

Research Readout

Rogers STEM Scholarship

VA Form 22-10203



VA.gov
6.11.20



What We Wanted to Learn
What We Did
What We Learned
Appendix

What We Wanted to Learn

The Problem | The Product | Why This Testing

The Problem

Currently, Veterans applying for the Rogers STEM Scholarship must use VA Form 22-1995. The addition of STEM scholarship questions to this form was a temporary solution. However, a large number of individuals were applying for the scholarship even though they weren't eligible (>80% of applicants). This resulted in significant additional work for the claims processors.

How might we increase valid submissions of VA Forms 22-1995 and 22-10203, and streamline the application process for beneficiaries using either of the two forms?

The Product

VA Form 22-10203 will be a stand-alone application for the Rogers STEM Scholarship. The form will be easy to complete for those who are eligible and will clearly indicate ineligibility to those who are not.

Why This Testing?

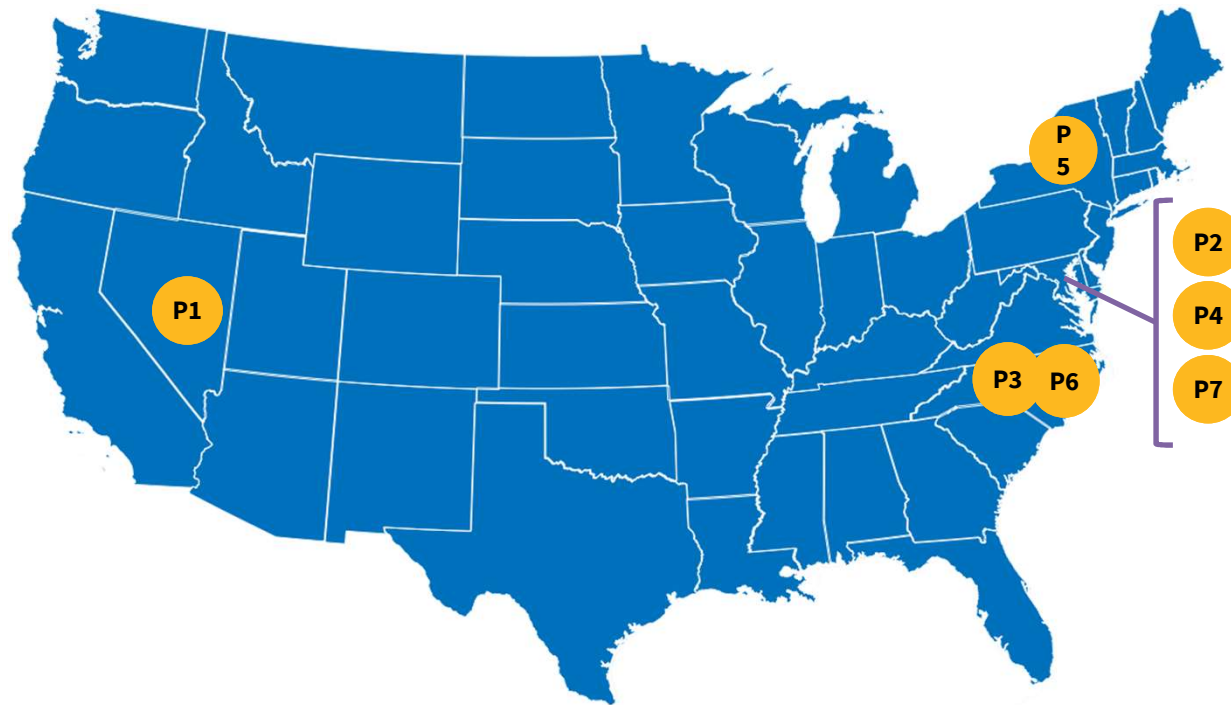
We want to ensure that

1. The application is easy for those who are eligible to complete and submit
2. The messaging around scholarship eligibility criteria is clear, actionable and dissuades those who aren't eligible from applying

What We Did

Participants | Research Methods

Participants



1 Women
6 Men

7
Veterans

3
Branch

3
Ethnic
Backgrounds

25-54
Age Range

Research Methods

J[1

The following research methods were used:

Remote Usability Sessions using a robust inVision prototype with Veterans who:

- Are using or have used up all Chapter 33 VA education benefits
- Some studying STEM fields, some not

The screenshot shows the VA website's 'Apply for the Rogers STEM Scholarship' page. The header includes the VA logo, 'U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs', and navigation links for 'Search', 'Contact Us', and 'Sign In'. Below the header, there are links for 'VA Benefits and Health Care', 'About VA', and 'Find a VA Location'. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: 'Home > Education > How to apply > Apply for education benefits'. The title is 'Apply for the Rogers STEM Scholarship'. Below the title, it says 'Equal to VA Form 22-10203 (Application for Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship)'. A callout box with a blue border and a light blue background contains the text: 'Save time—and save your work in progress—by signing in before starting your application'. It lists benefits of signing in, such as prefilling the application and saving progress. A 'Sign in to start your application' button is present, along with a link to 'Start your application without signing in'. Below this, a section titled 'Follow the steps below to apply for education benefits.' lists the first step: '1 Determine eligibility'. It states that to be eligible for the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship, users must meet all requirements, including being a current or former recipient of certain education benefits, having used all benefits or being within 6 months of doing so, and being enrolled in an undergraduate STEM program or having a STEM degree and teaching certification. The second step, '2 Prepare', is partially visible at the bottom.

Slide 9

J[1

We did have the one participant who had only used Voc Rehab

Jones, Jen [USA], 6/11/2020

What We Learned

Primary Finding

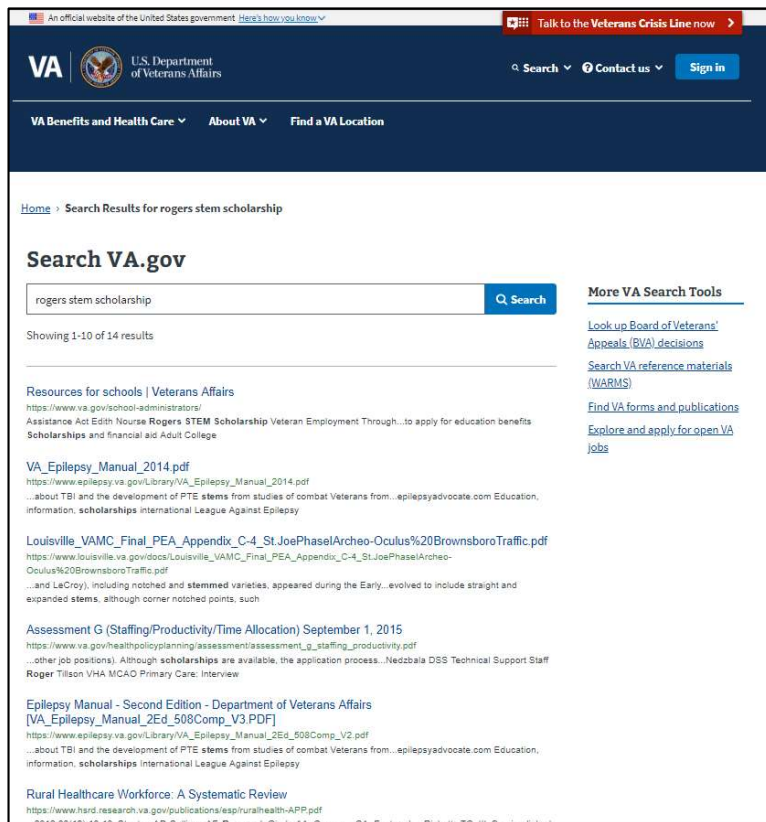
Participants were able to determine their eligibility for the Rogers STEM Scholarship and complete the scholarship application with ease

“It was pretty easy – it was surprisingly simple... Based on the process I went through just to apply to school, I would have expected this to be a lot more involved.”

- P4

Finding 1

Most participants were unable to locate the STEM Scholarship application from within VA.gov



- Top areas where participants expected to find the Rogers STEM Scholarship:
 - Using “Apply for education benefits” link in the Education block on VA.gov homepage
 - Education and Training hub
 - "Other VA education benefits" link
- Many participants were looking for the word “scholarship”
- Search results initiated on VA.gov were not useful to participants

"I'm looking for anything that has to do with scholarship, and I don't see that."

- P3

[Ran search with keyword "rogers"]

"Let's see what that does for me...That's a lot of non-relevant stuff."

- P4

Recommendation

Recommendations

- Incorporate STEM scholarship content in VA.gov site. "Other VA education benefits" is a spot where a lot of individuals anticipated they'd find it
- Ensure STEM scholarship content and application are indexed by VA.gov site search

Finding 2

The majority of participants reviewed & understood the scholarship eligibility criteria

An official website of the United States government [Here's how you stay](#)

VA U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Search Contact Us Sammy

VA Benefits and Health Care About VA Find a VA Location My VA My Health

Home > Education > How to apply > Apply for education benefits

Apply for the Rogers STEM Scholarship

Equal to VA Form 22-10203 (Application for Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship).

Note: Since you're signed in to your account, we can prefill part of your application based on your account details. You can also save your form in progress and come back later to finish filling it out.

[Start the education application](#)

Follow the steps below to apply for education benefits.

- Determine eligibility**

To be eligible for the [Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship](#), you must meet all the requirements below. You:

 - Are using or recently used Post-9/11 GI Bill or Fry Scholarship benefits
 - Have used all your education benefits or are within 6 months of doing so. [Check your remaining benefits](#)
 - Are enrolled in an undergraduate degree program for science, technology, engineering or math (STEM), or have already earned a STEM degree and are pursuing a teaching certification. [See approved STEM programs](#)
- Prepare**

To fill out this application, you'll need your:

 - Social Security number
 - Education history
 - Information about your school and STEM degree

- Most participants read through the eligibility requirements
- Most said they'd check their remaining benefits before they'd start the application
- Several participants checked "Approved STEM programs" PDF to see if their program of study was listed

"Sign in to start your application." I would ignore that and I would look down here [subway map] to determine my eligibility."

- P6

[Searched STEM document for "information technology"]

"Ok, so I have 4 choices....oh look and there's Computer IT Services Admin and Management. This would give me confidence that I'm eligible."

- P1

Recommendation

Recommendations

- Present entitlement info for authenticated users early in the flow so they can quickly & easily see their remaining benefits before they start applying
- Explore options for incorporating eligibility questions earlier in the flow to more quickly alert ineligible users who aren't authenticated
- Consider removing the "Start the application" button from the top of the page to encourage applicants to read requirements before applying
- Ensure language regarding STEM degree clearly communicates an **undergraduate degree** is required

Finding 3

Several participants chose to continue applying despite learning that they'd be ineligible for the STEM Scholarship

The screenshot shows the VA website's application page for the Rogers STEM Scholarship. The page is titled "Apply for the Rogers STEM Scholarship" with form number 22-10203. It is at step 3 of 6, "Program Details". A message states: "It appears you're not eligible for the Rogers STEM Scholarship." Below this, "Your responses:" are listed with three items: "Are using or recently used Post-9/11 GI Bill or Fry Scholarship benefits" (checked), "Have used all your education benefits or are within 6 months of doing so" (unchecked), and "Are enrolled in an undergraduate degree program for STEM, or have already earned a STEM degree and are pursuing a teaching certification" (checked). A note says: "If your situation changes in the future and you meet all of the criteria, you may return to apply for the Rogers STEM Scholarship." There is a green button "Explore other education benefits". Below that is a question "Would you still like to apply? (*Required)" with radio buttons for "No" and "Yes". At the bottom are "Back" and "Continue" buttons, and a link "Finish this application later".

- Three participants would continue applying as "you never know" or "it wouldn't hurt to apply"
- Two participants would continue applying if they were within a "grace period" for their entitlement exhaustion
- One participant definitively chose not to apply

"I'd still apply, just to see what happens."

- P5

"I don't know how long the application process will take. By the time they look at it, I might be eligible [in terms of remaining entitlement]."

- P7

"Probably 50/50 [likelihood of applying though ineligible] because sometimes even though you don't check all the boxes, you still get in."

- P3

Recommendation

Recommendations

- Present entitlement information earlier in the flow for authenticated users -- on the intro page, if possible
- Refine exhaustion of benefits language, in all locations, to make the 6-month cut-off clearer and more emphatic
- Leverage entitlement check for authenticated users on STEM (in-)eligibility summary to show how long before they could qualify

Finding 4

Participants assumed their school contact info (ID and email) would be used to verify attendance and enrollment

The screenshot shows a web form titled "3 of 6 Program Details". The form is divided into two main sections. The first section, "STEM degree and school details", contains four required fields: "What's the name of your STEM degree? (*Required)", "What's the name of the school where you plan on using the Rogers STEM Scholarship? (*Required)", "City (*Required)", and "State (*Required)". The second section, "Your school ID and contact details", is highlighted with a red border and contains two optional fields: "Your school student ID number" and "Your school email address (This email address usually ends with .edu)". A note below these fields states: "Note: If you need help completing this form, your school's School Certifying Official (SCO) can help you." At the bottom of the form, there are two buttons: "« Back" and "Continue »", and a link "Finish this application later".

- None of the participants' school IDs are the same as their Social Security Number
- All have a school email address that they use with some regularity

"[They ask for school info] To make sure you are still a verified student... It means that I'm still enrolled in school and I'm not trying to get money that I don't qualify for."
- P6

Recommendation

Recommendations

- None

Finding 5

Participants generally weren't concerned entering a new bank account would impact other VA payments

The screenshot shows the VA website's 'Apply for the Rogers STEM Scholarship' form. The page is titled 'Apply for the Rogers STEM Scholarship' with the form number 'Form 22-10203'. It is the '5 of 6' steps in the 'Personal Information' section, specifically the 'Direct deposit' step. The text explains that VA makes payments only through direct deposit (EFT) and that if approved for the scholarship, the user will need to provide bank information. The form includes fields for 'YOUR NAME', 'YOUR ADDRESS', 'DATE', 'PAY TO THE ORDER OF', '\$', and 'DOLLARS'. Below these are three input fields for the routing number (044072324), account number (000123456789), and check number (0). The 'Account type' section has radio buttons for 'Checking' and 'Savings'. There are also input fields for 'Bank routing number' and 'Bank account number', both marked as required. At the bottom, there is a checkbox for 'I don't want to use direct deposit'.

- No participants expressed concern about entering their banking information
- Some participants made comments that implied issues with payments wouldn't be unexpected
- One user had concerns entering a new bank account could possibly impact other VA payments

"Other than having been in the Army long enough to know that things can get screwed up, I wouldn't think it would cause any issues. I think it would just update or get added to my current information. I wouldn't assume this application would overwrite the existing settings."

- P4

Recommendation

Recommendation

- Include copy on the Direct Deposit page which explains the bank information entered here is for Rogers STEM Scholarship payments only and will not affect any other VA payments

Finding 6

Various findings on reviewing & submitting the application

The screenshot shows the VA Form 22-10203 'Apply for the Rogers STEM Scholarship'. The page is titled 'Apply for the Rogers STEM Scholarship' with the form number 'Form 22-10203'. It is at step 6 of 6, 'Review Application'. The instructions state: 'Please review the information below to ensure that it's correct before you submit your application. This is especially important if you worked on your application over several days.' There are five expandable sections: 'Applicant Information', 'Education Benefit', 'Program Details', 'Military Details', and 'Personal Information'. A note at the bottom states: 'Note: According to federal law, there are criminal penalties, including a fine and/or imprisonment for up to 5 years, for withholding information or for providing incorrect information. (See 18 U.S.C. 1001)'. At the bottom, there is a checkbox for 'I have read and accept the [privacy policy](#). (*Required)' with a hand icon pointing to it.

- Less than half of the participants said they'd review the summary information before submitting
- Most participants would choose to print the confirmation page – either hard copy or digital
- One participant mentioned they'd like an email confirmation after submitting the application
- Most participants said they'd prefer to be contacted by email, followed by mobile phone, if VA had questions about the application

"I think it would be nice if students can get an email saying that their application has been received."

- P2

"Preferably email [as primary form of contact] unless it's something that needed to be answered immediately. I kind of hope they prioritize it. That they would send email first."

- P7

Recommendation

Recommendations

- Ensure applicants are receiving email confirmations after they submit their applications
- Continue to ask applicants how they want to be contacted and engage with them through those channels

Next Steps

Next Steps

1. Prioritize findings & evaluate LOE
2. Incorporate updates into prototypes
3. Determine approach to re-testing
4. Begin development efforts



DIGITAL SERVICE at VA

Thank you