

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

VA.gov Homepage Deep Dive

Michelle Middaugh, Senior Product Manager, Ad Hoc
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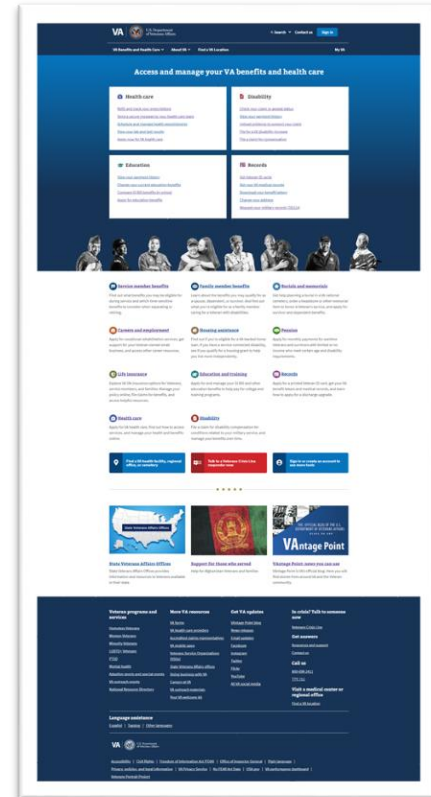
Background

Supporting VA's mission

The fulfillment of President Lincoln's promise and VA's mission: *"To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan"* by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans.

Launched in 2018, the new VA.gov homepage is focused on digital modernization goals, including

- increase the use of VA's self-service tools
- enable faster access to care and more timely delivery of services
- improve the experience our users have when interacting with the VA

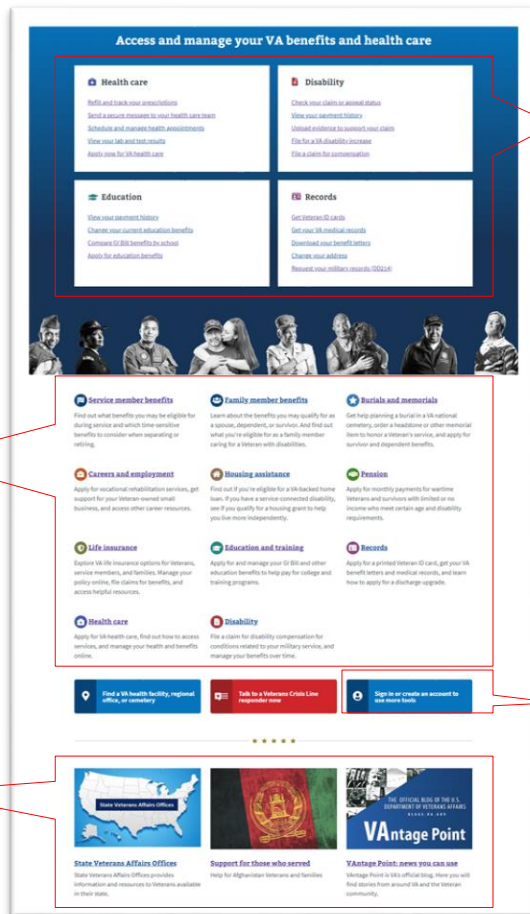


2018 Homepage goals

Help Veterans and beneficiaries....

explore VA
benefits and
services

get the latest
information



complete tasks
to manage their
benefits and
services

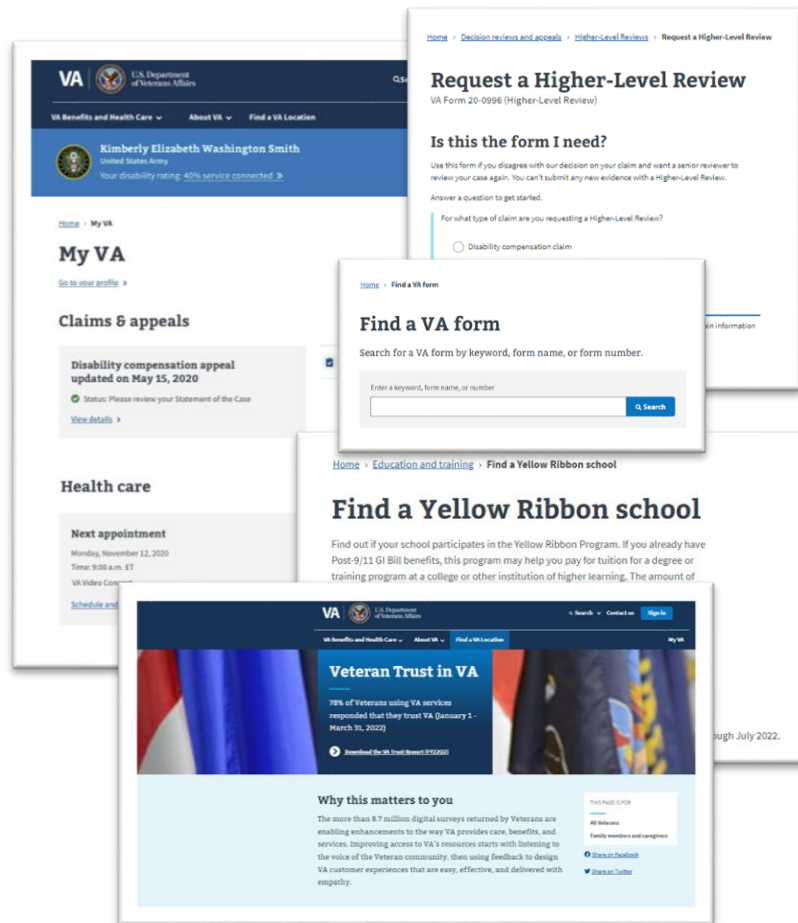
log in for access
to a
personalized,
streamlined
experience

Things have changed

The landscape of available VA benefits and programs has expanded and evolved since launch in 2018.

From *never* logging in to understanding some tasks are only possible online if they *have* logged in, Veterans have evolved too.

The VA.gov homepage should reflect the evolution of our Veterans and their landscape.



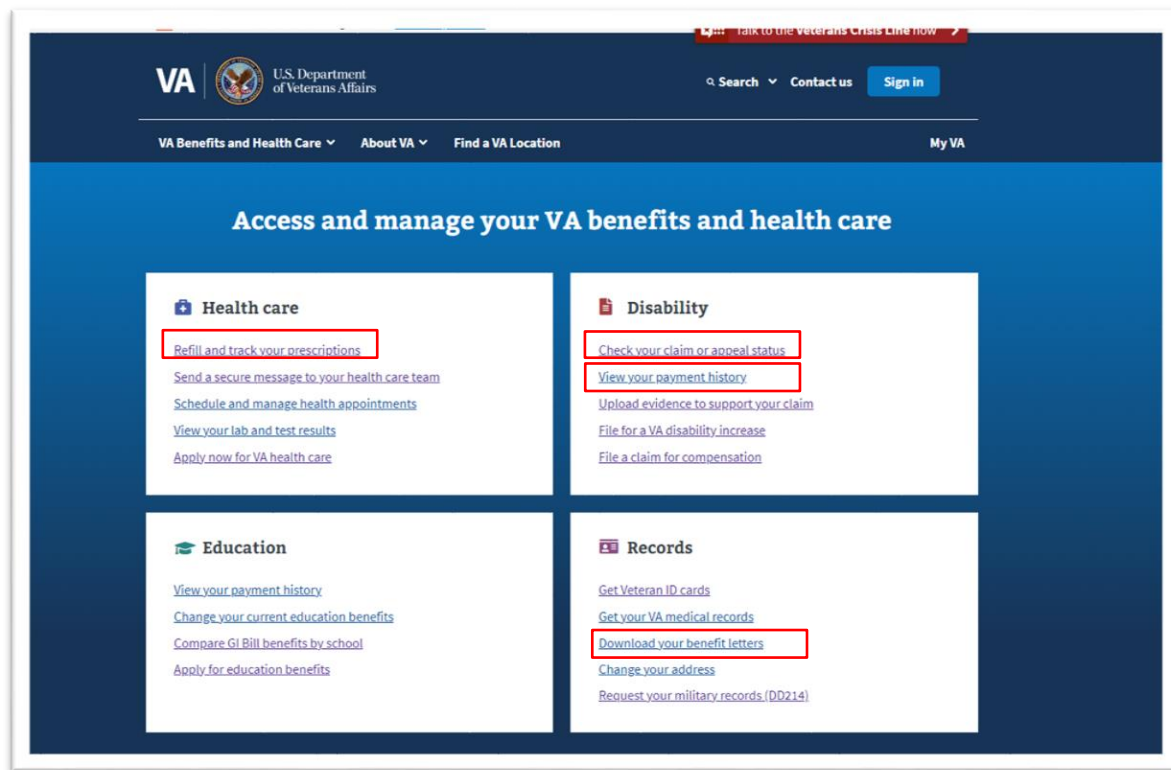
We can do better for Veterans.

High cognitive load

Veterans tend to focus on a single area of the homepage, usually the top four boxes.

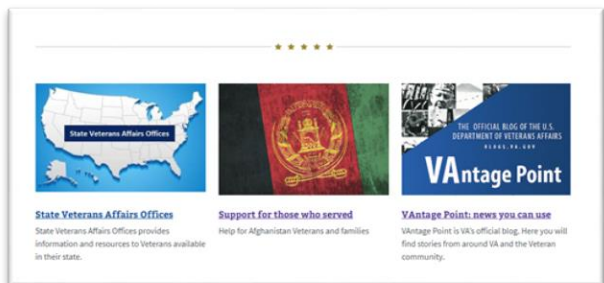
Some tasks are easier to complete than others.

A few tasks get most of the traffic.



Veterans rarely scroll the full page.

The row of Veteran portraits creates a false bottom, which negatively affects engagement with content lower on the page.



Search and sign-in

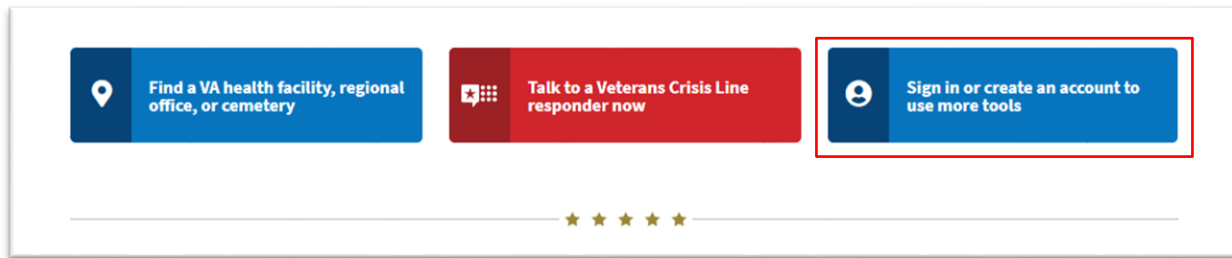
There were ~586K unique searches initiated from the homepage (Jan-Jun 2022)

- 2nd only to Find a VA form
- ~12% of total unique searches

~15% of visitors to VA.gov log in to complete a variety of tasks

Opportunities

- encourage use of the logged in experience
- improve findability of information by increasing search utilization
- look to align search behavior with Veteran expectations based on experiences with search engines

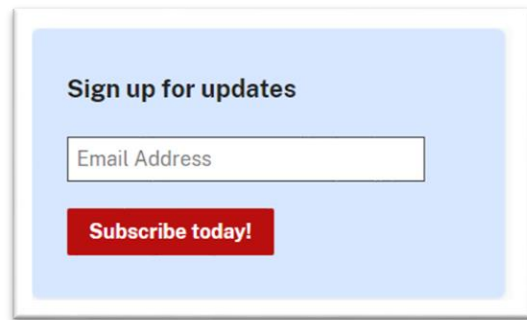


The homepage can also do better for the organization.

Business needs

The current design doesn't meet organizational and stakeholder needs, such as

- helping Veterans discover changes at the VA, including products, services or eligibility, that affect them so that they can take action
- promoting avenues that empower Veterans to receive information rather than actively seek it out
- directing non-Veteran/beneficiary audiences where to go for information and tasks appropriate to their needs (e.g., department.va.gov)



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Approach

Veteran focused research

The VA.gov homepage was created using human-centered design and feedback from Veterans.

We'll continue to use findings from Veteran research, quantitative user data, and benefit utilization.

For example, from our most recent top task research we learned

- Veterans and beneficiaries identify tasks related to health care benefits as some of their most important and frequent.
- Top tasks vary by participant age and are quite different for participants who don't use VA health care.
- Participants selected an average of 9.5 tasks as important.
- It is challenging to recruit people who don't use VA benefits.

Homepage research participants

We follow inclusive recruitment strategies and intentionally recruit research participants who represent our broad and diverse Veteran, service member, and beneficiary population, beyond basic demographics, for example

- People with a range of VA benefit experience, including those with little to no experience, and those without healthcare
- Mobile and desktop users, including those who have never used the VA.gov website before
- Participants with cognitive disabilities
- Participants who use assistive technology on a daily or near-daily basis
- Those with a range of educational experience, including those who don't have any degree or vocational training after high school
- People living in rural or remote areas

The number of participants to be recruited is influenced by a variety of factors, including the required degree of confidence, available resources, session duration, and the availability of the type of participants requested.

Explore design changes

Conduct research with a diverse group of Veterans and beneficiaries who have a range of VA benefit experience to get input on designs with the following objectives

- making it easier for Veterans to navigate the page, engage with relevant information, and complete their tasks via reorganized layout and streamlined content
- increasing use of the authenticated experience, by making the login more readily available
- intuitively empowering Veterans to find and take action on less common tasks via a more prominent search feature
- providing an avenue for Veterans to receive updates and information by making a sign-up available

Defining success

Success will be measured using key performance indicators, such as

- Increased click-through rates
- Decreased time on page before taking any action
- Increased log-in rate from the homepage
- Increased Veteran satisfaction scores
- Increased subscriptions to email updates

What to expect next

What to expect next

Updates on our efforts, including

- Our collaboration with the Web Governance Board
- Refinement of objectives and key results
- Development of a rubric to deliver meaningful Veteran-facing content
- Design iterations, informed by analytics and research findings