

VA.gov Facility Operating Status AX Research

Round 1 Remote, moderated usability testing

Prepared by the VA.gov CMS Team
Prepared for and presented to VA stakeholders & DSVA

[Research: August 22-23. Presented during Sprint 21 demo, August 28]

Executive summary

- This study explored the Drupal authoring experience for linking an operating status to an on-page facility alert.
- We interviewed 2 web managers at VAMC Pittsburgh | Remote, moderated UAT w/ Prototype
- Overall, both authors appreciated the proposed user flow for adding a facility alert in Drupal CMS.
- **We uncovered three high-level, impactful takeaways:** 1) **Takes too long:** currently, the entire process for adding alerts is approximately 45 minutes to 1-hour. 2) **Delayed communication:** communication from the front office is inconsistent and sometimes delayed at the detriment of posting timely alerts and notifications. 3) **No standardized language:** creating "new language as they go" and waiting for approvals is inefficient.
- Continued research focused on improving the AX for creating alerts is suggested.

Outline

1. Intro
2. Study goals
3. Research methods
4. Findings and recommendations
5. Next steps

This research explores the Drupal authoring experience for linking an operating status to an on-page facility alert.

1. Intro

The Tale of Two Studies

1. Authoring Experience (AX) Operating Status

The first study begins with supporting our authors by creating an intuitive authoring experience. We started this exploration by asking ourselves two questions:

- a. What's the possibility of linking an operating status to a facility on-page alert?
- b. How can we create an intuitive authoring experience that supports adding a system-wide banner alert and an alert series on a facility detail page?

2. Veteran Experience (VX) Operating Status

The second study focused on our end-users, Veterans. How will Veterans perceive:

- a. System-wide banner alert (national and site-wide alerts)
- b. VISN-wide alert
- c. Facility specific notices

2. Study Goals

Primary goals

For AX Operating Status research, we had two primary goals:

1. Create an authoring experience that supports linking an operating status with an on-page facility alert. The operating status options are:
 - a. Normal facility hours and services
 - b. Facility notice = blue informational alert
 - c. Limited services or hours = yellow warning alert
 - d. Facility closed = red error alert
2. Evaluate the need for authors to create an alert "series," on a facility detail page

Feature-level goals

For AX Operating Status research, we had several feature-level goals:

1. Allow users to dismiss banner alerts
2. Option to add an expiration date
3. Ability to remove alerts from facility detail page
4. Archive alerts

3. Research Methods

Our hypotheses and method

Hypotheses

- We believe that designing a streamlined authoring experience that supports linking an operating status to a facility alert will increase an author's confidence, reduce time, and improve efficiency.
- We believe that adding AX features such as sending email notifications, setting expiration dates, and archiving will add more granular control within the authoring experience.

Method and participants

- Remote, moderated task-based usability testing with an Invision prototype. The prototype was designed to simulate a proposed user flow in Drupal.
- VAMC Pittsburgh web managers: Shelly Nulph and Ryan Stubblebine!

Design Assumptions

| Design Assumptions | Validated? | Design Assumptions | Validated? |
|---|------------|--|------------|
| 1) New alert categories: Informational, Warning, Error, Facility | Yes | 5) Authors can set an expiration date | Yes |
| 2) Facility alerts should present a unique user-flow and publishing | Somewhat | 6) Add a filter component on the alerts landing page | Yes |
| 3) Automate banner messaging for quick posting | Yes | 7) Authors can archive/remove alerts from a facility detail page | Somewhat |
| 4) AX for adding an alert series on a facility detail page is intuitive | Somewhat | 8) Banners can be dismissable | Somewhat |

Tasks & Prototype

Tasks

- 1) Publish a VAMC-wide alert & on-page facility alert (severe flooding)
- 2) Edit an existing alert (Beaver County Clinic Typo)
- 3) Add another facility alert to Beaver Co. Clinic (Garage Construction)
- 4) Remove alert from facility detail page and archive (University Drive Campus)

4. Findings and Recommendations

What the team learned

At a high-level, our authors provided three substantial takeaways that impacted this research:

1. **Takes too long:** Currently, the entire process for adding alerts is approximately 45 minutes to 1-hour.
2. **Delayed communication:** Communication from the front office is inconsistent and sometimes delayed at the detriment of posting timely alerts and notifications.
3. **No standardized language:** Creating "new language as they go" and waiting for approvals is inefficient.

Task 1

Publish a VAMC-wide alert & on-page facility alert (severe flooding)

AX Research - Findings and recommendations

Finding: Authors were able to successfully identify the correct **alert type**... supported by help text.

However, authors were unsure how each alert type displayed on the front end.

So what?

Without context at this early stage, authors will experience undue cognitive load and increased stress, especially during high-pressure situations.

Content

Content Files Media Promos Alerts

Overview Moderated content

Home -- Administration -- Add custom alert

Block description

A brief description of your block.

CONTENT

Alert type

Informational
Warning
Error
Facility Alert

four alert types:

1. **Informational Alert:** Used to provide helpful information to a user or something that warrants attention. Not used for negative consequences.
2. **Warning Alert:** Used to warn a user, such as when there are negative consequences, but necessary when something has gone wrong.
3. **Error Alert:** Used when there is a problem or something destructive is about to occur.
4. **Facility Alert:** Used to display an alert at the top of a facility detail page. You can also create a system-wide banner alert.

Alert title

This will appear as an h2 at the top of the page.

Alert content

No content added yet.

Add Content

BEHAVIOR AND PLACEMENT

Banner or in-page alert?

Banner or in-page alert?

This block type currently supports two placements on the page:

1. Banner alerts appear below the main navigation and are used only for emergency or urgent communication. See example.
2. In-page can be placed anywhere within the content of a detail page.

IF THIS IS A BANNER ALERT

☐ Alert dismissable?

Dismissable blocks can be closed or hidden by users by clicking an X in the top right corner of the alert. Leave this box unchecked if you want the alert to appear permanently on the target page(s).

Behavior

Every session

If "Every Session" is selected, a user can dismiss the alert during a browsing session, but will reappear the next time the user visits the site. If "One Time" is selected, the alert will display once. After the user dismisses the alert, it will never appear again.

Target Page

Target Page

You may limit the scope of this alert to only appear on certain pages, but this currently supports Drupal node. Enter the items in the autocomplete fields where this alert should appear. If no values are entered, this alert will appear on all site pages.

Add another item

GOVERNANCE

Owner

VA Health Administration

The VA office or programs that owns this content.

Save as: Draft

Revision log message

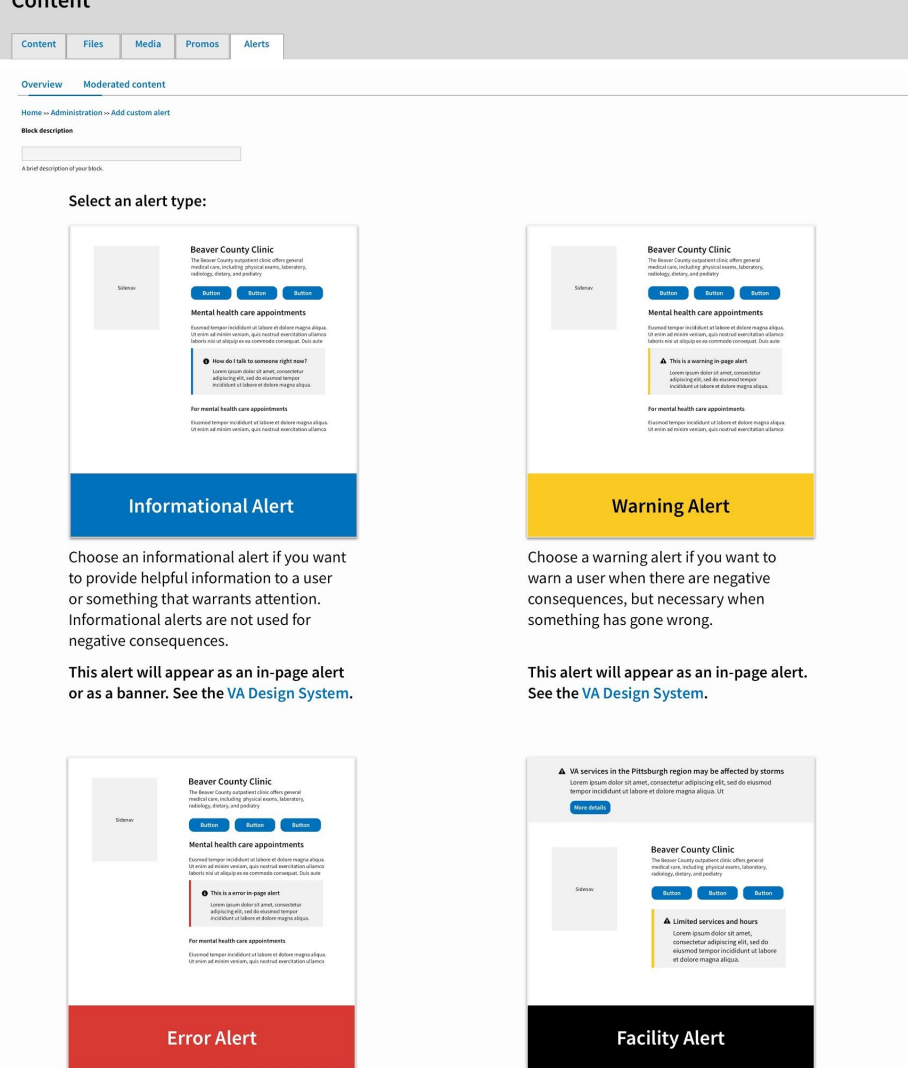
The log entry explaining the changes in this revision.



"I'm reading the definitions of the alert types. I did assume it's a facility alert, but I wanted to read the definition just to make sure." - ***Pittsburgh author***

Recommendations:

1. Design a graphic-forward user interface that illustrates the four alert types (informational, warning, error and facility alert)
2. Review and provide concise help text for each alert type
3. Work with the design team to reflect the addition of **facility alert**
4. **Note:** The current colors are changeable and should be considered as *representative* at this stage in development.

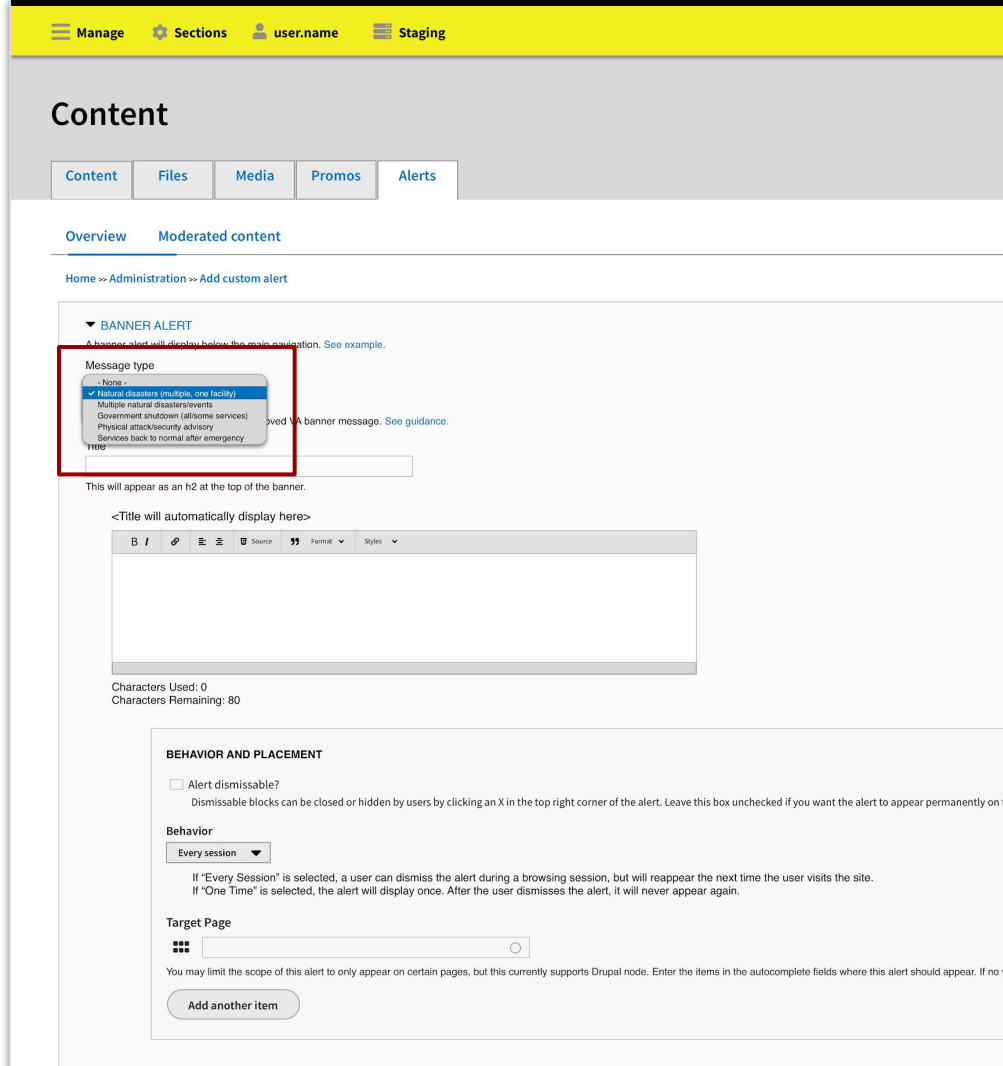


AX Research - Findings and recommendations

Finding: The drop down provided automated VA-approved banner alert types and messaging which was received positively, but the titles were somewhat confusing.

So what?

Currently, the process for adding alerts is approximately 45 minutes to 1-hour. Automated VA-approved banner messages could reduce the time to "20-minutes" or shorter.



Manage Sections user.name Staging

Content

Content Files Media Promos Alerts

Overview Moderated content

Home >> Administration >> Add custom alert

▼ BANNER ALERT

A banner alert will display below the main navigation. See example.

Message type

- None
- ✓ Natural disasters (multiple, one facility)
- Multiple natural disasters/events
- Government shutdown (all/some services)
- Physical attack/security advisory
- Services back to normal after emergency

Title

This will appear as an h2 at the top of the banner.

<Title will automatically display here>

B I [Icons] Source Format Styles

Characters Used: 0
Characters Remaining: 80

BEHAVIOR AND PLACEMENT

☐ Alert dismissible?
Dismissible blocks can be closed or hidden by users by clicking an X in the top right corner of the alert. Leave this box unchecked if you want the alert to appear permanently on the page.

Behavior

Every session

If "Every Session" is selected, a user can dismiss the alert during a browsing session, but will reappear the next time the user visits the site.
If "One Time" is selected, the alert will display once. After the user dismisses the alert, it will never appear again.

Target Page

You may limit the scope of this alert to only appear on certain pages, but this currently supports Drupal node. Enter the items in the autocomplete fields where this alert should appear. If no items are entered, the alert will appear on all pages.

Add another item

Findings

"What confuses me there are the two options with
"multiple" in it." - ***Pittsburgh Author***

"I love it. I don't have to think about it if they're already
pre-loaded, that just saves a minute." - ***Pittsburgh Author***

Recommendation:

For the "message type" dropdown, consider the functionality to **automate VA-approved language** per message type (e.g., natural disasters)

Possible options:

- Natural Disaster (one facility)
- Natural Disaster (multiple facilities)
- Physical Attack
- Facility Disruption (construction)
- Services back to normal

The screenshot shows a web application interface for creating a banner alert. The top navigation bar is yellow and contains links for 'Manage', 'Sections', 'user.name', and 'Staging'. Below this is a 'Content' section with tabs for 'Content', 'Files', 'Media', 'Promos', and 'Alerts'. The 'Alerts' tab is selected, and the 'Moderated content' sub-tab is active. A breadcrumb trail shows 'Home > Administration > Add custom alert'. The main form is titled 'BANNER ALERT' and includes a 'Message type' dropdown menu. A red arrow points from the text '2. Create an alert taxonomy of all possible alerts...' to this dropdown. Below the dropdown is a text area for the alert message, which is pre-populated with 'Beaver Country Clinic is affected by severe flooding'. A 'Title' field contains 'Some services in Pittsburgh affected by severe flooding'. A 'Behavior' dropdown is set to 'Every session'. A 'What page will this banner appear?' field is set to 'VA Pittsburgh Health Care'. A red arrow points from the text 'Consider this the dropdown list:' to the 'Message type' dropdown. The dropdown list contains the following options: 'Natural Disaster (one facility)', 'Natural Disaster (multiple facilities)', 'Physical Attack', 'Facility Disruption (parking, construction)', and 'Services Back to Normal'. The form also includes a 'Send email to subscribers via GovDelivery' checkbox and a 'Behavior' section with a 'Dismissable' checkbox. The bottom of the form has an 'Add' button.

2. Create an alert taxonomy of all possible alerts. When an author selects the dropdown a VA-approved message should appear in the below fields. This ensures consistent and reduces time spent crafting and gaining approvals, which is currently at 45 mins

Consider this the dropdown list:

- Natural Disaster (one facility)
- Natural Disaster (multiple facilities)
- Physical Attack
- Facility Disruption (parking, construction)
- Services Back to Normal

Findings:

- There were mixed reactions on the option to dismiss banner alerts.
- Authors were confused by the "target page" field
- Design lacked a 'send email' checkbox and an 'Add' button
- Concerns around 80-character count - will it accommodate all alerts?

So *what?*

"I would probably choose not to make it dismissable because this affects personal safety." - Pittsburgh Author

"There's only an 80-character limit, which could be problematic given the different types of experiences we have had. I definitely have very verbose colleagues who like to use many words. That could create an issue going forward." - ***Pittsburgh author***

Recommendations:

1. Use user-friendly language for field titles and help text
2. Consider automating GovDelivery emails when a banner is posted
3. Provide guidance on what qualifies a banner alert as dismissable
4. More research is needed around situations where authors require more than 80-characters
5. Include an 'Add' button

The screenshot shows the 'Add custom alert' form in a Drupal administration interface. The top navigation bar is yellow with links for 'Manage', 'Sections', 'user.name', and 'Staging'. Below this is a 'Content' section with tabs for 'Content', 'Files', 'Media', 'Promos', and 'Alerts'. The 'Alerts' tab is active, showing 'Overview' and 'Moderated content' links. The main content area is titled 'Home > Administration > Add custom alert'. It features a 'BANNER ALERT' section with a 'Message type' dropdown, a 'Title' field, and a text area for the alert message. The message preview shows a banner for 'Beaver Country Clinic is affected by severe flooding'. Below the preview, there are character counts: 'Characters Used: 70' and 'Characters Remaining: -10'. The 'BEHAVIOR AND PLACEMENT' section includes checkboxes for 'Alert dismissable?' and 'Send email to subscribers via GovDelivery', a 'Behavior' dropdown set to 'Every session', and a 'What page will this banner appear?' field with a radio button selected for 'VA Pittsburgh Health Care'. An 'Add another item' button is at the bottom of the form, and a large blue 'Add' button is at the very bottom.

Manage Sections user.name Staging

Content

Content Files Media Promos Alerts

Overview Moderated content

Home > Administration > Add custom alert

BANNER ALERT
A banner alert will display below the main navigation. [See example.](#)

Message type
▼

This dropdown will pre-populate an approved VA banner message. [See guidance.](#)

Title
Some services in Pittsburgh affected by severe flooding
This will appear as an h2 at the top of the banner.

Beaver Country Clinic is affected by severe flooding

B I [Icons] Source Format Styles

Some VA facilities are not able to provide services right now.
[See affected services and facilities](#)

Veteran's Health Resource Center Disaster Hotline: 1-855-555-4422

Characters Used: 70
Characters Remaining: -10

BEHAVIOR AND PLACEMENT

☐ Alert dismissable?
Dismissable blocks can be closed or hidden by users by clicking an X in the top right corner of the alert. Leave this box unchecked if you want the alert to appear permanently on the target page(s).

☐ Send email to subscribers via GovDelivery

Behavior
Every session ▼

If "Every Session" is selected, a user can dismiss the alert during a browsing session, but will reappear the next time the user visits the site.
If "One Time" is selected, the alert will display once. After the user dismisses the alert, it will never appear again.

What page will this banner appear?
VA Pittsburgh Health Care ○

You may limit the scope of this alert to only appear on certain pages, but this currently supports Drupal node. Enter the items in the autocomplete fields where this alert should appear. If no values are entered, this alert will appear on all site pages.

Add another item

Add

Finding: Authors were able to successfully identify the operating status and were able to create an on-page facility alert.

Finding: However, authors were confused about the cluster of buttons: add, add operating status and add facility alert.

So what?

Offering too many options in close proximity may confuse authors and increase the likelihood of mistakes.

▼ LOCATIONS AND CONTENT

This section creates an alert at the top of a facility page. See example.

ON PAGE ALERT

Operating Status

- Normal facility services and hours
- ✓ Limited services and hours
- Facility Service
- Facility Closed

Select the facility name from the dropdown.

Owner

The VA office or program that owns this content.

Scope

You may limit the scope of this alert to only appear on certain pages.

Title

This will appear as an h2 at the top of the page.

<Title will insert here>

B I [icon] [icon] Source [icon] Format Styles

Characters Used: 0
Characters Remaining: 80

This content will display as an on-page alert for the selected facility. [See an example.](#)

☐ This alert will have an expiration date

☐ Send email to subscribers via GovDelivery

Add + Add status alert Cancel

+ Add facility alert

“[The buttons] that to me there are too many options there and I wouldn't know if I push the 'Add' button would that push everything straight through, why is there an 'Add status alert' button?” - ***Pittsburgh author***

Recommendations:

1. Use user-friendly language for field titles and help text
2. Remove the "add facility alert" button. Only allow users to create one facility alert and/or series before publishing.
3. Relocate the "Add operating Status" button outside the main box. This *may* alert authors that this is a separate function.

▼ LOCATIONS AND CONTENT

This section creates an alert at the top of a facility page. See example.

ON-PAGE ALERT

Operating Status

Facility

Select the facility name from the dropdown.

Owner

The VA office or program that owns this content.

What page will this alert appear?

You may limit the scope of this alert to only appear on certain pages.

Title

This will appear as an h2 at the top of the page.

<Title will insert here>

Characters Used: 0
Characters Remaining: 80

This content will display as an on-page alert for the selected facility. [See an example.](#)

☐ This alert will have an expiration date

AX Research - Findings and recommendations

Finding: Authors were somewhat successful with adding another facility operating status.

Finding: Authors expressed the need to preview the banner and on-page alert before publishing.

So what?

A preview option helps authors establish a visual connection between backend functionality and the frontend design.

This will appear as an h2 at the top of the page.

Beaver County Clinic is affected by severe flooding

Some services are not available at the Beaver County Clinic in Rochester, PA.
[See affected services.](#)

Veteran's Health Resource Center Disaster Hotline: 1-855-555-4422

Characters Used: 70
Characters Remaining: -10

This content will display as an on-page alert for the selected facility. [See an example.](#)

☐ This alert will have an expiration date
☐ Send email to subscribers via GovDelivery

[Update](#) [+ Add status alert](#) [Cancel](#)

Operating Status
▼

Facility
Beaver County Clinic ▼
Select the facility name from the dropdown.

Owner
VA Pittsburgh Health Care ○
The VA office or program that owns this content.

Scope
Beaver County VA Clinic ○
You may limit the scope of this alert to only appear on certain pages.

Title
▼

This will appear as an h2 at the top of the page.

Beaver County Clinic is affected by severe flooding

▼

Characters Used: 0
Characters Remaining: 80

This content will display as an on-page alert for the selected facility. [See an example.](#)

☐ This alert will have an expiration date
☐ Send email to subscribers via GovDelivery

[Add](#) [+ Add status alert](#) [Cancel](#)

[Add facility alert](#)

EDITORIAL WORKFLOW

Save as: [Published](#) ▼

Revision log message

▼

The log entry explaining the changes in this revision.

[Save](#) [Save and continue editing](#)

Recommendations:

1. Provide "preview" functionality
2. 'Save as' drop down includes: Draft, Publish and Archive

EDITORIAL WORKFLOW

Save as: Published ▼

Revision log message

The log entry explaining the changes in this revision.

Save Save and continue editing [Preview](#)

Task 2

Edit an existing alert (Beaver County Clinic Typo)

Task 3

Remove alert from facility detail page and archive (University Drive Campus)

AX Research - Findings and recommendations

Finding: Authors were able to successfully edit an existing facility alert from the alert landing page.

Finding: Authors also expressed the need to reuse archived alerts.

ManageSectionsuser.nameStaging

Content

ContentFilesMediaPromosAlerts

OverviewModerated content

Home >> Administration >> Alerts

+ Create Alert

TitleAlert typeModeration StateLast editedOwner

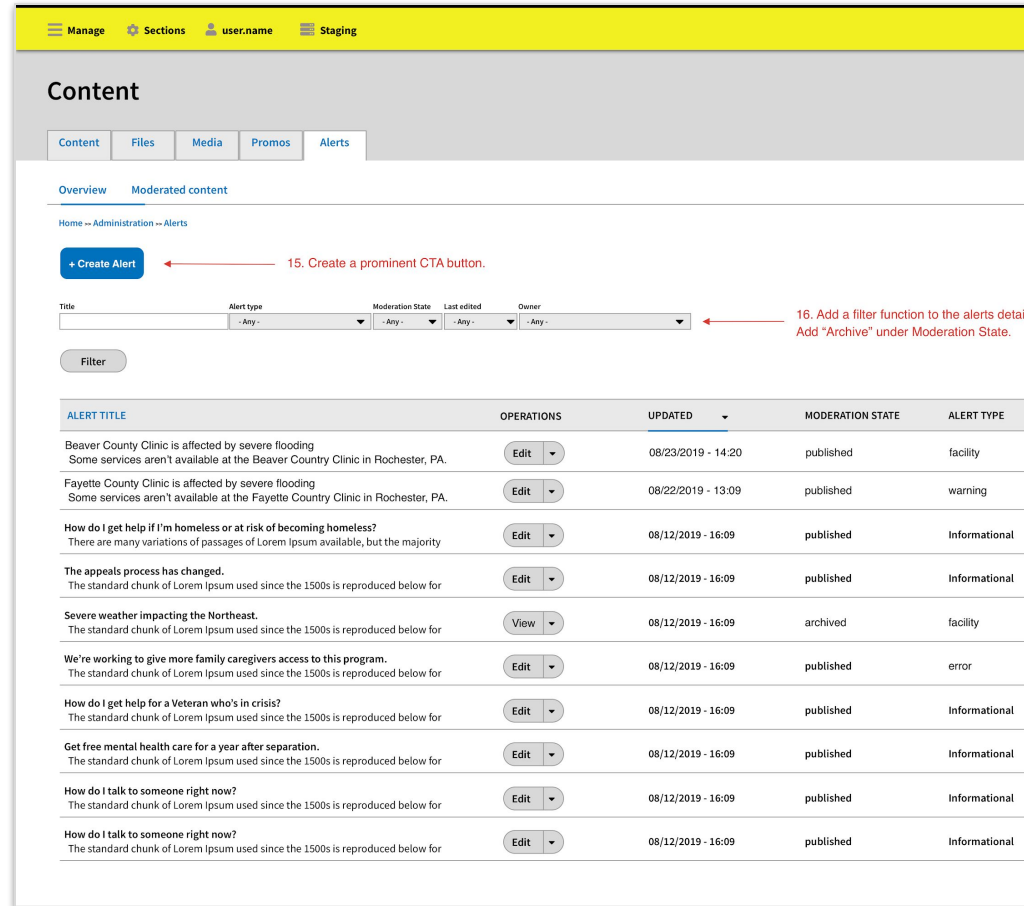
- Any - - Any - - Any - - Any -

Filter

| ALERT TITLE | OPERATIONS | UPDATED | MODERATION |
|--|------------|--------------------|------------|
| Beaver County Clinic is affected by severe flooding Some services aren't available at the Beaver Country Clinic in Rochester, PA. | Edit | 08/23/2019 - 14:20 | published |
| Fayette County Clinic is affected by severe flooding Some services aren't available at the Fayette Country Clinic in Rochester, PA. | Edit | 08/22/2019 - 13:09 | published |
| How do I get help if I'm homeless or at risk of becoming homeless? There are many variations of passages of Lorem Ipsum available, but the majority | Edit | 08/12/2019 - 16:09 | published |
| The appeals process has changed. The standard chunk of Lorem Ipsum used since the 1500s is reproduced below for | Edit | 08/12/2019 - 16:09 | published |
| Severe weather impacting the Northeast. The standard chunk of Lorem Ipsum used since the 1500s is reproduced below for | View | 08/12/2019 - 16:09 | archived |
| We're working to give more family caregivers access to this program. The standard chunk of Lorem Ipsum used since the 1500s is reproduced below for | Edit | 08/12/2019 - 16:09 | published |
| How do I get help for a Veteran who's in crisis? The standard chunk of Lorem Ipsum used since the 1500s is reproduced below for | Edit | 08/12/2019 - 16:09 | published |
| Get free mental health care for a year after separation. The standard chunk of Lorem Ipsum used since the 1500s is reproduced below for | Edit | 08/12/2019 - 16:09 | published |
| How do I talk to someone right now? The standard chunk of Lorem Ipsum used since the 1500s is reproduced below for | Edit | 08/12/2019 - 16:09 | published |
| How do I talk to someone right now? The standard chunk of Lorem Ipsum used since the 1500s is reproduced below for | Edit | 08/12/2019 - 16:09 | published |

Recommendations:

1. Create a CTA button featured prominently and with color
2. Add a filter
 - a. Include options under moderation state: Published, Draft and Archived
3. For future: Consider adding a "Reuse" button next to the "Edit" button, so that authors can reuse an archived alert.



Finding: Authors were unsuccessful at removing an alert from the facility detail page.

Finding: The "archive" button is not descriptive enough. Does it archive and remove or just archive?

So what?

"If the situation is over, I would want something a bit more clear. Like "Remove and archive," so that way it's saved and we can reuse it or see what we did." - Pittsburgh Author

Title

This will appear as an h2 at the top of the page.

Beaver County Clinic is affected by severe flooding

Characters Used: 70
Characters Remaining: -10

This content will display as an on-page alert for the selected facility. [See an example.](#)

☐ This alert will have an expiration date
☐ Send email to subscribers via GovDelivery

[Add](#) [+ Add status alert](#) [Cancel](#)

| | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|--|
| Beaver County Clinic | Facility Closed | Published | Edit Archive |
| University Drive Campus | Limited hours and services | Published | Edit Archive |
| Fayette County Clinic | Facility Closed | Published | Edit Archive |
| Washington County Clinic | Facility Notice | Published | Edit Archive |
| Westmoreland County Clinic | Limited hours and services | Published | Edit Archive |

EDITORIAL WORKFLOW

Save as: [Published](#)

Revision log message

The log entry explaining the changes in this revision.

[Save](#) [Save and continue editing](#)

Recommendation:

Provide the option to 'archive' as part of the editorial workflow.

EDITORIAL WORKFLOW

Save as:

Published ▼

Revision log message

The log entry explaining the changes in this revision.

Save

Save and continue editing

[Preview](#)

7. Next steps

Moving forward

- Socialize this research with DSVA and VA for meaningful product decisions and a way forward
- Continue research around (proposed) AX user flow and publishing from this research
- Size tactical short and long term improvements with stakeholders and development team.

Thank you!

Contact with questions:

Kevin Walsh (kevin.walsh@civicactions.com)

Andy Lewandowski, DSVa