

Research Plan for Health Hub Benefits, July 2022

Background

Veterans find it extremely difficult to navigate commonplace interactions with the VA. The VA ecosystem is so complex that Veterans feel discouraged to learn about, apply, maximize, and manage their benefits.

This experience extends online. There is a fragmentation in information and tools. In particular, navigating between general information and personalized information and tools is difficult. Veterans (will) come to VA.gov to learn what benefits are available to them, apply, and then track and manage those benefits. While these are distinct stages, we expect that Veterans will need to continue learning about their benefits during the application process, and when managing their benefits.

As the team considers how to include the Health Apartment on VA.gov, this research effort is an effort to update and improve the benefits-related information architecture of VA.gov.

[Mural that briefly explains the problem]

[Product brief for the health apartment]

[Link to Research Plan for Treejack Study 1]

OCTO Objectives

This effort supports the following OCTO objectives:

- Veterans and their families can find a single, authoritative source of information
- Veterans can manage their health services online
- Logged-in users have a personalized experience, with relevant and time-saving features

Veteran Journey

Veteran tasks fit into the following key points in the Veteran journey:

- Primary point in the Veteran journey: “Taking care of myself”
- Secondary points: “Starting up,” “Putting down roots,” “Retiring,” and “Aging”

Research Goals

How we might create an experience that allows Veterans to easily find the content and tools they need based on where they are in their VA health care journey:

- learning about the benefit
- applying for the benefit
- getting started with the benefit
- or managing their care and health benefits?

We want to understand how Veterans might navigate between tasks in ‘get benefits’ and ‘manage benefits’ on proposed changes to VA.gov.

Outcome

To understand (and build consensus) how to best organize the UX for ‘get benefits’ and ‘manage benefits,’ specifically for health care, on VA.gov. We’ll use the information architecture insights from this research to build and test prototypes of a future Health Hub.

Research questions

1. Can users (Veterans and Caregivers or family members) navigate proposed changes to VA.gov to find information or complete core tasks as they get and/or manage their VA health care benefits and care?

Specific goals

- Evaluate the usability of navigation in and between the ‘get benefits’ and ‘manage benefits’ sections

- Assess the labeling of health hub section
- Gain insight into user mental models as they get and manage their benefits and care

Hypothesis

We're testing two competing hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 0: Veterans find it easier to understand the benefits that are available to them and navigate through the information when there is one unified section to 'get benefits' and 'manage benefits'.
- Hypothesis 1: Veterans find it easier to navigate when there are two separate sections for 'get benefits' and 'manage benefits'.

The current Heath Apartment prototype that's being tested, assumes Hypothesis 0.

Method and tools

This phase of the research is designed to indicate which information architecture strategy to follow: hypothesis 0 or hypothesis 1.

In this first phase, unmoderated remotely conducted tree tests allow us to evaluate navigation and labeling quickly across multiple research cohorts.

We will use Optimal Workshop to conduct the tree tests.

What it is

- Nielsen Norman Group - Tree Testing

Method

- IA Tree Tests (remote, unmoderated)
 - Using Optimal Workshop, we will conduct a moderated study in which participants are invited by email to participate. After accepting the invitation, participants will be sent a link to a tree test activity that contains, respectively, 12 tasks for a Veteran and 11 tasks for Caregivers and family members that they may experience when getting or managing their health care benefits. For each task, the participant will locate in the tree where a specific task can be completed.

- We would like to get complete responses from at least 15 Veterans, 5 for each cohort. Each cohort will access the study using a unique URL.
- Sessions will be conducted via Zoom.

Research materials

For moderated usability tests:

- [Link to conversation guide](url goes here)

Hypothesis 0

- [Link to Optimal Workshop - cohort A](url goes here)
- [Link to Optimal Workshop - cohort B](url goes here)
- [Link to Optimal Workshop - cohort C](url goes here)

Hypothesis 1

- [Link to Optimal Workshop - cohort C](url goes here)
- [Link to Optimal Workshop - cohort E](url goes here)
- [Link to Optimal Workshop - cohort F](url goes here)

Participants and recruitment

Ask Perigean to recruit 54 people using the cohorts below in order to get at least 5–8 completes for each cohort. Ideally, we would like to have:

- 1/3 of recruited participants Veterans' family members or caregivers who help a Veteran manage their VA health care (5)
- 2/3 of participants are Veterans (10)
 - 5 are enrolled in VA health care and have used MyHealtheVet online health management tool within the last year.
 - 3 are enrolled in VA health care and have not used MyHealtheVet online health management tool or have not done so in the last year
 - 2 are not enrolled in VA healthcare but are enrolled in at least one other VA benefit (i.e. disability compensation, disability pension, education).
 - 5 are not enrolled in VA health care and are not enrolled / receiving another VA benefit
- We want to ensure we research with the following underserved Veteran populations:
 - Females
 - Minorities

- Lower education
- LGTBQAI2S+
- Cognitive disorder
- *Candidates may meet several secondary criteria so long as a minimum number of identified underserved Veteran populations identified in spreadsheet are represented in the data pool.*

Timeline

Prepare

- We'll conduct a pilot session with mock participants (week of August 1).

Research sessions

- Research sessions will begin the week of August 8. Schedule sessions beginning at 9:30am ET for 45 minutes, with a half hour break in between, maximum 5 scheduled participants a day.

Length of session

- This is a moderated online test. Participants are expected to spend 30–45 minutes
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Availability

Team Roles

Research guide writing and task development: Team MOVE

Participant recruiting & screening: Perigean

Project point of contact: Carolyn Williams (Carolyn@themostudio.com)

- Moderator:
- Research guide writing and task development (usually but not always same as moderator): Carolyn Williams
- Participant recruiting & screening:
- Project point of contact:
- Participant(s) for pilot test:
- Note-takers:
- Observers: List email addresses for those who should attend and observe the sessions: VA Stakeholders, engineering team members, design team members, any other people who might find this research relevant to their work. Spread observers across sessions so that there are no more than 5-6 total attendees (moderator, notetaker(s), observer(s)) per session on the VA side