VA.gov CMS: Office user research 1

This research focuses on learning **how, when, where and what types of information target audiences seek from VA Public Affairs websites**. We will use this research to help us build an information architecture, content strategy and overall layout for the site pages based on their needs. Our aim is to understand how/if the public affairs websites are currently relevant to participants and to identify gaps so we can support their contexts and preferences when seeking content.

As someone who visits [va.gov](http://va.gov) for outreach materials or OPIA content, I have been able to provide feedback to the people building the website so that I can more easily navigate it and find the information I need. This is achieved because the researchers were prepared for the research with a plan to execute, and participants lined up.

[Moderator Guide](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qRgkoGUU8HZqmQpYBsGoYzLtUnV_utx87Z19Ufh8B_c/edit?usp=sharing)

# Goals

* This document outlines the details for the first round of user research with target audiences of Offices websites (E.g. [Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs](https://www.va.gov/opa/), OPIA) to understand their needs, how those needs are being met currently and where there are gaps.
* Background:
  + This organization owns VA.gov and is has some of the more [high-profile pages](https://www.va.gov/opa/bios/index.asp) – like executive bios
  + Office has the highest ranking organic search results and highest traffic of non-benefits pages. High seasonal volume during Veteran's Day because this is where users find official branded content. There are also spikes in traffic when there is breaking news – E.g. a new Secretary or some headline-grabbing news about the VA.
  + Each office needs their own section, so our templates should work for a variety of needs. See this [content inventory](https://airtable.com/tbl85I2wyMfVBShjM/viwjs8eAk6XDnqdjv?blocks=hide) for more information.
* Research questions:
  + What prompts participants to seek information about the Department of Veterans Affairs?
    - How do they begin their searches or investigations for information?
    - What resources are most/least useful and why
      * Expecting to hear, "None of this is useful." When participants say that, prompt them to follow up by answering, "what I really need is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_."
  + How do participants use VA-sponsored websites or information?
    - What is succeeding/failing about this information?
  + What types of content do participants create for veterans?
* Research hypotheses:
  + We believe our audience needs to find timely and straightforward information from the VA to do their jobs well.
  + We believe that doing this user research with outreach leads from big 6 VSOs, journalists with government or VA beats, and Congressional staffers will achieve help us understand what types of content to prioritize on the Office pages and how to organize it for optimal wayfinding. We will know this is true when we have learned about their needs via user research with them on their existing use of VA-related websites.

# Method

* What method of research are you planning?
  + Moderated 1:1 interviews focused on the existing user journey and with a set of tasks to help us organize key content areas (a card sort).
* Why these methods?
  + Observing use of existing VA sources and then asking participants to organize content according to their needs and mental models are two methods that will help us develop an IA and page layouts based on user needs
* Zoom will be the screen collaboration tool for remote research
* Optimal Workshop for card sort?

# Participants and Recruitment

* Participant screening criteria
  + 2 outreach leads from Big 6 VSOs (people VSO’s who help Veterans)
  + 1-2 media representative or journalists who focus entirely on gov or veteran issues
  + 1-2 Congressional staffers
    - Folks in Congress who ask VA for any information, including appeals
  + ***Folks at Regional Offices (medical advisors, etc)***
* The VA.gov CMS team will be conducting the recruit. Details can be found on the Confluence page titled *VA.gov CMS: Office, User Research 1* (<https://va-gov.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/VAGOV/pages/51609878/VA.gov+CMS+Office+User+Research+1>)

# When?

* March 4-13, 2019
* The research materials will be done by February 27, 2019
  + Eric Chiu
* Sessions will be 30 minutes each
* Sessions may be scheduled M-F, 8:00AM - 7:00PM

# Team Roles

Please list the people who will be serving in each role. Include the primary phone number for moderator and the emails for moderator, notetaker, and observers.

* Moderator: Jodi Leo <[jodi@navapbc.com](mailto:jodi@navapbc.com)>, (401) 569-9281
* Research guide writing and task development (usually but not always same as moderator): Jodi Leo
* Participant recruiting & screening: Howie Brande <howard.brande@agile6.com>
* Project point of contact: Jeff Brauer <jeff.brauer@agile6.com>
* Participant(s) for pilot test: Howie Brande <howard.brande@agile6.com>
* Note-takers: Eric Chiu <eric@navapbc.com>
* Observers: Howie Brande <[howard.brande@agile6.com](mailto:howard.brande@agile6.com)>, Jeff Barnes <[jeffrey.barnes4@va.gov](mailto:jeffrey.barnes4@va.gov)>, Andy Lewandowski <Andrew.Lewandowski2@va.gov>

# Resources (complete after research)

* Project Brief: Project brief should live in the appropriate vetsdotgov-team product folder, simply paste a link to it here
* **Discussion Guide**. Coming soon
* **Notes & Recordings**. Session notes and recordings should live in the appropriate vetsdotgov-team product folder, simply place links to them here.
* **Synthesis.** Link to any documents used for synthesis (Mural or Realtimeboard boards, excel sheets, other data outputs, etc.)
  + Clear direction on IA, gaps in content, top content needs
  + Notes
  + Videos/recordings
  + Readout
* **Lessons Learned.** Did you have any takeaways from the process of this research round that you want the team to remember for the future? Document them here.
* **Read-Out/Results**
  + Read-out presentation should live in the appropriate product repo and folder; paste a link to it here.
  + \*\* Don't forget to add a link to your research folder to the research tracker! <https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/vets.gov-team/blob/master/Work%20Practices/Research/Research%20History.md>