



US BY THE PEOPLE
FOR THE PEOPLE
WITH THE PEOPLE

Priority Life Experiences

August 2022

Navigating Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life



Agenda

Slide(s)

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. Life experience background (<i>Where We've Been</i>) | 03 - 10 |
| 2. Customer personas and journey | 11 - 12 |
| 3. Opportunities (<i>Where We're Going</i>) | 13 – 17 |
| 4. Questions | |

Approach

The Veterans Experience Office (VEO), in partnership with Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Labor (DoL), applied Human Centered Design (HCD) to identify experiential needs and desires of Transitioning Servicemembers (TSMs), Recently Separated Veterans (RSVs) and their families during Military to Civilian (M2C) transition.

Objectives:

- Better-understand the physical, mental, and emotional needs of TSMs, RSVs, and their families
- Use the experiential information gathered to recommend program and process improvements in the following areas:
 - Enhanced Healthcare Collaboration
 - Integrated Benefits and Services Delivery
 - Enhanced Transition and Post-Separation Experience
 - Modernized Shared Business Operations
 - Enhanced Interoperability and Partnership



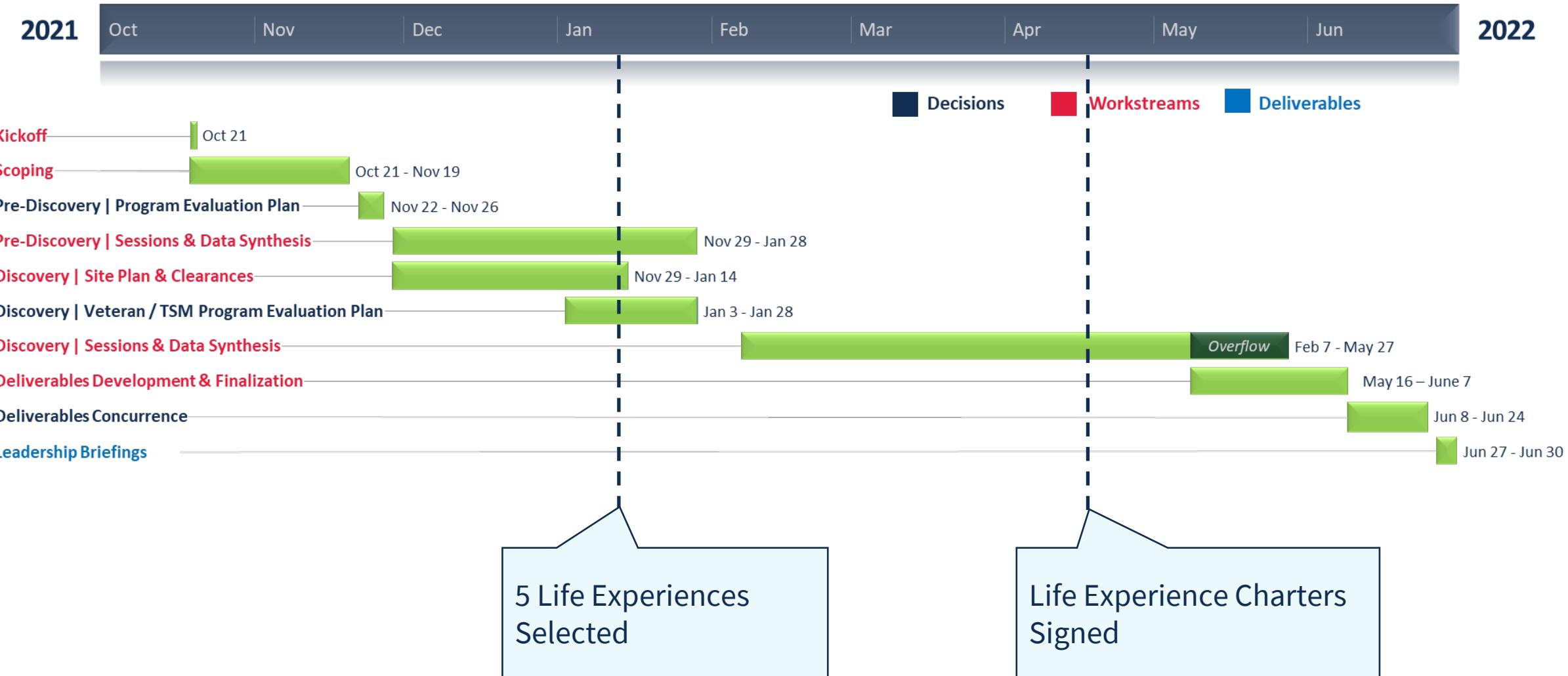
US BY THE PEOPLE
FOR THE PEOPLE
WITH THE PEOPLE

Priority Life Experiences

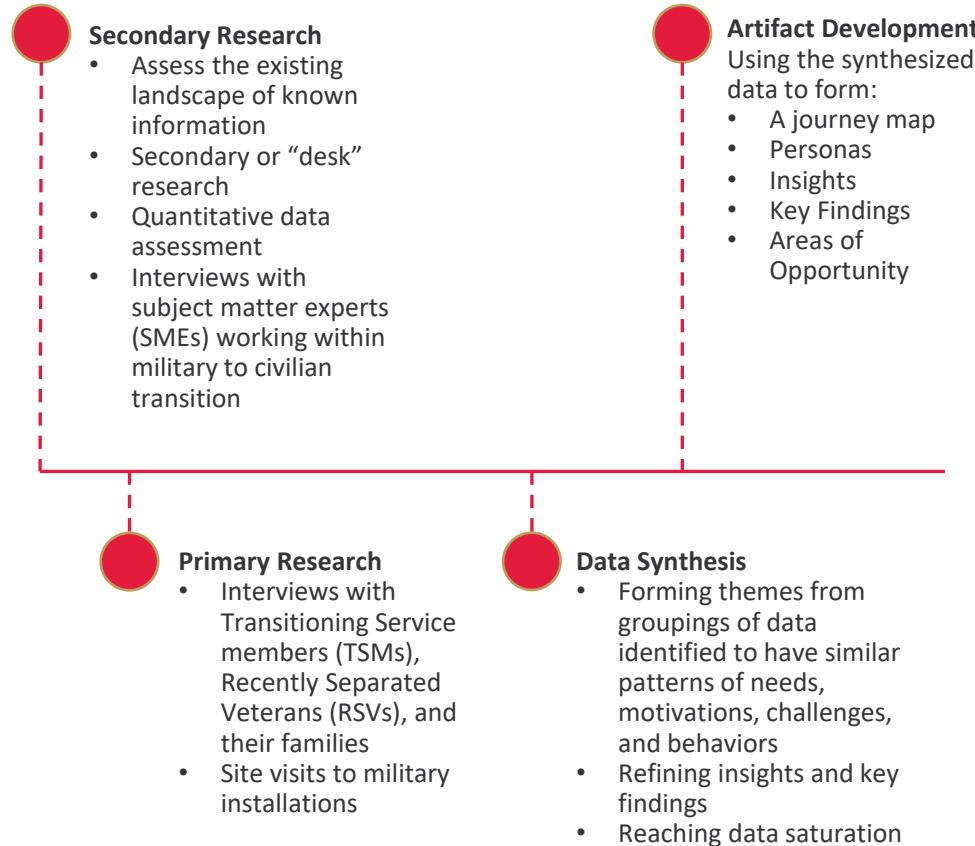
Navigating Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life

Building on a Body of Research

This cross-agency effort benefits from a foundation of years of collaborative research and workstreams within the transition space culminating with broad discovery in FY22.



Project Background



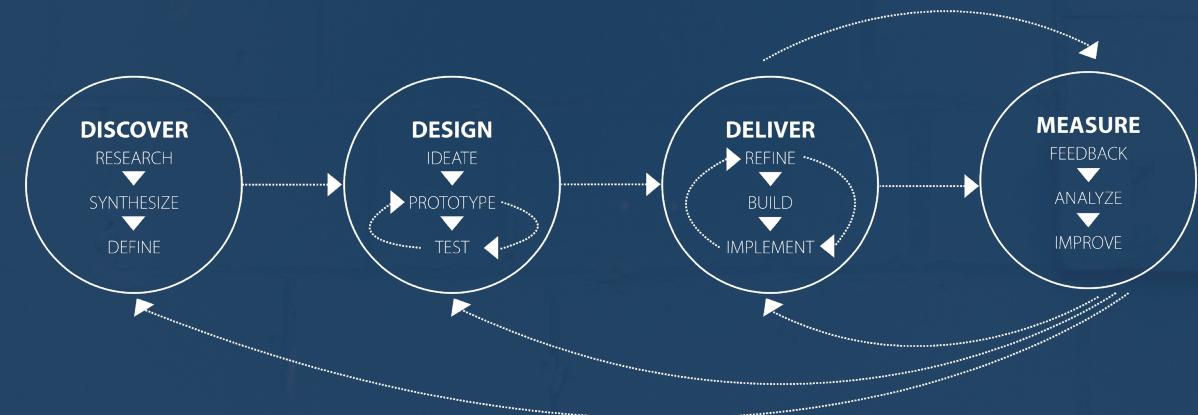
VEO Experience Design

What Is Human Centered Design?

Human Centered Design (HCD) is a problem-solving framework that helps make systems and products more responsive to the people who use them. It requires rigorous **qualitative research** directed toward the goal of deeply understanding the needs, insights, emotions and lived experiences of people. This method helps to seek solutions in a way that prioritizes customer needs over system needs.

VA uses HCD to learn from people in the Veteran ecosystem such as Veterans, their families, caregivers, survivors, VA employees, supporters and stakeholders.

HCD involves several key phases of sequential work: discovery, design, delivery and measurement. HCD is also cyclical. Once a design solution is launched, we measure its effectiveness against initial and intended aims, and then continually tweak it - thus improving the solution over time. HCD recognizes that people and their needs are dynamic and changing and so our solutions must also be dynamic and changing.



Secondary Research

1200

Data Points Collected

96

Themes

22

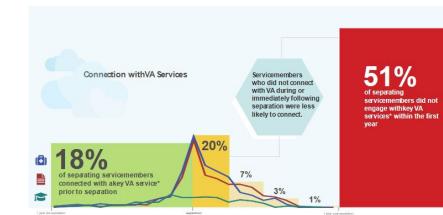
SME Interviews

05

Areas of Opportunity

A preliminary research phase was conducted to assess the landscape of known information through:

- Secondary or “desk” research
- Quantitative data assessment
- Interviews with subject matter experts (SMEs)



Secondary Research

Timing and Preparations

There is an opportunity to better-understand customer expectations and impacts on transition based on start / stop times and rejoining civilian life.

Program / Service Awareness

There is an opportunity to better-understand customer awareness and identification of resources.

Shifts in Lifestyle / Identity

There is an opportunity to better-understand impacts of rejoining civilian life on customer identity, lifestyle, and personal networks.

Success and Effectiveness

There is an opportunity to better-understand customer definition of transition success, and how current / future programs may or may not align with that definition.

Program / Service Engagement

There is an opportunity to better-understand customer perceived roles / responsibilities and utilization patterns during transition.

Primary Research

200 Total Engagements

50

Recently separated Veterans

71

Transitioning Service members

10

Family Members

69

DoD, DoL, VA and community SMEs

A primary research phase was conducted to assess to better understand the transition experience through:

- Interviews with Transitioning Service members (TSMs), Recently Separated Veterans (RSVs), and their families
- Site visits to military installations to include engagement with TSMs DoD, DoL, VA, and community SMEs

04

Research Artifacts

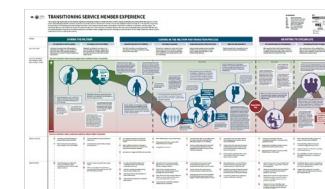
Insights



Area of Opportunity Videos

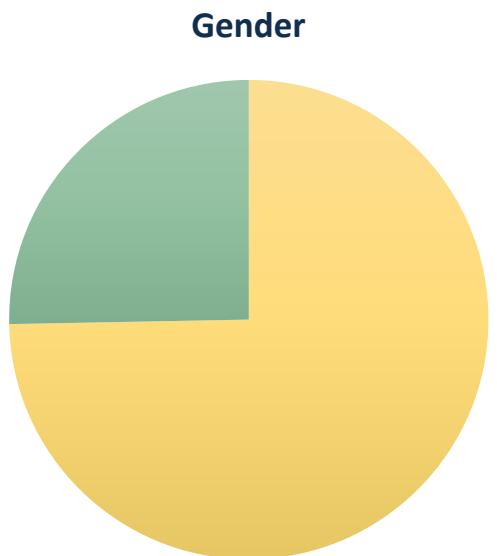


Personas

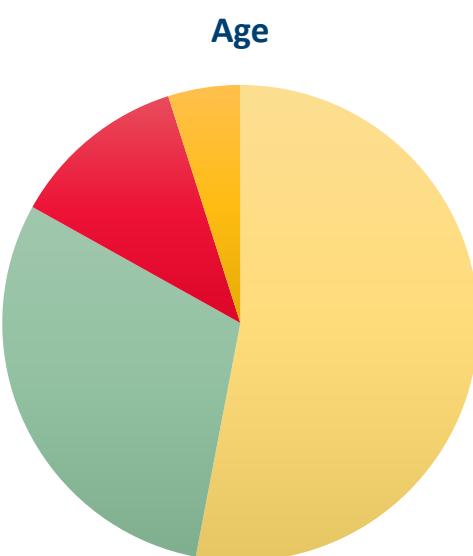


Journey Map

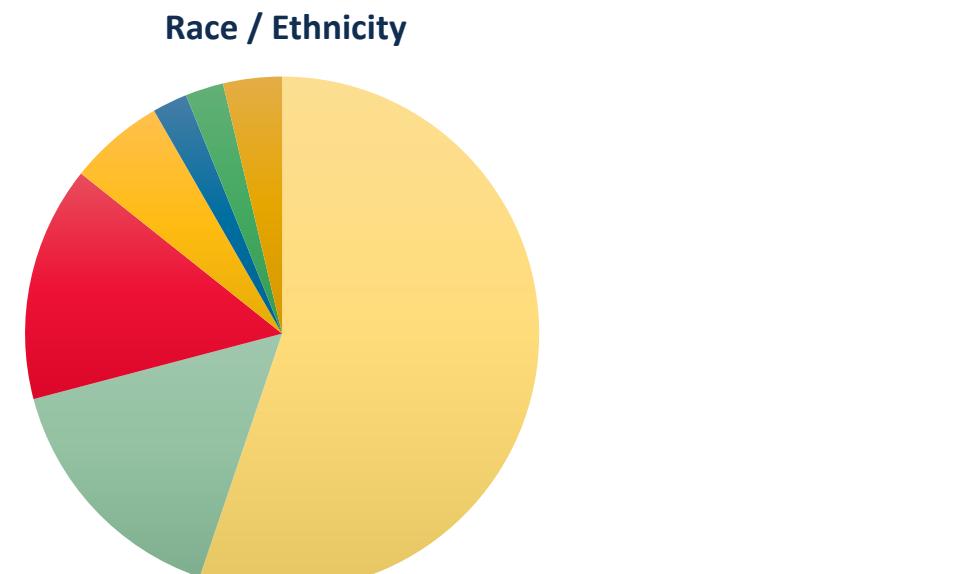
Primary Research



■ Male, 74.7% ■ Female, 25.3%



■ 18 - 34, 53% ■ 35 - 44, 30.1%
■ 45 - 54, 12% ■ 55 - 64, 4.9%



■ White / Caucasian, 55.2% ■ Black / African American, 15.7%
■ Hispanic / Latino, 14.8% ■ Asian, 6%
■ Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander, 2.4% ■ American Indian / Alaska Native, 2.2%
■ Other, 3.7%

Primary Research

Insight 1:

Lack of Standard Transition Process

As they prepare to separate, transitioning Service members navigate a lack of direction and coordination for the first time since they joined the military.

Insight 4:

Walking Off the Resource Cliff

Transitioning Service members (TSMs) find themselves walking off a resource cliff with complex and short timelines, creating a lack of awareness and foresight into how to land safely.

Insight 7:

Family Member Sacrifices

Spouses and family members may discover their own challenges in establishing a life after the military that seeks to re-engage a postponed career, education opportunity or community that was previously sacrificed in support of frequent moves and the demands of military life.

Insight 2:

Shaken Confidence in Civilian Services

Veterans quickly lose confidence when engaging with civilian services that fail to meet their standards of reliability.

Insight 5:

Show Don't Tell

TSMs are overwhelmed with information and aren't sure how to apply it to their needs, so they rely on advice from other TSMs and Veterans based on their experiences.

Insight 3:

Replacing a Lifestyle is Easier Said than Done

Veterans often casually approach reintegration into a civilian lifestyle and may not appropriately prepare for the impact of having to replace their entire community, purpose, culture, and identity.

Insight 6:

The Unseen, Variable, Necessary Support Network

Even the most prepared and supported TSMs run into unforeseen challenges when relying on the competence of those working behind the scenes.



Customer Personas

Personas are a combination of characteristics and experiences gathered through HCD research.



Lifer

I am trying to let go of the military even though it means everything to me.

Priorities: Family, Healthcare

I will know several colleagues who have gone through transition, or I may be placed in a unit to help me transition if I am going through a medical discharge.

Even if I am armed with knowledge, I still may try and work until the last minute instead of focusing on my needs as much as I should.

I need a network that can help push me in the right direction at the right time as my focus is on accomplishing what the military needs me to do and not on my transition.



Goal Oriented

I view the military as a way to reach my future goals.

Priorities: Education, Employment, Finances

My singular goal will be to maintain my post-military plan that I settled on before joining or that I figured out during my time in the military.

My transition experience and attention will be focused on fulfilling my education or career plans.

I need resources to provide me with specific information and enough time to put actionable steps into my plan.



Purpose Seeker

I am trying to find a purpose for my life after the military.

Priorities: Family, Employment

I will focus a lot of my time on finding something that will give me a similar sense of purpose to the military, which requires me to learn about as many resources as possible so I can weigh my options.

Initially, I will need to hear the experiences and advice of others who have transitioned so I can consider my options.



True Separator

I just want to get out the military.

Priorities: Employment, Finances

When I tell my peers I'm separating, I may be treated with less respect than I deserve; which will amplify my decision to leave.

I will be tired of the military and want to do something different, but I may also have some trouble figuring out what that is because I'm so focused on getting out.

I will need VA and other military-related resources to understand that I may be apprehensive to engage while I'm separating, but still may have a need for what they are able to offer me.



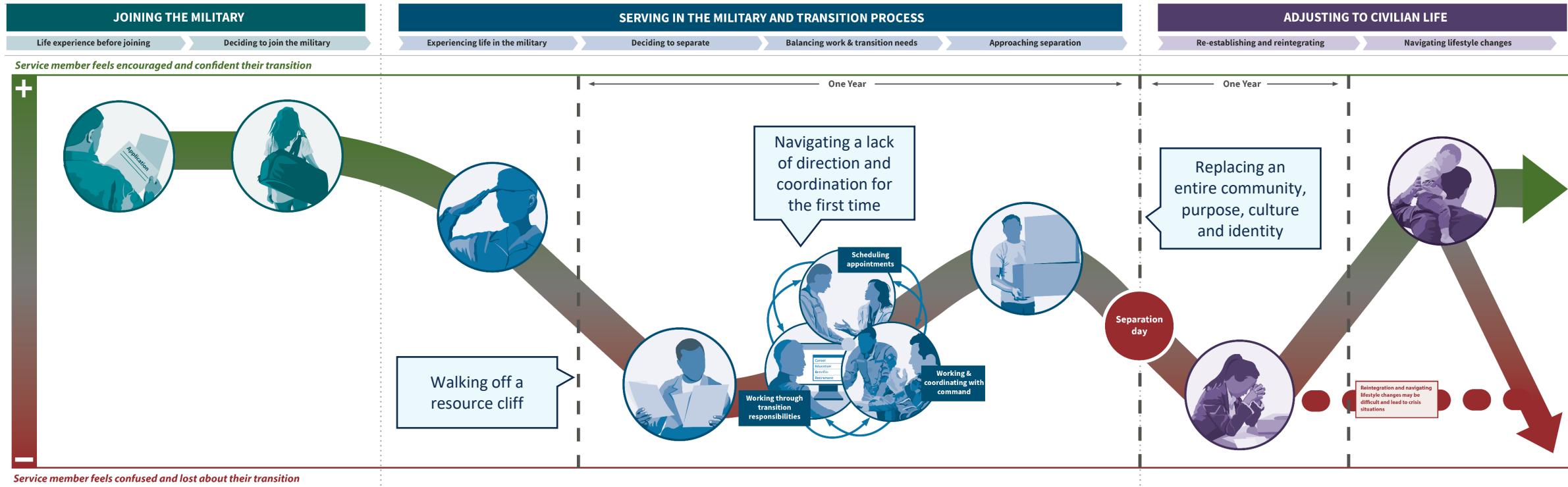
US BY THE PEOPLE
FOR THE PEOPLE
WITH THE PEOPLE

Priority Life Experiences

Navigating Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life

Journey Map

Journey maps outline the steps and individual moments when moving through a specific process, program, or experience. Often, the map outlines pain points and bright spots that the individual experiences during each step.



Areas of Opportunity

Transition Process

The current transition process lacks standardization and clarity around what's important, what needs to happen to achieve personal goals, and when; and accessing VA services can be confusing and difficult for Service members.

Life Planning

Service members often do not develop comprehensive plans for life after the military beyond meeting their most immediate and priority needs.

Education & Timing

Service members are provided with "too much information" over a compressed timeframe that often prevents understanding and actionability.

Programs & Services

Service members often struggle to navigate and become aware of the hundreds-to-thousands of resources that may be available to them, and lack protected time to engage with them.

INSIGHT 1 | Lack of Standard Transition Process

INSIGHT 2 | Shaken Confidence in Civilian Services

INSIGHT 3 | Replacing a Lifestyle is Easier Said than Done

INSIGHT 4 | Walking Off the Resource Cliff

INSIGHT 4 | Walking Off the Resource Cliff

INSIGHT 5 | Show Don't Tell

INSIGHT 6 | The Unseen, Variable, Necessary Support Network

INSIGHT 7 | Family Member Sacrifices

INSIGHT 6 | The Unseen, Variable, Necessary Support Network

INSIGHT 7 | Family Member Sacrifices



US BY THE PEOPLE
FOR THE PEOPLE
WITH THE PEOPLE

Priority Life Experiences

Navigating Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life

Voice of the Customer

A short video introduction to the areas of opportunity, including actual voices of customers.



NAVIGATING TRANSITION FROM MILITARY SERVICE TO CIVILIAN LIFE

Four areas of opportunity to improve

[Video Link](#)

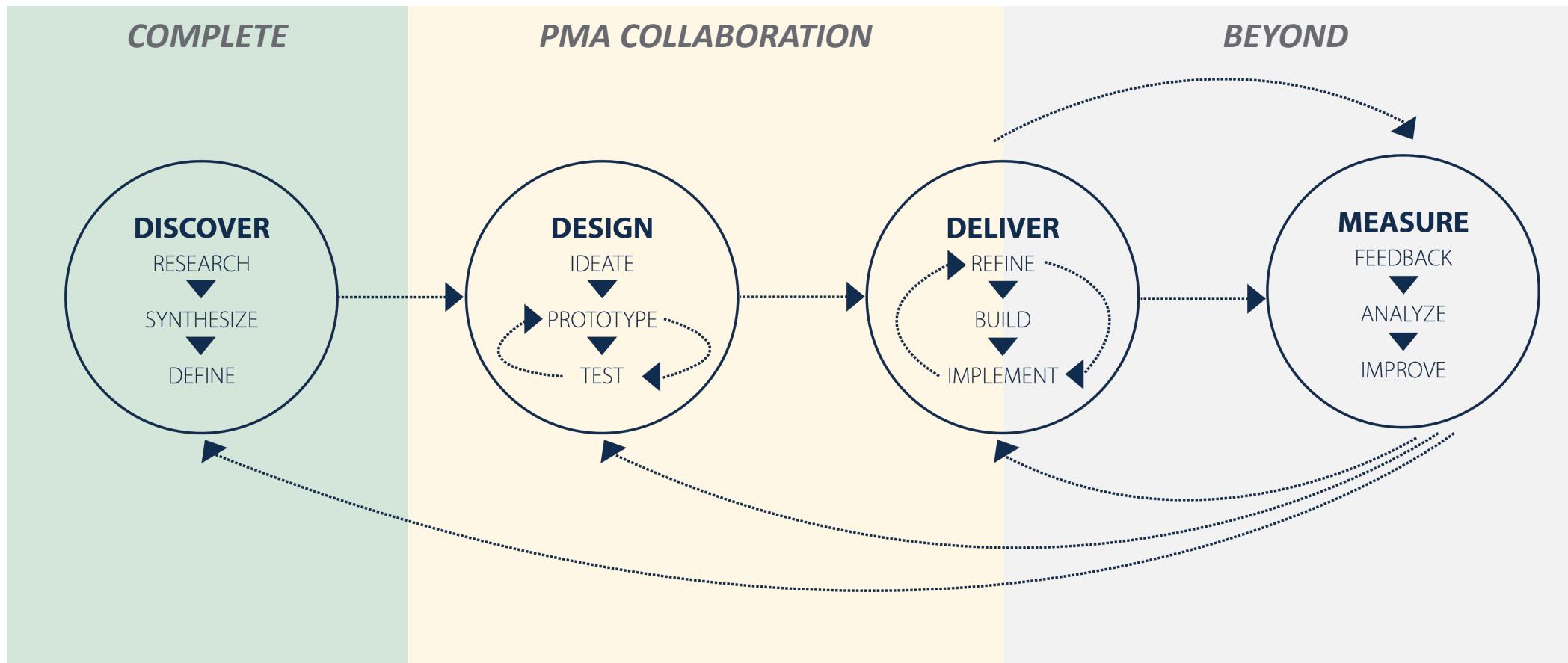


On December 13th, 2021, President Biden signed ***E.O. 14058, Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government***, which charges members of the President's Management Council (PMC) to form interagency teams, coordinated by OMB, to designate and assess cross-agency customer life experiences, work to develop measurable improvements for such customer life experiences that involve multiple agencies, develop prospective plans to rigorously test what works, and share lessons learned across the Federal Government.



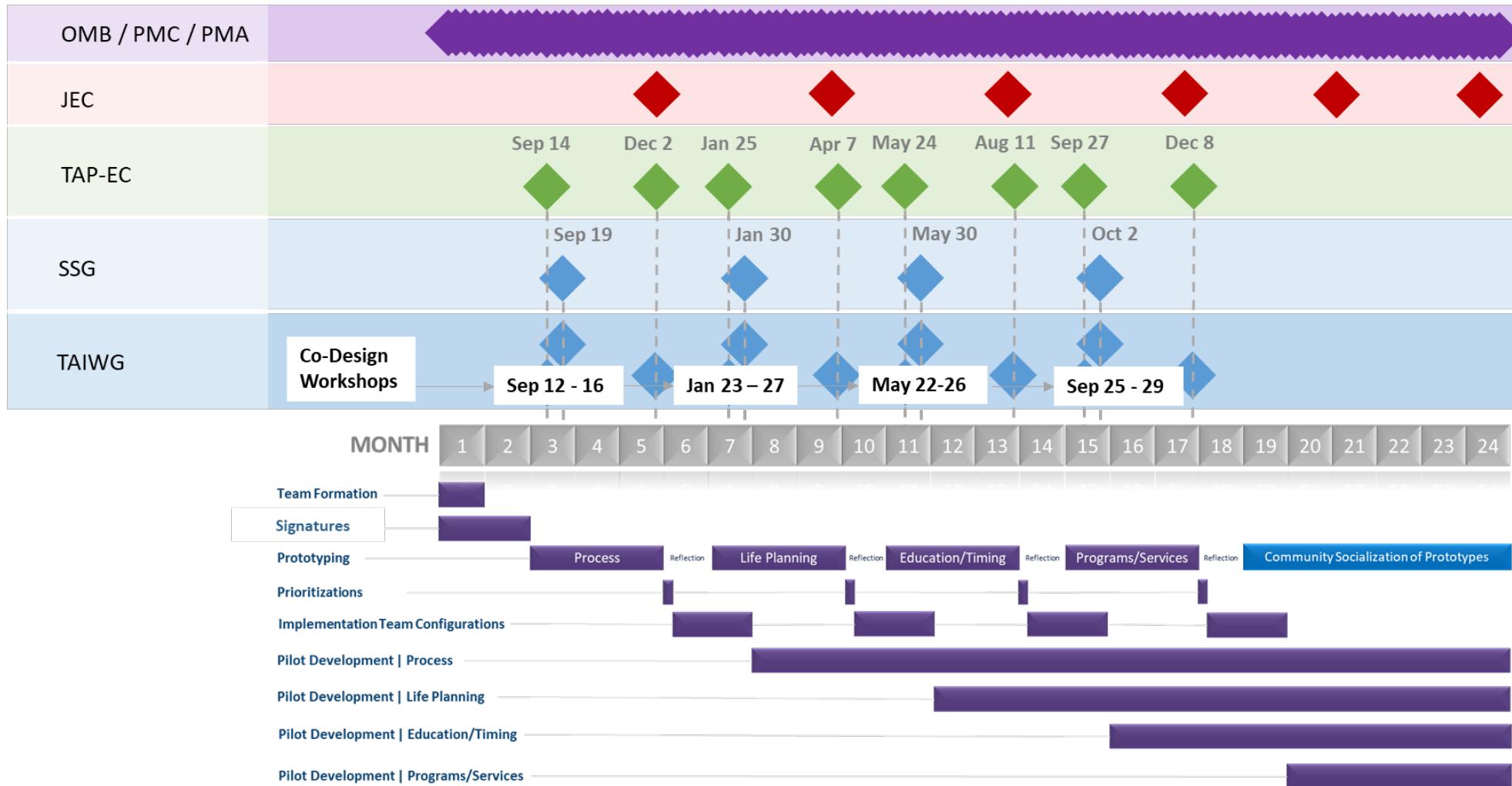
Human Centered Design (HCD)

HCD is a proven problem-solving framework that helps make systems and products more responsive to the people who use them. It requires rigorous qualitative research directed toward the goal of deeply understanding the needs, insights, emotions and lived experiences of people; and seeking solutions in a way that prioritizes customer needs over system needs through several key phases of sequential work:





Zoom-Out: PMA Timeline





US BY THE PEOPLE
FOR THE PEOPLE
WITH THE PEOPLE

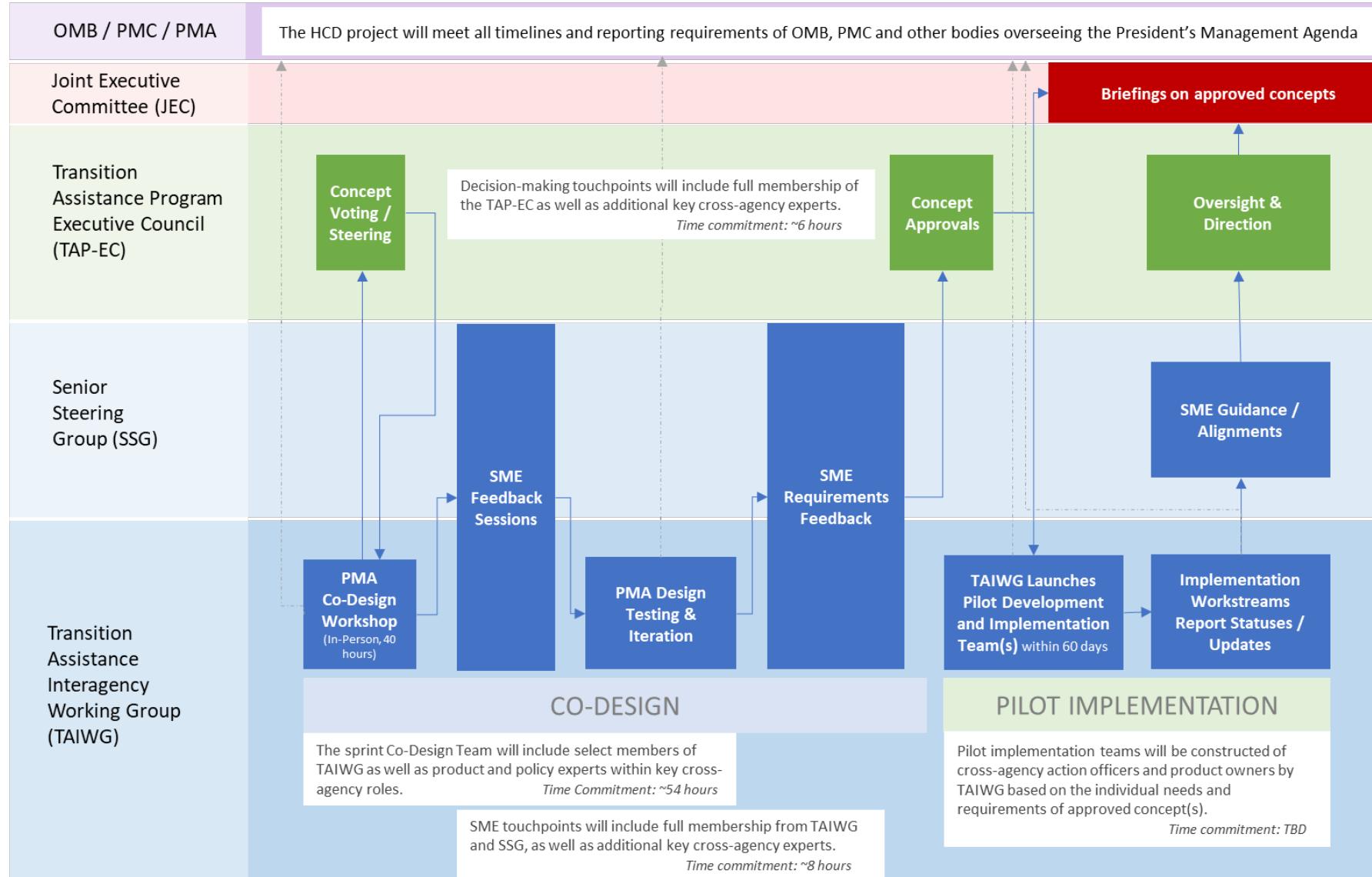
Priority Life Experiences

Navigating Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life

Appendix



Zoom-In: 13-Week Co-Design Sprint and Pilot Implementation





Votes/Voices Needed in Addition to Current Governance Structure (1 ea.)

OMB / PMC / PMA	
Joint Executive Committee (JEC)	
Transition Assistance Program Executive Council (TAP-EC)	<p><i>Decision-Making Level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>HUD Representative</i>• <i>GSA Representative</i>• <i>OMB Representative</i>• <i>VA Customer Experience Representative</i>• <i>Veterans Health Administration Representative</i>• <i>Defense Health Agency Representative</i>• <i>VA Office of Enterprise Integration Representative</i>
Senior Steering Group (SSG)	<p><i>Advisory-Level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>DoD Facilities / Space / Planning Representative</i>
Transition Assistance Interagency Working Group (TAIWG)	<p>CO-DESIGN</p> <p><i>Field-to-Advisory Level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>DoD OIT</i>• <i>VA OIT</i>• <i>VA Systems / Software Developer / Engineer</i>• <i>DoD Systems / Software Developer / Engineer</i>• <i>VA Transition Policy Expert</i>• <i>DoD Transition Policy Expert</i>• <i>VA Transition Researcher / Academic</i>• <i>DoD Transition Researcher / Academic</i>• <i>Veterans Health Administration Representative</i>• <i>Defense Health Agency Representative</i>



Opportunities

This slide elaborates on the key pain points / opportunity areas identified in HCD research, and outlines key next steps.

Opportunity & Summary	To address this customer pain point:	To see this change happen:	Measures we hope to move:	The agencies involved and how:	Immediate actions to take:	Requirements for this opportunity to succeed:	Resources needed for this opportunity:
#1 Integrated and Guided Transition There is an opportunity to reimagine the transition process to allow for more customer-centric structure, clarity and guided supports for all Service members.	Transition Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Simplified and standardized touchpoints → Key decision / event triggers → Separation preparedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → TBD <p>Some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → VA Enrollment → VA Trust → Separation Health Assessments Completed 	DoD, VA, DoL, DoE, HUD, GSA, OMB: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Co-design → Piloting & Implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Identification of key personnel to support matrixed teams (Co-design, SMEs, Systems, Advisory Board) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Signed MOUs / MOAs → Commitment of personnel and associated resources 	Co-Design Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 23 cross-agency personnel @ ~54 hours per sprint
#2 Expanded Planning Around Key Life Domains There is an opportunity to empower Service members to plan beyond their most immediate priorities, to ensure major social determinants are considered prior to separation.	Life Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Action plans for each major social determinant / life domain → Connection-to and achievement-of personalized goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → TBD <p>Some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Veteran Unemployment → Average Income Post-Separation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Launch series of 4 13-week co-design sprints, with one month of reflection between each → Stand-up pilot development and implementation teams based on selected and approved co-design solutions 		SME Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 40 cross-agency personnel @ ~8 hours per sprint
#3 Curated and Just-in-Time Information There is an opportunity to reimagine information / education delivery through a customer-centric lens of what is most important to know, how to act on that information and when.	Education and Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Customer-centric education content → Enhanced engagement with desired and needed information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → TBD <p>Some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Mode Time Between Course Date(s) and Separation Date → PSTAP 				Systems Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 15 cross-agency personnel @ ~4 hours per sprint
#4 Resource Funnels that Meet Customers Where They Are There is an opportunity to reimagine how Service members identify and connect with resources and services that best meet their transition needs.	Program and Service Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Role clarity between organizations → Ease of access to personalized resources at all levels (fed, state, local, community) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → TBD <p>Some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Veteran Suicide → Veteran Homelessness → Veteran Unemployment → Average Income Post-Separation 				Advisory Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 17 cross-agency personnel @ ~6 hours per sprint Piloting & Implementation Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → TBD



Current / Future States

This slide describes current and future state of the military-to-civilian transition experience in accordance with the signed Lifecycle Journey charter.

Collaborating Agencies: Departments of Defense, Education, Housing and Urban Development, Labor, Veterans Affairs; and General Services Administration, Office of Management and Budget

Additional Collaborators: Department of Homeland Security, Small Business Administration

Where we are now

Each year, approximately 200,000 service members leave the military and reorient their civilian lives around key domains, including: education, employment, health, finance, housing and social relationships.

Progress has been made to help empower transitioning Service members to embrace and engage these domains, but quantitative and qualitative data suggests that around half of all recently separated Veterans may not connect with available resources, benefits, services and tools for several years, and potentially only at a time when they may already be in a state of crisis.

Where we want to be

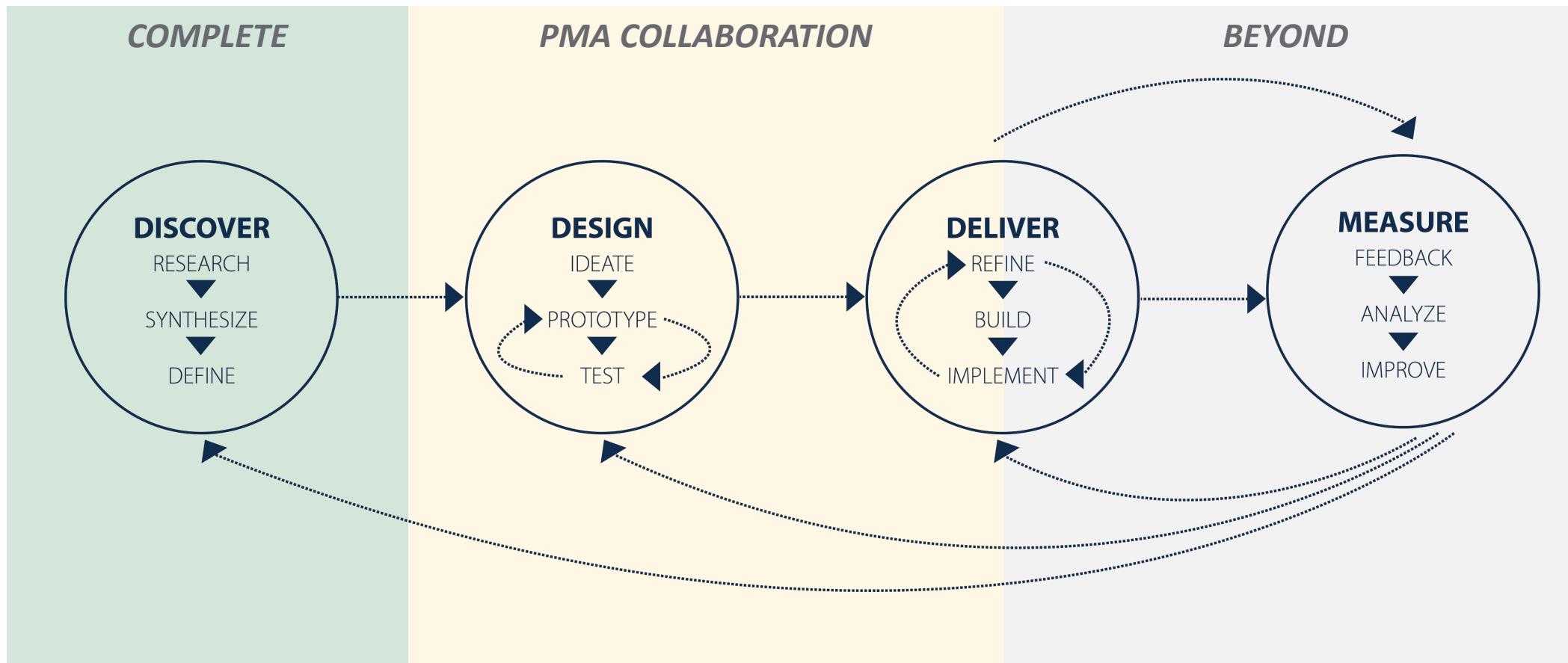
We want to create a transition experience where:

- All Service members have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in a truly-integrated transition process that supports establishing and accomplishing goals across each of their key life domains throughout their journey
- All Service members are provided the time, space and planning support to act on their transition goals
- All Veterans, Transitioning Service members and military spouses are enabled to reach their full potential in the workplace
- Increased access and enrollment in VA benefits and services to which Veterans and families are entitled
- Increased trust and satisfaction in VA, particularly in underserved communities such as younger age groups, LGBTQ+, tribal and female Veterans



Human Centered Design (HCD)

HCD is a proven problem-solving framework that helps make systems and products more responsive to the people who use them. It requires rigorous qualitative research directed toward the goal of deeply understanding the needs, insights, emotions and lived experiences of people; and seeking solutions in a way that prioritizes customer needs over system needs through several key phases of sequential work:





Project Details

This slide outlines the HCD Discovery work that the team has completed as a precursor to cross-agency Design, Piloting and Implementation.

About the project team members including agencies represented:

1. The Discovery sprint included representation from the following agencies:
 - VA
 - DoD
 - DoL

Structure of the project:

1. Human Centered Design (HCD) Discovery
 - Desk Research (prior work dating back to 2015)
 - Quantitative benefits-connection analysis and sampling plan development
 - Pre-Discovery with SMEs
 - Discovery with Transitioning Service Members, Recently-Separated Veterans and their families
 - Data synthesis and analysis
 - Artifact development
 - Co-design planning

Sampling breakdown of participants by key characteristics:

1. Interviews by participant type:
 - **50** Recently-Separated Veterans
 - **71** Transitioning Service Members
 - **10** Family Members
 - **69** DoD, DoL, VA and Community SMEs

200 total participants

2. Interviews by location

Participants came from a cross-section of the nation, including:

- CA, FL, GA, IL, KS, MO, NC, NY, OH, OR, PA, RI, TX, VA, SC

3. Interviews by age

- **53%** 18 – 34
- **30.1%** 35 – 44
- **12%** 45 – 54
- **4.9%** 55 - 64

4. Interviews by race / ethnicity

- **55.2%** White / Caucasian
- **15.7%** Black / African American
- **14.8%** Hispanic / LatinX
- **6%** Asian
- **2.4%** Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
- **2.2%** American Indian / Alaska Native
- **3.7%** Other

Interagency presentations / updates:

1. Throughout the HCD Discovery sprint, the team kept open lines of communication between all key stakeholder groups, including:
 - Weekly primary stakeholder sync
 - Monthly cross-agency partner sync

Projects referenced / built upon:

1. Federal projects/initiatives
 - Veterans Journey
 - VA Multi-Channel Communications Workshop
 - SECVA Prime Directive – CX
 - PMA CX CAP Goal 2018
 - VA.gov Redesign
 - Veterans Welcome Kit
 - VA Military-to-Civilian Transition HCD 1
 - VA Outreach Landscape Analysis
 - VA Liaison Program
 - CX CAP Goal Employment Journey
 - VA Women's Health Transition Training
 - TSM / Women Veterans Post-Separation Socio-Economic Support
 - VA M2C Ready
 - VA Intrinsic Needs and Relationship Opportunities
 - VA Member Experience
 - Women Veterans Design Concept Prototyping
2. Other government projects/initiatives
 - TAP Assessment | Public Law 116-315, 4305
 - TAP Longitudinal Study | Public Law 116-315, 4306



Customer Personas

Personas are a combination of characteristics and experiences gathered through HCD research.



Lifer

I am trying to let go of the military even though it means everything to me.

Priorities: Family, Healthcare

I will know several colleagues who have gone through transition, or I may be placed in a unit to help me transition if I am going through a medical discharge.

Even if I am armed with knowledge, I still may try and work until the last minute instead of focusing on my needs as much as I should.

I need a network that can help push me in the right direction at the right time as my focus is on accomplishing what the military needs me to do and not on my transition.



Goal Oriented

I view the military as a way to reach my future goals.

Priorities: Education, Employment, Finances

My singular goal will be to maintain my post-military plan that I settled on before joining or that I figured out during my time in the military.

My transition experience and attention will be focused on fulfilling my education or career plans.

I need resources to provide me with specific information and enough time to put actionable steps into my plan.



Purpose Seeker

I am trying to find a purpose for my life after the military.

Priorities: Family, Employment

I will focus a lot of my time on finding something that will give me a similar sense of purpose to the military, which requires me to learn about as many resources as possible so I can weigh my options.

Initially, I will need to hear the experiences and advice of others who have transitioned so I can consider my options.



True Separator

I just want to get out the military.

Priorities: Employment, Finances

When I tell my peers I'm separating, I may be treated with less respect than I deserve; which will amplify my decision to leave.

I will be tired of the military and want to do something different, but I may also have some trouble figuring out what that is because I'm so focused on getting out.

I will need VA and other military-related resources to understand that I may be apprehensive to engage while I'm separating, but still may have a need for what they are able to offer me.



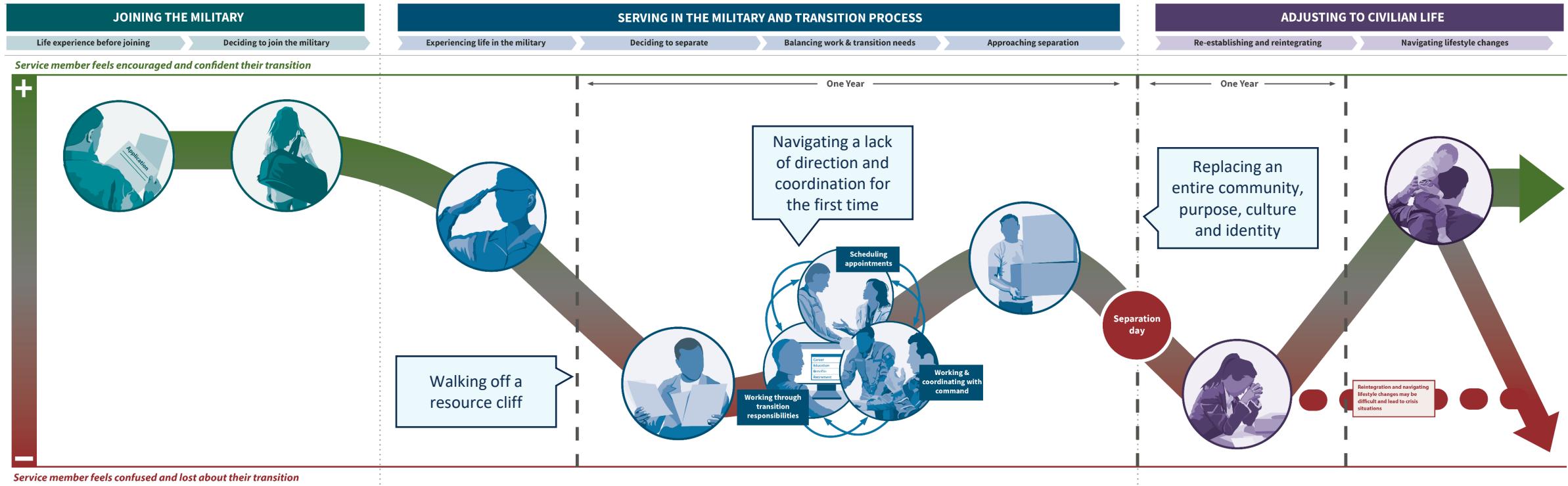
US BY THE PEOPLE
FOR THE PEOPLE
WITH THE PEOPLE

Priority Life Experiences

Navigating Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life

Journey Map

Journey maps outline the steps and individual moments when moving through a specific process, program, or experience. Often, the map outlines pain points and bright spots that the individual experiences during each step.



Transition Process	Life Planning	Education and Timing	Program and Service Connection
The current transition framework lacks standardization across its processes and clarity around what is important to the customer, how and when to achieve personal goals; and accessing VA services can be confusing and difficult for Service members.	Service members often do not develop comprehensive plans for life after the military beyond meeting their most immediate and priority needs.	Service members are provided with “too much information” over a compressed timeframe while transitioning; which often prevents understanding and actionability.	Service members often struggle to navigate and become aware of the numerous resources that are available, and lack protected time to engage with them.



Customer Insights

Alignment of 7 key insights found in research to the 4 areas of opportunity.

Transition Process

The current transition process lacks standardization and clarity around what's important, what needs to happen to achieve personal goals, and when; and accessing VA services can be confusing and difficult for Service members.

Life Planning

Service members often do not develop comprehensive plans for life after the military beyond meeting their most immediate and priority needs.

Education & Timing

Service members are provided with "too much information" over a compressed timeframe that often prevents understanding and actionability.

Programs & Services

Service members often struggle to navigate and become aware of the hundreds-to-thousands of resources that may be available to them, and lack protected time to engage with them.

INSIGHT 1 | Lack of Standard Transition Process

INSIGHT 2 | Shaken Confidence in Civilian Services

INSIGHT 3 | Replacing a Lifestyle is Easier Said than Done

INSIGHT 4 | Walking Off the Resource Cliff

INSIGHT 4 | Walking Off the Resource Cliff

INSIGHT 5 | Show Don't Tell

INSIGHT 6 | The Unseen, Variable, Necessary Support Network

INSIGHT 7 | Family Member Sacrifices

INSIGHT 6 | The Unseen, Variable, Necessary Support Network

INSIGHT 7 | Family Member Sacrifices



Building Collaborative Teams

All co-designed solutions will be vetted through multiple teams and filters at key moments throughout the process to ensure major considerations are gathered and addressed early. Collaborating partners will be asked to identify and supply the right subject matter experts and product owners for each team / line of effort



Responsible for unpacking the problem space and designing innovative solutions.

**The majority of co-design participation will be in-person during a 1-week co-design workshop.*

Effort
Moderate

Time (per sprint)
~54 Hours

Co-design Team	VA	DOD	DoE	HUD	DoL	OMB
Human Centered Design / Customer Experience Leads	3					
Implementation Team Project Managers (changing each sprint)	3					
Benefits Experts	1					
Healthcare Experts	1	1				
Policy Experts	1	1				
Product Experts Transition Assistance	1	1		1		
Product Experts Transition Assistance Career Planning					1	
Product Experts Transition Assistance Education			1			
Product Experts OIT / OCTO	1	1				
OIT / OCTO Developers / Engineers	1	1				
Transition Researcher / Programs Development	1	1				
Portfolio Advisor						1



Building Collaborative Teams

All co-designed solutions will be vetted through multiple teams and filters at key moments throughout the process to ensure major considerations are gathered and addressed early. Collaborating partners will be asked to identify and supply the right subject matter experts and product owners for each team / line of effort

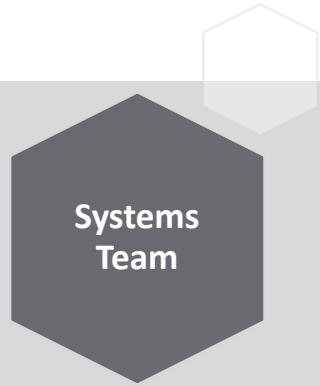
SME Team

Responsible for reviewing solutions against known stakeholders, systems, processes and considerations to provide key feedback for improvement.

Effort
Low

Time (per sprint)
~8 Hours

SME Team	VA	DoD	DoE	HUD	DoL	OMB
Innovation Designers / CX Professionals	1	1	1	1	1	1
Education / Curriculum Experts	1	1	1			
Healthcare Delivery Experts	1	1				
Healthcare Enrollment Experts	1					
Mental Health Experts	1	1				
Homelessness Experts	1	1		1		
Career Planning Experts	1	1			1	
Space / Planning Experts	1	1				
Benefits Authority	1					
VEO Representatives (MCT, T&I, VFCE, Measurement)	5					
Other (Agency Discretion)	2	2	2	2	2	2



Systems Team

Responsible for reviewing solutions against known roadmaps, solutions and considerations to mitigate duplication.

Effort
Low

Time (per sprint)
~4 Hours

Systems Team	VA	DoD	DoE	HUD	DoL	OMB
Systems Redesign Experts	1	1	1	1	1	
Modernization Experts	1	1				
Quality / Improvement Experts	1	1				
Human Factors Engineering Experts	1					
Centers for Excellence Experts	1	1				
Centers for Innovation Experts	1	1				1

Building Collaborative Teams

All co-designed solutions will be vetted through multiple teams and filters at key moments throughout the process to ensure major considerations are gathered and addressed early. Collaborating partners will be asked to identify and supply the right subject matter experts and product owners for each team / line of effort



Advisory Board

Responsible for prioritizing and approving co-designed prototype solutions for pilot development and implementation.

Effort
Low

Time (per sprint)
~6 Hours

Decision Authority / Advisory Board	VA	DoD	DoE	HUD	DoL	DHS	OMB	GSA
Veterans Experience	1							
Benefits (JEC)	1							
Healthcare	1	1						
Service Branches (1 ea.) (Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, Space Force)		5						
Coast Guard						1		
DoE			1					
HUD				1				
DoL (TAP-EC)					1			
DoD (JEC)		1						
OMB							1	
GSA								1
OEI	1							

Building Collaborative Teams

All co-designed solutions will be vetted through multiple teams and filters at key moments throughout the process to ensure major considerations are gathered and addressed early. Collaborating partners will be asked to identify and supply the right subject matter experts and product owners for each team / line of effort



Building Collaborative Teams

All co-designed solutions will be vetted through multiple teams and filters at key moments throughout the process to ensure major considerations are gathered and addressed early. Collaborating partners will be asked to identify and supply the right subject matter experts and product owners for each team / line of effort



Responsible for bringing prototypes up to pilot fidelity and launching Minimum Viable Products (MVPs).

Implementation Teams	VA	DoD	DoE	HUD	DoL	OMB
Project Manager	1					
Other	?	?	?	?	?	?



US BY THE PEOPLE
FOR THE PEOPLE
WITH THE PEOPLE

Priority Life Experiences

Navigating Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life

Appendix

HCD Discovery Findings

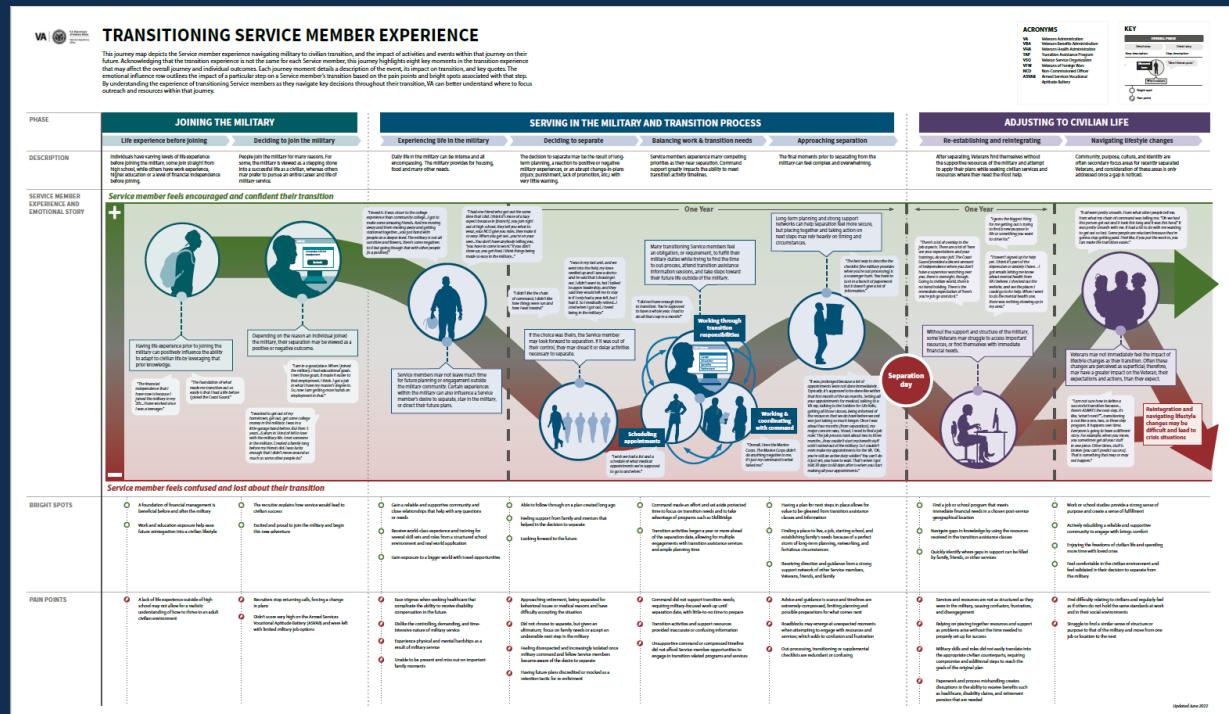
Journey Map

A journey map outlines the steps and individual moments when moving through a specific process, program, or experience. Often, the map outlines pain points and bright spots that the individual experiences during each step.

Journey maps are used as a visual tool to create understanding of how a process, program, or moment is being experienced for users in the real world.

It can also be used later in the HCD process to inform design concepts and prototypes.

This journey map portrays the moments that most impact Service member transition from joining the military through to rejoining civilian life.



Personas

Personas are a combination of characteristics and experiences gathered through HCD research.

Often, personas highlight key motivators, psychographics, considerations, and behaviors that make them unique in how they choose to navigate their experience.

Personas can be used as a tool for prototype development and design, giving insight into how certain customers may interact with future solutions to their current challenges.

These personas portray the motivations and behaviors of Service members as they navigate life prior-to, during, and after separation from the military.

The True Separator
Driving Desire: I just want to get out the military.

TRANSITION CONSIDERATION

Planning
I may have a general idea of what life out looks like for me, but I'm mostly just focused on getting out.

Support
I may lean heavily on family or friends I needed support for a starting point folio and moving on.

Access to Resources
I will seek-out as much information and guidance possible to try and piece together the next steps.

Housing
I may have housing in place and experience v Home Loans; but I may also be willing to move if opportunity takes me if I think it's for the right reason.

Family
My family will be my priority and the bridge of purpose and community.

Education
I may pursue education if I believe it will help next step I want to take for myself.

Employment
I will review multiple jobs and new roles before one. I may change my initial orientation or see opportunities in the National Guard or Reserve similar sense of purpose I had in the military.

Finances
Restablishing my finances may take some on family support to make ends meet.

Health
Health is a low priority as I attempt to plan immediate needs that will allow me to be taking action on my next steps.

The Purpose Seeker
Driving Desire: I am trying to find a purpose for my life after the military.

TRANSITION CONSIDERATION

Planning
I may create several tentative plans, but it can know which one is right so I will pursue multi goals the closer I am to separation.

Support
I may ask anyone and everyone for advice to I express myself and see if a job opportunity or help me as well.

Access to Resources
I know the resources I need, but sometimes helpful information.

Housing
Housing may be a lower priority because to be supported by my family, friends, or planning, or the GI Bill.

Family
If I have a family, this may be one of the I want to separate.

Education
I may have joined to gain access to the G my energy may go into taking the necessary attend college.

Employment
I may have joined to gain access to a job learned skill or career path may not be civilian career field or may not match transition and am trying to land a job after

Finances
Financial security is the cornerstone to a may find that I won't make as much money chasing education the GI Bill helps, but I: a job to ensure I can pay off all of my bills.

Health
I may not focus much on my health at the feel fine and other things are more important.

The Goal Oriented
Driving Desire: I view the military a way to reach my future goals.

TRANSITION CONSIDERATION

Planning
Planning was not a high priority as my focus was mainly on working or handling appointments until my last day in the military.

Support
I may not have much support or desire it. My focus will be on doing my job or going to medical appointments, which may lead me to grasp for support structures once I separate from the military.

Access to Resources
I may see transition as a "check the box" task while I'm still in the military. I know there are resources available, but I may struggle to find what I need at the last minute.

Housing
I may have a general idea where I will live next. It may be that I will move to be closer to family, or will choose to stay close to our last duty station.

Family
I had to put family second for a long time. Now that I have the availability, I will want to put a higher focus on spending time with them.

Education
I may be less interested in education as I enjoyed my military skillset and will try to continue using my skillset if I can. I may have passed any GI Bill resources on to my family.

Employment
I will try to find a job outside of the military, but my focus is on family and reacting to what's changed.

Finances
I may have high hopes of replacing and maintaining my current financial lifestyle. I may find difficulty in replacing the resources provided by the military. I will rely on my pension or disability for support.

Health
I may have health issues from a long military career or from a specific disability from the military, so I will need to spend time ensuring my health is taken care of appropriately.

The Lifer
Driving Desire: I am trying to let go of the military even though it means everything to me.

TRANSITION CONSIDERATION

Planning
I may have a general plan for what I want to do before enlisting, but it is becoming more goals the closer I am to separation.

Support
I may rely on my family and other Veterans help me when I transition, or help me get my feet once I transitioned.

Access to Resources
I know the resources I need, but sometimes helpful information.

Housing
Housing may be a lower priority because to be supported by my family, friends, or planning, or the GI Bill.

Family
My family will be my priority and the bridge of purpose and community.

Education
I may have joined to gain access to the G my energy may go into taking the necessary attend college.

Employment
I will try to find a job outside of the military, but my focus is on family and reacting to what's changed.

Finances
I may have high hopes of replacing and maintaining my current financial lifestyle. I may find difficulty in replacing the resources provided by the military. I will rely on my pension or disability for support.

Health
I may have health issues from a long military career or from a specific disability from the military, so I will need to spend time ensuring my health is taken care of appropriately.

Pre-military life: The military was always my goal. I may have family who served as well, and I joined as soon as I had the opportunity.

Military life: I will be proud of my service and will have loved my time in the military. I may be forced to leave due to retirement, or any number of reasons influencing an early separation, when I'm not ready to move on.

Transition story: I will tell several colleagues who have gone through transition, or I may be placed in a unit to help me transition if I am going through a medical discharge. Even if I am armed with knowledge, I still may try and work until the last minute instead of focusing on my needs as much as I should.

Life after transition: The key to my success will be having others who are able to push me to take care of my own needs. I may find it challenging to set myself up for success as my primary focus was not on my transition needs.

“*I haven't wrapped my head around being a retired Veteran. I don't want to walk in and say 'I'm [my rank] retired.'*

“*I was doing my job [in the military] for about two to three days before my terminal leave. I headed back CONUS, that was a big floodgate. And then, first day of classes was like, 'okay, now we're a civilian.'*

What I want during my transition:

- I need a network that can help push me in the right direction at the right time as my focus is on accomplishing what the military needs me to do and not on my transition.
- I need realistic expectations to be set about what my lifestyle will look like once I leave the military and how I can best set myself up for success.
- I need someone else to put aside time for me to focus on my transition.
- I expect the services outside of DoD to have the same reliability and structure. I will become frustrated or confused if I discover that to not be the case.

Insights

Insights form the basis of design decisions. While all Service members and Veterans may not experience every insight, each insight represents a major pattern identified through customer interviews, verified with project stakeholders, and in some cases supported by findings from previous projects or secondary research.

Insights are written in direct language as "universal truths." There are likely to be some exceptions to each insight because the Service member and Veteran population is so diverse. Quotes from interviews are provided to support and elicit empathy for each insight.

Insight 1: Lack of Standard Transition Process

As they prepare to separate, transitioning Service members navigate a lack of direction and coordination for the first time since they joined the military.

Insight 2: Shaken Confidence in Civilian Services

Veterans quickly lose confidence when engaging with civilian services that fail to meet their standards of reliability.

Insight 3: Replacing a Lifestyle is Easier Said than Done

Veterans often casually approach reintegration into a civilian lifestyle and may not appropriately prepare for the impact of having to replace their entire community, purpose, culture, and identity.

Insight 4: Walking Off the Resource Cliff

Transitioning Service members (TSMs) find themselves walking off a resource cliff with complex and short timelines, creating a lack of awareness and foresight into how to land safely.

Insight 5: Show Don't Tell

TSMs are overwhelmed with information and aren't sure how to apply it to their needs, so they rely on advice from other TSMs and Veterans based on their experiences.

Insight 6: The Unseen, Variable, Necessary Support Network

Even the most prepared and supported TSMs run into unforeseen challenges when relying on the competence of those working behind the scenes.

Insight 7: Family Member Sacrifices

Spouses and family members may discover their own challenges in establishing a life after the military that seeks to re-engage a postponed career, education opportunity or community that was previously sacrificed in support of frequent moves and the demands of military life.

As they prepare to separate, transitioning Service members navigate a lack of direction and coordination for the first time since they joined the military.

Service members are supported with clear and actionable steps, contingency plans, and direct points of contact for the majority of their time in the military.

However, one aspect of the military that lacks direction is the process of transitioning out, as they often struggle to find clear guidance and support from their chain of command.

TSMs attempt to piece-together what they may need to plan for, but the lack of a finite process and traditional military support network often results in TSMs becoming disoriented when they run into unforeseen obstacles or a lack of resource-and-service awareness. While transition checklists are sometimes provided to help ensure equipment and basic medical needs are tended to, the TSM is left to navigate the remaining necessary actions to transition steps on their own.

Future solutions must provide a clear transition process, with coordination standards and clear direction backed by sensible reasoning that focuses on the future success of the TSM.

"They say you're supposed to start this process a few years out. And a year out, you're supposed to start SFL TAP. Well, that wasn't really happening. I will throw everyone under the bus on that. No one is following that timeline. Don't have a program...like the drug and alcohol program...they say "the best thing you can do is say you have a problem" but most of the time...it's not. And it's the same with TAP. You get grief for attending those appointments."

"I feel like I had enough time I just didn't know what to do. That's the difficult part about transitioning out is that no one in the military has transitioned out so there isn't help."

Veterans quickly lose confidence when engaging with civilian services that fail to meet their standards of reliability.

TSMs have confidence in the world-class resources and training the military provides thanks to a reliable and structured environment.

However, outside of the military, Veterans are confronted with situations that shake their foundational confidence in the systems they have become reliant on over time. Civilian organizations are often not designed or structured in ways that resemble military governance and command structure, so it is common for Veterans to discover that previous military support and experience fails to translate equally to their civilian counterparts.

Even the most educated and high-ranking Veterans may find themselves confused and frustrated when navigating civilian services due to a lack of clear points of contact, access parameters, timelines, and steps they should be following while transitioning.

Future solutions must instill confidence in civilian services through increased transparency and reliability of support structures meant to assist with military-to-civilian transition.

"The concept of command, the [military] has that command and command responsibility. No matter where you're at, there is someone responsible for the quality of life you have. There is accountability for what's done or not done. From my interactions with the VA, there is no accountability or command type of climate."

"My family were very helpful when they heard that I was moving. I had heard of horror stories of the moving companies, and I wanted to move everything myself."

Veterans often casually approach reintegration into a civilian lifestyle and may not appropriately prepare for the impact of having to replace their entire community, purpose, culture, and identity.

When Service members first join the military, they begin to construct an entirely new lifestyle and adapt to a culture unlike what is often found in civilian society; complete with a purpose they believe in, an established community, clear standards, and a military-focused mindset or identity.

However, the transition process often provides minimal civilian reintegration time, opportunities, and navigation toward support services. The effects Veterans feel after replacing or adapting their lifestyle are often not immediate as they focus on navigating the resource cliff, and this delay may contribute to depression and frustration or alienation from friends, family, and co-workers.

Most Veterans are aware of the changes that take place when transitioning to the civilian world at a superficial level. However, Veterans may not understand the true, personal effects until confronting the reality of civilian workplace standards and reestablishing a reliable community of support networks. Stark cultural differences may require completely redefining and discovering purpose, world view, communication style, personal responsibilities, and routines to reach a successful cultural assimilation.

Future solutions must approach social reintegration in a genuine and dedicated way prior-to and post-separation.

"Oh, it sucks. It was the absolute worst thing in the world, trying to bundle everything together and attempt to....the best way of putting is 'start from scratch.' "

"It's still been hard to adapt now that I've been out of the military. I couldn't get along with my coworkers. I tried to talk to them the way I talk to a lot of people in the military. The stories I would tell them, they wouldn't understand, and it made me sad. I don't have anyone anymore."

Transitioning Service members (TSMs) find themselves walking off a resource cliff with complex and short timelines, creating a lack of awareness and foresight into how to land safely.

The day of separation from the military leaves most TSMs searching for resources to maintain their current military standard of living. Some are lucky enough to be provided ample time to plan, may have roles in the military that provide early exposure to civilian resources and services, or are placed in programs like SkillBridge or a dedicated transition unit.

However, even with some advantages, it is difficult to identify and align the replacement of necessary resources when faced with ambiguous civilian timelines for finding a job or securing a place to live.

A TSM's chain of command influences the success of their transition. When the needs of their job in the military outweigh the needs of their transition, they often face condensed timelines with little-to-no preparation to traverse the resource cliff.

Future solutions must provide opportunities to realistically replace military resources that are essential to maintaining a Service member's standard of living to ease reintegration post-separation.

"So that's my other challenge, Targeting this two-week window. Get ready, get ready, get ready, jump in the deep end. I've gotten all my civilian clothes ready; I don't think I can get serious because of that timing window. I have to move, get my kid to college, get my home setup. So that's my challenge to get hired. I'm not ready to hit apply yet."

"It's just romanticized. I'm going to get out and be a free person and I don't have to listen to anyone's rules. You get out and there's still rules. You're not just going to get out and make \$80k a year and do nothing. I didn't have a solid enough plan and it was brutal at first."

TSMs are overwhelmed with information and aren't sure how to apply it to their needs, so they rely on advice from other TSMs and Veterans based on their experiences.

TSMs are provided with potentially useful information during their transition, which is often communicated in overwhelming amounts from multiple sources and a point in time that may leave the TSM unable to effectively apply what they have learned. Even when attempting to identify a useful resource, the instructions or next steps may be difficult to understand or feel too ambiguous, and TSMs may try to filter out information based on personal interest or levels of relevance, resulting in a skewed understanding of next steps and what's available.

However, TSMs resourcefully latch onto a small group of individuals, most commonly other TSMs or Veterans they trust for the information they need. When attempting to share information or resources with each other, they may rely on memory and their own personal experience which can be inaccurate, irrelevant, or given at a time that is no longer applicable.

Future solutions must provide an equal, relevant, and high standard of individualized guidance from a singular or small group of resources with recommendations and clear walk-throughs that are readily available throughout the transition process.

"There's a little saying. At first, I didn't understand it because I wasn't in that situation, but it was saying:

There's a Marine that's stuck in a hole. He cries for help and his command comes and says, 'Hey Marine, you're stuck, deal with it.' Then his officer comes in and his officer says, 'Here's the resources to get out of the hole, here's a shovel,' but doesn't explain how to get out of the hole. Next a doctor comes in and the doctor's like, 'Here's some medication for your pain.' But he's still stuck in the hole, can't get out of the hole. Next a psychiatrist comes by and talks to him once a week, but that Marine is still in that hole. He gives him medicine but he's still in the hole, he's not getting out. Then comes another Marine, another Veteran comes by, jumps in that hole, and that Marine's like, 'What are you doing? Now we're both stuck.' And he's like, 'No, brother, I know how to help you get out.'

And that's kind of where I'm at in this situation, I'm still trying to take care of myself, but at the same time I still need that peer support from other Marines."

Even the most prepared and supported TSMs run into unforeseen challenges when relying on the competence of those working behind the scenes.

Family, friends, VSOs, and Veterans can be extremely important sources of emotional, financial, and cultural support during a transition. In the best of cases, TSMs and Veterans have established support groups and are self-capable, motivated, and informed when preparing for a successful transition.

However, even when a TSM is an ambitious self-starter with exceptional support networks, they may become reliant on the competence of their support network operating behind the scenes to share accurate information, connect them to appropriate resources, receive and process documents or approve what they need in a timely and informed manner.

The reliability of this unseen support network within a TSMs' transition experience fluctuates and can result in lost paperwork, delayed or disregarded requests, ambiguous timelines, incorrect information, and issues with accessing desired services. These reliability constraints may create additional obstacles to properly plan or take next steps, creating financial backlash, gaps in healthcare for medicine and treatment, and unnecessary stress.

Future solutions must relieve confusion by offering transparent timelines, updates, and informed points of contact; and include accountability for each action needed to assist TSMs and Veterans.

"We have the survivor death benefit plan. I opted out of it. Had my wife sign it and got it notarized, but when my retirement came in, they were still taking it out because they said they didn't have the paperwork. Some of my peers said they had the same thing happen to them."

"I've been trying to make a claim for months and they said I had to have DD214, that was another struggle to obtain. I was finally able to make that claim a few days ago. I asked the claims guy to email me some of the links he had on transition and VSOs and stuff. And he said he doesn't do email; he will mail it to me. I still haven't gotten that mail. It hasn't been an easy transition."

Spouses and family members may discover their own challenges in establishing a life after the military that seeks to re-engage a postponed career, education opportunity or community that was previously sacrificed in support of frequent moves and the demands of military life.

Service members often heavily-weigh future opportunities for members of their family when making decisions about their life after the military.

However, military families may be confronted with a reality that the career or education trajectory they placed on-hold to support their Service member does not directly translate to the opportunities available at their time of transition.

This mis-match or mis-alignment of job skills and up-to-date education may set family members back and/or limit prospects in their new communities; which serves as an additional source of confusion, frustration and instability to the Service member and their family during transition.

Future solutions must support family career-building and educational opportunities to provide additional points of stability for the family unit during transition.

"It's really tough for me, because I had to put my career on hold so that I can go where he goes and take care of everything while he's deployed... Now that he's getting out, I'm left wondering if everything I started is too outdated, or how I'm supposed to pick things up where I left off."

"He was deployed a lot, so I had to find [what resources and opportunities are out there] to keep myself busy."

"I didn't know that spouses could also attend the [TAP] classes. I think it would have been helpful for me to get that information as well."

Key Findings

Key findings are additional important patterns that emerged during synthesis, but either did not express a novel sentiment or did not have enough supporting data to fully form an insight.

Details

TAP Variability

The quality and usefulness of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is highly dependent on the engagement-level of the Service member, their ability to process information quickly, and in an environment conducive to their learning style.

"Make sure that they go to TAP twice and try to get into an in-person one. Because the Zoom ones, you don't get the information out of it."

COVID Impact

Some TSMs and RSVs appreciated the flexibility that accompanied remote work due to COVID. However, most believed that it interrupted, slowed down, and decreased the quality of services they relied on during transition.

"I didn't actually go to the [TAP] course itself because they had limitations of how many people could be in classes. It was hard to focus. I missed like 75-80% of the stuff. The instructor would walk away from the mic because he's talking to the rest of the class and I was just like, 'What is this man saying?'"

Non-Active Duty Experience

National Guard and Reserve TSMs and RSVs expressed concern over obtaining Veteran status to receive accompanying benefits and services, as well as the lack of information and guidance specific to those who are non-active duty.

"...but to be considered eligible, you have to have a six-month deployment or six years in the Guard before you can have that VA status, before you can use the guaranteed home loan or have that status. Most people don't understand that if they get out prior to that, they will never have that VA status."

Key Findings (continued)

Details

Complex Disability Claims

TSMs and RSVs may plan to rely on compensation from their disability claims as financial support but find the process to be complex and confusing with ambiguous, unreliable timelines.

"I put in a claim at the end of [several months ago] and it's still in review. I have no idea how long the process actually takes. Had I known I would have started it while I was in."

Higher Family Priority

The military can be demanding of a Service member, resulting in a lack of quality time with family. TSMs and RSVs expressed a strong emphasis on how they were creating plans that allowed their family to be a higher priority.

"My grandparents are starting to get up in their elder age. I don't want to miss any more time than I already did. So, family stuff is a big one for me."

Key Findings (continued)

Details

Like-Minded Communities

When seeking support or attempting to rebuild their sense of community, Veterans are likely to try and find communities with like-minded backgrounds or hobbies to connect with that aren't necessarily other Veterans.

Value of Military Experience

Veterans receive world-class skills and job training in the military, but often run into translation issues where their skills do not match their civilian counterpart, or their experience is not understood, so it becomes devalued by civilian hiring professionals.

"I haven't looked into any Veterans groups to be honest. I know when I was in [state] I played on a Veterans softball league when I was a young soldier. I think it's something I will look at over time."



US BY THE PEOPLE
FOR THE PEOPLE
WITH THE PEOPLE

Priority Life Experiences

Navigating Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life

Appendix

Artifacts



US BY THE PEOPLE
FOR THE PEOPLE
WITH THE PEOPLE

Priority Life Experiences

Navigating Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life

The Lifer

Driving Desire: I am trying to let go of the military even though it means everything to me.



TRANSITION CONSIDERATION

Consideration Level

Planning

Planning was not a high priority as my focus was mainly on working or handling appointments until my last day in the military.

Support

I may not have much support or desire it. My focus will be on doing my job or going to medical appointments, which may lead me to grasp for support structures once I separate from the military.

Access to Resources

I may see transition as a "check the box" task while I'm still in the military. I know there are resources available, but I may struggle to find what I need at the last minute.

TRANSITION PRIORITIES

Priority Level

Housing

I may have a general idea where I will live next. It may be that I will move to be closer to family, or will choose to stay close to our last duty station.

Family

I had to put family second for a long time. Now that I have the availability, I will want to put a higher focus on spending time with them.

Education

I may be less interested in education as I enjoyed my military skillset and will try to continue using my skillset if I can. I may have passed any GI Bill resources on to my family.

Employment

I will try to find a job outside of the military, but my focus is on family and reacting to what's changed.

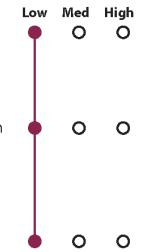
Finances

I may have high hopes of replacing and maintaining my current financial lifestyle. I may find difficulty in replacing the resources provided by the military. I will rely on my pension or disability for support.

Health

I may have health issues from a long military career or from a specific disability from the military, so I will need to spend time ensuring my health is taken care of appropriately.

Low Med High



Pre-military life: The military was always my goal. I may have family who served as well, and I joined as soon as I had the opportunity.

Military life: I will be proud of my service and will have loved my time in the military. I may be forced to leave due to retirement, or any number of reasons influencing an early separation, when I'm not ready to move on.

Transition story: I will know several colleagues who have gone through transition, or I may be placed in a unit to help me transition if I am going through a medical discharge. Even if I am armed with knowledge, I still may try and work until the last minute instead of focusing on my needs as much as I should.

Life after transition: The key to my success will be having others who are able to push me to take care of my own needs. I may find it challenging to set myself up for success as my primary focus was not on my transition needs.

"I haven't wrapped my head around being a retired Veteran. I don't want to walk in and say 'I'm [my rank] retired.'

"...I was doing my job [in the military] for about two to three days before my terminal leave. I headed back CONUS, that was a big floodgate. And then, first day of classes was like, 'okay, now we're a civilian.'

What I want during my transition:

- I need a network that can help push me in the right direction at the right time as my focus is on accomplishing what the military needs me to do and not on my transition.
- I need realistic expectations to be set about what my lifestyle will look like once I leave the military and how I can best set myself up to be successful.
- I need someone else to put aside time for me to focus on my transition.
- I expect the services outside of DoD to have the same reliability and structure. I will become frustrated or confused if I discover that to not be the case.

The Goal Oriented

Driving Desire: I view the military as a way to reach my future goals.



TRANSITION CONSIDERATION

Consideration Level

Planning

I had a general plan for what I want to accomplish since before enlisting, but it is becoming more focused on specific goals the closer I am to separation.

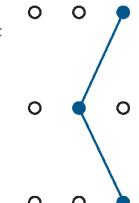
Support

I may rely on my family and other Veterans for support to help me when I transition, or help me quickly get back on my feet once I transitioned.

Access to Resources

I know the resources I need, but sometimes I do not receive helpful information.

Low Med High



TRANSITION PRIORITIES

Priority Level

Housing

Housing may be a lower priority because I feel this is likely to be supported by my family, friends, my own personal planning, or the GI Bill.

Family

If I have a family, this may be a lower priority as my main focus is to ensure our family finances are established or next steps are securely in place.

Education

I may have joined to gain access to the GI Bill, so most of my energy may go into taking the necessary steps to attend college.

Employment

I may have joined to gain access to a job skill or career. This learned skill or career path may not translate well into a civilian career field or may not be readily available when I transition and am trying to land a job after my military service.

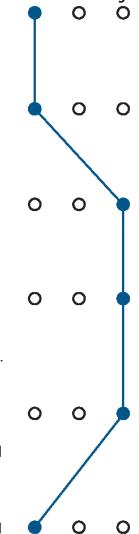
Finances

Financial security is the cornerstone to achieving my goal. I may find that I won't make as much money as I planned. If I choose education the GI Bill helps, but I still may have to find a job to ensure I can pay all of my bills.

Health

I may not focus much on my health at the moment because I feel fine and other things are more important.

Low Med High



Pre-military life: I had a specific goal I wanted to achieve when I joined the military.

Military life: I will focus on completing my initial military contract, but I may decide to stay in longer or potentially retire from the military if I enjoy the work and lifestyle.

Transition story: My singular goal will be to maintain my post-military plan that I settled on before joining or that I figured out during my time in the military. My transition experience and attention will be focused on fulfilling my education or career plans.

Life after transition: The key to my success will be landing my chosen career or effectively using the GI Bill.

I may find it challenging to set up a support group or have a social life because that is provided in the military and my friends from before the military may have become unreliable.

"I am in a good place. When I joined the military, I had educational goals. I met those goals. It made it easier to find employment, I think. I got a job in what I have my master's degree in. So, now I am getting more hands on experience."

"I knew I wanted to go into aviation because my neighbor worked with the Blackhawks. When I was 12, he let me go into the simulator and then I passed the certification. I did junior guard in middle school and JRTC in high school."

What I want during my transition:

- I need my resources to provide me with specific information and enough time to put actionable steps into my plan.
- If I choose to pursue education, I need my school to understand my experience.
- If I choose to pursue a job skill, I need time and understanding to acquire a position in the location I choose to live after separation.
- If I choose to pursue a job skill, I need to better understand how to market myself.
- If I choose to pursue a career, I need to be provided a realistic picture of my job search, timing, and value I may bring to the civilian job market.



US BY THE PEOPLE
FOR THE PEOPLE
WITH THE PEOPLE

Priority Life Experiences

Navigating Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life

The Purpose Seeker

Driving Desire: I am trying to find a purpose for my life after the military.



TRANSITION CONSIDERATION

Consideration Level

Planning

I may create several tentative plans, but it can be difficult to know which one is right, so I will pursue multiple options if I'm able.

Low Med High



Support

I will ask anyone and everyone for advice to learn about their experience and see if a job opportunity or resource might help me as well.

○ ○ ●

Access to Resources

I will seek-out as much information and guidance as is possible to try and piece together the next steps in my life.

○ ○ ●

TRANSITION PRIORITIES

Priority Level

Housing

I may have housing in place and experience with the VA Home Loan; but I may also be willing to move wherever an opportunity takes me if I think it's for the right reasons.

Low Med High



Family

My family will be my priority and the bridge to my new sense of purpose and community.

○ ○ ●

Education

I may pursue education if I believe it will help me with the next step I want to take for myself.

○ ○ ○

Employment

I will review multiple jobs and new roles before settling into one. I may change my mind to re-enlist or serve in another capacity in the National Guard or Reserves to maintain a similar sense of purpose I had in the military.

○ ○ ○

Finances

I will plan and have several concepts for how my financial situation may look once I decide which path to pursue.

○ ○ ○

Health

My health will take a backseat to my pursuit of purpose and next steps.

○ ○ ○

Pre-military life: I've always been attracted to the military and may have had other family who served as well. I may have worked a job or two as a teenager prior to entering the military.

Military life: I will have a good military career. Somewhere along the way, I will choose to separate due to developing new career interests, wanting to spend more time with my family, or planning for retirement.

Transition story: I will focus a lot of my time on finding something that will give me a similar sense of purpose to the military, which requires me to learn about as many resources as possible so I can weigh my options.

Life after transition: The key to my success will be building a new community by focusing on my family or volunteering to help other Veterans.

I may find it challenging to integrate in the civilian space if my new job and coworkers don't live up to my values or provide me with a new sense of purpose.

“
I was going to wait until August to get out and go to school. And then I applied at [company], and I didn't like it there. It felt like I was the only one working. So I decided to do full time schooling. So I have been going to school full-time.

“
I really didn't have a plan with my separation or retirement. I just knew I had an education. I knew I wanted to work, but I didn't know what type. I wanted my daughter to still see me have a purpose, basically.

What I want during my transition:

- Initially, I will need to hear the experiences and advice of others who have transitioned so I can consider my options.
- I may need to be connected with other Veterans who were a similar rank or skillsets so I feel confident in the options I have.
- I will need the time and space to organize my various plans.
- I would prefer to receive training more often so I can ensure I didn't miss anything.

The True Separator

Driving Desire: I just want to get out the military.



TRANSITION CONSIDERATION

Consideration Level

Planning

I may have a general idea of what life outside the military looks like for me, but I'm mostly just focused on getting out and moving on.

Low Med High



Support

I may lean heavily on family or friends for housing or other needed support for a starting point following separation.

○ ○ ○

Access to Resources

I will avoid military or VA resources because I'm trying to leave the culture behind me. Engaging these resources may just be a check-the-box task for me while I'm still in the military.

○ ○ ○

TRANSITION PRIORITIES

Priority Level

Housing

I will have an idea of where I can go that may include staying with family, friends, or my own apartment if I can afford it in my home state.

Low Med High



Family

If I have a family, they may be one of the key reasons for why I want to separate.

○ ○ ○

Education

Education may be an option for me as it allows me to explore new opportunities and provides quick financial support from the GI Bill.

○ ○ ○

Employment

Employment for the sake of financial support may be crucial for me as I try to establish my next steps. I may rapidly test my fit for many jobs and rely on my family's network to find initial employment opportunities outside of the military.

○ ○ ○

Finances

Reestablishing my finances may take some time, so I may rely on family support to make ends meet.

○ ○ ○

Health

Health is a low priority as I attempt to piece together the more immediate needs that will allow me to begin planning and taking action on my next steps.

○ ○ ○

Pre-military life: I may have joined before I was sure what to do with my life, or when college didn't feel right for me.

Military life: Military culture may not be a good fit for me. I may have had bad experiences with my command, my job, or the environment that heavily influenced my decision to separate.

Transition story: When I tell my peers I'm separating, I may be treated with less respect than I deserve; which will amplify my decision to leave. I will be tired of the military and want to do something different, but I may also have some trouble figuring out what that is because I'm so focused on getting out.

Life after transition: The key to my success will be setting up structures for housing and financial support while I get back on my feet.

I may struggle with what to do, who to reach out to, and which VA resources will be best to utilize because I want to disengage from anything dealing with the military for a while.

“
Well, I mean, I was at the end of my rope. I couldn't go any further.

“
When my husband was deployed and I was a first time mom I didn't hear anything from my leadership about maternity leave or checks-ins. So that was another indicator that, 'hey, I need to go.'

What I want during my transition:

- I may feel I'm treated with less respect once I inform my command and other Service members that I'm planning to separate. A lack of support can add stress, anxiety, unnecessary time constraints, and hardship on my ability to transition effectively.
- I will need VA and other military-related resources to understand that I may be apprehensive to engage while I'm separating, but still may have a need for what they are able to offer me.
- I may have a few ideas, but not a clear plan in mind for my future. I will need patience and support from those around me while I explore my next steps.



US BY THE PEOPLE
FOR THE PEOPLE
WITH THE PEOPLE

Priority Life Experiences

Navigating Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VA



US BY THE PEOPLE
FOR THE PEOPLE
WITH THE PEOPLE

Priority Life Experiences

Navigating Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life

Appendix

Co-Design Facilitation

Strategy

Acting on Insights and Opportunities

President's Management Agenda (PMA)

Executive Summary

To fulfill the intent of Executive Order 14058 (**Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government**), Deputy Secretaries from Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, Labor, Education, Housing and Urban Development, as well as General Services Administration and Office of Management and Budget, formally committed their agencies to create integrated solutions using human centered design (HCD) that will measurably improve the **Experience of Navigating Military Transition to Civilian Life**.

Since 2015, VA and its partners have engaged in a multitude of studies and collaboration initiatives within the transition lifecycle journey, culminating in HCD discovery research in FY22. With the goal of improving VA programs and services, while also highlighting broader partner collaboration opportunities, the FY22 discovery effort was designed to better-understand the entire transition experience end-to-end; and resulted in the identification of four (4) key areas of opportunity.

The President's Management Agenda (PMA) charges VA to play a leading facilitation role in co-designing solutions in each of these opportunity areas - leveraging the learnings and insights VA and its partners have developed over the past 7-years to optimize for innovation while tackling root-causes to significant pain points that may also correlate to negative downstream outcomes including Veteran homelessness and suicide.



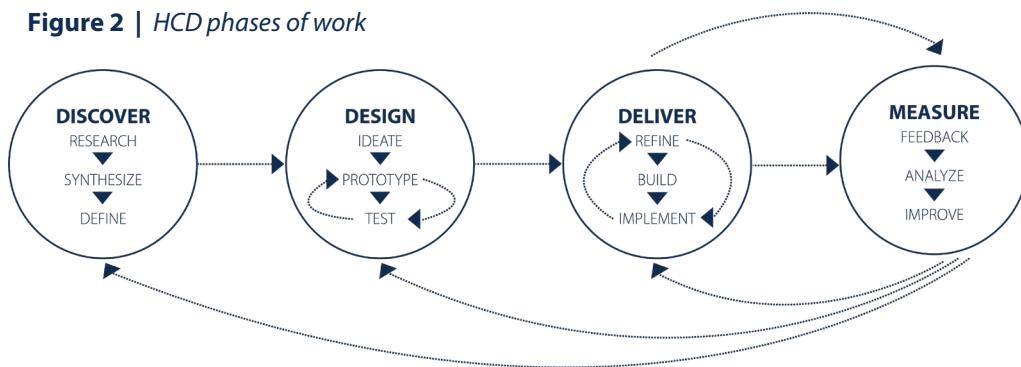
Acting on Insights and Opportunities (Continued)

VETERAN QUOTES

Applying Human Centered Design (HCD)

HCD is a proven problem-solving framework that helps make systems and products more responsive to the people who use them. It requires rigorous qualitative research directed toward the goal of deeply understanding the needs, insights, emotions and lived experiences of people; and seeking solutions in a way that prioritizes customer needs over system needs through several key phases of sequential work:

Figure 2 | HCD phases of work



You have to know where the cracks are for nothing to fall through.

It's very difficult to really understand how the world works, because you're insulated in this environment.

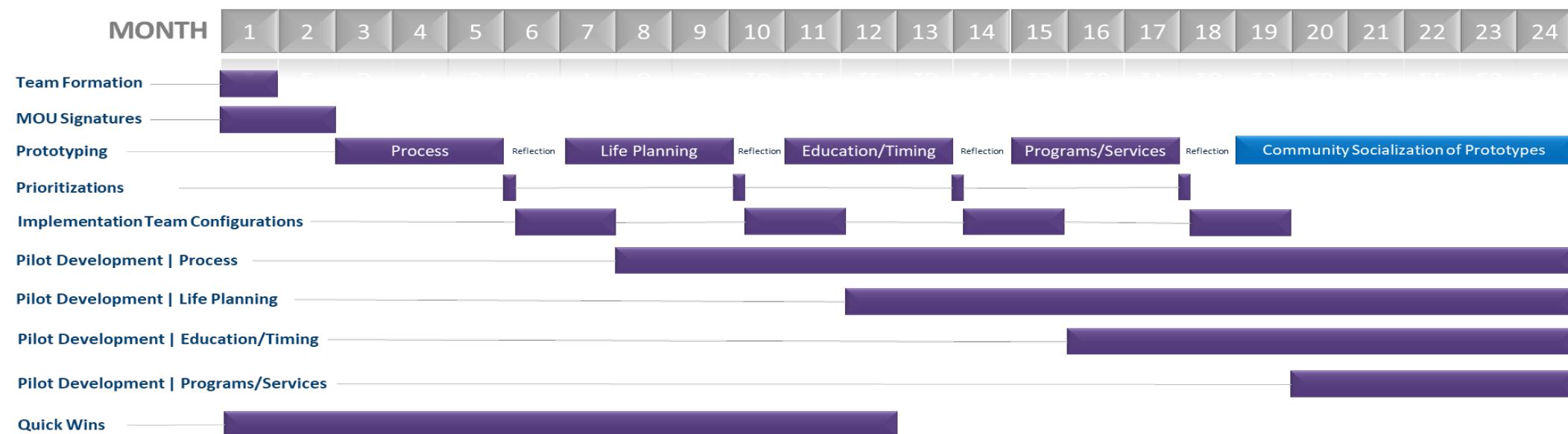
If I were to become suicidal again, I would call 911. I don't know who else I could call to get help.

Acting on Insights and Opportunities (Continued)

Facilitating Innovation

VA will provide structured facilitation throughout the PMA workstream. The timeline below demonstrates how VA aims to guide all participating partner agencies through the co-design of up to three (3) viable solutions to each key opportunity area by way of four (4) consecutive design sprints (13-weeks each) over a 20-month period. These solutions will then be prioritized for approval and moved into their own implementation workstreams for further development and piloting. This approach optimizes for collaboration, momentum and progress - while acknowledging that some solutions may take several years to fully-develop.

Figure 3 | Project timeline overview (first 24 months)



Acting on Insights and Opportunities (Continued)

Building Collaborative Teams

All co-designed solutions will be vetted through multiple teams and filters at key moments throughout the process to ensure major considerations are gathered and addressed early. Collaborating partners will be asked to identify and supply *the right* subject matter experts and product owners for each team / line of effort.

