

WA8 Reflection

Community Impact

There is a lot of CU Boulder related info for veterans, but it is scattered across different sites and PDFs. People end up clicking around for too long or asking the same questions over and over. My goal was to give student veterans one place to start, with clear links to the stuff they actually use. I validated this by talking with classmates who are vets, scanning the university pages, and keeping a running list of what people asked for most. Benefits, certification forms, tutoring, disability services, writing help, and career services kept coming up. I turned that list into the core navigation and quick links. The idea is not to replace official pages. It is to cut the hunt time and get folks to the right place fast.

Technical Decisions

I kept the experience very simple. The home page has a small set of high value cards and a search box. Users can switch between grid and list views because some people read better in a simple list. I also added a dark mode for anyone who prefers lower brightness or has light sensitivity. The menu is straightforward and repeats on every page so you never feel lost. I avoided fancy components that add friction. The goal was fast, clear, and predictable.

Data and Privacy

No personal information is stored or sent anywhere. The site does not use analytics, cookies, or forms. The only thing saved is temporary display preferences in the browser, like whether you picked dark mode or list view. That lives in localStorage on the device and never leaves the browser. There is also a reset button to clear it. If I ever add a form, I will include a short privacy note that says exactly what is collected and why, and I will keep storage to the minimum needed.

Performance and Accessibility

I leaned on basics that work. Semantic HTML for headings and sections. A small CSS file with system fonts instead of big font downloads. Deferred JavaScript so the page can render before any scripts run. The layout is responsive by default with simple grid rules, so it works on phones without extra hacks. For accessibility, links look like links, focus states are visible, inputs have labels, and touch targets have enough padding. Color choices are simple with good contrast in both themes. I tested with Lighthouse in Chrome, did keyboard only passes to make sure focus order made sense, and used the built in accessibility panel to spot missing labels. Since the pages are light, load times are quick even on slow connections.

Challenges and Learning

The hardest part was deciding what not to build. It is tempting to add calendars, filters, and animations. Most of that would slow the site down and create maintenance work. I learned to keep the surface area small and let the content do the work. I also got more comfortable wiring up simple state with localStorage without turning it into a big state machine. Another small lesson was structuring the content into separate pages. That forced me to keep the nav

consistent and think about how people move between the home page and deeper pages without losing context.

Future Development

If I had more time, I would:

- Add a tiny events feed in JSON so updates are one edit. The Events page would render from that feed automatically.
- Expand the Resources page based on actual questions students ask. Short step by step guides for things like certification and residency would save a lot of email back and forth.
- Add a super short feedback form with a clear privacy note. One or two required fields only. Use responses to reorder links by what is most used.
- Integrate a campus calendar link and a subscribe button so people can add events to their phone calendars.

Conclusion

The site gives CU veterans one place to start and cuts the time spent chasing links. The tech choices are boring on purpose, which is good for reliability. It is accessible, fast, and easy to maintain. As content grows, the structure is ready for a small data feed and a round of user feedback to keep it aligned with what the community needs.