

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: Product Support Team



Andrea Hewitt
Product Lead
Slack: @AndreaHewitt



Shira Goodman
Product Manager
Slack: @Shira Goodman



Peggy Gannon
Content Editor
Slack: @Peggy Gannon



Allison Christman
UX Designer
Slack: @Allison Christman



Trevor Pierce
Accessibility Expert
Slack: @Trevor Pierce



Noah Gelman
Accessibility Expert
Slack: @Noah Gelman



Mikki Northuis
Information Architect
Slack: @Mikki Northuis



Peter Hill
QA Specialist
Slack: @Peter Hill



Darius Dzien
QA Specialist
Slack: @Darius Dzien

Slack: @vsp-product-support-members

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

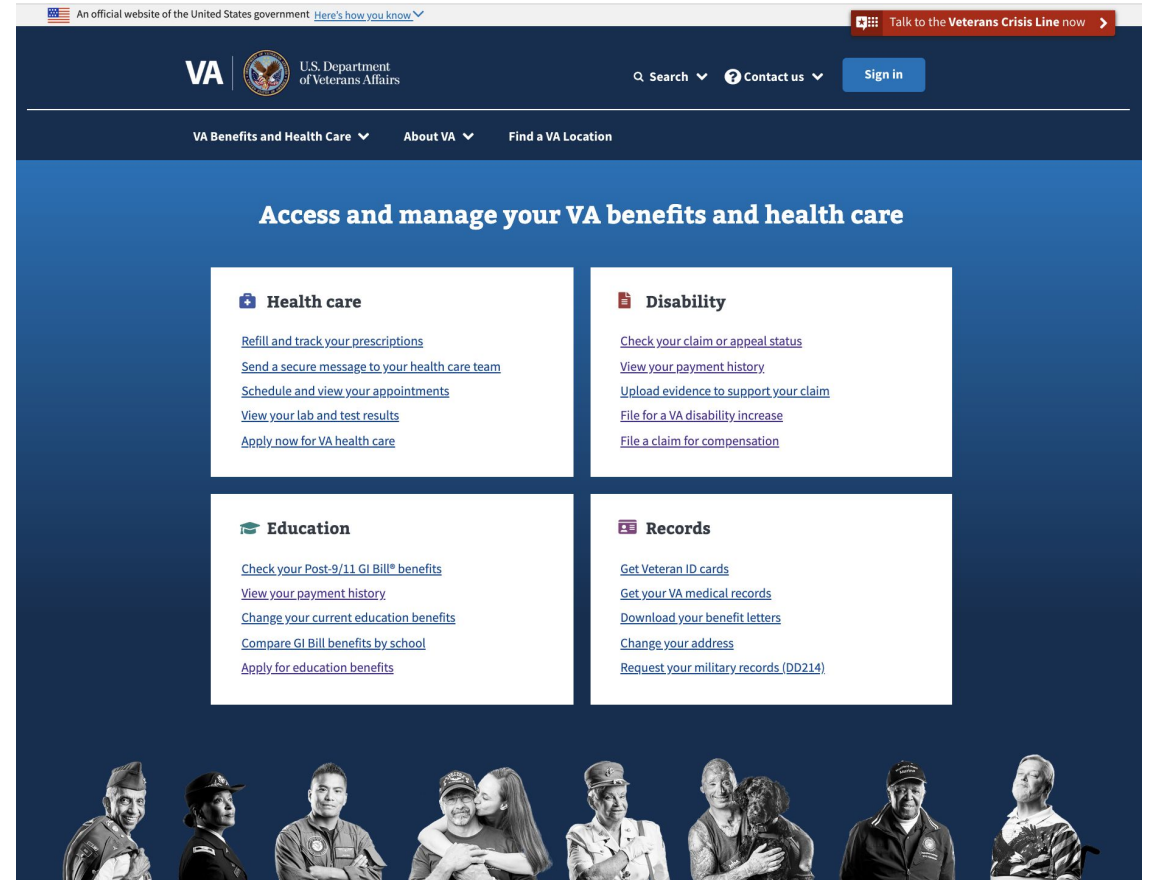
Digital Modernization

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of these users have a frustrating experience, encountering a complicated tangle of websites, forms, logins, brands, and outdated tools.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)



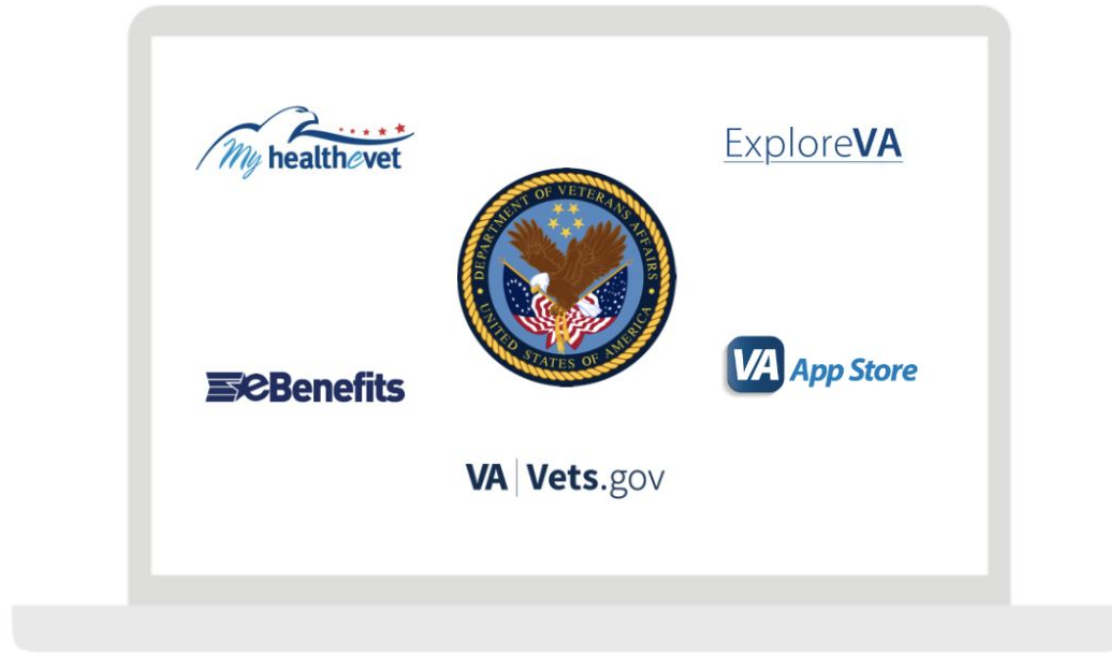
Web Brand Consolidation

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

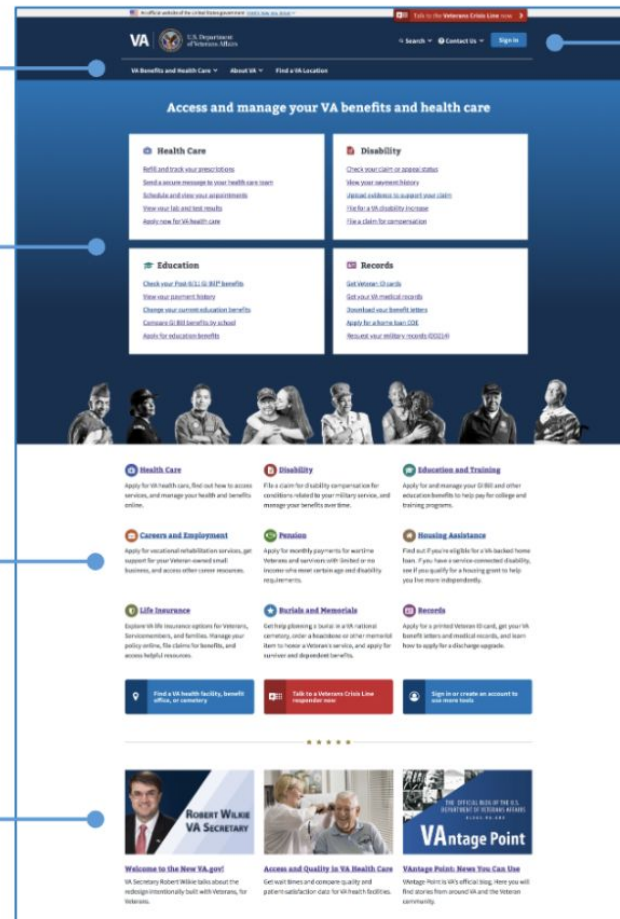
A new VA.gov that is a Veteran-first product platform

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

Working together

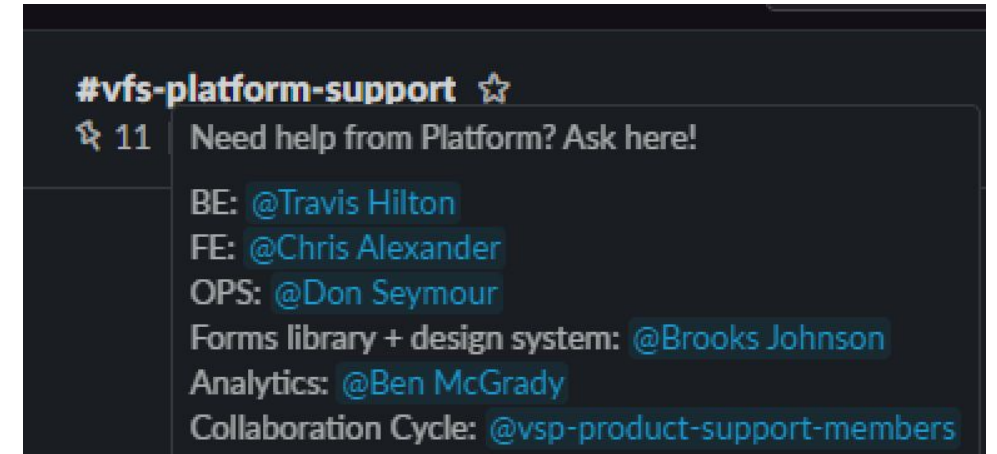
Communication norms and escalation paths

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

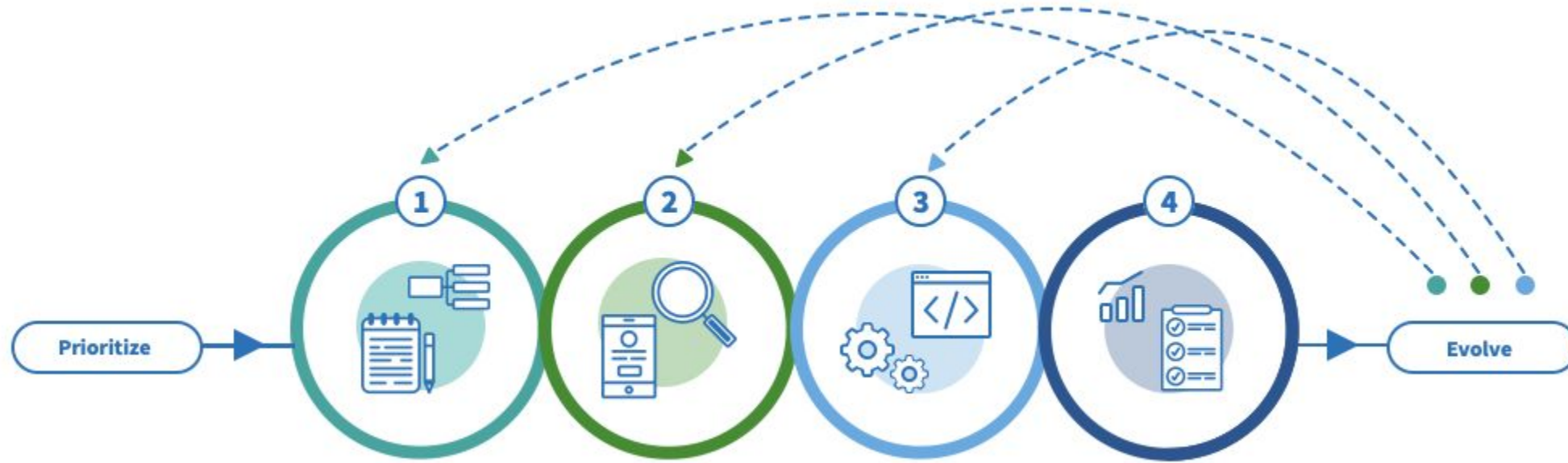
- [Product development checklist](#)
 - Reviews to be conducted throughout the process
 - Accessibility, content, design, analytics, release plan, IA, security, privacy, production readiness/infrastructure
 - Other requirements
 - Call center scripts and documentation, points of contact, load testing, 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
Platform Collaboration Point Tracker

VSP Collaboration Cycle

[Link to full visual](#)



Define

- Collaboration Cycle Kick-off
- Design Intent

Discover

- Midpoint Review
- Research Plan Review
- 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

Collaboration Cycle Kickoff

DEFINE PHASE

Start off by completing the Collaboration Cycle Kickoff ticket which is designed to introduce VSP to your new work initiative. This will help VSP determine what level of support, which practice areas, and which touchpoints are needed for your work

Format: asynchronous

Timing: When you understand the problem you're trying to solve and have an idea of how to solve it

Request Process: VFS Product Manager uses **Collaboration Cycle Kickoff** template



Design Intent Collaboration

DEFINE PHASE



VSP team: We'll review your responses to the Collaboration Cycle Kickoff questions. We will share existing design components and research findings relevant to the problem you're trying to solve.

VFS team: You'll introduce your new work initiative and discuss existing solutions in the problem space. You'll present a draft of ideas to VSP and other expert designers. You'll also have the opportunity to discuss accessibility considerations with VSP accessibility experts.

Format: 30-minute meeting or asynchronous review

Timing: When you are brainstorming and drafting how you are going to approach your solution. When you have an idea of how to solve the problem.

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

Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- A rough draft of your product outline (stored in appropriate GitHub va.gov-team/products folder)
- An explanation of the problem you're trying to solve
- Any other artifacts you have so far
- Whiteboard sketch or other lo-fi prototypes or mockups

Discover Phase

Midpoint Review

DISCOVER PHASE



VSP reviewers will confirm that your prototypes or mockups are consistent with existing patterns and standards. They'll provide feedback to help ensure your product is ready for successful usability testing.

Format: 30-minute meeting or asynchronous review

Timing: When you have determined your initial solution approach and have prototypes or mockups ready for usability testing. Before you begin recruiting research participants and scheduling sessions.

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

Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- Link to product outline
- Link to or attach prototype or mockups
- Link to content brief (if applicable)
- Link to or specify the artifact that represents this initiative's content source of truth
- Link to research plan and conversation guide
- Link to regression test plan for QA practice area review
- Link to test cases/test plan in TestRail ([learn more](#)) (even if just a draft) for QA practice area review

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](#)).
- Conversation Guide



Information Architecture (IA) Request

DISCOVER PHASE



Collaborate with VSP's Information Architect to finalize where your product/feature will live within the overall VA.gov IA. This includes reviewing entry points, user flows, breadcrumbs, URL, and other key details before developing in staging.

Format: Asynchronous collaboration

Timing: After Design Intent, when you're beginning to understand the user flow.

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

Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- Link to product outline
- Link to or attach prototype or mockups
- Link to content brief (if applicable)
- Link to research readout/results (learn more)
- Link to research history masterlist showing that you have added your research to the list as applicable
- Link to or attach your content source of truth/final content including H1s (if separate from prototype/mockup)
- Completed information architecture worksheet in ZenHub template (Optional)

Analytics Request

DISCOVER PHASE



Begin setup of Google Analytics so we can understand how Veterans are using VA.gov.

Format: Varies

Timing: After you have defined your KPIs and are determining which user interactions would be beneficial to track before you build your product/application.

Request Process: VFS Product Manager uses Analytics Implementation and QA Request template.

Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- Link to product outline ([template](#))
- North Star and KPIs for the product
- Authenticated test-user logins, when applicable.
- Your product URL(s), including any unauthenticated landing pages that precede your tool.

Build Phase

Contact Center Review

BUILD PHASE



Ensure that VA contact center representatives are prepared to answer questions and help Veterans troubleshoot new tools or services on VA.gov.

Format: Asynchronous collaboration

Timing: At least 4 weeks prior to launch or unmoderated testing for a brand-new service, or at least 2 weeks prior to launch or unmoderated testing for a new feature in an existing service.

Request Process: VFS Product Manager follows instructions on **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. VSP will identify any launch-blocking issues that must be addressed prior to launch.

Format: 30-minute meeting

Timing: Before you begin launch, allowing enough time to implement feedback. This will vary depending on the size of your product.

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

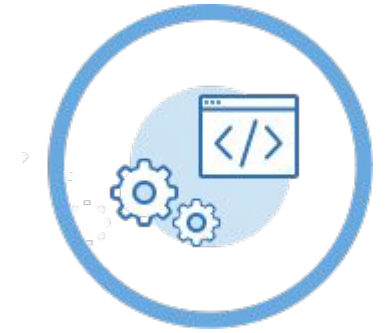
Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- Link to product outline
- Link to release plan with the "Planning" sections completed (in each section: Phase I, Phase II, Go Live)
- Link to the tool or feature in staging.
- Staging test user information (if applicable)
- Link to content brief (if applicable)
- Link to or specify the artifact that represents this initiative's content source of truth
- Link to your QA test plan in TestRail with test results for QA practice area review
- Link to your Coverage for References and Summary(Defects) reports in TestRail for QA practice area review
- Review the staging accessibility review processes
- Verify foundational accessibility tests are complete.
- (List of known issues (with links to tickets when applicable))



Privacy and Security Review

BUILD PHASE



Ensure your feature meets VSP's privacy and security standards. Privacy and Security Reviews are required for all products launching on VA.gov.

Format: When the product is in staging and before you begin rollout, allowing enough time to implement feedback.

Timing: When you're ready to begin rollout.

Request Process: VFS Lead Engineer or Product Manager uses **Privacy and Security Review** template in va.gov-team-sensitive repository

Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- Link to product outline
- Ensure Product Outline contains Incident Response info
- Links to technical diagrams (checked into GitHub alongside your product documentation), including:
 - Describe any new publicly-exposed endpoints (vets-api or otherwise)
 - Describe any new interactions with dependent VA backends
 - Describe any other security hotspots you're concerned about / want extra attention on
- Link to Release Plan with the "Planning" sections completed (in each section: Phase I, Phase II, Go Live)
- Review the guidance on hosting a security review

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. Review the accessibility post-launch audit processes document for more information.

Format: Asynchronous collaboration

Timing: Schedule a full audit when your product is launched to production, when code is relatively stable. All accessibility defects that were identified at Staging Review must be fixed before requesting a full audit.

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

Artifacts Required from VFS Team:

- Access information for the tool or feature in production
- Verify foundational accessibility tests are complete

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!
