

# VBA Service Label Usability Testing

2022-02, Facility Locator Team, Dave Sukharan

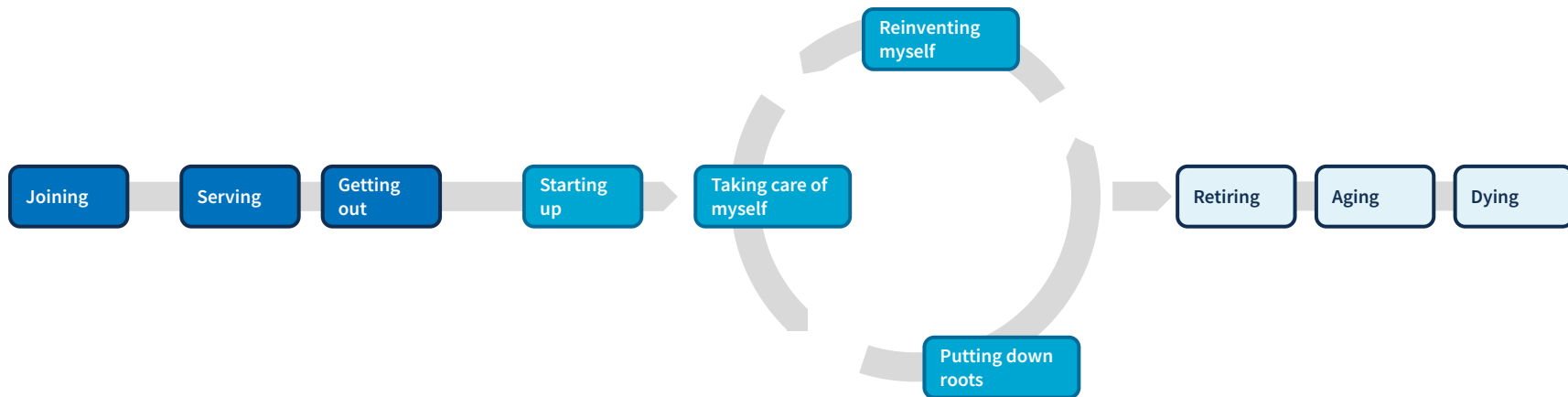


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# How this research maps to the Veteran journey

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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

VA



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# OCTO-DE goals that this research supports

Title of the research | mm dd, yyyy

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 percent filtered for Benefits

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# 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.”**

- # number of users who receive a No Results page per quarter
- % of tested users who had trouble with the map

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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.”**

- # of Location Specific pages with < 1 services offered
- # of Location Specific pages with which are effectively closed
- # of Location specific pages which are marked closed

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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 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.”**

- # of users who mentioned not trusting online VA resources
- # of users who expressed negative sentiment about call centers

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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 (3 or fewer)

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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.

# 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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