

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

VSP Orientation Kickoff

VA.gov | [new team]

Welcome!

Agenda

- Introductions
- VA.gov Overview
- How the Platform works
- Working together
 - Communication norms and escalation paths
 - Embracing collaboration
 - Engaging practice areas
 - Documentation overview
- What's next
- Feedback
- Questions and discussion

Introductions

Who we are



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Product Lead

VSP Product Support

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Product Manager

VSP Product Support

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VSP ORIENTATION

Who are you?

One minute each:

1. Name
2. Role
3. What are you excited about?
4. What are you nervous about?

Digital Modernization and Web Brand Consolidation

VA.gov Overview

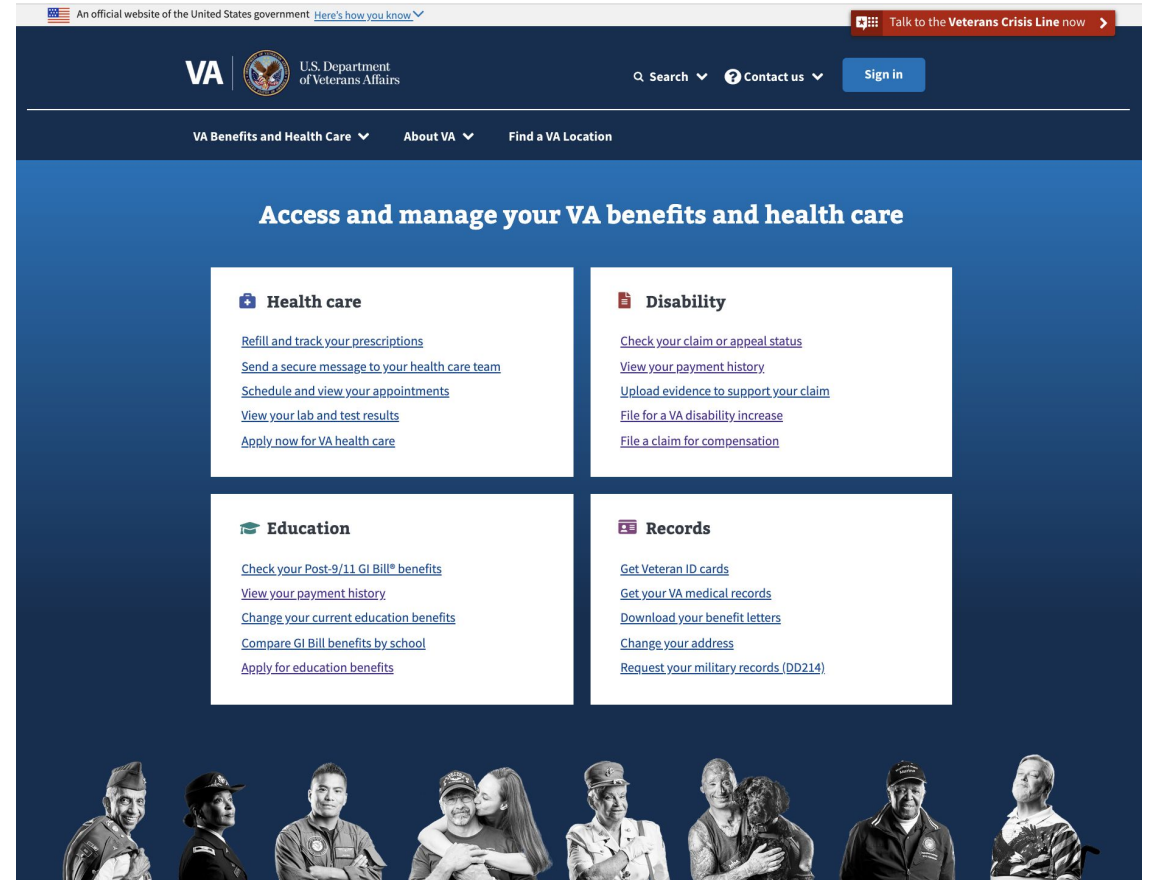
Digital Modernization

Modernizing VA technologies and bringing our digital experiences up to today's customer expectations, and on par with the brands we interact with online every day.

VA Digital Modernization: The Challenge

Every month over 10 million people access VA's digital tools and content. Many of these users have a frustrating experience, encountering a complicated tangle of websites, forms, logins, brands, and outdated tools.

Since January 2018, we have been changing that. (Login, personalization, APIs, new home page, tool standardization)



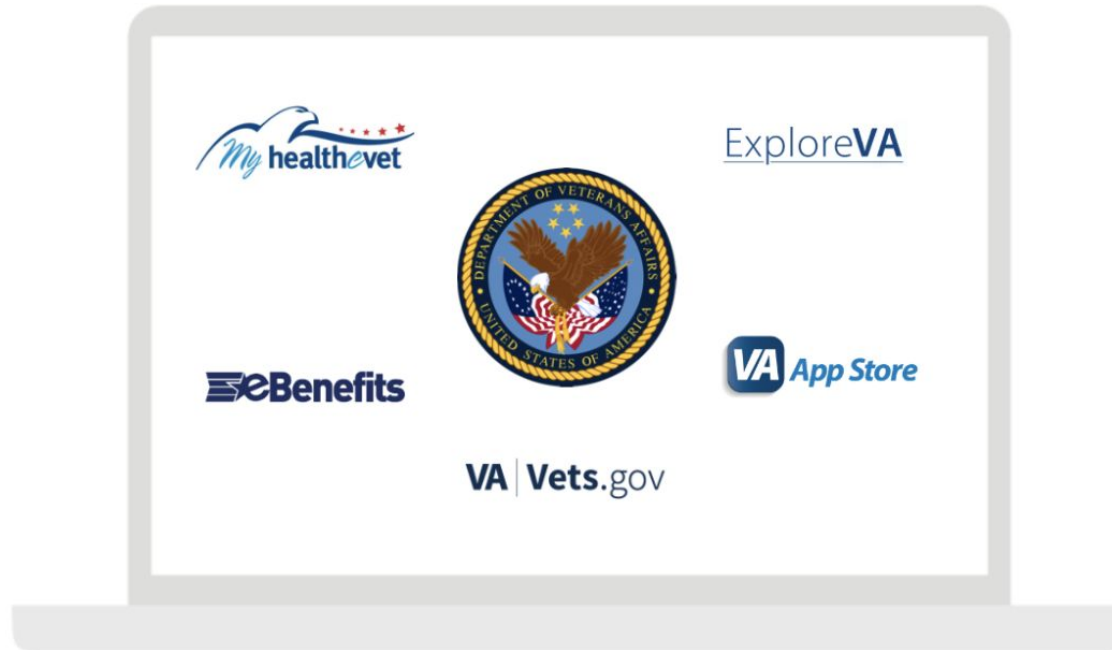
Web Brand Consolidation

Retiring and consolidating subbrands into one VA.gov, so Veterans have a single source of truth for Veteran-facing benefit information, tasks, and tools.

Web Brand Consolidation

1. THE PROBLEM

Veterans told us VA's multiple web sites are confusing and complicated to use



"All the sites sound the same to me – why do I need another brand?"

"It seems like they are getting redundant with all these sites."

"I don't care about all your @#\$\$%^&* brand names... I just want to go to the VA & check my claim or refill my prescription..."

—Veteran research participants

Web Brand Consolidation (launched Veterans Day 2018)

2. THE SOLUTION

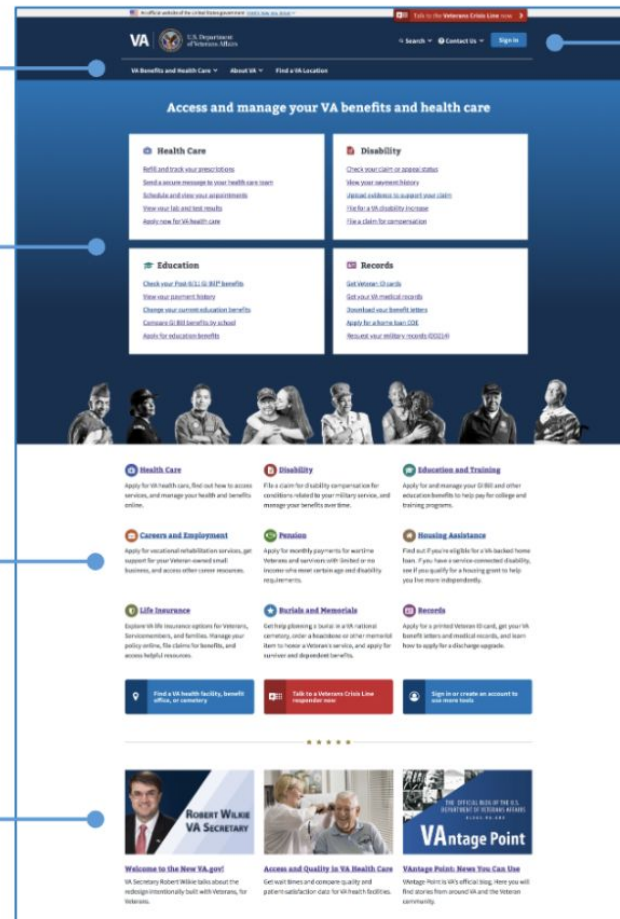
A new VA.gov that is a Veteran-first product platform

Global navigation
with benefit hubs

Top user tasks

Benefits index

News stories



Global account, help,
and search utilities

One "front door" to get
to all VA benefits, tools,
and services

More context

Digital Modernization Strategy

Web Brand Consolidation

How the Platform works

DEFINITIONS:

VSP: Veteran-facing services platform

VFS: Veteran-facing services

How the Veteran Services Platform (VSP) works

- **VSP is a constantly evolving product**
- MVP processes, iterating as we go
- Feedback loops
 - Let us know what's working!
 - Feedback surveys



Orientation

Meet with us to learn the ropes of VSP and get a tour through the tools, services, support, and documentation available to you.



Define

Work with your VA Product Owner to define the problem you're solving, how you hope your product will impact Veterans and VA, and how you'll measure your impact.

Use our templates to guide these definitions, and store your documentation in our public va.gov-team repository.

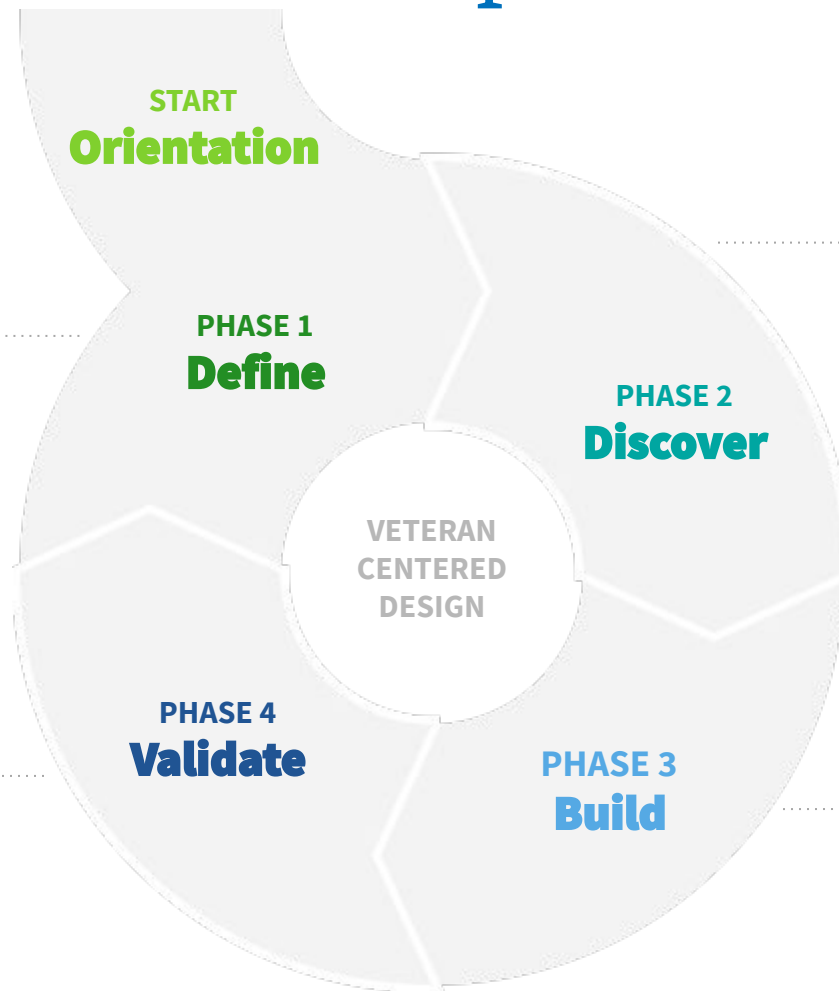


Validate

Use our templates to create release criteria and a launch plan, and use our feature flags to iteratively get your product into production in front of real users. Ultimately, when your release criteria are met, go live to millions of users.

Use our data dashboards to track the impact of your product, and prioritize updates based on what you learn.

Iterate by starting the "Define" phase again with the new information you're learning from users interacting with your product.



Specifically, how VFS teams use VSP



Discover

Use our templates, patterns, and guides to conduct user research, create prototypes, start crafting supporting content, and test all of this with real users. Ultimately take what you learn and define the user stories and features of the product you'll build - again storing all of these findings and documentation in our public va.gov-team repository.

Work with our Analytics team to determine what data will help you understand your product's impact when you launch.



Build

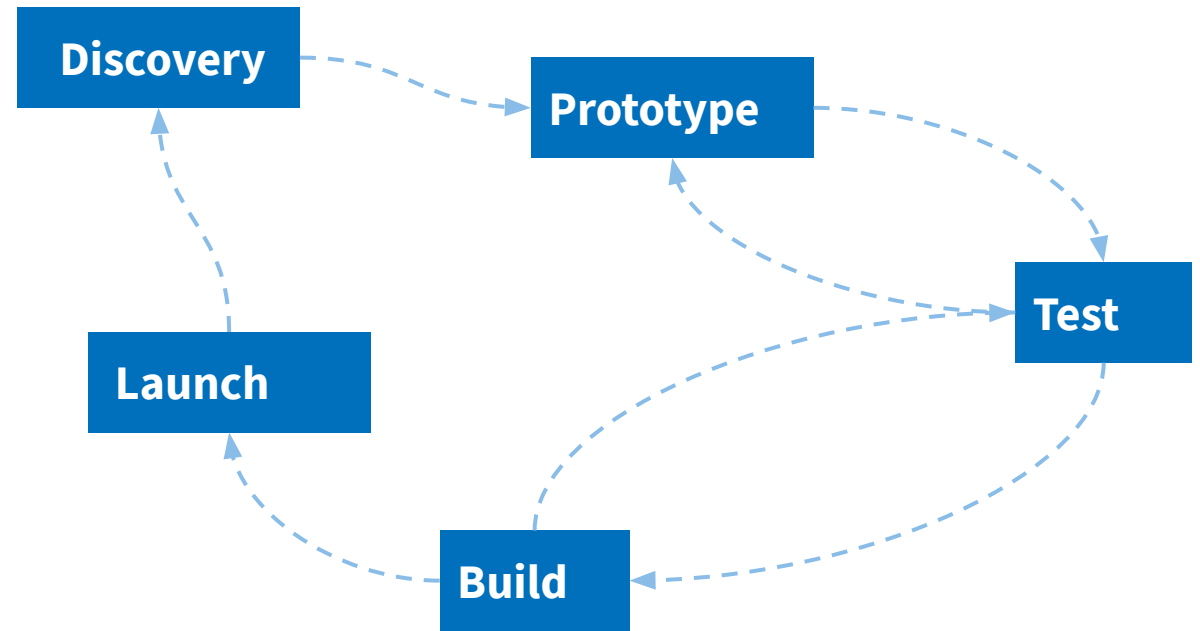
Use our sample app, component and pattern libraries, deployment pipeline, and dev/staging/prod environments to iteratively check in code and build out your product online.

Use our guides again for user testing, and update your content and features based on what you learn.

Work with our Analytics team some more to make sure your code is set up to track the success metrics you've define.

How VFS teams work

- Agile, two-week sprints
- Veteran-centered design



Working together

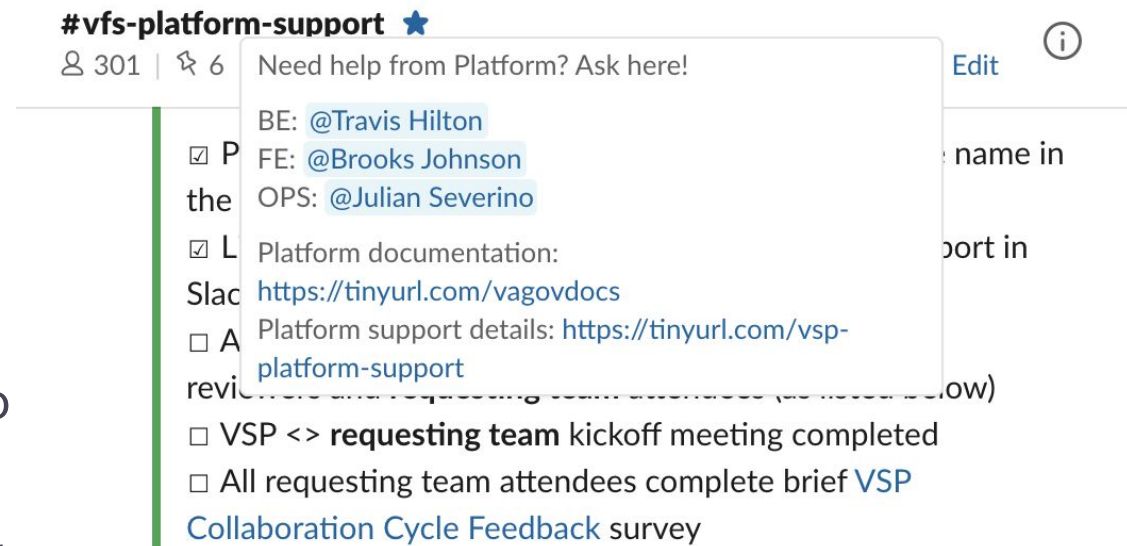
Communication norms and escalation paths

Slack

- Your team: #
- Join [practice area-specific Slack channels](#)
- Default to generating discussion and asking questions in public channels
- Use DMs when it truly needs to be private
- Use wtf-bot to decode acronyms (/wtf ATO)
- Everything in the DSVA Slack is subject to the [Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\)](#)
- Fill out profile including GH username
- Under “What I do” put information about yourself in this format: `VSP/[team] - Role [Org Name]`
Example: VSA/Public Websites - Product Manager [GCIO]

Logistics: Communication and escalation

- Slack channel for general support:
[#vfs-platform-support](#)
- [Communication norms](#)
- Escalation path:
 - If you don't get a response within a few hours, @-mention someone you know in the channel to look at your question.
 - If you don't get a response within 1 business day, contact your DSVa Product Manager, who will make sure the right people address your question.



GitHub

- Most of your work (or requests to others for work) should be connected to a ZenHub issue or product folder
- Decisions made in Slack conversations and meetings should be documented in GitHub
- Planning, notes, documentation should be in markdown (.md) files
- Research documentation and design decisions should be stored in appropriate research folder within product folder
- Cross-link any research to the research history

Email

- Ideally only used when communicating with people outside the DSVA team, such as stakeholders

Embracing collaboration

Working remotely or with remote teams

- Default to over-communicating
- Take advantage of Zoom (in particular video)
- Sit in on remote user research sessions
- Find time to reach out and just chat with people

Embracing collaboration

- Weekly cross-VA.gov Team of Teams meeting
- Regular VSP reviews / check-ins
- [Regular practice-area specific meetings](#)
- Other meetings and Slack collaboration as needed!

What to expect

- [Product development checklist](#)
 - Reviews to be conducted throughout the process
 - Accessibility, content, design, analytics, release plan, IA, security, privacy, production readiness/infrastructure
 - Other requirements
 - Call center scripts and documentation, points of contact, load testing, no major bugs
 - Learn and improve plan written
- Using Zenhub for Workflow Management
 - [Zenhub Orientation PDF](#)
 - [Zenhub Product Management Guide](#)
- [Product documentation best practices](#)

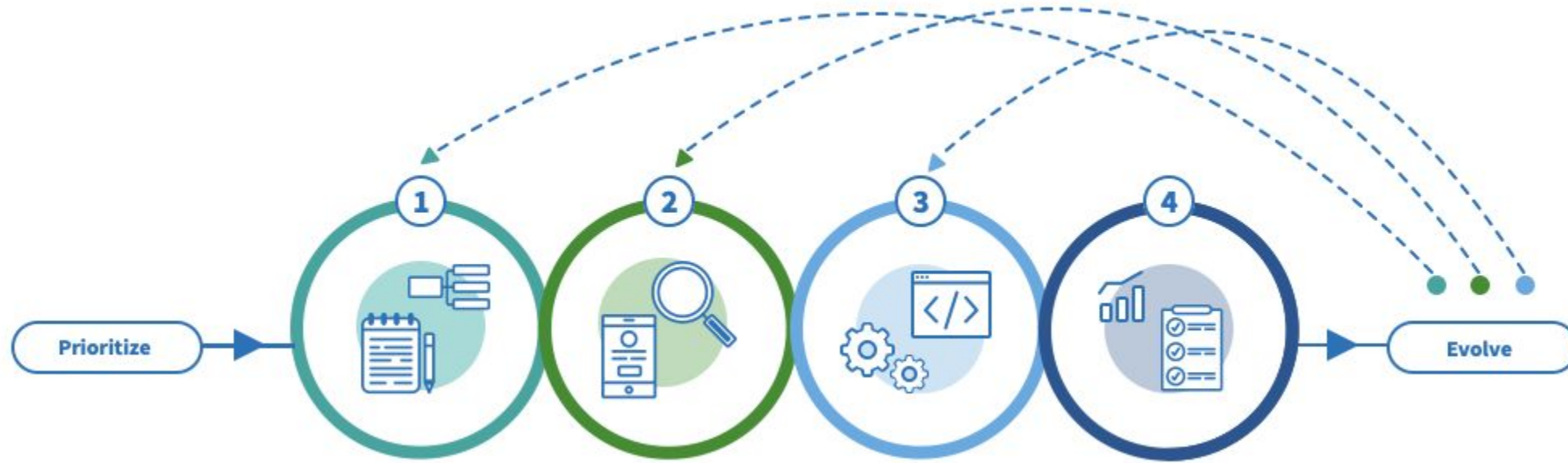
Collaboration Cycle

Collaboration Cycle Documentation

Collaboration Point Tracker

VSP Collaboration Cycle

[Link to full visual](#)



Define

- Project Kick-off
- Design intent collaboration

Discover

- Research Plan Review
- Usability Testing Prep
- Information Architecture (IA) Request
- Analytics Request

Build

- Contact Center Review
- Staging review
- Privacy and Security Review.

Validate

- Full Accessibility and 508 Office Audit
- Post-launch Check-in

Define Phase

Project Kickoff

DEFINE PHASE

Start off by introducing your team and VSP to your new work initiative. Discuss existing solutions in the problem space, align team member expectations, and collaborate with VSP to identify any areas that may need additional support.

Format: 30-minute meeting

Timing: When you understand the problem you're trying to solve

Request Process: VFS Product Manager uses **Project Kickoff** template

Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- An explanation of the problem space
- A rough draft of product outline (stored in appropriate GitHub va.gov-team/products folder)
- Any other artifacts you have so far (such as lo-fi prototypes)
- You do not need to prepare a presentation



Design Intent Collaboration

DEFINE PHASE



Present a draft of your ideas to designers. Learn about existing design components and research findings relevant to the problem space. Discuss accessibility considerations with accessibility experts.

Format: 30-minute meeting

Timing: When brainstorming and drafting your solution approach

Request Process: VFS Designer or Product Manager uses **Design Intent Collaboration** template

Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- Whiteboard sketch or other lo-fi prototypes or mockups
- A general idea of the toolset you intend to use in your designs
- *Please provide these artifacts at least 2 days before the scheduled review meeting.*

Discover Phase

Usability Testing Prep

DISCOVER PHASE



Meet with VSP practice area reviewers to catch anything in your prototypes or mockups that may detract from usability testing. Get feedback on your test plan.

Format: 30-minute meeting

Timing: When you're ready for usability testing

Request Process: VFS Product Manager uses **Usability Testing Prep** template

Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- Link to product outline
- Prototypes or mockups prepped for user testing
- Link to research plan and script
- Link to regression test plan (if there isn't already one for your feature)
- A draft of your test cases and/or test plan (for QA practice area review)
- *Please provide these artifacts at least 2 days before the scheduled review meeting.*

Research Plan Review

DISCOVER PHASE

Get approval from DEPO's research expert on your research plan and script. Begin recruitment of Veterans for research.

Format: Asynchronous collaboration

Timing: A week before you plan to conduct Veteran research (during Discover or any other phase).

Request Process: VFS Designer or Product Manager messages Lauren Alexanderson (@Lalexanderson) your research plan and script

Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- Your complete research plan (resources located in [research folder](#)).
- Script



Information Architecture (IA) Request

DISCOVER PHASE



Collaborate with VSP's Information Architect to finalize your URL and other key details before developing in staging.

Format: Asynchronous collaboration

Timing: After usability testing when you're ready to build in staging

Request Process: VFS Product Manager uses **IA Request** template

Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- Link to product outline
- Prototypes or mockups
- Link to research readouts/results
- Link to research history masterlist showing that you have added your research to the list
- Link to or attach final content including H1s (if separate from prototype/mockup)
- A completed information architecture worksheet (in ZenHub template)

Analytics Request

DISCOVER PHASE



Begin setup of Google Tag Manager and ForeSee so we can understand how Veterans are using VA.gov.

Format: Varies

Timing: After you have defined your KPIs and you're ready for analytics implementation guidance before you build

Request Process: VFS Product Manager uses **Analytics Implementation and QA Request** template for Google Tag Manager implementation. Slack #vfs-analytics for ForeSee setup.

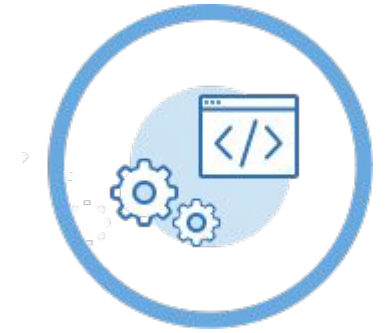
Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- Google Tag Manager implementation: Product outline, objectives and definitions of success, authenticated user logins for testing, and URLs for your product.
- ForeSee implementation: final staging and production URLs for pages you want the survey on

Build Phase

Contact Center Review

BUILD PHASE



Ensure that VA call center representatives are prepared to help Veterans troubleshoot VA.gov.

Format: Asynchronous collaboration

Timing: 4 weeks prior to launch for a brand new service or 2 weeks prior to launch for a new feature in an existing service

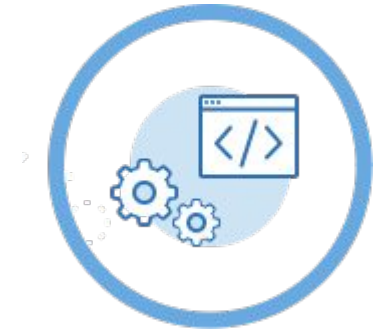
Request Process: VFS Product Manager follows instructions on request-contact-center-review page in GitHub.

Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- Product Guide
- Product Video

Staging Review

BUILD PHASE



Get feedback on your completed build before rolling out to users.

Format: 30-minute meeting

Timing: When you're ready to begin rollout.

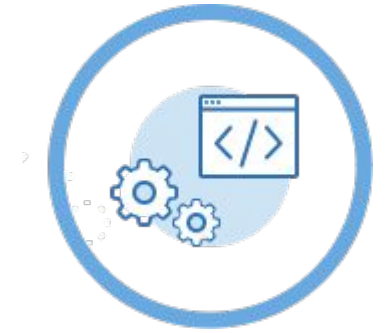
Request Process: VFS Product Manager uses **Staging Review** template

Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- Link to product outline
- A [Release Plan](#) with the "Planning" sections completed (in each section: Phase I, Phase II, Go Live)
- Access information for the tool or feature in staging (stored in sensitive repo)
- A link to your test cases/test plan in TestRail with test execution logs
- Link to Coverage for References and Summary(Defects) reports in TestRail
- Link to accessibility-specific test cases and test plan.
- List of any known issues
- *Please provide these artifacts at least 4 days before the scheduled review meeting.*

Privacy and Security Review

BUILD PHASE



Ensure your feature meets VSP's privacy and security standards.

Format: 60-minute meeting

Timing: When you're ready to begin rollout.

Request Process: VFS Lead Engineer or Product Manager uses **Privacy and Security Review** template

Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- An architecture diagram, showing involved systems + data flows
- Description of any new publicly-exposed endpoints (vets-api or otherwise)
- Description of any new interactions with dependent services (i.e. vets-api --> ???)
- Description of any other security hotspots you're concerned about / want extra attention on

Validate Phase

Full Accessibility and 508 Office Audit

VALIDATE PHASE



Accessibility experts complete a full accessibility audit and coordinate with the VA's 508 office for feedback and approval.

Format: Asynchronous collaboration

Timing: When you have begun rollout

Request Process: VFS Product Manager use **Full Accessibility & 508 Office Audit** template

Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- Access instructions for your product in production (store in sensitive repo)
- A link to your accessibility-specific test cases/test plan in TestRail with test execution logs

Post-launch Check-in

VALIDATE PHASE



Now that you've released your product and gathered some initial KPI data, evaluate your success and begin your plan for iteration.

Format: Asynchronous collaboration

Timing: One month after “Go Live”

Request Process: VFS Product Manager link to your completed Release Plan in Slack #vfs-all-teams and tag @Shira Goodman

Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- Completed [Release Plan](#) with results populated

Documentation overview

Documentation overview

- [Documentation Getting Started Guide](#)
- [Va.gov Repo Map](#)
 - [va.gov-vfs-teams repository](#)
 - [vets-api repository](#)
 - [vets-website repository](#)
 - [va.gov-team repository](#)
 - [vets.gov-team repository](#)
 - [VA.gov Design System](#)
 - [VA.gov Content Style Guide](#)
 - [Front-end documentation](#)

What's next?

What's next?

- Work through the zenhub epic!



5-minute survey

[Link to survey](#)


Questions

VSP ORIENTATION

How are you feeling?

Has anything changed?

- What are you excited about?
- What are you nervous about?
- What questions do you have?



LET'S DO THIS.

Thank you!
