# Facility Locator Search Expectations

**Discovery Readout**

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# Background & Goals

# Background

Facility Locator is VA's single source of truth for customers to find VA facilities and location details about all VA facilities, across VHA, VBA, and NCA

# Research goals

The goal of this research is to understand users expectations for search results, including the following:

- how many results they expect to be returned for a healthcare related search

- how search results are impacted by geographic setting (urban/rural)

- what geographic area they would expect the map to show by default

- how they would expect to interact with the map to change their search results

- how facility type impacts expectations

# Hypotheses to be tested

- Rural participants will not want to see many return results if the facilities are far away

- Urban participants will want to see multiple locations and compare them by if they are close

- Users will be looking for VAMC or VA locations first regarding healthcare related searches

- Rural participants may depend on landmarks and they may recognize non-VA locations easier

# Methodology

# Method

A task-based remote, moderated usability study was conducted via Zoom between March 4 - March 6, 2020. A moderator began with introduction questions and prompted users with questions (from the conversation guide). Participants were encouraged to talk through their exploration of the Facility Locator on VA.gov. Remote observers and note takers were also in attendance.

# Who we spoke with

- 4 Veterans

- 1 Caregiver

- Geographically diverse (IN, NY, FL, PA, TN)

    ○ 3 rural

    ○ 2 urban

- Ages varied 25-64 years of age (exact data unknown)

# Research questions

- How does user interaction with the map and search results differ between urban and rural residents?

- What impact does facility or service type have on how participants interact with search results?

- How many search results should the facility locator display before pagination?

- How do participants utilize the map and search results together?

- How do participants expect to refine their search results?

# Research Findings

# Key Findings

1.  The expected number of search results **varies based on geographic location.**

2.  The most likely use-case for the Facility Locator is **when a person is researching an unfamiliar area.**

3.  Participants **did not** refer to the Facility Locator **when seeking help for a specific issue.**

4.  **The map is a secondary source** for users to find a location.

5.  Participants are **more likely to look for VA Medical Centers than non-VA locations.**

# Expected number of search results varies based on geographic location

- Overall, participants did not want to see more than 5 results per page

- Rural participants wanted to see 2-3 results returned and mentioned that anything listed after that would be too far to travel

    *"I don't want to drive 37 miles, I'm not driving 37 miles to see my mother - let alone a VA appointment."*

- Urban participants expected to see a larger *total* number of results returned, but mentioned that they would generally want to see around 5 locations listed

# The most likely use-case for the Facility Locator is when a person is researching an unfamiliar area.

- Each participant we spoke with mentioned that they had previously used the locator when they didn't know what services would be available to them in a new area

- Most commonly, participants said they used it when preparing for a move to a new location.

  *"When I first moved up here to [my city] I was trying to see where I could go."*

# Participants did not refer to the Facility Locator when seeking help for a specific issue.

- When prompted to seek in-person help for a home loan, all participants looked in the VA Benefits and Health Care dropdown or the white boxes on the VA.gov homepage

  *"First I would look under housing assistance…"*

- Most participants wanted find a message center or a phone number to call before attempting to visit a location

  *"…and I could message them online right there… that looks like about it. Or if I wanted to call them, I could.*

# The map is a secondary source for users to find a location

- All participants viewed the list of search results; observing the distanced, name of location, and address

- We observed that they used the map to compare pins of locations.

    ○ A few participants wanted to see an indicator of their current location on the map

    *"I prefer it shows me my location and my nearest location [in the same view]. so at the very least, I can see how close the nearest location is."*

- Geographically, urban participants were more satisifed with the results listed on the map as the radius shown was smaller (15 mi. or less) than what rural participants were shown (varied, generally 15+ mi.)

# Participants are more likely to look for VA Medical Centers than non-VA locations.

- Most participants expressed a general lack of trust when it comes to VA-adjacent locations
  - They would often scroll past clinics and non-VA locations to find VAMCs or similar locations.

    *"I don't have a sense of trust with the VA and going somewhere else, and having it be seamless and easy to do..."*

- If a participant had experience with the Mission Act and/or community care, they trusted non-VA locations more than those who had not heard of the Mission Act

# Additional Insights

- Benefits help offices are often far away from a user's location.

- There is a need for Caregiver specific information

- Distance and travel time vary by location

- Users interpret facility descriptions differently

- Participants depend on the name of a facility to inform their search.

- Participants want to know what services are available at a facility.

# Recommendations

# Recommendations

- Add "search this area" functionality to map

- Show 5 results on first page

- If user moves map, require them to re-search

- Add filter for "within x miles"

- Brainstorm new card labels

- Include a "you are here" (similar to google maps) on map

- Update labels to distinguish VAMCs

- Include information on regional offices for benefits help

# Next Steps

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**Update search experience**

Implement design recommendations

**Look into Veteran journeys**

Get a better understanding of how/when Veterans interact with and visit certain facilities

Understand how they fit into the over Veteran Health Journey

Specifically research the Community Care journey

# Appendix