

# 2020-11-18 Custom Search Tools Sync

Wednesday, November 18, 2020 10:02 AM

## Host

John Hashimoto

## Attendees

John

Denise

Zach

Sam

Brian

Nick

Kelson

Megan

Marci

## Meeting Notes

- Several different search tools on VA.gov:
  - Resources & Support
  - Find a Form
  - Yellow Ribbon Program Schools
  - GI Bill Comparison Tool
- It's not search.gov, but will that play a part at some point down the line?
  - If it is, there are a LOT of trade-offs. Very "basic" search - we can't search tags, search custom fields, etc.
- **Yellow Ribbon**
  - High-level of how Yellow Ribbon works
    - ★ ■ We have the schema per John
    - Yellow Ribbon doesn't use Lighthouse API
      - School data - GI Bill Comparison Tool - basically an extension of that
      - Using the same data source as the GI Bill - va.gov/gids - we don't have credentials. Platform may have staging credentials  
[https://dsva.slack.com/archives/C011K1VSTC3/p1605712378021100?thread\\_ts=1605712368.021000&cid=C011K1VSTC3](https://dsva.slack.com/archives/C011K1VSTC3/p1605712378021100?thread_ts=1605712368.021000&cid=C011K1VSTC3)
      - People upload CSV docs that are manipulated into a database
      - There's a whole separate repo for GIDS; Kelson worked with it
      - Kelson build a different method to get only schools enrolled in Yellow Ribbon
      - Generally owned by a different set of contractors
    - ★ □ Booz Allen team - we may need to connect with them; let John know if I need help connecting
    - Yellow Ribbon won't be integrated into the GI Bill anytime soon. The question of whether the separate search will still be needed.
    - Jen gave us some info about getting additional metadata ( "approved" school abbreviations)
    - ★ □ Maintaining a years' worth of data
      - ◆ Follow up with Jen
        - ◇ What month does the update occur?
        - ◇ Who does those updates?
        - ◇ How do we preserve the previous year's data?
          - ▶ Nick thinks they just clone a page in Drupal

◇ Who are the stakeholders

- ★ □ Kelson did a diagram that is in the Yellow Ribbon deck - look at that for reference.
- This was a long-standing project; trying to understand their process, bottlenecks, etc. were the real pain points for Nick and Kelson.
- Building the API into the GI Bill system was a no-brainer
- ★ □ Booz Allen was their go-to resource; they are in that repo every day
- ★ □ Exploring the repo will be the first step when we are ready to start on this.
- Comparison tool - team determined there wasn't enough value to do this per Jen. Something may have been built out for it ages ago. There were some comps done per John

• Find a VA Form

○ Question - Zach

- What is the engineering process for looping in Jennifer Strickland and the crew?
  - Jen Strickland - you can maybe ask her to code review your work; there isn't an easy way for her to see it before you merge it.
  - If it's high-risk, you can do a feature flag and let her look at it in staging.
  - Once it's merged and live, the engineer runs the Axe checks locally at every state change
  - Once it's merged, ping Jen Strickland on your ticket and ask her to validate the ticket and confirm that it was done right
  - If there's still something wrong, she'll let you know. Otherwise she will close it.
  - Per John, they do a design review with design comps for Jen to review. They will weigh in on things that need to be considered
  - Engineering generally doesn't question the design

○ Search experience

- We always knew there would need to be iterations on the search results
- What are some of the tweaks Nick thinks would be ideal to improve the relevancy? And how much flexibility is there to improve?
  - This is Jen Lee's forte since she had the vision for how it would improve over time
  - Speculation recently to use Search.gov - there could be some kind of integration. Drawback would be that we wouldn't have the fancy links like downloadable
  - Weighted search results have also been in the backlog for a while, but the method of weighting is not currently stored anyway. In theory there should be a field in Drupal to indicate that certain popular forms should appear first. That also creates a dependency on CMS
  - There are a substantial number of additional fields that comes back in the JSON response that are not currently being used. This will would be a big win that would be relatively easy to implement
  - Example - if you do a search for "change", it also brings up the word
  - ★ □ We need to know exactly the conditions are for the current search - where does that logic currently reside?
  - There is a search channel
  - Lighthouse API is intended for one more than one consumer - mobile applications and other applications. Each has its own token
  - Marci would need to coordinate with Lighthouse API if we need to make any changes - Nick posted in a slack channel -  
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