



# VETERANS AIRLIFT COMMAND

*They've got heart,  
They need wings*

Sarah Brooking, Neil O'Mara and Arianna Buller  
Group 6

## **The Problem:**

Wounded veterans need comfortable transportation for themselves and their families to necessary medical and other important appointments

## **The Solution:**

Redesign the VAC website so it is engaging for veterans and volunteers and streamlines the travel request process for veterans and their families

**My Role:** UX Designer

**Tools:** Adobe XD, Adobe Illustrator, FigJam and InVision

# Research & Empathize

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# User Research

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## GETTING TO KNOW OUR USER Our Proto Persona

*What are Max's needs, goals and pain points?*

Link to proto persona [here](#)

Max Macklin, age 35



# Interview Plan

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## GETTING TO KNOW OUR CLIENT Walt Fricke, Founder

*How can we help to make the process easier for veterans, volunteers and financial donors to engage with the VAC website?*



"I owned and flew my own airplanes, and I realized that I could create a national organization to fly wounded warriors with dignity and bring their families to their bedsides, too."

Link to interview plan [here](#)

- Walt Fricke, from article Non-Profit Success Story: Flying Wounded War Veterans Home

# User Research

Our interview process yielded a discovery:

Three *individual* users  
Veterans  
Pilots  
Donors

Link to interview plan [here](#)

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Veterans Airlift Command (VAC) website. At the top right is the VAC logo and the text "VETERANS AIRLIFT COMMAND". Below it is a navigation bar with links: Home/About VAC, Passenger Info, For Pilots and Planes, How You Can Help, The Latest News, and Contact. The main banner features the text "COMBAT WOUNDED THEY'VE GOT HEART THEY NEED WINGS" above an image of a private jet flying over a sunset. To the right is a photo of a man in a wheelchair and a woman standing next to him. Below the banner is a text block: "Imagine returning home from combat facing devastating injuries and long-term hospitalization in a facility hundreds of miles away from your family. Imagine howobody brings you together." To the right of this text is a sidebar with the VAC mission statement: "The VAC provides free air transportation for combat veterans, 9/11 combat wounded and their families for medical and other compassionate purposes through a national network of volunteer aircraft owners and pilots." Below the sidebar are several call-to-action boxes: "CORPORATE SPONSORS AND DONORS", "DONATE", "SUPPORTERS", and "OUR ADVISORY BOARD". At the bottom are social media links for CFC (Combined Federal Campaign) and Facebook, along with contact information: "info@veteransairlift.org", "952-582-2911", and "Privacy Information". The footer also contains the VAC logo and the text "Home/About VAC, Passenger Info, For Pilots and Planes, How You Can Help, The Latest News, Contact".

# Competitor Analysis

Direct Competitors	Feature Analysis	Competitive Advantage	Weakness	Notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides free air transportation to veterans in need</li> <li>Serves organ transplant candidates and others as well</li> <li>Pilots donate their time, aircraft and fuel</li> </ul>	Combined, the Air Charity Network is the Nation's largest unified Volunteer Pilot organization comprised of thousands of pilots who annually fly tens of thousands of passengers across the US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weakness is users are routed to regional charities instead of served directly within Air Charity Network's website</li> <li>Users are required to provide a "compelling reason" to request assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Easy to locate "Request a Flight" and "Participation" links in navigation</li> <li>- Very wordy website</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides free transportation to medical care, both air and ground travel</li> <li>Serves not only veterans, but helps cancer patients, children, and families in need get travel to medical care</li> <li>Air travel provided by volunteer pilots and the commercial airlines</li> </ul>	Mercy Medical Angels is the largest charitable medical transportation system in the world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteer pilot network serves only select states</li> <li>Commercial travel serves all states but requires 21-day notice to arrange</li> <li>Only for medical care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extensive network of individual regional volunteer networks. It seems like you don't book directly with Mercy Medical Angels - but rather they get you in touch with regional organizations</li> </ul>
Indirect Competitors				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pays veterans back for mileage and other transportation expenses to and from approved health care appointments</li> </ul>	Backed by the authority of Veterans Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must pay up front before getting reimbursed</li> <li>Only qualified expenses will be reimbursed</li> <li>Can take time/red tape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seems like a high "red-tape" option/place to start for most veterans. I could see veterans using this in addition to other private or non-profit resources.</li> </ul>

# Competitor Analysis

Link to full analysis [here](#)

## Direct Competitors



Pilots donate their time, aircraft and fuel and largest collection of volunteer pilots



Users are routed through different charities and have to provide “compelling reason” to be eligible for travel

## Indirect Competitors



Refunds veterans for travel and backed by authority of Veterans Affairs



Users must pay up front before being reimbursed and may not even be eligible for reimbursement

# Interview Data

Transcribing our interview and survey data onto sticky notes in Figjam prepared us to both analyze the data and empathize with the user.

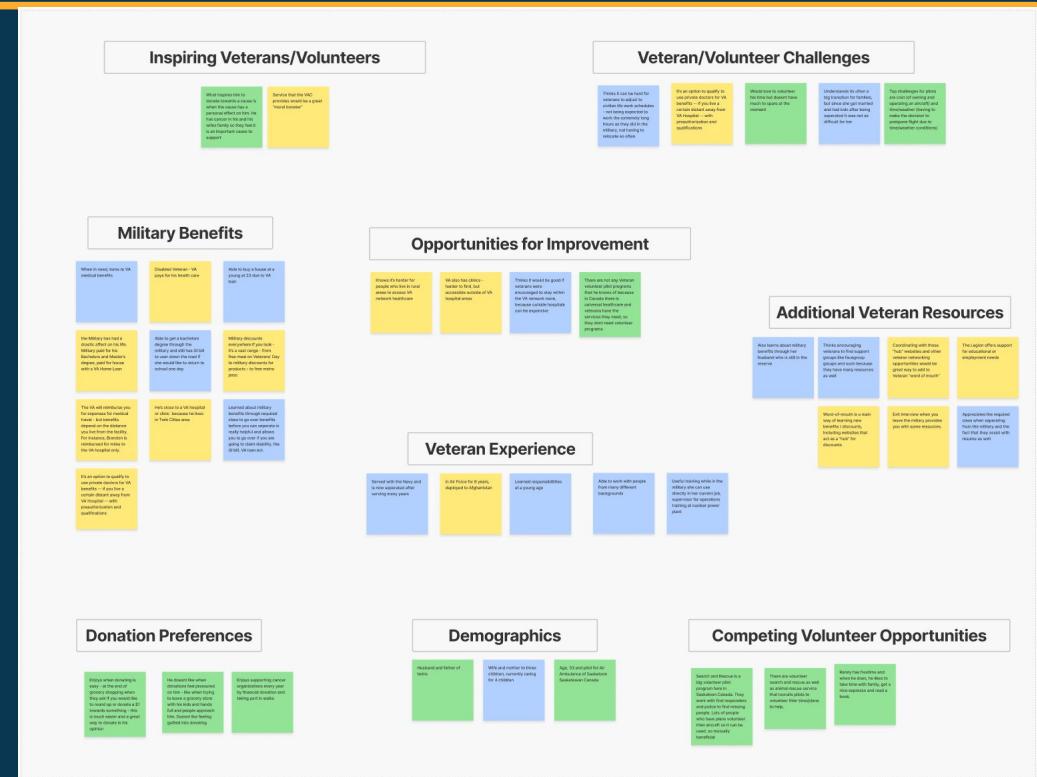


Link to our figjam page [Here](#)



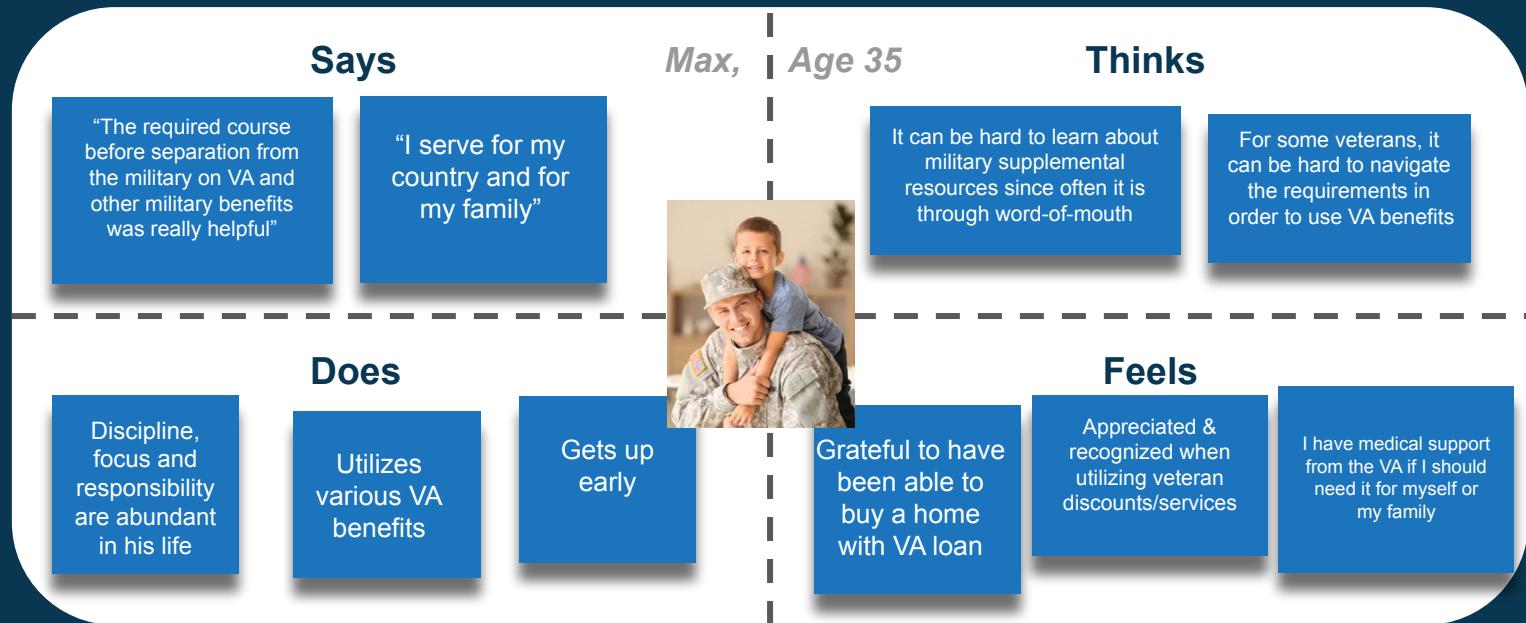
# Affinity Diagram

Creating an Affinity Diagram from interview responses allowed user insights to reveal themselves



Link to our figjam page [Here](#)

# Empathy Map



## Pain

Costly trips

Uncomfortable travel

Being without family

## Gain

Reliable Transport

Free flights

Compassionate travel providers

Obtaining medical care needed

Skills they can apply to daily life

# Definition

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# User Persona

*"I served for my family"*



## Max Macklin

Age: 35

Occupation: IT Specialist

Location: Minneapolis, MN

Education: Graduate Degree

Relationship Status: Married

### Bio

Max is a veteran after serving in Afghanistan. Family is the most important thing to him. Now that he's back, he doesn't want to miss a single moment with his kids. While in service, he was able to earn his degree in Computer Science and enjoys his job as an IT Specialist.

Wounded in combat, he now has a prosthetic leg which requires many follow-up appointments out-of-state. In his spare time, he enjoys activities with his family and playing video games with his friends.

### Favorite Brands



### Dislikes

- Having to travel to specialized treatment centers without family
- Commercial airline flights due to uncomfortable travel with prosthetic

### Goals

- Spend as much time with family as possible after being discharged from service
- Travel comfortably to medical appointments

### Challenges

- Multiple costly trips
- Being without family during long term travel
- Uncomfortable commercial flights

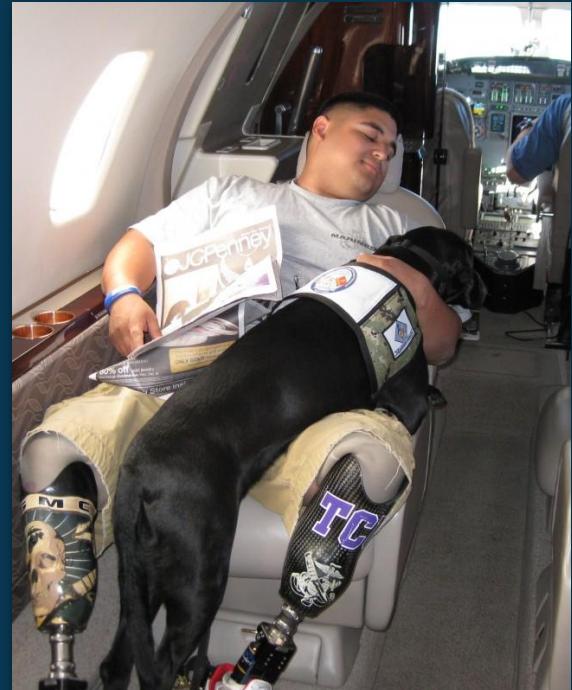
# Problem Statement & Value Proposition

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Many disabled veterans cannot travel comfortably or afford to take their family on a commercial flight to a long term medical appointment. How might we help veterans through the VAC website to specify comfort and family needs in order to experience reliable free travel as a family?

The Veterans Airlift Command website helps wounded veterans connect with volunteer pilots and donated planes, making it easy to plan travel so they can fly comfortably with family.

Link to value proposition canvas [here](#)



# User Insight Statement

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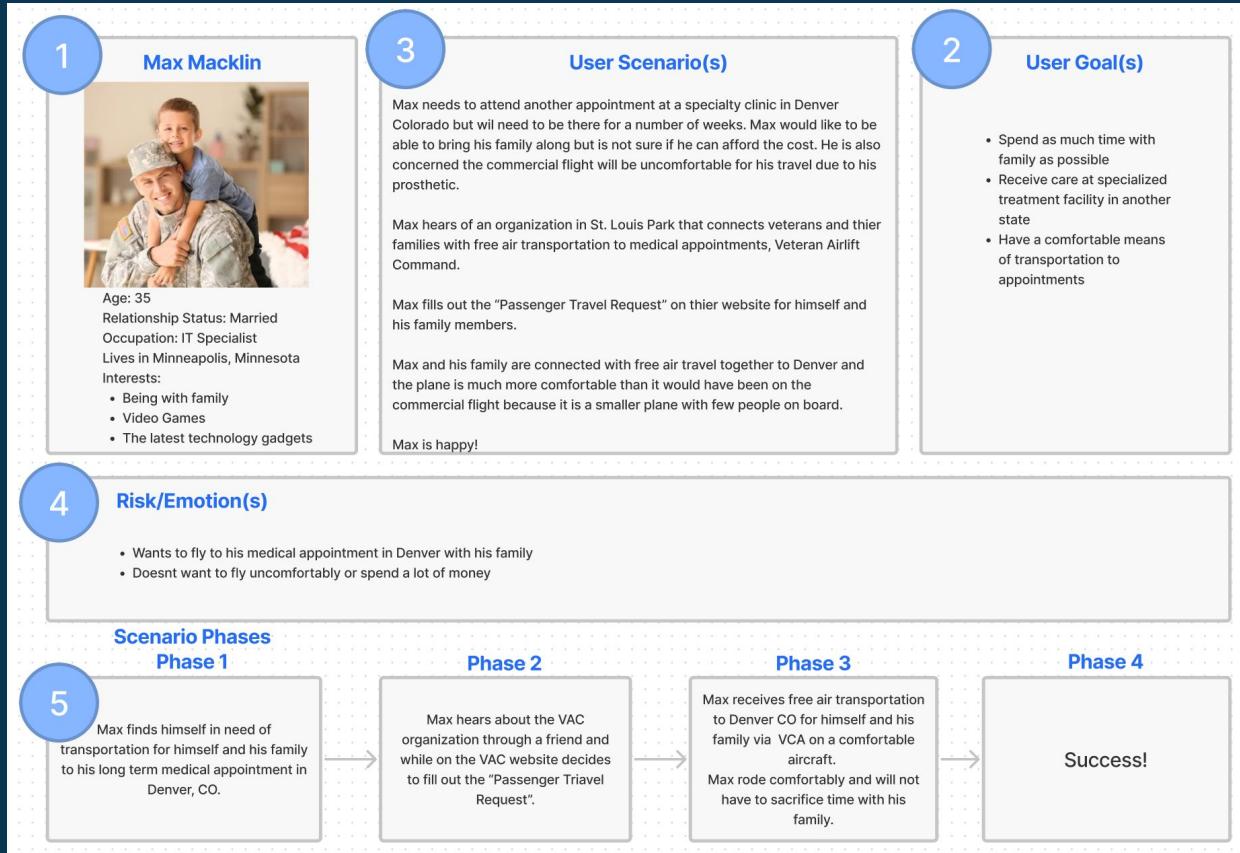
*The disabled veteran needs reliable and comfortable air travel to appointments because commercial flights can be expensive and uncomfortable for a veteran with a prosthetic who needs their family with them.*

# Ideation

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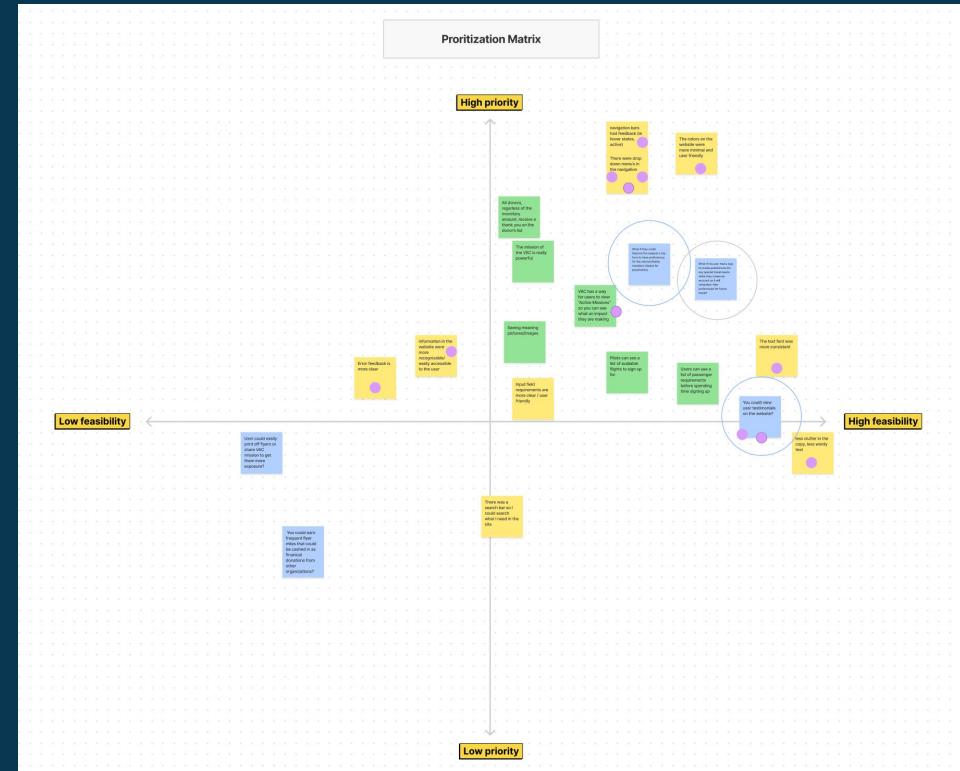
# User Scenario

We then took a moment to think based on our research, why would our user be visiting the website?



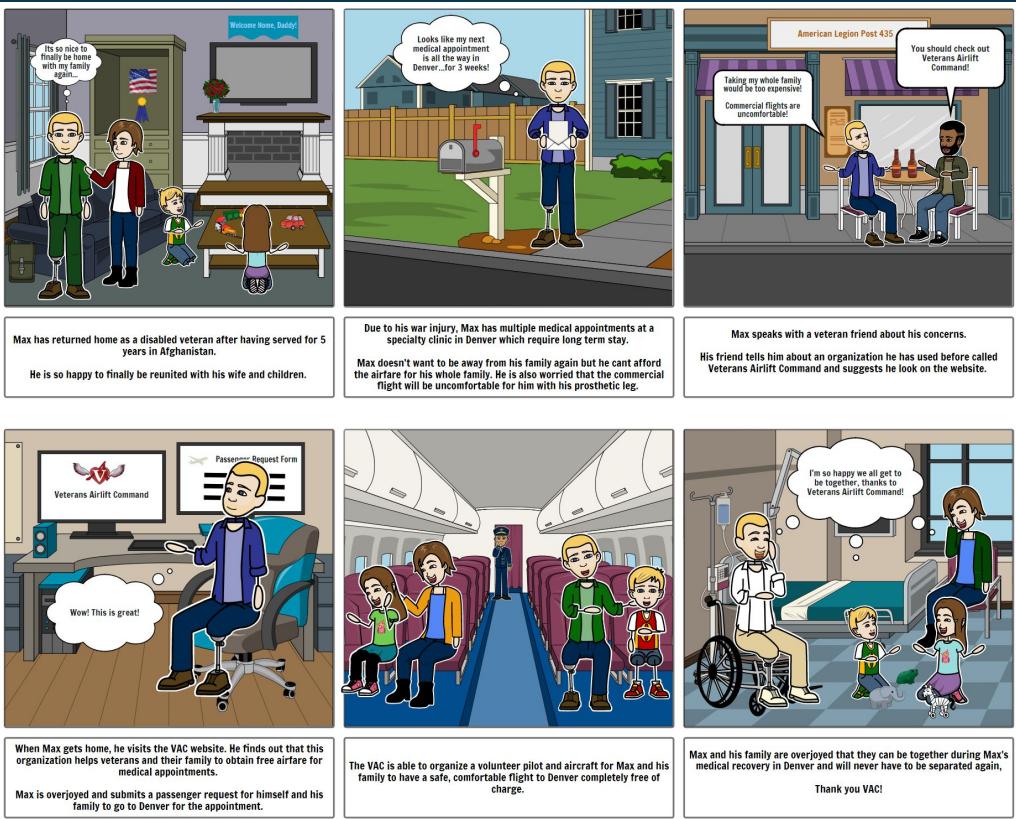
# Feature Prioritization Matrix

Through the defining process, we discovered our 3 main features:



# Storyboard

Storyboards help us to put ourselves in the shoes of our user to feel empathy for their situation and help us visualize a solution.









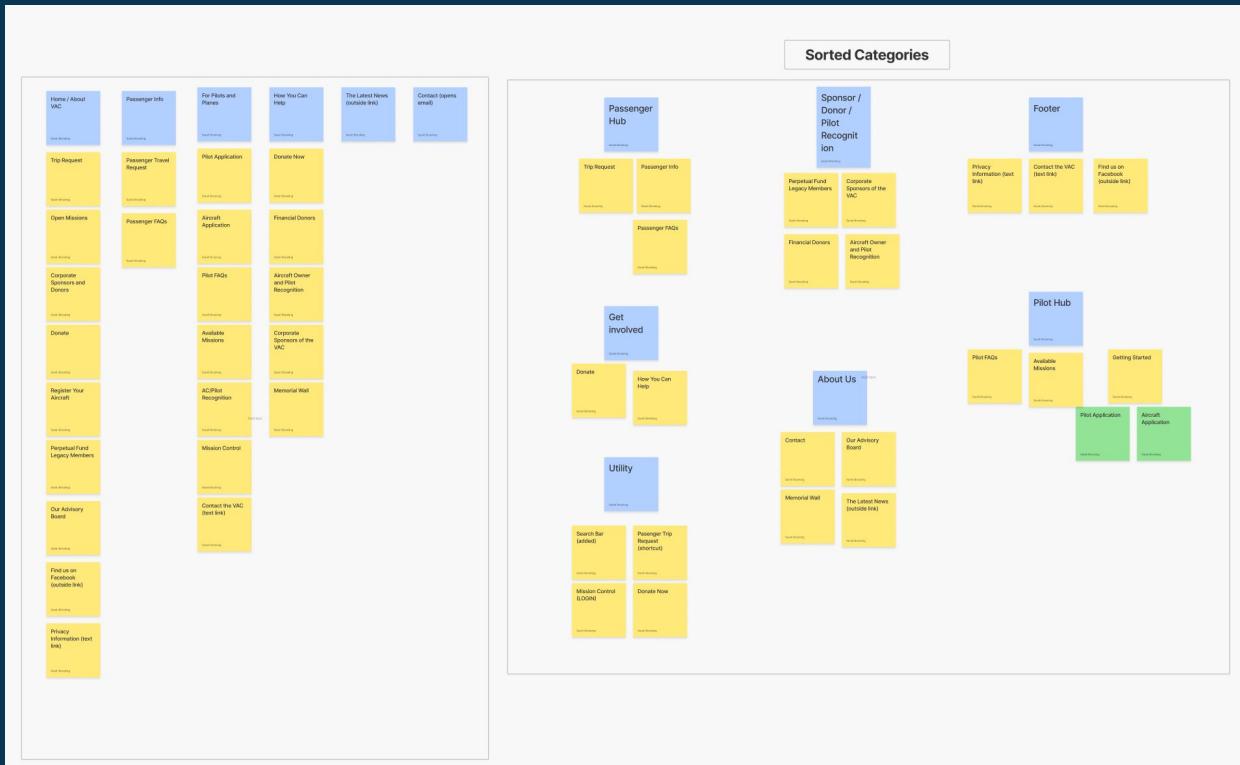
# Information Architecture

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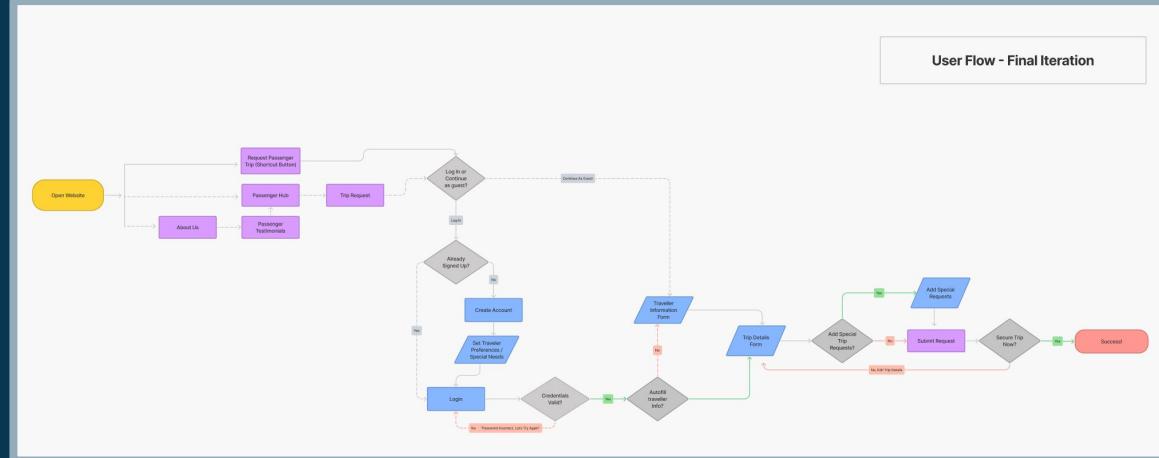
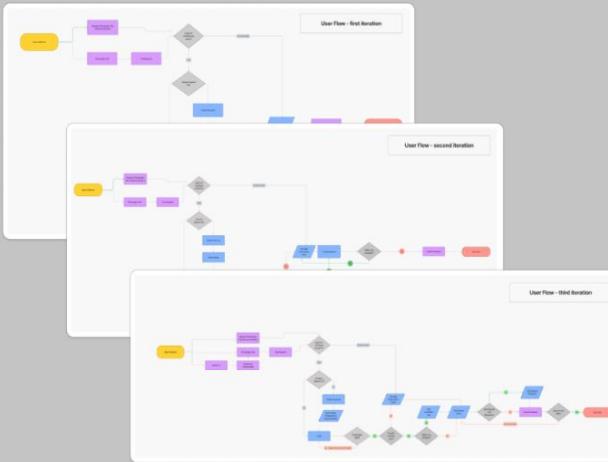
# Card Sorting

Next we took a look at how the information is presented in the current version of VAC website and rearranged it in a way that we felt was more user friendly and logical.

Link to view full card sorting [here](#)



# User Flow Iterations



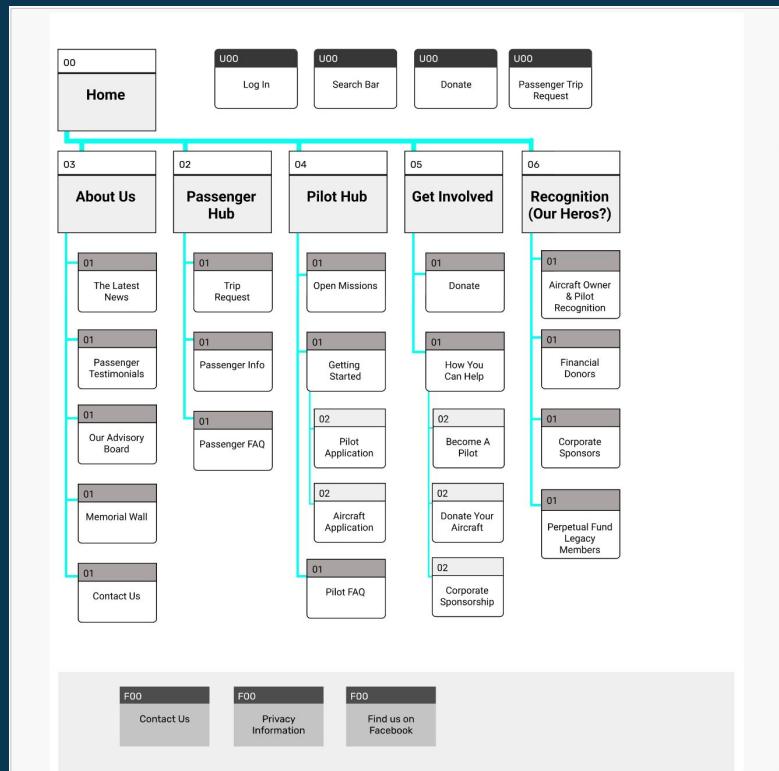
It took many iterations of our user flow before we landed on our final.

Link to view user flows [here](#)

# Site Map

After determining what information we wanted to present, we turned our attention to how we would like that information to be displayed.

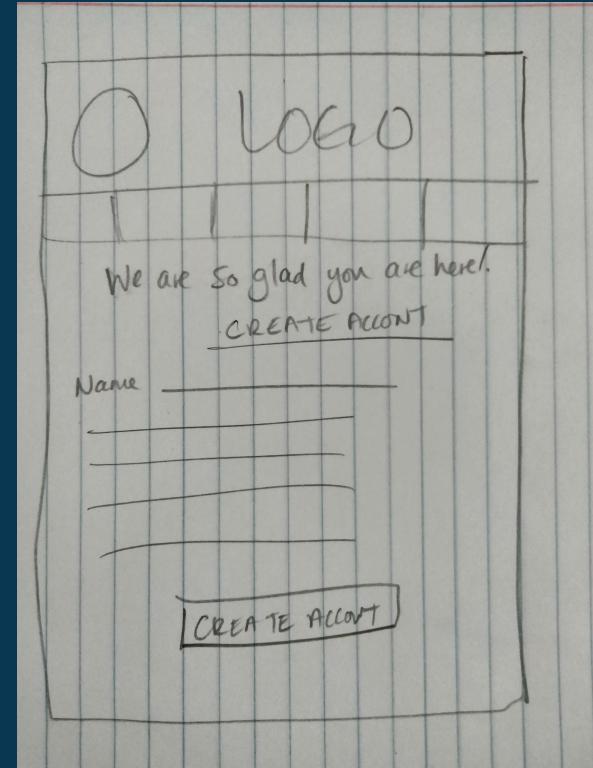
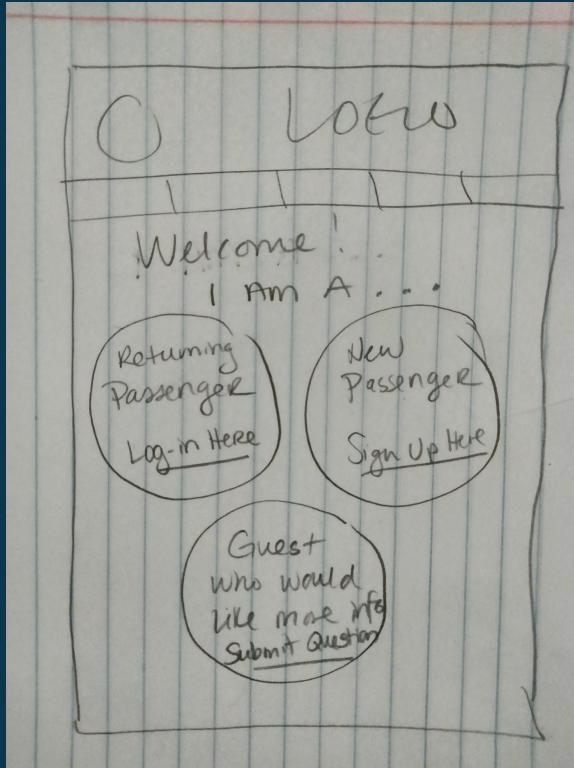
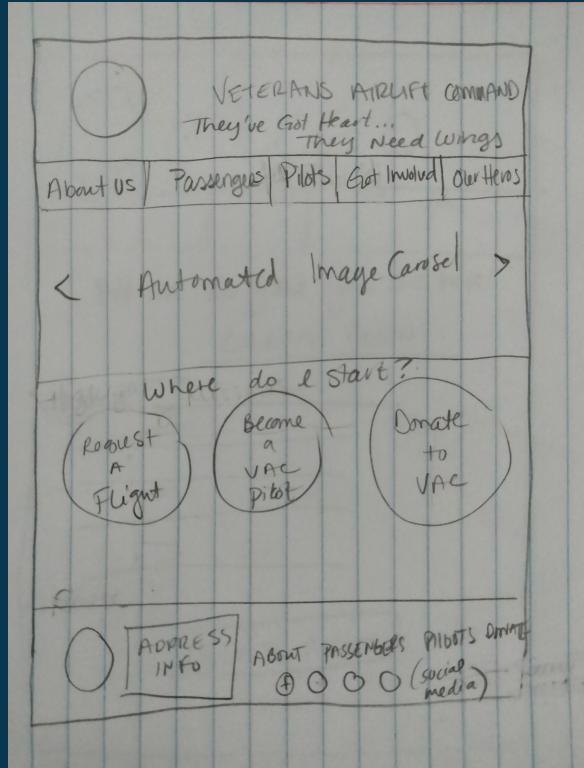
Link to view full card sorting and site map [here](#)



# Wireframes & Testing

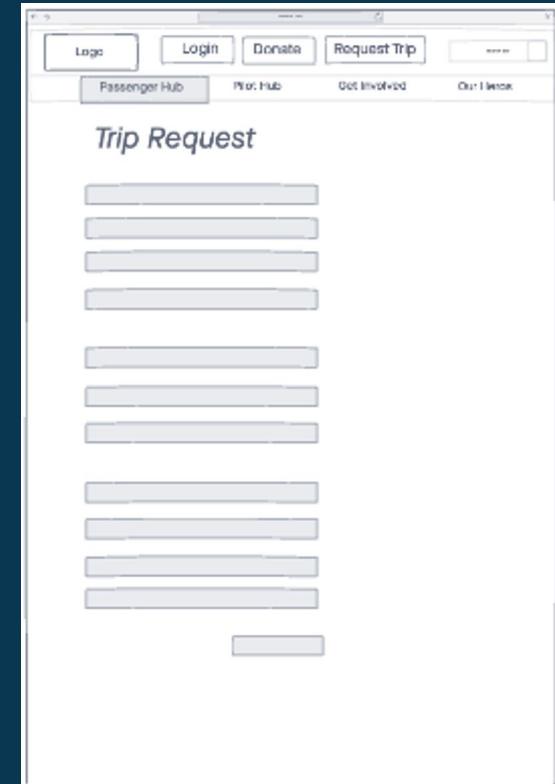
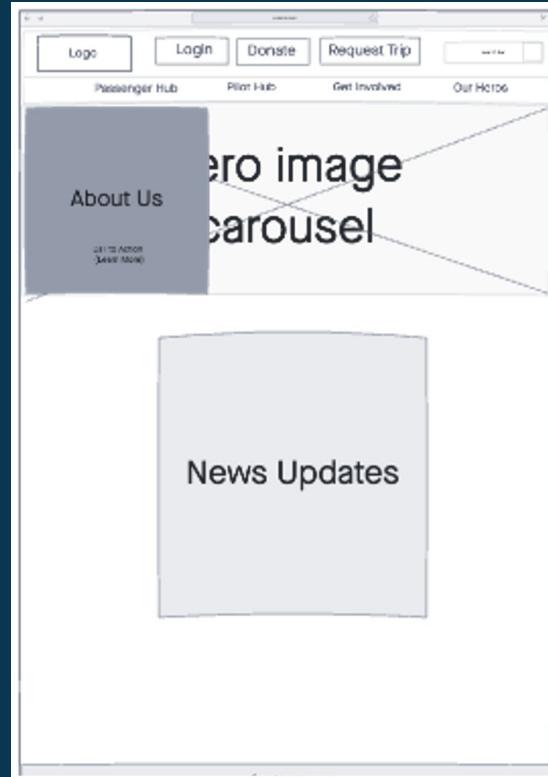
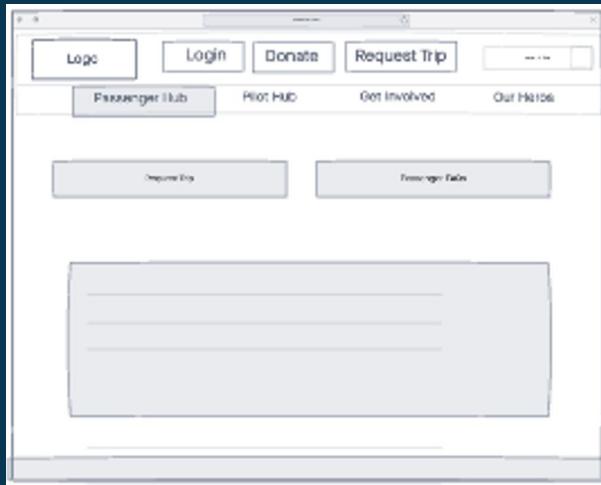
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# Sketches



# Sketches

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These sketches helped us to uncover some initial wireframe designs.

Link to view sketches [here](#)

# Mid-Fi Wireframes

Homepage, Mid-Fi

VETERANS AIRLIFT COMMAND  
THEY'VE GOT HEART | THEY NEED WINGS

Reunited  
Imagine returning home from combat facing devastating injuries, and long hospitalizations or a healthy business of alone away from your family.  
Imagine somebody brings you together.  
[Request Trip](#) [Request Help](#)

Free Flights [\[dropdown\]](#) Donations [\[dropdown\]](#)

For Veterans - Transportation Solutions

The VAC provides free air transportation to post 9/11 combat wounded and their families for medical and other compassionate purposes through a national network of volunteer aircraft owners and pilots.

Travel Request Form Mission Prioritization Ground Transportation Physical Requirements Donate Volunteer

Veterans Airlift Command  
5770 Veterans Boulevard,  
St. Louis Park, MN 55418

ABOUT CONTACT OUR HEROES DONATE LOG IN

About Us - Medium Fidelity

VAC ABOUT PASSENGER HUB PILOT HUB GET INVOLVED HEROES

Testimonials

Veteran Photo 1 > < Veteran Photo 2

"Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consetetur sadipscing elitr, sed diam nonumy eirmod tempor invidunt ut labore et dolore magna aliquyam erat, sed diam voluptua. At vero eos et accusam et justo duo dolores et ea rebum. Stet clita kasd gubergren, no sea takimata sanctus est. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet."

"At vero dolor sit amet, consetetur sadipscing elitr, sed diam nonumy eirmod tempor invidunt ut labore et dolore magna aliquyam erat, sed diam voluptua. At vero eos et accusam et justo duo dolores et ea rebum. Stet clita kasd gubergren, no sea takimata sanctus est. Stet clita kasd gubergren, no sea takimata sanctus est."

About Us

Stet clita kasd gubergren, no sea takimata sanctus est.

Stet clita kasd gubergren, no sea takimata sanctus est.

Request Trip [\[button\]](#) Donate Now [\[button\]](#)

Veterans Airlift Command  
5770 Veterans Boulevard,  
St. Louis Park, MN 55418

ABOUT CONTACT OUR HEROES DONATE LOG IN

Create An Account - 1

VAC ABOUT PASSENGER HUB PILOT HUB GET INVOLVED HEROES

Create an account

Family Traveler Preferences

Name [\[dropdown\]](#)

Last Name [\[dropdown\]](#)

Email [\[dropdown\]](#)

Password [\[dropdown\]](#)

Use 8-12 characters with at least 1 special character and 1 number. Don't include your name or date of birth.

Re-enter password [\[dropdown\]](#)

Who are you?

Name [\[dropdown\]](#)

Save Traveler Information

# Mid-Fi Wireframes

Passenger Hub

VAC

ABOUT PASSENGER HUB PILOT HUB GET INVOLVED

Request Trip

Passenger Requirements

Passenger FAQs  
Need answers? Find them here!

How do I prepare for the flight?

What are the planes like on the inside?

Can we bring food and drinks on the plane?

Can I use a mobile phone during the flight?

How much luggage can I bring?

Veterans Affairs Command  
5776 Mayzelle Boulevard,  
Suite 700  
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

ABOUT CONTACT OUR HEROES DONATE LOG IN

Passenger Request Form, Veteran Info

VAC

Trip Request

Veterans Information

First Name:

Last Name:

Date of Birth:

Branch:

Rank:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

Health Care Facility:

Flight Number:

Next

Veterans Affairs Command  
5776 Mayzelle Boulevard,  
Suite 700  
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

ABOUT CONTACT OUR HEROES DONATE LOG IN

Passenger Request Form, Passenger Info

VAC

Trip Request

Who's Flying?

The veteran is a passenger on this trip

Passenger 1

First Name:  Last Name:  Relationship to Veteran:  Age:  Height:  Weight:

Passenger 2

First Name:  Last Name:  Relationship to Veteran:  Age:  Height:  Weight:

Passenger 3

First Name:  Last Name:  Relationship to Veteran:  Age:  Height:  Weight:

Passenger 4

First Name:  Last Name:  Relationship to Veteran:  Age:  Height:  Weight:

Passenger 5

First Name:  Last Name:  Relationship to Veteran:  Age:  Height:  Weight:

Passenger

Next  Go Back

Veterans Affairs Command  
5776 Mayzelle Boulevard,  
Suite 700  
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

ABOUT CONTACT OUR HEROES DONATE LOG IN

We took these Mid-Fi wireframes and created a prototype for our next stage in the process...testing!

Link to view wireframes [here](#)

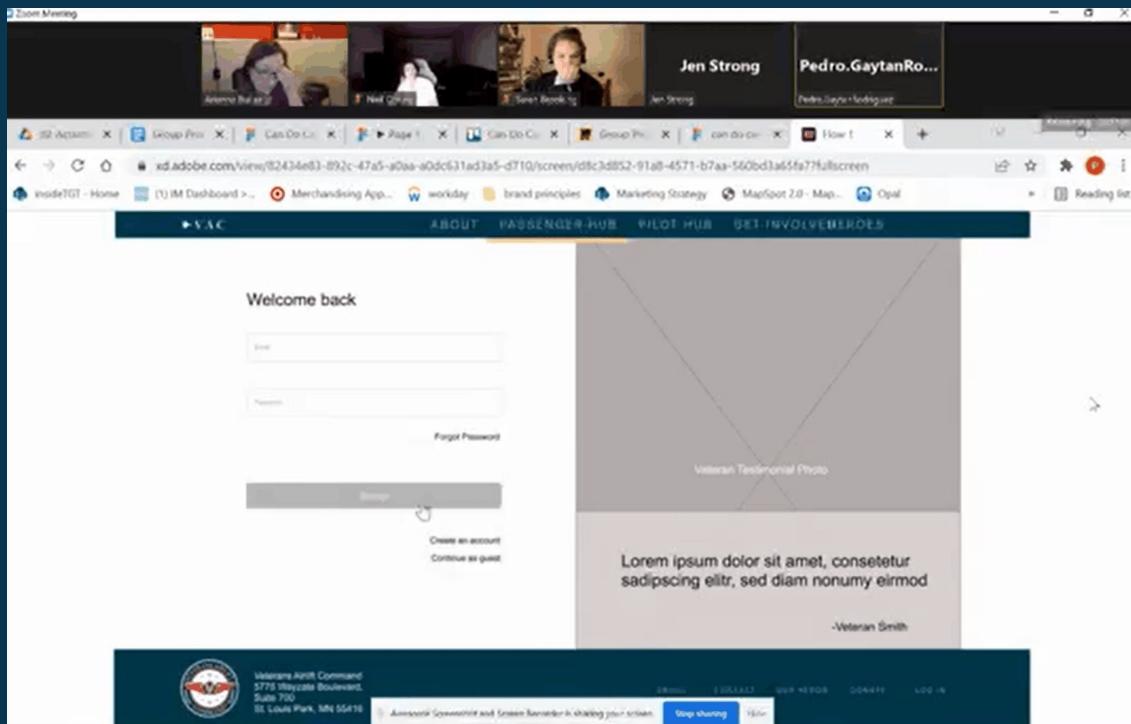
# Testing

User testing helped us to discover many things that needed to be improved for usability.

Some of these highlights were:

- Font color hard to see
- Homepage rarely scrolled down
- Log-in/Create account difficult to find
- Testimonials difficult to find
- Drop down menu fields hard to see in forms

Link to view testing videos [here](#)



# Developing our Style Guide

Creating a Style Tile and Style Guide helps us to put our vision into reality.

**UI STYLE TILE : Veterans Airlift Command / veteransairlift.org**

**UI STYLE DIRECTION**  
The style of the redesign should feel trustworthy yet compassionate. Navigation choices should be easy to find with multiple options for the user to find where they need to go.

**UI Style Adjectives**  
**Trustworthy**      **Compassionate**      **Patriotic**

**Typography**  
As this site has a wealth of information and forms, the majority of the typography will be a highly legible sans serif font. Accents and headlines will be a transitional, strong serif font to invoke feelings of trust and tradition.

**HEADLINE**  
(Kepler Std Semibold ext Display, 74 pt)  
**SUB HEADLINE** (Forma DJR Banner, 36 pt)

**BRAND LOGO**  
— Logo on white      — Logo on dark



**ICONOGRAPHY**  
VAC



**COLOR PALETTE**  
— Base Colors  
#093751   #FCA02B R/G/B   #94ACB9  
— Primary Colors  
#093751   #FCA02B   #94ACB9

**IMAGES Samples**  
A collage of small images showing people standing in front of aircraft and a small airplane.

**Veterans Airlift Command Style Guide**

**COLOR SWATCH**  
Base Colors      Gradient



**TYPOGRAPHY**  
Font weights

Aa Helvetica Neue Medium      Aa Helvetica Neue Regular      Aa Helvetica Neue Bold  
Aa Forma DJR Banner Regular      Aa Forma DJR Banner Light      Aa Semibold ext Display

**HEADINGS**

H1-60px	Font Weight: Medium	Font: Helvetica Neue
H2-35px	Font Weight: Medium	Font: Helvetica Neue
H3-20px	Font Weight: Medium	Font: Helvetica Neue
H4-17px	Font Weight: Bold	Font: Helvetica
H5-16px	Font Weight: Regular	Font: Helvetica

**BUTTONS**  
Button States

Default	Hover	Focus	Pressed	Disabled
Request a Trip	Just give us a few details about your trip and we'll take care of the rest.	Request a Trip	Just give us a few details about your trip and we'll take care of the rest.	Request a Trip

Default State      Hover State  
Request a Trip      Just give us a few details about your trip and we'll take care of the rest.  
Request a Trip      Just give us a few details about your trip and we'll take care of the rest.

**SELECTORS**  
□ Preferred      ○ Preferred

**ICONS**



# Hi-Fi Wireframes

VETERANS AIRLIFT COMMAND  
THEY'VE GOT HEART | THEY NEED WINGS



Reunited  
Imagine returning home from combat  
having lost your limbs. Imagine having to reacclimate to a family home made of  
metal every time you fly.  
Imagine changing you together.

[Learn More](#)



[Free Pages](#) [Donations](#)

For Veterans - Transportation Solutions

The VAC provides free air transportation to our VET heroes whether for medical or other compassionate purposes through a national network of volunteer aircraft owners and pilots.



YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT TO EXPECT

Expect our full concentration on providing professional, comfortable and safe flights.



TESTIMONIALS FROM OUR WOUNDED HEROES

See what users of Veterans Airlift Command have to say about their experiences.



Veterans Airlift Command  
5775 Wayzata Boulevard,  
Suite 700  
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

Veterans Airlift Command  
5775 Wayzata Boulevard  
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

► VAC

ABOUT PASSENGER HUB PILOT HUB GET INVOLVED HEROES 

## Sign In

Email

Password

[Forgot Password](#)

[Sign In](#)

[Create an account](#)

[Continue as guest](#)



“

“VAC has been incredible to our family. My husband lost both of his legs in Afghanistan in 2019, and as a result has had multiple appointments for prosthesis. Flying on commercial

- Chrissy Trial

ABOUT CONTACT OUR HEROES DONATE LOG IN



# Hi-Fi Wireframes

► VAC

ABOUT PASSENGER HUB PILOT HUB GET INVOLVED HEROES 

## Create an account

First Name \*

Last Name \*

Email \*

Password \*

Use 9-12 characters with at least 1 special character and 1 number. Don't include your name or date of birth.

Re-enter password \*

Who are you?

Select

Family Traveler Preferences

Select

Legroom Preferences

Select

Additional Accommodations  
Please list any additional travel accommodations you require.

Save Traveler Information

VETERANS AIRLIFT COMMAND

Veterans Airlift Command  
5775 Wayzata Boulevard,  
Suite 700  
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

ABOUT CONTACT OUR HEROES DONATE LOG IN

► VAC

ABOUT PASSENGER HUB PILOT HUB GET INVOLVED HEROES 

## Trip Request

Flight Info Passenger Info Trip Details Contact Info Request Submitted

Veterans Information

First Name \*

Last Name \*

Branch of Service

Phone Number

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)

Homeless City

Homeless State

Veteran's Rank

Health Care Facility Name

Purple Heart Recipient

Next

VETERANS AIRLIFT COMMAND

Veterans Airlift Command  
5775 Wayzata Boulevard,  
Suite 700  
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

ABOUT CONTACT OUR HEROES DONATE LOG IN

# Hi-Fi Mobile Wireframes



This wireframe shows the "About VAC" section of the website. It includes a header with a menu icon, "ABOUT", and a user profile. Below this is a breadcrumb navigation "Home > About" and the title "About VAC". A testimonial section features a photo of four people (three adults and one child) standing in front of an airplane. A yellow speech bubble icon with double quotes is overlaid on the photo. Below the photo is a call-to-action button "Read Kyle's Story". A dark blue footer bar contains the text "About Us".

This wireframe displays a news article titled "Vac Mission Report: Dr. Howard and Gail Tobin". The article begins with a quote from Michael Paz: "Since I began flying missions for VAC two years ago, each of the 16 missions has been special in one way or another. What a privilege it has been to give back a little to the young men and women of our armed forces who have sacrificed so much." It continues with a story about Michael Paz and William Garibaldi, mentioning their injuries and the impact of service dogs. The article concludes with a personal reflection from the author.

# Prototype Iterations

ABOUT   PASSENGER HUB   PILOT HUB   GET INVOLVED   HEROES  

**Sign In**

**Trip Request**

**Passenger Info**

**Passenger FAQ**

### About

#### Testimonials

**Read real veteran stories to see how we're changing lives every day.**

"I'm incredibly thankful for the efforts afforded to my family during this trying time. The VAC lives its values and honors those who served by giving back." - Kyle Mayo

"My husband is a double amputee, so flying can be troublesome. We are so thankful for the VAC. The pilots were incredibly kind and accommodating." - Janet Hurt

### About VAC

"The VAC coordinated flights with outstanding pilots across multiple states. Without this resource we would have been unable to access this critical care. I'm incredibly thankful for the efforts afforded to my family during this trying time. The VAC lives its values and honors those who served by giving back." - Kyle Mayo

# Prototype Iterations

The initial prototype features a top navigation bar with links: VAC, ABOUT, PASSENGER HUB, PILOT HUB, GET INVOLVED, and HEROES. Below the navigation is a large banner with the text "VETERANS AIRLIFT COMMAND" and "THEY'VE GOT HEART | THEY NEED WINGS". A white Cessna aircraft is shown flying over a sunset landscape. A "Request Trip" button is located at the bottom right of the banner. Below the banner is a row of small logos for various partners. A large white arrow points from this screen to the next one.

The final prototype is similar to the first, but includes a new "Reunited" section on the right side. This section contains text about returning home from combat and bringing family together, followed by a "Request Trip" button. A yellow circle highlights a small icon at the bottom center of the page, which is circled in orange. The overall layout remains consistent with the initial prototype.

# Final iOS Prototype

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After many iterations,  
we settled on our final  
prototype which we  
created in Adobe XD

Link to view final prototype [here](#)



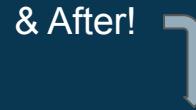
# Closing Thoughts & Future Opportunities

We loved having the opportunity to redesign the VAC website!

If we had more time, we would like to build a design for the “Pilot Hub” and make the financial donation area of the website more engaging.

This screenshot shows the original "Passenger Travel Request Form" from the Veterans Airlift Command website. The form is titled "Passenger Travel Request Form" and includes sections for "Veteran's Personal Information", "Trip Requester Contact Information", "Passenger Contact Information", and "Passenger List". It features numerous input fields for names, addresses, phone numbers, and medical information, along with dropdown menus for states and zip codes. At the bottom, there is a "Travel Needs" section with options for trip type (One Way, Round Trip), origin and destination cities, departure date, and a note about providing a flight summary. A "VAC Passenger" section at the very bottom includes links for "Accept" and "View Passenger Information".

Trip Request Form Before...



This screenshot shows the redesigned "Trip Request" form. The header includes the VAC logo and navigation links for "Home", "About", "Passenger Hub", "Pilot Hub", "Get Involved", "Heroes", and "Log In". The main form is titled "Trip Request" and has a "Veterans Information" section with fields for First Name, Last Name, Branch of Service, Phone Number, Date of Birth, Home/City, Home State, Veteran's Rank, Health Care Facility Name, and Purple Heart Recipient. Below this is a "Flight Details" section with fields for Origin City & State, Destination City & State, Departure Date, Return Date, and a "Comments" text area. At the bottom, there is a "Next" button and a "VAC Passenger" section with "Accept" and "View Passenger Information" links. The footer contains the VAC address: 5775 Mayview Boulevard, Suite 700, St. Louis Park, MN 55416, and the phone number 952-543-1911, along with links for "ABOUT", "CONTACT", "OUR HEROES", "DONATE", and "LOG IN".

Thank you!