Ad Hoc

VA Mobile App

Status Update

May 8, 2020

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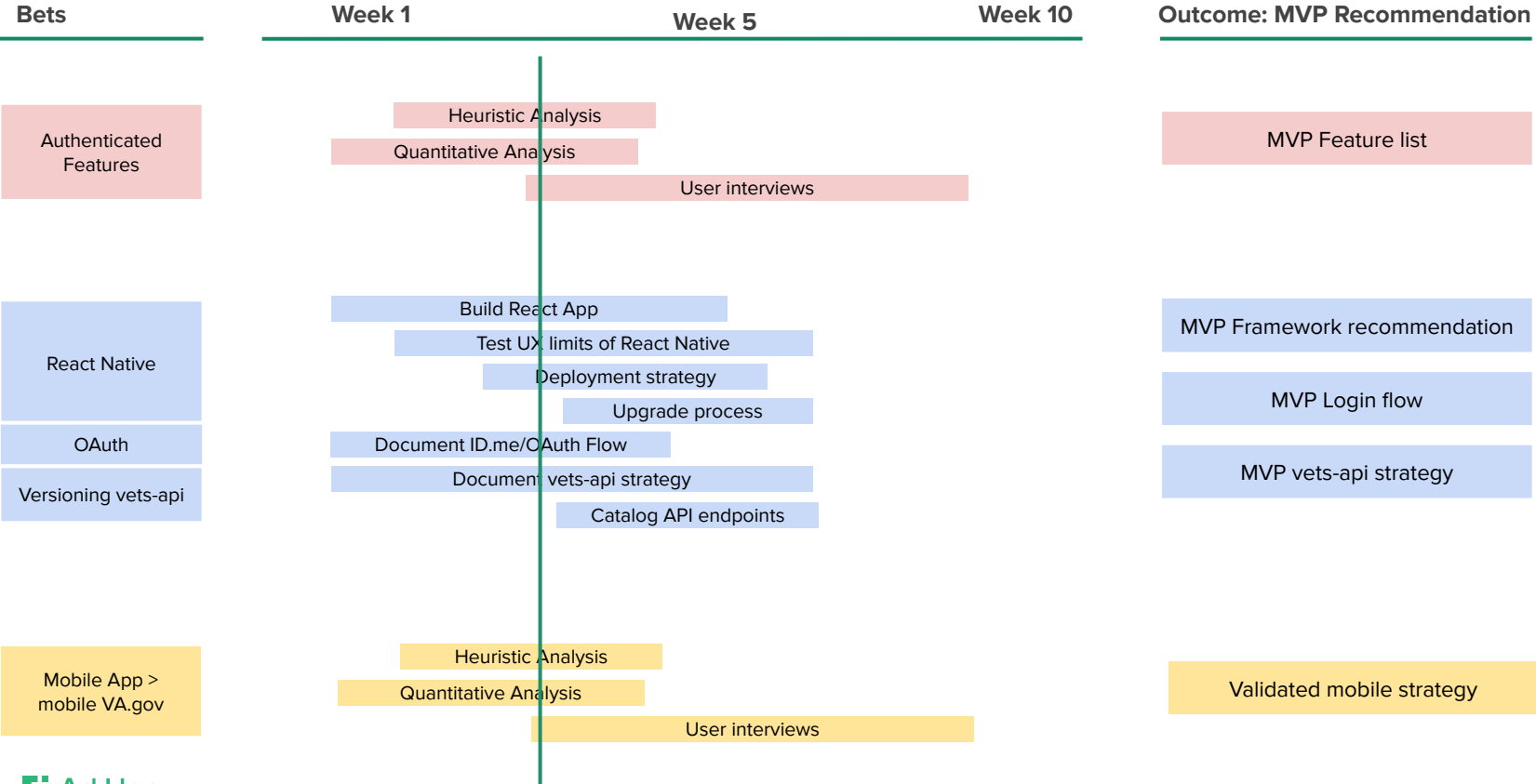bridget@adhocteam.us

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Integrated Roadmap

Bets	Week 1	Week 5	Week 10	Outcome: MVP Recommendation

Authenticated Features
- Heuristic Analysis
- Quantitative Analysis
- User interviews

→ MVP Feature list

React Native
- Build React App
- Test UX limits of React Native
- Deployment strategy
- Upgrade process

→ MVP Framework recommendation

→ MVP Login flow

OAuth
- Document ID.me/OAuth Flow

Versioning vets-api
- Document vets-api strategy
- Catalog API endpoints

→ MVP vets-api strategy

Mobile App > mobile VA.gov
- Heuristic Analysis
- Quantitative Analysis
- User interviews
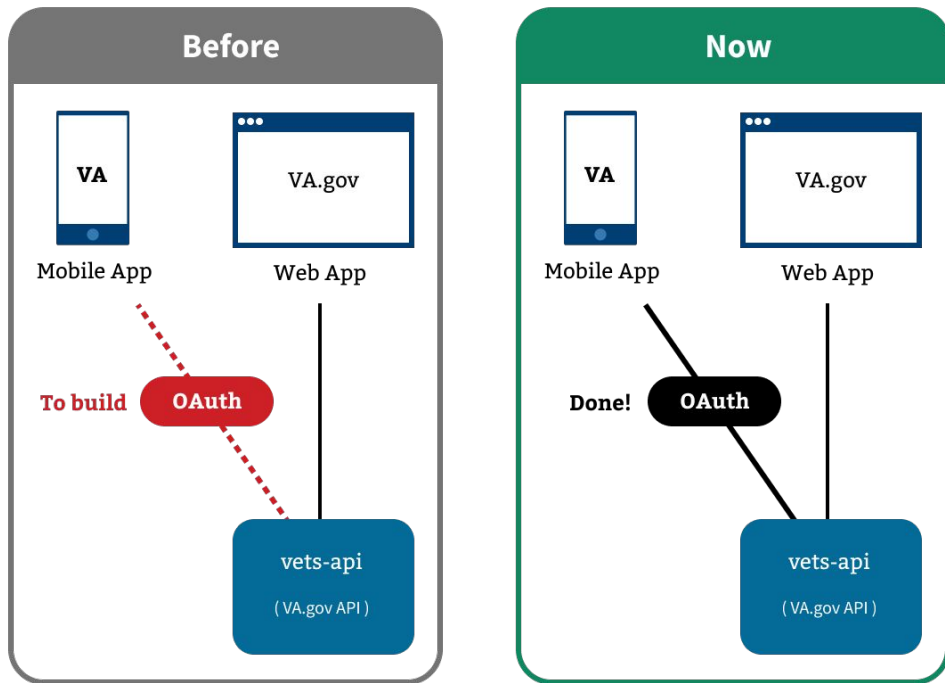
→ Validated mobile strategy

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Key Takeaways

1. Login works!

2. We have access to Lighthouse APIs

3. Using React Native sped up our development

4. Custom UX was relatively easy to implement with React Native

5. The existing VA experience can feel fragmented

6. A high volume of Veterans check their claims status online, and do so repeatedly

7. 50k people call each month about claims and correspondence, even though calling the VA is a frequently cited pain point.

8. Healthcare is the biggest driver for engagement with VA online

9. Mobile presents opportunities to expand the accessibility of VA digital tools

Login works!

VSP team added PKCE support for mobile oAuth to let us get an authentication token from Lighthouse

Before

Mobile App — VA

Web App — VA.gov

To build — OAuth

vets-api (VA.gov API)

Now

Mobile App — VA

Web App — VA.gov

Done! — OAuth

vets-api (VA.gov API)

"

I use the [USAA] app more, because if I login on a desktop, it makes me request a passcode and I then have to say whether I want it texted or emailed…

On my phone, it reads my fingerprint, I put in a 4-digit pin and boom!"

—P5

https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/blob/master/products/va-mobile-app/tech-research/Mobile%20App%20Discovery%20-%20Login%20Recommendation.pdf

We now have access to Lighthouse APIs

*We connected end to end: mobile client -> oAuth PKCE -> access tokens -> /claims*

Available today
- Benefits API ➜ Claims status
- Facilities API ➜ Facility locator
- Veteran Verification API ➜ Limited Veteran Profile (e.g., service history)

Needs to be added to Lighthouse
- Appointments API ➜ Scheduling
- Secure Messaging API ➜ Mobile messaging
- Prescriptions API ➜ RX Refill
- Profile API ➜ Expanded Veteran Profile
- Upload supporting Evidence ➜ Camera functionality

Demo
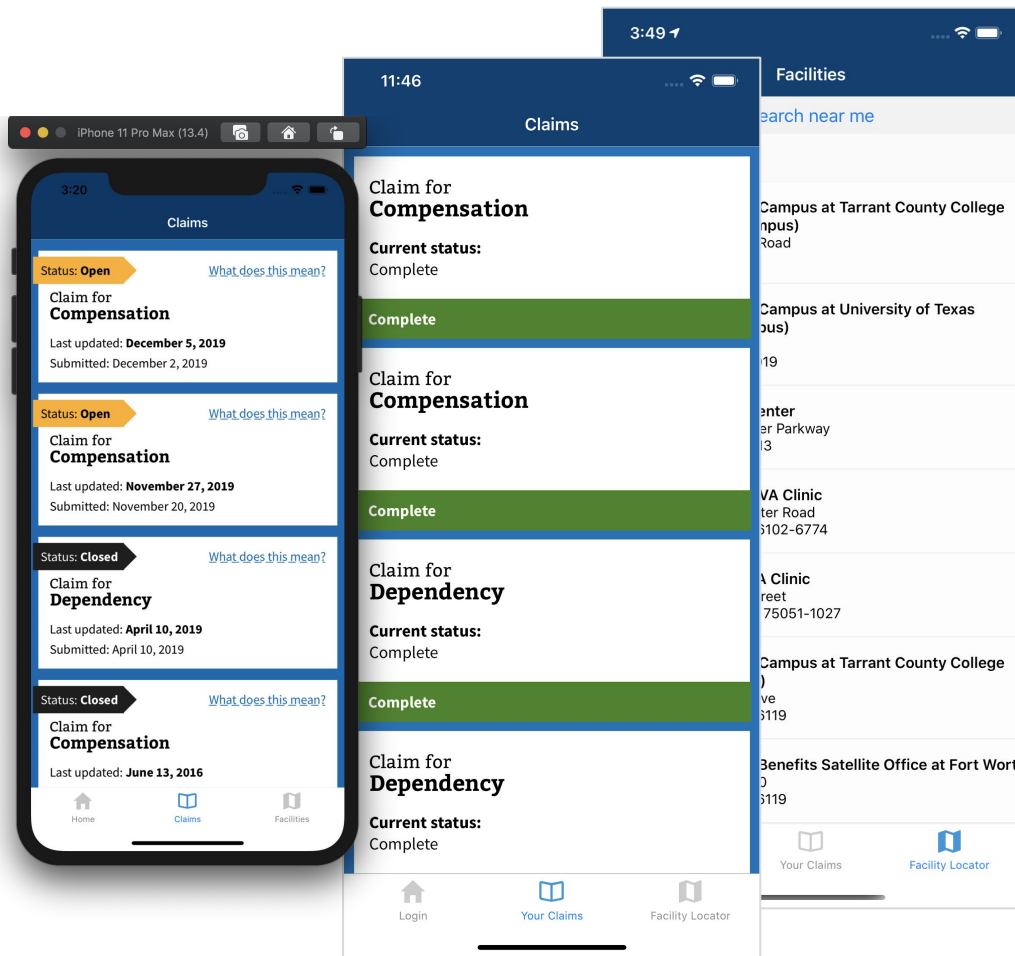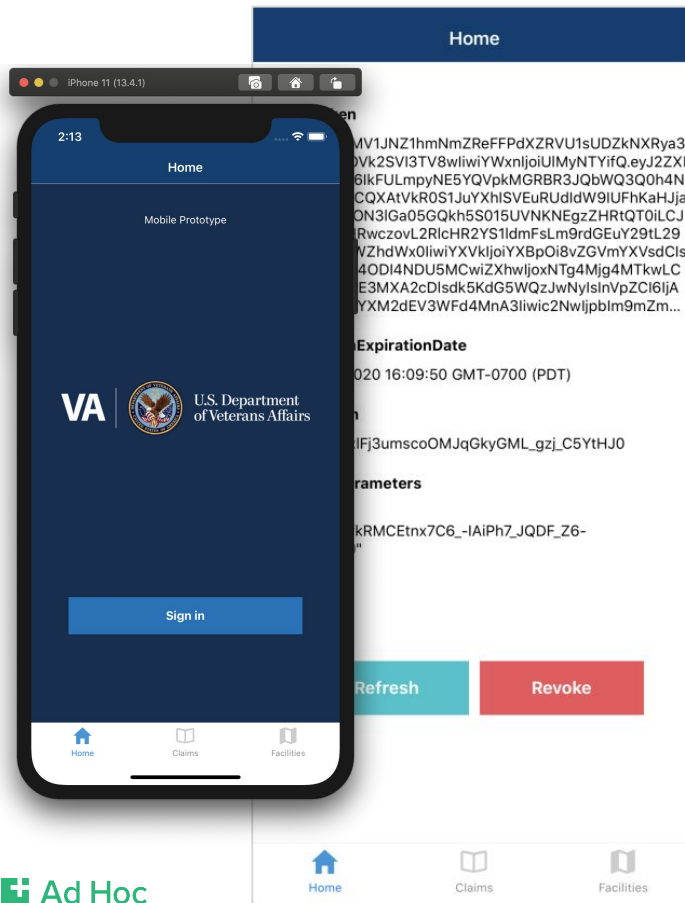
React Native sped up development time

In < 2 weeks, we built a 5 screen app with 5 API integrations, deployed to both platforms

|	React Native	Native iOS & Android
Number of screens to code	**5 screens**	**5 x 2 = 10 screens**
Number of codebases	**1**	**2**
Language/ecosystems	**JavaScript and React**	**Swift and Java or Kotlin**
Distribution	**Write once, deploy twice**	**Separate deploy paths**

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Custom designs were relatively easy to implement

Coding in React and CSS made it easy to create a custom, VA branded user interface with elements like a progress bar.
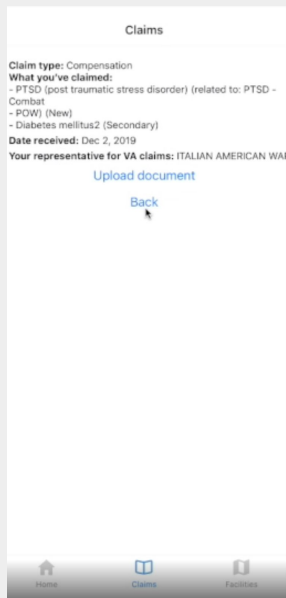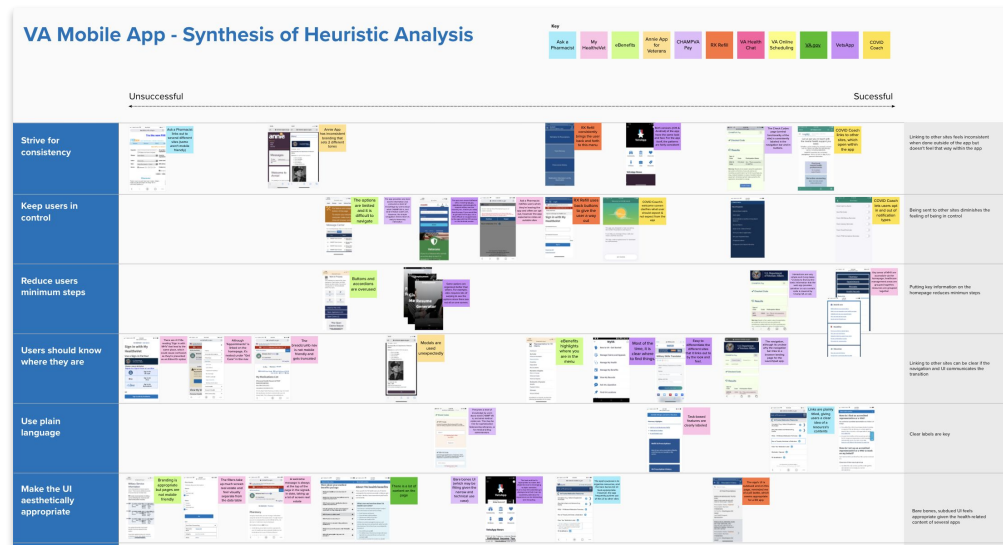

Last time ⬇   New ➡
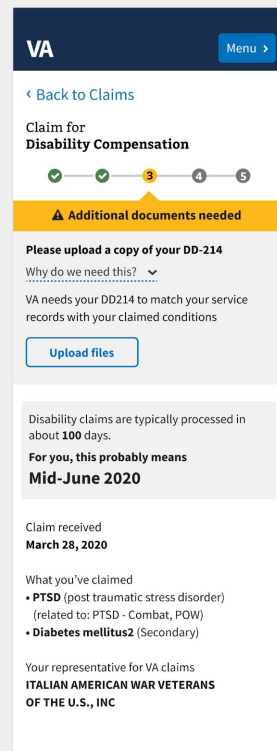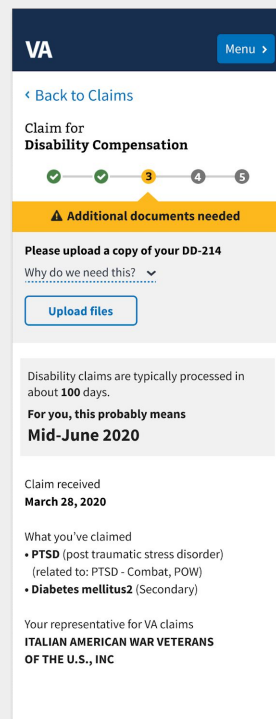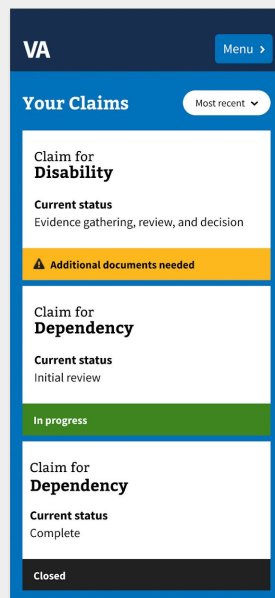
The VA can feel fragmented to Vets, both in person and online: 33 mobile and 15+ web apps

Via a heuristic analysis, we found most apps heavily linked to other apps or websites, requiring users to interact with more than one app or site at a time. This diminishes the feeling of user control. Further, most interfaces did not feel as modern or mobile friendly as they could be.

https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/tree/master/products/va-mobile-app/ux-research/heuristic-analysis

https://app.mural.co/t/adhocvasu2804/m/adhocvasu2804/1588084628284/38297b32e1af307bbc385f87689995952a9802ba

The existing VA experience can feel fragmented

This theme that has come up in the interviews we have conducted this week, both in relation to VA apps and sites, and interacting with the VA more broady.

"

I don't want to have to deal with 3, 4, 5 apps...no one is going to want to figure out which app has what they want. That's worse than figuring out which website."

P6

"

Once the ball is passed from Community Care to VA, [it would be nice to] know that is was received, be kept in the loop 24/7...I have spent 30 mins on phone one day, 30 mins on a phone another day."

P5

"

The VSO is awesome. I would actually be very upset if she left...I've seen my VSO Cindy 5-6 times since 2017 to have something explained to me in a bit further detail."
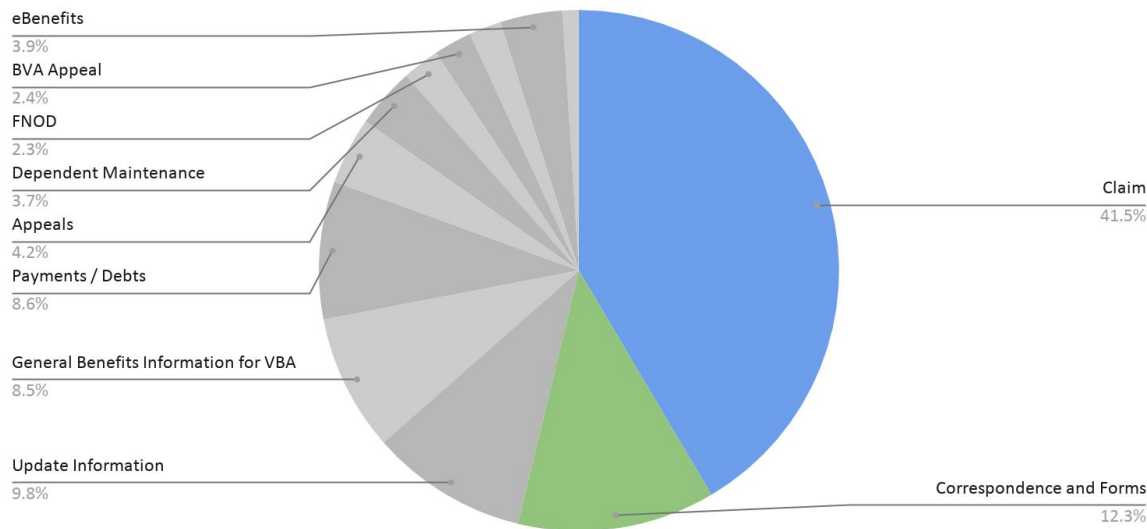
P1

A high volume of Veterans check their claims status online, and do so repeatedly

The highest volume of pageviews on VA.gov on mobile is for Claims, among both new and repeat users. The data suggests that Vets on their phones may make frequent checks to their claims status
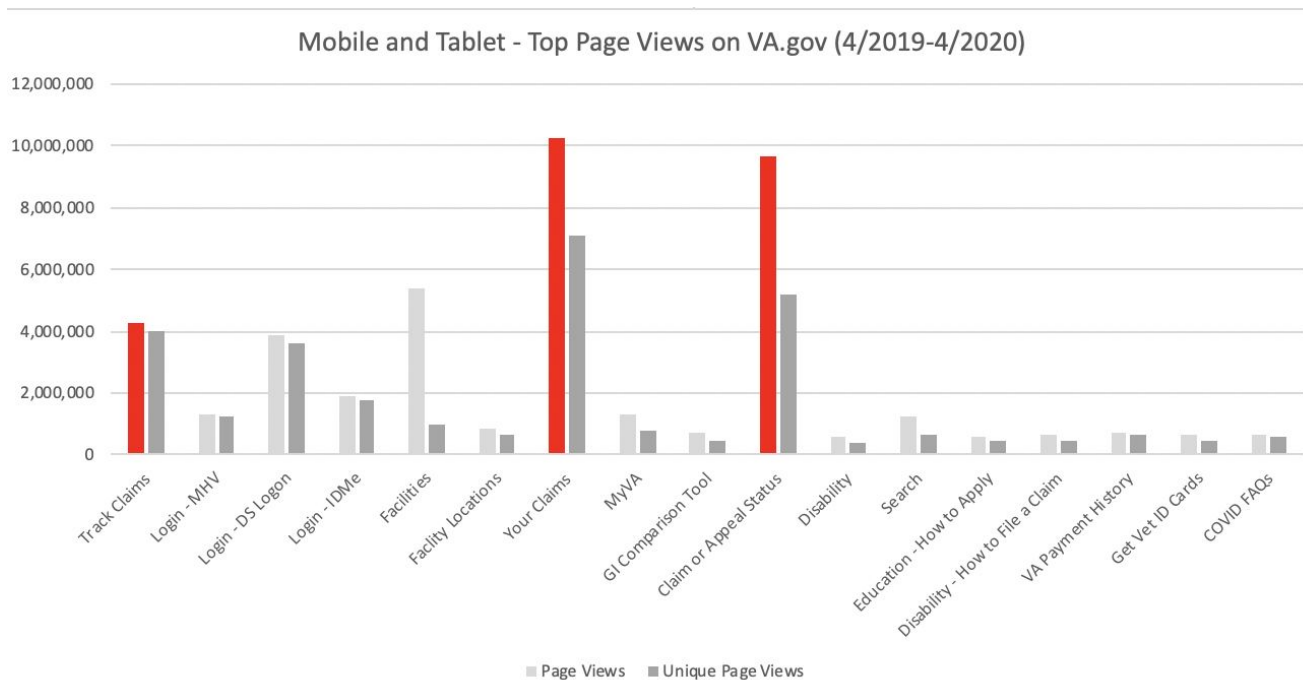
Mobile and Tablet - Top Page Views on VA.gov (4/2019-4/2020)

Legend: Page Views, Unique Page Views

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50k people call each month about claims and correspondence, even though calling the VA is a frequently cited pain point.

VBA NCC Issue Types
Oct 2019

eBenefits
3.9%

BVA Appeal
2.4%

FNOD
2.3%

Dependent Maintenance
3.7%

Appeals
4.2%

Payments / Debts
8.6%

General Benefits Information for VBA
8.5%

Update Information
9.8%

Claim
41.5%

Correspondence and Forms
12.3%

"

[I would use an app] so you don't have to call and get routed around to a lot of people."
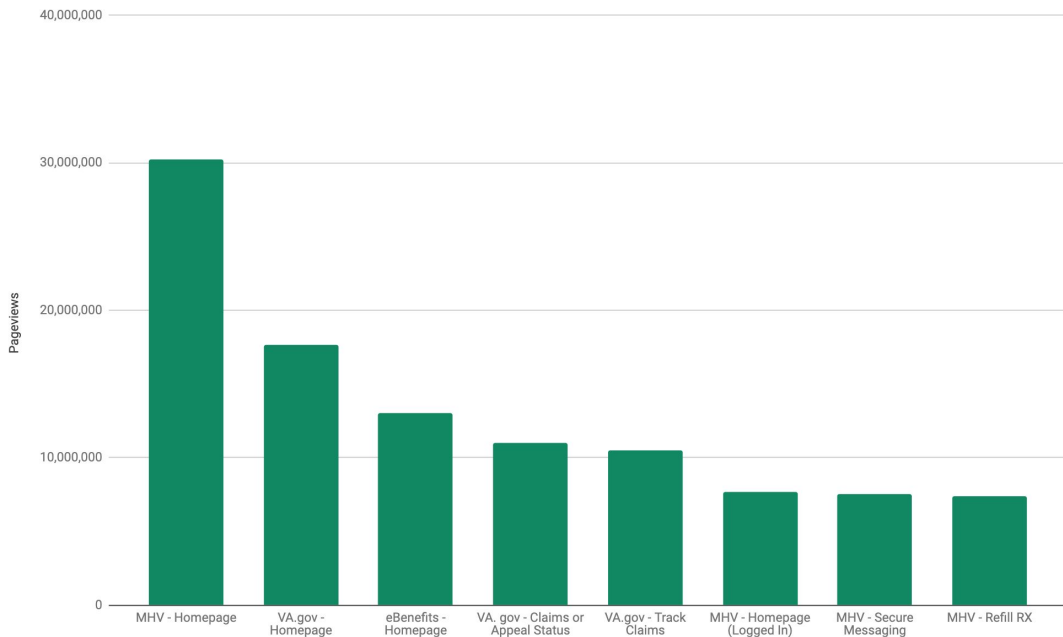
P5

"

The only thing I do sometimes is call and get a letterhead that has my name, social and my rating."

P1

Healthcare is the big driver for engagement with VA online

Top Page Views
4/2019-4/2020

Pageviews

MHV - Homepage	~30,000,000
VA.gov - Homepage	~17,500,000
eBenefits - Homepage	~13,000,000
VA. gov - Claims or Appeal Status	~11,000,000
VA.gov - Track Claims	~10,500,000
MHV - Homepage (Logged In)	~7,500,000
MHV - Secure Messaging	~7,500,000
MHV - Refill RX	~7,000,000

3 out of 4 participants we have talked to so far use VA medical benefits for themselves. 2 out of 4 had managed medical benefits on behalf of another Veteran in their family.

Mobile presents opportunities to expand the accessibility of VA digital tools

- VSP Accessibility SME providing guidance
- Discovery on iOS Accessibility Inspector
- Validated we can add labels and traits to improve experience

"

Technology is in flux when it comes to low vision..the apps have gotten a lot better. If apps are developed for voiceover, they work pretty darn well."

P6

"

If apps have accessibility built in they are easier to use because there's less clutter. Small screens are much more streamlined, so it's easier to find things."

P6

"

If [an app or website] is good, that goes back to the way it is designed. It has to be user friendly at all levels...it can't just be geared towards people who are tech savvy."

P5

Next Steps

- Finish this round of user interviews next week

- Iterate on mockups and plan concept testing

- Integrate basic accessibility using React Native and test

- Integrate native functionality (document scanning plugin)

- Explore persistent logged-in state

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Thank you!