**Benefits Taxonomy Conversation Guide**

**Main Interview**

**Warm-Up**

1. For how long have you been out of active duty military? I was discharged from the reserve April 1st, 1975, prior to that I was active duty from 68 to 72. So I was active duty for 3.5 years.
2. Where, geographically, are you based right now? Kanas city. Its urban.
3. Can you tell me about a time you’ve utilized a VA service? Yes, last week I had an opportunity to be taken to the VA hospital due to medication having an adverse reaction and I needed to go to the ER. They turned the ambulance away and took me back to the city to be admitted to the hospital. In the beginning when discharged from the Navy I applied for education and that was the last time I used the educational benefits.
4. Are you familiar with VA.gov, and if so, what do you typically use it for? Yes I am. I use it for health benefits and claim submissions.

**Scenario 1 - Category Name Evaluation**

*Take participants through a simple card sorting exercise.*

**Research Questions to Address**

1. Do existing category names cause confusion, or do they need to be described with more clear language?
2. How can the benefits services be best presented to Veterans?

Ebenefits registration, helpful. When I started using the VA as a provider I would have liked to have more help if you will registering for my benefits. I had to have help from a fellow navy person on how to fill it out and submit it. So a more in-depth helpful instructions would have been nice. It is a nightmare navigating through the va sites. They use terminology that doesn’t ring the bell for those not in service for a while. They will sue terms I haven’t. ebenefits registration would have been a lot of help.

Pension would be helpful because I don’t get one. It could be helpful for someone else though

Pre-discharge claim, what does that mean from the hospital or military. that’s not helpful to me, maybe its not worded correctly. Well pre-discharge like it says but discharge from what.

Family member claim help wouldn’t apply for me because I am the only veteran in the house. It is not helpful for me but it could be for someone else.

Education claims help is not helpful to me because I cant apply for it anymore

Education and career counseling it does not apply to me.

Applying for benefits would be helpful because it is for medical as well.

IDES would be helpful to me.

Transition help would be helpful for someone leaving active duty but not helpful for me

Homeless veterans it could be helpful for me in case I am thrown out in the future

Insurance claim could be helpful but it should have financial counseling. They are not the same. Well it isnt helpful for me because I don’t have insurance through the VA. that would be for someone that was a lifer, that’s the way I read it. I wouldn’t have financial counseling through them either, I would put that in not helpful

Burial claim would be helpful.

Disability claim is helpful

Va home loan would be helpful unless they recently removed that for veterans I can still apply

Update direct deposit is not helpful

Voc rehab and employment is questionable. I wouldn’t not be going through Voc Rehab that would be someone transition from military to civilian live but I am sure the va would help me find a jobs. I have seen them help veterans get a job. I would put that as helpful.

That’s my contribution.

Anything unclear: No they used language I could understand the IDES. I have had to file a claim more than once under that. I know I am entitled for something for burial so I am aware of some things under helpful. A lot of the not helpful directs the information to those that recently got out or retired so its not helpful to me

Need more infomration for things that aren’t helpful: Well if I need Voc Rehab or employment help I can go and ask them or I can go on va.gov and look for it. For help for homeless veterans they have social workers that can help you right then. IDES, I would need more information of what it entails. Is it for all veterans or certain people only. Applying for benefits is there on va.gov so I would find it hopefully. That’s my take on it.

Go to a location to go in person: Yeah all of them. If I couldn’t get directed from registration they would tell me where in the building I could talk to a social worker, they are everywhere.

What would you be looking for: for disability I know I can go to the Vso in the hospital to file a disability claim. I haven’t filed for another home loan and don’t think I would but I could find that off the website and not need to go in to talk to someone but if theres an office I would go in btu since I know the area I know there isnt one. Or I would need to make an appointment with eh state veteran assistance office. I have gone there before.

Any more information you need: No.

Anything to loop ack to: no this looks good theres the online status tool here as well.

Used it before: Nope

What would you use it for: I would click on it to see what it meant. There you go that’s nice. I like that that is nice

Something you’ve had to do in the past: yes. I think I did a study before. I have a claim for 3 years and I don’t know where it is or how many people are ahead of me. one study I did was to track to see where it stands and if it were waiting for the judge to make the decision this would be a nice tool. It would take away the anxiety of waiting or not knowing but knowing that you could have done something. I get bills faster then I get other things.

**Scenario 2 - Search Page Evaluation**

**Research Questions to Address**

Appling for education benefits, what would you do if looking for help: a lot of the time veterans talk to one another, we have Facebook pages we ask questions to and you always have someone to walk you through va.gov for information. I have learned that going through va.gov is not user friendly. So it’s always to ask another veteran because they have experienced what we have gone through. we share experiences among each other to help, not assigned but peer group: yes and the peer group because my age group we are baby boomers. A lot of groups have present people from the navy and are able to navigate through va.gov. we all share experiences and information to help go through the websites.

Infomration looking for: it’s not education anymore theres no point for me to use it. Most of it is health and submitting claims. Understand also that education benefits are not offered to my age group because those benefits are over with. At one time I did send off for (on paper) for a va home loan. Like I said back in the day we used paper.

Familiar with the facility locator tool: No.

Using tool, what would be your first step: well first of all I don’t think I need to find a va location. I was expecting something else but I guess this location needs to know where I am living. I would go here and say use my location. That’s better than typing it in.

Would contacting the va be on the list to help: no I would have directly used this location. It’s found my location then facility type, I don’t understand the questions what do you mean. Oh (reading list), I guess I would go to benefits. Then service type I am looking for va home loan. I don’t know why I would be asking for help; I would be looking for the form to fill it out. let me see if theres another choice, no other choice so used is va home loan help. No results found for va home loan help. Well what if I put in a zip code, I wonder if it will find it that way. Let’s see. That would have been my next thought to use the app to locate where I am

If I weren’t here what would you do: that’s what I am getting ready to do. Go back and use my zip code. I was expecting to go into infomration to apply for va home loan, not look for help. Okay it came up with a map. Oh I see and understand. This is odd. (reading page) I am looking for information on the home loan and don’t understand why the va is taking me, what I am understanding here it is looking for me to go somewhere to apply for va home loan help. Okay, I would go to search and say apply for home loan. I will be specific and not say benefits. It brought me to we welcome your feedback then here it is how to apply for va home loan. Theres no reason why I needed help, this is what I needed to begin with. Did I have a choice from the menu to apply for home loan, I went to va home loan help but that’s not what I needed I needed information on how to apply for the va home loan. I was thoroughly confused. This is what I wanted right here. Apply for va home loan, I figured it out.

Would you ever go to a location or call for help: no. I depend on the va.gov to give the correct information from the beginning. Calling people to help with this I have found don’t know any more than I do and in the first place me doing this here I wouldn’t know where to go to call someone to answer the question. I depend on the selections here like find handbook or form. Theres nothing here that says if you need help call this number

Used va locations in past: yes in the past when the va was changing the website and it was frustrating. I would call all of the numbers and they would direct me other places. It is very frustrating to call people.

Find VA locations, looking at benefits then service type, tell me about the labels: Well you asked me to find the va location regarding a home loan and it was puzzling because in the past I know to look for the form not looking for the location to apply for home loan. I know the area I live in and I know theres no locations near me to sit in an office to apply for the loan. I have never been aware of the benefit. If it does exist great but I thought it was always done by paper form or online, not looking for a location. Does that make sense. This the VA, I am taking on this they are trying to go the bank route like applying with a loan officer. If I want a location it would be for health nothing more because that’s what I think I am looking for a CBOC so I can go there for health. I have never seen a location to go apply for a loan.

**Prodding Questions:**

1. Would this location be able to help with the home loan: it gives me hours, the 800 number to call, tells me the Monday – Friday. That would be something I could use if I couldn’t fill it out on the website.
2. Confident the location could help you: presently going through covid I wouldn’t use it because it would probably be closed. I would hope the first place I would do it call to make sure they are open; I would hope they would put a notification that they are closed but I would call and set up an appointment to apply for a loan. Oh apply for benefits. Its for then looking for a home loan, theres all kinds of stuff. This would be a busy place so theres probably a lot of people in that office. I would definitely call to setup an appointment if they offered all of those benefits. Yupp.
3. Anything else jump out to you: I like it gives directions and a map. Then exactly what side of the street and the address. I would be happy with what it has there.

Anything else: wasn’t worth it because it should be able to find it unless there is no location. If I give it a zip code it could it. The zip code was the same within the address within the city. Oh well but at least I know the zip codes. You have to use your search imagination. The person living within the area knows where things are.

Sound correct that there were no locations: no that’s a correct assumption. I know I would need to go into Kansas city proper for that because there are no location where I live in that have offices that offer that kind of infomration. I suppose it depends on the population of the city and the desire of the city to have build government agency or rent spaces to provide for veterans. It is very sparse. To live in an area more populated like Baltimore closer to bases I would expect to see more federal buildings and offices that are suited for servicing veterans like Norfolk, VA you have to have more attention there then Kansas city that is landlocked. The government caters to the areas with more veterans unlike my situation if that makes sense.

In the past have you needed to travel: yes quiet a distance

Used online services or online tools to access services: No. I have to go to the places like to submit a claim I have to drive there. Theres no option for phone calls they don’t want to deal with calls they want you to come in.

**Closing**

Thank you so much for your time and for your help today!

* Did you have any questions for the team?

**STOP Recording**

* Was there anything you wanted to tell us about Benefits and services that we didn't get to cover today? No it has been very interesting. If they follow through with what they want to do. I haven’t seen them come to light but theres a lot of planning. This makes me aware of what they are doing and it is nice but I wish there was a better way to see where your claim stands. It was a nice thought. As far a health claims they need to be upfront but like disability or anything of that nature its not gonna happen anytime soon. Theres politics related in that.