Ask VA (AVA)
User Testing Phase III- Research Readout

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Research Goals

This is the 3rd study, conducted by the VSP Contact Center team, for the **Ask VA (AVA -ask.va.gov) tool**- which enables veterans and VA.gov users to submit inquiries digitally.

- The AVA product team released a new tab function with labels (Business, Personal) in December 2021.
- The design intent of the new tabs were to create views for AVA users (School Certifying Officials) handling cases specific to GI Bill and VA Benefits.
- Call Center teams handles Tier 2 cases related to AVA inquires. We have a vested interested in this tool's success.
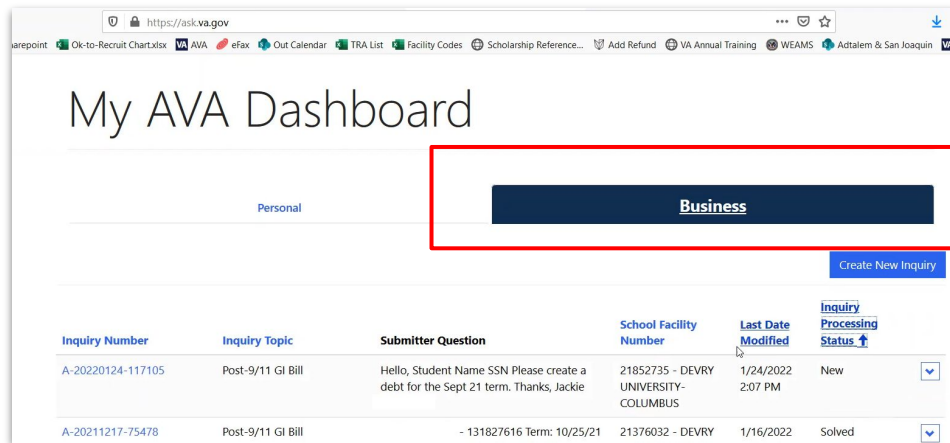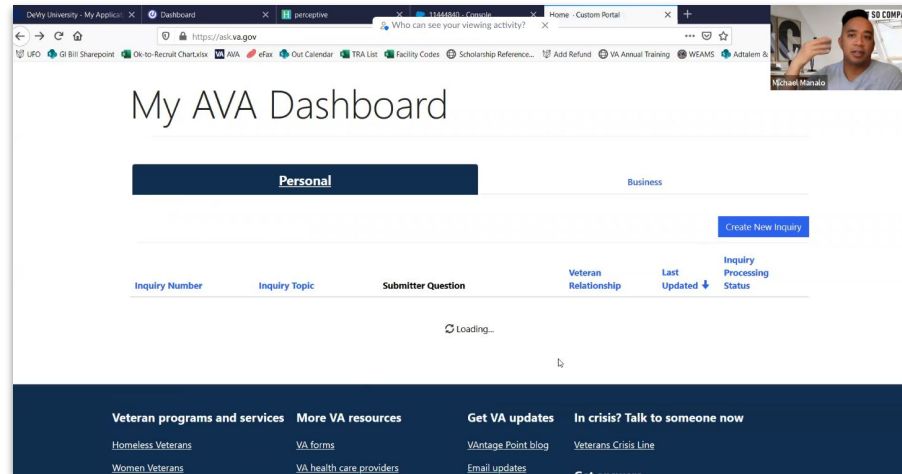
Hypothesis

We want to conduct a usability testing for these Tabs. These were scheduled between Jan and early February 2022.
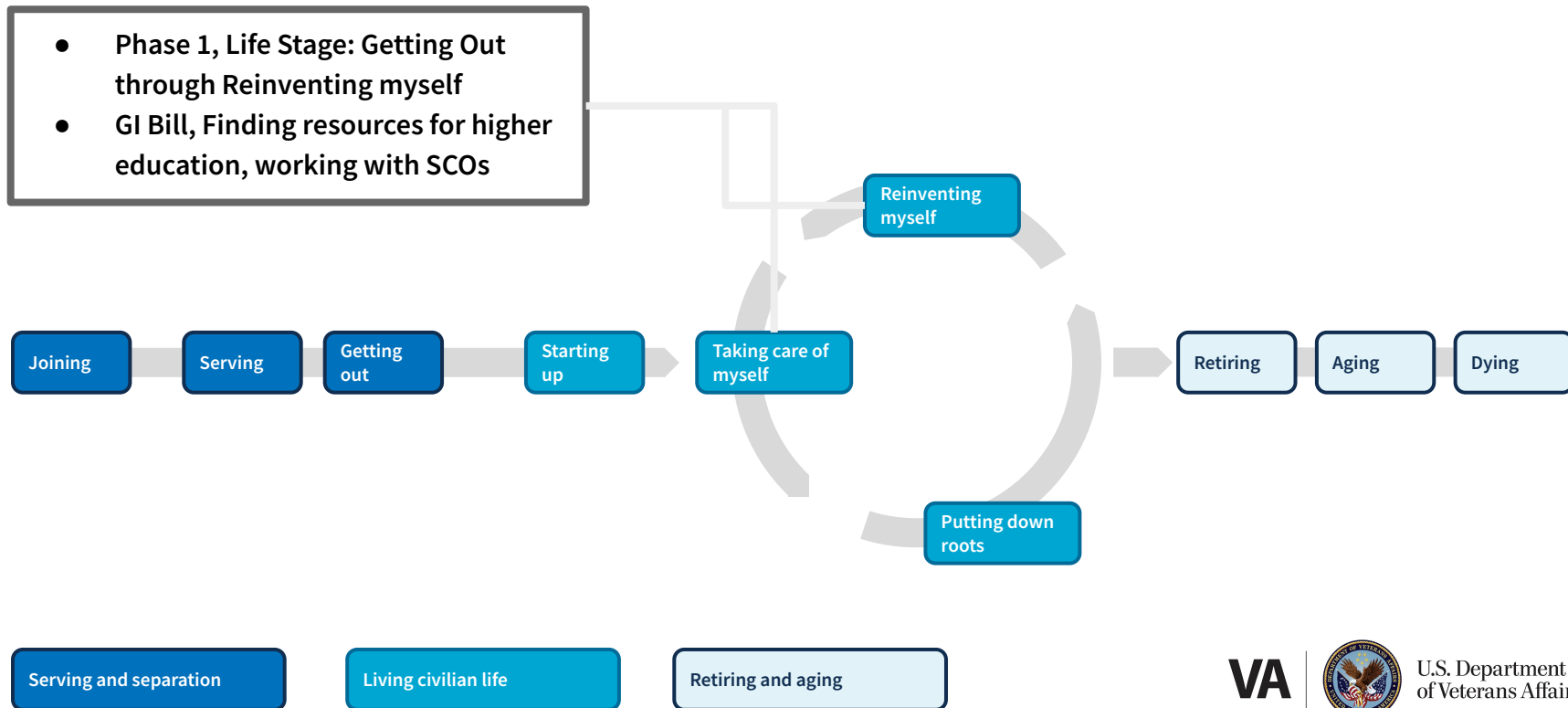
- *Though the business tab will create a specific view of inquiries, <u>there is possibly a lack of understanding of how these tabs appear for new users.</u>*

We believe that *insights provided by the participants of this usability testing* **would provide guidance on needed onboarding and fixes** *by the AVA product team.*

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How this research maps to the Veteran journey

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- **Phase 1, Life Stage: Getting Out through Reinventing myself**
- **GI Bill, Finding resources for higher education, working with SCOs**

Joining → Serving → Getting out → Starting up → Taking care of myself

Reinventing myself

Putting down roots

→ Retiring → Aging → Dying

Serving and separation

Living civilian life

Retiring and aging

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OCTO-DE goals that this research supports

Supported | Not supported

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Veterans and their families can apply for all benefits online *(Supported)*	Veterans and their families can find a single, authoritative source of information *(Not supported)*	Veterans and their families trust the security, accuracy, and relevancy of VA.gov *(Not supported)*	Veterans can manage their health services online *(Not supported)*	VFS teams can build and deploy high-quality products for Veterans on the Platform *(Not supported)*	**Logged-in users have a personalized experience, with relevant and time-saving features** *(Supported)*	Logged-in users can update their personal information easily and instantly *(Not supported)*	**Logged-in users can easily track applications, claims, or appeals online** *(Supported)*

Measures to increase ↑

Completion rate of online transactions *(Supported)*	Percent of applications submitted online (vs. paper) *(Not supported)*	Veteran satisfaction with VA.gov Benefit use and enrollment, across all business lines *(Not supported)*	**Benefit value (in $) delivered from online applications or transactions** *(Supported)*	Number of VA.gov users as a function of total Veteran population *(Not supported)*	**Usage of digital, self-service tools** *(Supported)*	

Measures to decrease ↓

Time to successful complete and submit online transactions *(Supported)*	Time to process online applications (vs. paper) *(Not supported)*	**Call center volume, wait time, and time to resolution** *(Supported)*	Time from online benefit discovery to benefit delivery *(Not supported)*	

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Participant Demographics

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The user group that was pooled were mostly SCOs (School Certifying Officials) that served Veterans at higher education institutions.

SCOs are primary users of AVA. We sourced 5 participants through our VA contact at Call Center team.

Our pool included these higher ed institutions:

- Devry University
- SUNY New Paltz

Example 1, Needs more research															
# of participants	7		# of no shows		1		# of AT users			0					
Category	Target	Study	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
General		Based on current VA statistics													
Age 55-64+	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1					
Cognitive Disability	4	3	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0					
Mobile user	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0	0					
Rural	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					
No degree	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					
Immigrant origin	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0	0					
Women	1	5	1	1	1	1	0	N	1	0					
Expat (living abroad)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					
Race		Targets based on VA's projected statistics													
Black	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	N	1	0					
Latinx	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					
Biracial	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					
Asian	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					
Native	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					
LGBTQ+		LGBTQ+ Veterans are 5 times as likely to have PTSD													
Gay, lesbian, or bisexual	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					
Transgender	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					
Nonbinary, gender fluid, ge	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					

Participant Tracker on Google Sheets

Method - Usability Testing, Zoom

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All user testings were conducted on Zoom.
(1 Pilot, 4 Sessions | 30-45 mins).
2 Tasks (Submit an inquiry, use the tabs)
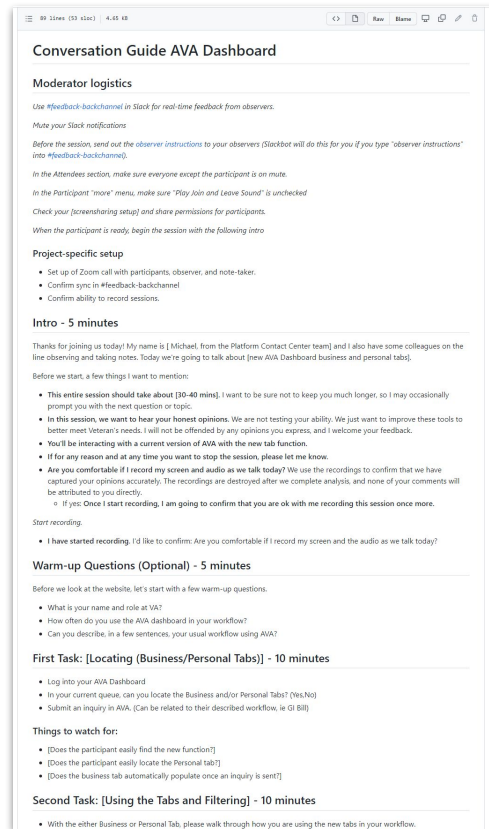We also had AVA product team members observed sessions as well.

Things we wanted to note were:

Does the business tab automatically populate to Dashboard?

Does this preset sorting process assist in their workflow?

Does the participant understand the primary function of the new tabs?

Does the participant notice and/or highlight any gaps or missing functions?

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Key findings

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1. 3 of the five participants (including our Pilot Session) **had initial login issues with ID.me** or got errors in Chrome and had have to switch to Internet Explorer.

2. **All were able to locate** the Business and Personal tabs after submitting inquiries specific to GI Bill.

3. The number of inquiries made by the SCOs <u>could range from 25 - 50 a month</u>.

4. New users had **difficulty understanding the function** of Business and Personal tabs.

5. SCO users that had 1 month of usage or more **did like the auto-sorting of inquiries** for their workflow.

6. 2 of the participants **referenced difficulties their co-workers may face using AVA** - regarding how they identified themselves (ie. VR&E Veteran Readiness & Employment).

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Secondary findings

1. All interviewees did make recommendations to see a function to **find inquiries in their AVA Dashboard faster** - regardless of whether they had one month of experience or not with the new tabs.

2. 3 of the five participants had **concerns about adjusting their PI data on the Review page** before submittal and confusion about how the fields were auto-populating.

3. One of the participants mentioned a workflow where they n**eed to print to PDF their dashboard** and/or specific inquiry for internal filing. They had **this function break often** in Chrome.

" *Would be ideal to only have a business tab. I wants a tab only related to my job duties. Instead of having these 2 tabs- have 2 tabs related to status of the ticket (inquiry).* " - Participant
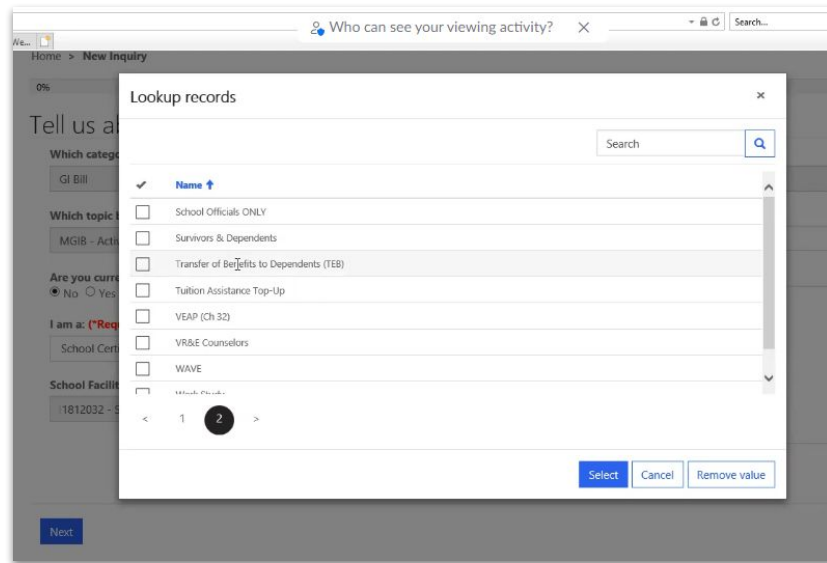
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Recommendations and next steps

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1. AVA Product Team should r**esearch onboarding functions or reminders** for the overall dashboard view.

2. There should be a consideration for these **tabs to have the ability to be renamed**- per SCO preference.

3. Their might be an **audit needed** for the beginning of the AVA form regarding Inquiry Type. One of participants highlighted specific keywords related to GI Bill not in the drop down.

4. Next Steps: Our team is looking to combine these findings and our previous research into **an executive summary report** for the AVA Product Team.

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Thank you for your time.