

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Ask VA User Research

Contact Center Team | Research Readout from Testing Round 2

Chante Lantos-Swett
chante.lantosswett@va.gov

Ian McCullough
ian.mccullough@oddball.io

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Goals

Research Goals

- Document and prioritize any outstanding usability concerns with AVA, including both inquiry submission and the authenticated dashboard.
- Verify the implementation of recommendations provided from previous usability testing.

Goals

Research Questions

- Are users able to submit inquiries successfully and without hindrance?
- Are users able to navigate and access previous inquiries via the authenticated dashboard?
- Do veterans understand how to fill out all of the fields on the inquiry form?
 - Is help text provided in all the appropriate areas?
 - Do users understand which fields are required?

Goals

Hypothesis

Due to implementation of previous study findings, Veterans will be able to successfully submit inquiries through AVA.

There will be a reduction (when compared to previous study) in confusion and questions around specific inquiry fields and the review page.

Methodology

Methodology

Usability Testing and Interviews

11 Participants

- 8 desktop
- 3 mobile

Aiming to learn:

- What are their impressions of the form?
- What situations would prompt users to submit an inquiry?
- What are their expectations after forms are submitted?

Gender	
Female	5
Male	6

Ethnicity	
American Indian or Alaska Native	1
Black or African American	1
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin	1
White or Caucasian	8

Age	
25 - 34	2
35 - 44	3
45 - 54	2
55 - 64	1
65 - 74	3

Research Findings

Summary

- All participants were able to successfully submit an inquiry
- OMB Burden Language confused multiple users
- All participants expressed interest, or preference, in logging in to complete the form
 - Logging in would automatically fill in multiple form fields, and make further contact more streamlined
- Some technical issues remain, though less than previous tests. These issues include:
 - Confusion around form fields that launch modal windows
 - Subtopic field conditionally appears though has no content
- Multiple usability concerns were raised, which include:
 - Confusion around the “Create reply” button on inquiry details page
 - Empty inquiry reply area
 - Users struggled to find their most recent inquiry on the list due to default sorting

Summary

Additional user-presented improvements include:

- Link the inquiry number at the confirmation page to details page
- Reduce prominence of “Start your message without signing in” button on landing page
- Clarity around nuances and differences between SSN, Service Number and DoD ID/EDIPI Number

Additional concerns include:

- How to navigate back to full inquiry dashboard from inquiry details page
- Nested modal windows in inquiry responses
- Inquiry details page needs increased clarity with heading adjustments and additions
- Recommended follow-up procedures if reply is overdue
- Struggles with file attachment portion of the inquiry
- General concerns regarding text, “All the verbage feels very formal and not friendly. ...[S]oftening the language would be helpful.”

OMB Burden Language

“5 days? I thought it said 10 minutes?”

“Respondent? Who’s the respondent?”

The screenshot shows a web form for sending a message to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). At the top, there are two bullet points: "Receive secure responses that will protect your personal information" and "See all your past messages and responses". Below these are two blue buttons: "Create Account/Sign in to start your message" and "Start your message without signing in". A section titled "Need help?" is followed by a horizontal line and text providing a toll-free number (877-222-8387), a TTY number (800-877-8339), and operating hours (Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. ET). At the bottom left, a red-bordered box contains the following text: "Respondent burden: 10 minutes", "OMB Control #: 2900-0619", "Expiration date: 11/30/2019", and "Privacy Act Statement".

- Receive secure responses that will protect your personal information
- See all your past messages and responses

[Create Account/Sign in to start your message](#) [Start your message without signing in](#)

Need help?

Having trouble with the form? Call our toll-free number:
[877-222-8387](tel:877-222-8387)
TTY: [800-877-8339](tel:800-877-8339)
Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. ET


Respondent burden: 10 minutes
OMB Control #: 2900-0619
Expiration date: 11/30/2019
Privacy Act Statement

Research Findings

Modal Window Fields

A majority of users clicked in the category field and attempted to type. The expectation of this functionality stemmed from the presence of the “search” icon as well as a state change when the field is clicked into (demonstrated below).

Which category best describes your question? (*Required)

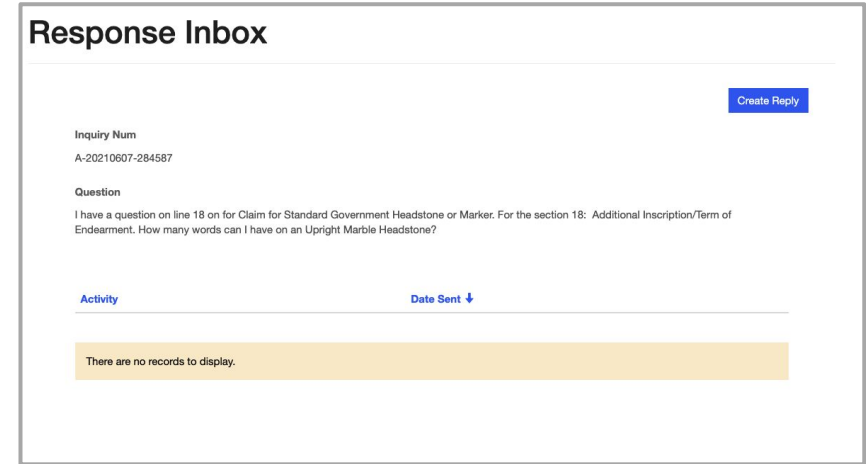
Recommendation

Replace the “search” icon with a different icon; many users recommended a “drop down arrow.” Also, have the modal window launch when a user clicks in the field in addition to clicking on the icon.

Research Findings

Inquiry Details Page

- “Create Reply” appears despite no response present yet
- “Response Inbox” feels somewhat inconsistent, considering it also includes the original question.
- “There are no records to display.” feels mechanical and impersonal, as well as “Activity”



The screenshot shows a web interface titled "Response Inbox". In the top right corner, there is a blue button labeled "Create Reply". Below this, the "Inquiry Num" is listed as "A-20210607-284587". The "Question" section contains the text: "I have a question on line 18 on for Claim for Standard Government Headstone or Marker. For the section 18: Additional Inscription/Term of Endearment. How many words can I have on an Upright Marble Headstone?". Below the question is a table with two columns: "Activity" and "Date Sent" (with a downward arrow). The table is currently empty, and a yellow message bar at the bottom of the table area states "There are no records to display."

Recommendations

- Remove “Create Reply” until a response is available, or conditionally change text to something more relevant such as “Send a Message” or “Leave a Comment”
- Consider changing the title to something more relevant, such as “Inquiry Details”
- Either remove the blank records area, or adjust text to something similar to “Responses will appear here”
- Add a link to take users back to the dashboard

Note: copy recommendations are not final, but are provided to prompt further consideration.

Research Findings

File Upload

Only one user uploaded a file, and attempted to upload a .doc multiple times before successfully uploading a .jpg.

Other users questioned the presence of the file upload only appearing on the review page.

Recommendations

- Consider including the file upload on a previous page, or providing a subhead on the review page to call more attention to the field
- Further test the file upload process

File attachments below must not exceed 25 megabytes and are limited to files of type: jpg, jpeg, pdf(unlocked), gif, bmp, txt.

Choose Files No file chosen

Submission Confirmation

Recommendations

- Provide a link within the body to the dashboard or directly to the inquiry details page
- Inform users as to whether or not to expect an email confirmation
- If necessary, inform users as to course of action to pursue if 5 days have elapsed

Your inquiry has been submitted!

Thank you for submitting your Inquiry with the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. It is our commitment to provide an excellent customer service experience to all Veterans and members of our Veteran community. To all who have served or continue to serve, we thank you for your service.

Your Inquiry **A-20210805-286374** has been successfully submitted. Please refer to this ID in any future communications regarding your Inquiry.

You should expect a response from us within 5 working days.

If you are in immediate danger, please call 911. Please do not use Ask VA Inquiry for urgent needs or medical emergencies.

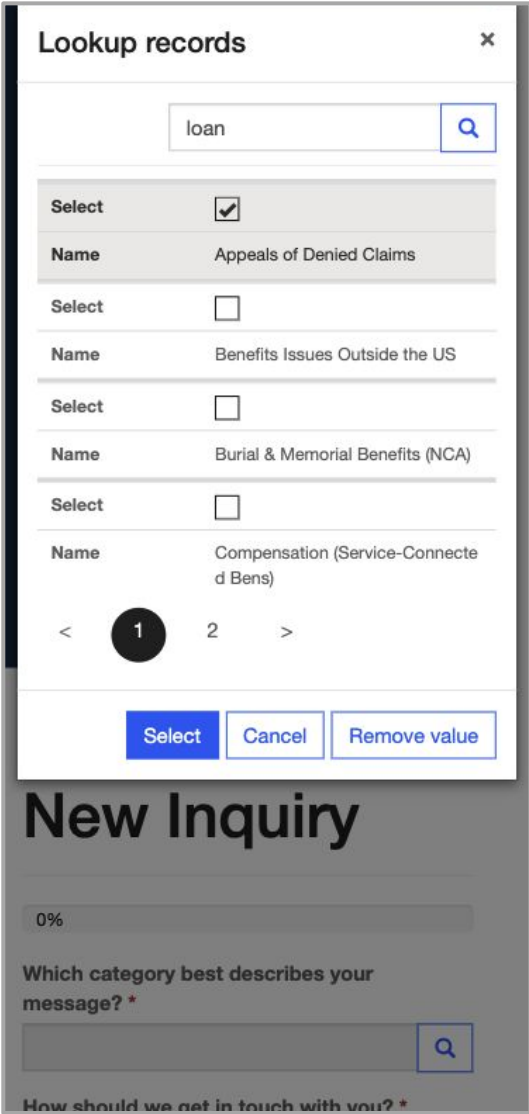
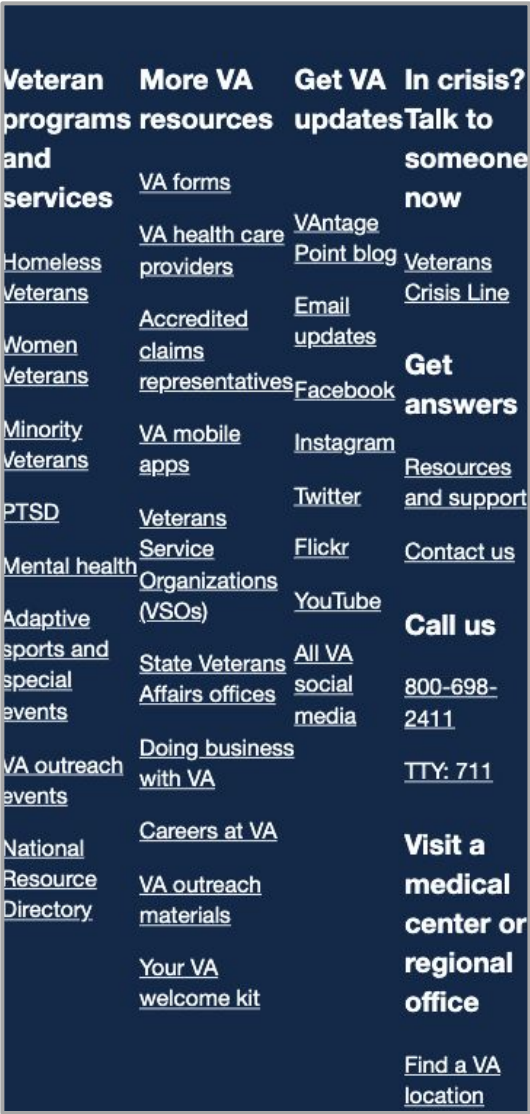
For immediate help in dealing with a suicidal crisis, please call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text 838255.

Design Issues

General design issues include:

- [VA.gov fonts](#) not utilized throughout the form
- [VA.gov button styles](#) not implemented for form progression & submission buttons
- Spacing issues on both mobile

Design Issues: Mobile



From left to right:

- Excessive header spacing
- Non-responsive footer column structure
- Crammed modal window experience

Next Steps

Additional Recommendations

- Resolve the above mentioned mobile issues
- Implement the appropriate design system updates
 - [Fonts →](#)
 - [Button →](#)

Next Steps

- Work with appropriate team members to implement the technical issues listed above
- Final testing with all previous recommendations implemented
- Determine final recommendations regarding OMB burden language
- Address VA.gov link locations