

VBA Service Label Usability Testing

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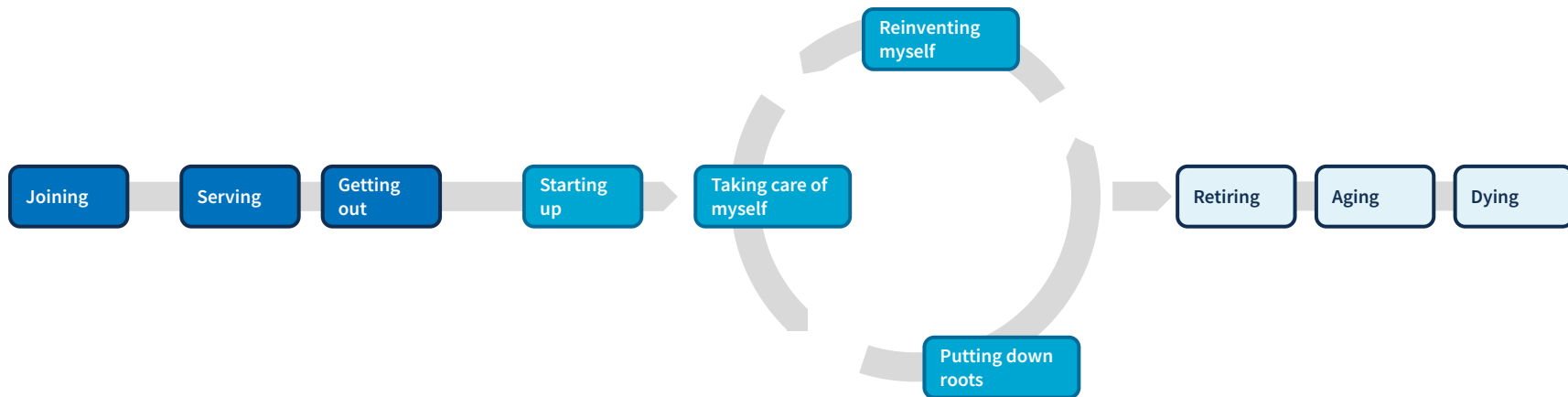


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How this research maps to the Veteran journey

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- Veterans interface with the VBA locator and the service labels at many stages of the journey.
 - From Transition services > Apply for Benefits > Education > Home Loan > to Burial Plots



For a fully detailed Veteran journey, go to

<https://github.com/departement-of-Veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/blob/master/platform/design/va-product-journey-maps/Veteran%20Journey%20Map.pdf>

Serving and separation

Living civilian life

Retiring and aging

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OCTO-DE goals that this research supports

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Supported

Not supported

Veterans and their families can apply for all benefits online

Veterans and their families can find a single, authoritative source of information

Veterans and their families trust the security, accuracy, and relevancy of VA.gov

Veterans can manage their health services online

VFS teams can build and deploy high-quality products for Veterans on the Platform

Logged-in users have a personalized experience, with relevant and time-saving features

Logged-in users can update their personal information easily and instantly

Logged-in users can easily track applications, claims, or appeals online

Measures to increase

Completion rate of online transactions

Percent of applications submitted online (vs. paper)

Veteran satisfaction with VA.gov Benefit use and enrollment, across all business lines

Benefit value (in \$) delivered from online applications or transactions

Number of VA.gov users as a function of total Veteran population

Usage of digital, self-service tools

Measures to decrease

Time to successful complete and submit online transactions

Time to process online applications (vs. paper)

Call center volume, wait time, and time to resolution

Time from online benefit discovery to benefit delivery

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Expanding the Scope and Adjusting the Methods

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- **From a card sort to a usability test.**
- **Why?**
 - Generative, not evaluative; the VBA service labels are not set in stone.
 - More qualitative data is better here.
 - Usability testing better captures other factors that affect users' interactions with the labels.
 - Quantitative data can be obtained through analytics

- 2.8 million searches per 6 months
- 11% filtered for VBA Benefits

No results does not mean no reactions.

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“I know there are three major bases around here. There's no way they don't offer help with this service! I've been to this base. They offer everything here, for sure.”

- 40% of tested users were confused by the map delivering No Results

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Location specific pages could be more specific.

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“This part up here (the megamenu) is great. Every question I have is just a click away. How to apply, change my address, I just click on it... it feels like this part is done and this part (the services list) is not.”

- 17% of users click into detailed location pages from a Benefits search

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Location specific pages must not be dead ends.

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“Like this page (sparse location specific page)... it pisses me off *bitter laugh*. I would say an expletive and leave. I want it to be more like the Baltimore location where someone actually put in some care.”

- 221 (49%) Location Specific pages offer less than 3 Services
- 18 (6%) of Location Specific pages are currently marked Closed M-F in their listed hours.

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It's more than the task at hand - it's about trust.

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**“I would want a list of FAQ's.
There's only a limited number of
unique inquiries that a Veteran
can make. The VA knows what
the Veterans - what WE need to
know and what we want to
know. The call centers are
completely slammed, they know
what Veterans want to hear.”**

- 70% of users chose a non-web based solution first
- 30% of users expressed negative sentiment about call centers or the 1-800 line

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Key findings

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1. Veterans are often able to select the best label for their scenario on the Facilities Search page.
2. Veterans experience significant confusion and increased cognitive load when receiving a "No Results" search.
3. Veterans experience significant anger or frustration when presented with location pages which are “dead ends”: have no services, no open hours, or are closed without explanation.
4. Veterans appreciate any knowledge to help speed their VBA location visit or confirm their prior knowledge and research.
5. Veterans who receive the wrong information (or perceive the information as wrong) can be subject to critical errors and loss of trust.
6. Veterans don't often want to seek help at a physical location. When they do, they are looking for targeted, personal, and specific help.

Secondary findings

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1. Veterans have a high amount of animosity towards phone trees and calling the VA.
2. At the same time, Veterans often name **people** (VBA employees, PEBLO officers, VA peers) as the best information sources, though they're difficult to find.
3. Efficient treatment of the most vulnerable Veterans can increase trust in the system for all Veterans.



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Recommendations

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1. Reduce the impact of dead ends as they cause critical failures for users.
 - a. Rigorously audit and increase the quality of information on individual location pages especially to avoid inaccurate hours, empty service lists, or locations which are never open.
 - b. Give fewer and better next actions for users who get “No Results” searches.
2. Increase the amount of information offered alongside each service label.
 - a. Provide a link, dropdown, or short, standard description for each service label in the Location Specific Pages to allow Veterans to confirm their understanding of the label’s meaning.
3. Increase the amount of information on each specific location.
 - a. Provide parking information, detailed directions to find the front desk, or even staff names and appointment slots to allow Veterans to more efficiently conduct their business.



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One Last Quote

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"When you don't know- you need to find somebody who can help. You need to play the duck game (wild goose chase), but once you find your duck you get taken care of."



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Appendix

Quantitative Data Tables



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Rainbow Spreadsheet Results: Top Behaviors

Observation or Behavior	Percent of Tested Users
User self-selected a real past experience with the VA	100%
User successfully entered location or zip code on first try	100%
User was familiar with VA.gov	70%
User suggested a non-web based action first	70%
User successfully selected VA benefits the first time	70%
User successfully selected the correct service label from drop-down	70%
User received a No Results map	70%
User attempted to re-search the map with new criteria	70%
User mentioned a VA Help Service other than the VA (Hired heroes, etc.)	60%

VBA Location Hours Audit

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Category of Hours	Count of Locations	Percent of Locations
Full Open: Have hours from M-F	246	78%
Partially Closed: Marked Closed at least once M-F	50	16%
Fully Closed: Marked Closed from M-F	18	6%

Answer Key: What the VA Labels mean to the VA

VBA service	Tasks
Applying for benefits	apply for health care, apply for dental care, apply for life insurance, request documents, apply for education benefits
Burial claim help	decide how and where to be memorialized, schedule and plan funeral/burial arrangements, apply for pre-need determination eligibility, learn about survivor benefits, get financial assistance for burial services, apply for a headstone, marker or medallion, apply for a presidential memorial certificate, apply for a burial flag
Disability claim help	apply for a disability rating, check the status of a claim, file a supplemental claim, request a higher level review, appeal to the board
eBenefits registration help	sign up for MyHealtheVet, sign up for eBenefits
Education and career counseling	apply for benefits, get educational and career counseling, choose how to use education benefits, get help finding a job, put military skills to use, get small business support, learn about VA work study, learn about on-the-job training and apprenticeships, find Technology education courses
Education claim help	check the status of a claim, transfer benefits to dependents
Family member claim help	learn about survivors pension, learn about survivor/dependent compensation, learn about survivor education benefits
Help for homeless Veterans	find rent support, find housing options
VA home loan help	become a homeowner, find accessible housing, refinance existing home loans, find housing options
Insurance claim help and financial counseling	plan for financial future, apply for life insurance
Integrated Disability Evaluation System assistance (IDES)	apply for a disability rating, check the status of a claim, file a supplemental claim, request a higher level review, appeal to the board
Pensions	apply for a pension, apply for supplemental income, learn about aid and attendance allowance, learn about homebound benefits
Pre-discharge claim help	apply for a disability rating, check the status of a claim, file a supplemental claim, request a higher level review, appeal to the board
Transition help	apply for SGLI Traumatic injury protection,
Updating direct deposit information help	sign up for direct deposit
Vocational rehabilitation and employment help	get help finding a job that suits a disability, get credentialing for employment, train for a new opportunity

Card Sort Quantitative Results and Analytics for Scale

VBA service	Green (Helpful/Clear)	Red (Not Helpful/Needs Improvement)	Total Clicks/Hits (over 6 months)	Percent (over 6 months)
TOTALS	53%	47%	42,366	100%
Applying for benefits	78%	22%	12,367	29%
Burial claim help	56%	44%	2,043	5%
Disability claim help	56%	44%	8,716	21%
eBenefits registration help	89%	11%	1,211	3%
Education and career counseling	44%	56%	2,969	7%
Education claim help	44%	56%	2,124	5%
Family member claim help	56%	44%	2,298	5%
Help for homeless Veterans	44%	56%	869	2%
VA home loan help	44%	56%	404	1%
Insurance claim help and financial counseling	22%	78%	332	1%
Integrated Disability Evaluation System assistance (IDES)	67%	33%	1,807	4%
Pensions	44%	56%	424	1%
Pre-discharge claim help	44%	56%	458	1%
Transition help	78%	22%	1,343	3%
Updating direct deposit information help	56%	44%	3,047	7%
Vocational rehabilitation and employment help	33%	67%	1,954	5%