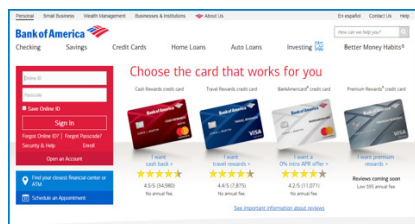






- Homepage content that is focused on the customer first, with other user types (i.e., "investors" or "press") available, but not primary
- Existing customers have a clear and standard way to "log in" to see a personalized view of all the services they receive from the company

- Action-oriented content that is easy to understand (i.e., 'Find a Location,' 'Shop Plans,' 'Choose a Card')
- Simple, standard design across tools

- A single corporate brand under which all products are offered
- Mobile-friendly webpages, in addition to iOS and Android native mobile applications that offer a similar experience

These examples stand in contrast to VA, where our online tools are spread across disparate platforms, brands, designs, and logins. To align our digital experience with our users' expectations, VA will follow a core set of digital modernization principles modeled on these examples.

## DIGITAL MODERNIZATION PRINCIPLES[1]

**1** Every VA service will have a single, high quality digital version, designed with direct input from users. All VA digital services will have a consistent look and feel.

**2** Top services will be accessible from a single customer-focused homepage on VA.gov. This homepage will be organized around the primary actions people are trying to take when they visit VA. The homepage will be optimized for quickly connecting users with the tool or information they are seeking. VA's internal org chart will be invisible to customers.

**3** Whenever possible, services will be personalized for the individual using the tool.

**4** All existing VA account holders, regardless of which account they have, will be able to use that account to access all of VA's digital tools.

**5** VA's customer support channels will be equipped to assist Veterans with digital tools, and Veterans will be provided the same information about their situation regardless of whether the use a digital tool or a different customer support channel.

**6** Every service will be equally available in desktop and mobile environments.

**7** Customer information will be protected with best-in-class security.

[1] These principles were developed and agreed to by the Digital Modernization Working group including SMEs from VHA, VBA, VEO, OEI, DSVA and OIT, and are based on a human-centered design analysis of customer needs.

## THE PLAN

Transforming VA's online experience to follow these principles is achievable but will require a change in the status quo. Rather than deliver digital tools and content in stovepipes offered under competing brands with different logins, we will modernize and consolidate these tools into an enterprise-wide self-service platform, and make VA.gov the main site for VA's customers to access what they need.[2] VA.gov will be Veteran-focused and will connect customers to the top tools and services within one or two clicks (i.e., 'Apply for health care,' 'Refill a prescription,' 'Check your claim status,' etc.).

VA's digital tools will be standardized so they are integrated into the overall modernized VA.gov experience—a unified design pattern, consistent navigation strategy, and single sign on will enable all logged in VA.gov users to access the tools. Users will be able to log in with new or existing VA accounts of their choice to get a personalized experience of all their

existing VA services, regardless of which VA administration provides those services. Logged in users will also be able to access an agency-wide user profile allowing the user to view and update the information VA has about them.

This personalized VA dashboard will allow VA to seamlessly integrate VA's EHR of the future into the VA digital experience. Veterans will see a consistent summary of all of their VA services, whether their healthcare locations have transitioned to a new EHR or are still using Vista. Logged in users will be directed to the appropriate digital health tools automatically based on the status of their providers' transition to a modern EHR system.

After VA has created an excellent online experience centered on VA.gov, VA will release a flagship "VA" mobile application on the iOS and Android app stores, providing users access to these same services from a single app on their mobile phone.

[2] September 2017 survey of 3,400 Veterans and Service Members indicated that the most users want one place to access all of their military and Veteran services online, and that they expect to find that experience on VA.gov. (VEO "VA Brand Survey," Online Survey, Sept 17-25., 2017).

| Topic | Actions | April 11, 2018 |
|---|---|---|

**VA.gov Homepage**

Relaunch VA.gov homepage with a new design focused on quickly connecting Veterans to the most commonly needed transactions and information VA offers. Update VA's other main front doors (MHV, eBenefits) so they integrate seamlessly with the modernized tools offered on VA.gov.

- Includes new top-level navigation
- Applies U.S. Web Design System for consistent look and feel
- Takes lessons learned from user-centered modernization work done by Explore, VEO, and the DSVA teams, and applies them to a larger audience for greater impact

**Login**

Add a prominent login call to action to VA.gov that will allow people with existing VA accounts (My HealtheVet, DS Logon, or ID.me) to access all VA services with their preferred credential.

- Will provide a simple way for users to establish a new VA-approved credential if they need one
- All tools requiring login will be accessible via single sign on for users who have logged in to VA.gov

**Personalization and Profile**

Like other private sector companies, logging in from the VA.gov homepage will bring users to a summary of all of their existing VA services from across the organization.

- Includes secure messages from users' doctor, prescription refill status, claim and appeal status, in-progress applications, and more
- During the EHR transition, the dashboard will present Veterans a single view of their health information whether data comes from the modern EHR, Vista or both
- Will help Veterans and transitioning Service Members navigate to benefits and services they do not currently receive but may be eligible for
- Will allow users to access their VA profile to view and update their personal information on record with VA

**Mobile Access**

VA.gov and all content and tools contained within it will be designed to work well across mobile and desktop device types.

- VA will release a flagship "VA" mobile application on the iOS and Android app stores, providing users access to these same services from a single app on their mobile phone

**Tool Standardization**

All self-service tools will be evaluated and upgraded so they can consistently fit within the re-launched VA.gov framework.

- All tools will adopt the same design standards as the new VA.gov, including a consistent navigation approach that will enable users to easily navigate between the homepage, tools, content, and forms
- As they are upgraded, VA's other main front door portals (eBenefits, MHV) will direct users to these new tools
- The modern EHR patient portal tools will adopt the same brand and design standards, making the EHR transition invisible to Veterans
- All tools requiring login will be accessible via single sign on for users who have logged in to VA.gov

**API Consolidation**

A single set of Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) will be used to power every VA online service.

- Consistent with the VA's Lighthouse API strategy, these same APIs will be exposed to approved 3rd parties to build products and apps on top of VA services and data
- All applications, both internal and external to VA, will use the same APIs to deliver a consistent experience across all channels
- VA.gov will integrate the modern EHR patient portal capabilities into users' personalized dashboard using the EHR's APIs

| Timeline | Milestones |
| --- | --- |
| **Jan–Mar 2018** | **Login**<br>A user can use any of the most frequently used VA credentials (DS Logon, MHV, ID.me) on Vets.gov<br><br>**Tool Standardization**<br>Launch updated appeals status tool to improve appeals process transparency |
| **Apr–Jun 2018** | **Profile and Personalization**<br>Launch Action Center, a place for Veterans to see a personalized list of benefits and services for which they are eligible<br><br>Launch Profile, where a Veteran can view and update personal information and see the statuses of their current benefits<br><br>**Tool Standardization**<br>Launch a modernized self-service Claims for Increase application<br><br>Launch Pre-Need burial form online (first time users can apply online)<br><br>**API Consolidation**<br>Launch Lighthouse API for third parties to electronically submit forms to VBA |
| **Jul–Sep 2018** | **VA.gov Homepage**<br>Release pilot of Veteran-focused VA.gov homepage with new header and navigation<br><br>Migrate Vets.gov and "Explore VA" tools and content to VA.gov, sunsetting Vets.gov and Explore brands<br><br>**Login**<br>Single sign-on from homepage to most frequently used Veteran self-service tasks |
| **Oct–Dec 2018** | **VA.gov Homepage**<br>Public launch of new VA.gov homepage, with login, dashboard, and consistent global navigation for all top tools and content<br><br>**Tool Standardization**<br>Launch a modernized self-service end-to-end claims process, and update eBenefits entry portal to point users to this new tool<br><br>**Login**<br>USAA credentials available as login option to VA |
| **2019** | **Mobile Access**<br>Build & launch flagship native mobile application that includes top transactions from VA.gov<br><br>**Login**<br>Login.gov credentials available as login option to VA |