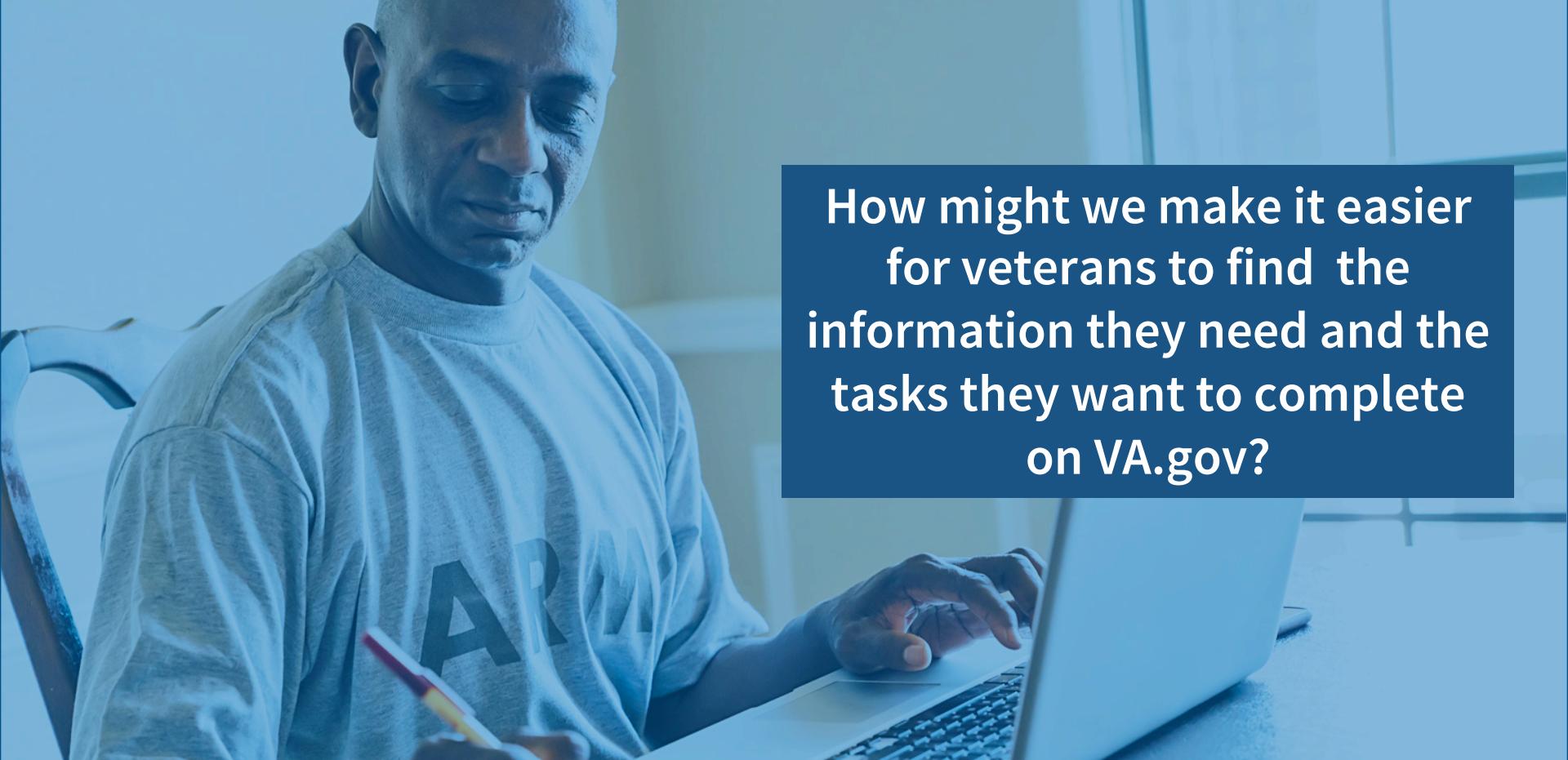




Product Overview

Search & Discovery

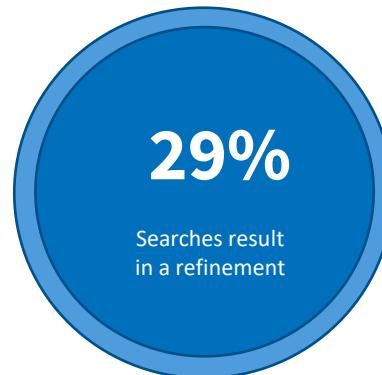
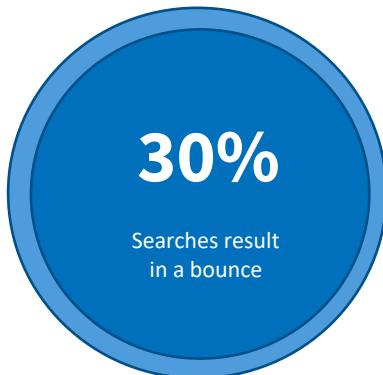
What is the Problem to be Solved?



How might we make it easier
for veterans to find the
information they need and the
tasks they want to complete
on VA.gov?

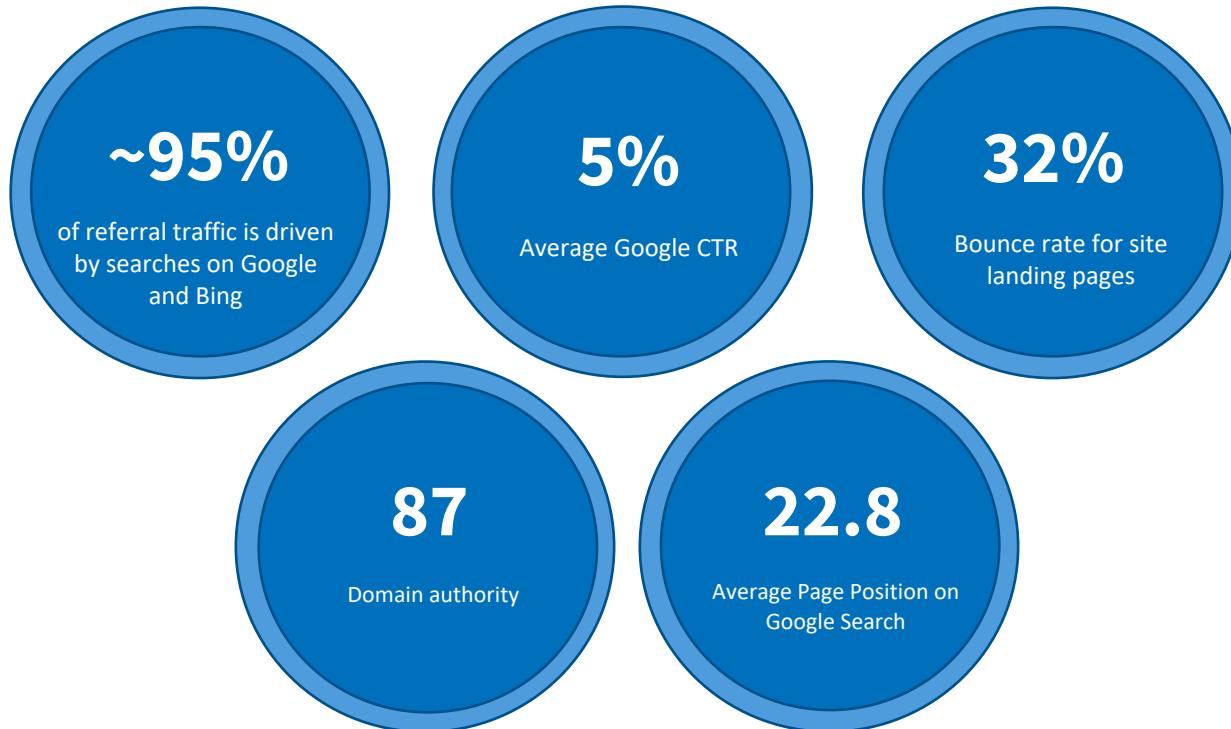
What does the data tell us?

On-Site Search



What does the data tell us?

Off-Site Search



What does the data tell us?

Search.gov – Keyword Analysis Insights

Top 10 Search Queries

- loans
- benefits
- pension
- burials
- health
- forms
- jobs
- dd214
- ebenefits
- direct deposit

Make up 25% of all searches

Top Category of Searches*

- Health (20%)
- Education (14%)
- Disability (13%)
- Benefits (13%)
- Records (11%)
- Housing (8%)
- Burials (6%)
- Pension (4%)
- Life Insurance (4%)
- Careers (4%)
- VA Employee (3%)

*Add Loans, others?

Top Forms Searched:

- Form 21-4138 (32%)
- Form 21-526ez (28%)
- Form 21-0538 (8%)
- Form 20-0995 (16%)
- Form 21-686c (16%)

Notable Search Trend:
Between May and November 2020:
Search Query “Urgent Care”
Jumped from #38 to #11 on top
query list. Potentially highlighting
pandemic and need for more
medical care.

What has been our initial focus?

Data Sourcing & Insights

- ✓ Set-up Google & Bing Search Console
- ✓ Audit Search.gov search terms data
- ❑ Implement Search.gov click-tracking
- ❑ Identify, answer and synthesize top questions
- ❑ Create Domo dashboard for Search
- ❑ Veteran User Research Plan

Initial Bets & Tactics

Q2-Q4/2020

On-Site Search

- ❑ Type Ahead POC
- ❑ Click Tracking

Off-Site Search

- ✓ Rich Results – FAQs
- ✓ COVID-19 Test Sites for VAMCs
- ✓ Local Listings Strategy

Initial Bets and Tactics

Type Ahead POC

User Story:

As a veteran, I need a faster, easier way to search for information on VA.gov so I can save time and avoid wading through lots of content.

Hypothesis:

If we leverage the type-ahead feature from Search.gov in on-site search then we can expect VA.gov site users to find what they need faster, saving time and reducing cognitive load.

Situation:

Search.gov released Type-Ahead as an API enabled feature in late Q2 2020, but our audit revealed the suggestions are not as "relevant/valuable" as expected an issue which has been confirmed and is under investigation.

Strategy:

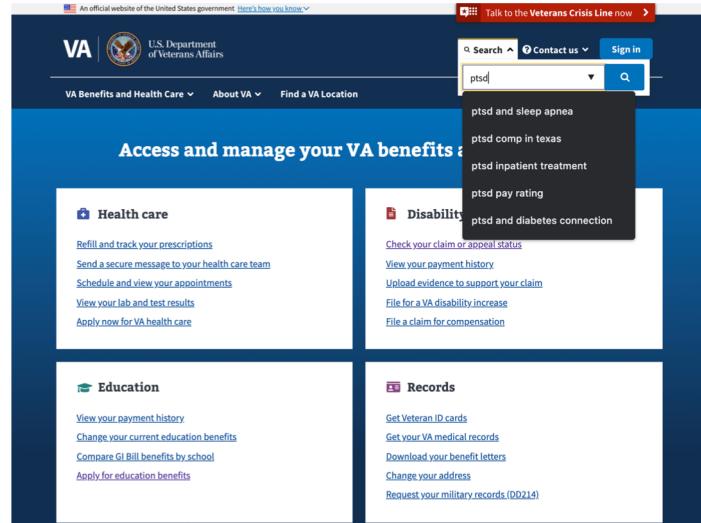
Launch a four week Proof of Concept “as is” to ~5% of the VA.gov user base, capturing key data to measure impact to search effectiveness.

POC Product Outline:

<https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/issues/8896>

Analytics:

<https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/issues/13494>



Initial Bets and Tactics

Rich Results (FAQs)

Hypothesis:

If we use structured metadata mark-up, we can create “rich results” Google/Search engine listings which will result in improved search rankings and click through rate.

Situation:

Google has introduced an array of new tools (e.g. [rich results testing tool](#), [structured data gallery](#) and the ability to track performance in search console), which VA.gov may be able to leverage to improve off-site search performance.

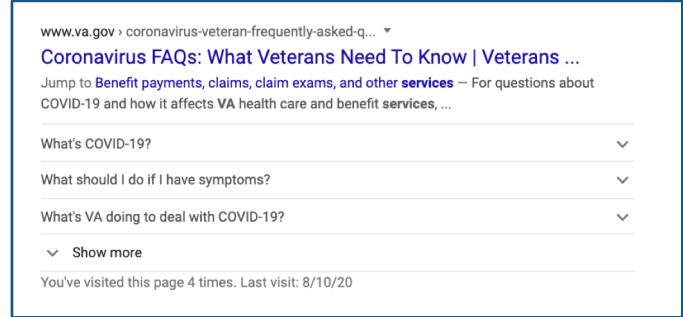
Strategy:

Create a COVID-19 FAQ rich results markup to validate that the tools work and to determine if organic search performance (as measured by impressions and click through rate) is improved.

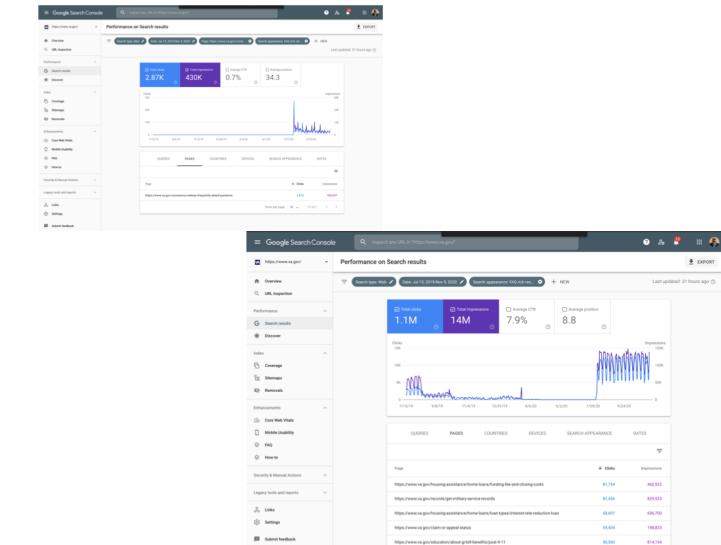
Finding:

COVID-19 FAQ is not yet appearing for COVID/Coronavirus related queries, muting its performance CTR (0.7%). However, the overall performance for VA.gov FAQs is 7.9% compared to 5% for all terms.

Product Epic: <https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/issues/10772>



The screenshot shows a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) on the VA.gov website. Each question is displayed as a card with a blue header and a white body, containing text and a small blue arrow icon. The URL in the address bar is www.va.gov > coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-q... . The title of the page is "Coronavirus FAQs: What Veterans Need To Know | Veterans ...". Below the title, there is a brief description: "Jump to Benefit payments, claims, claim exams, and other services — For questions about COVID-19 and how it affects VA health care and benefit services, ..." A footer at the bottom of the page indicates: "What's COVID-19?", "What should I do if I have symptoms?", "What's VA doing to deal with COVID-19?", and a "Show more" link. At the very bottom, it says "You've visited this page 4 times. Last visit: 8/10/20".



Initial Bets and Tactics

Local Listings Strategy

Situation:

Google and Bing have evolved how they handle local listings (e.g. structured data, Google My Business). But the VA – which has the largest integrated health network in the nation with more than 1,200 local medical centers and clinics – does not have a modern, nor unified local listings strategy.

The result: mis-matches in vital information, confusing facility names, lack of detail about services, etc.

Tactic:

Conducted research and analysis to determine the state of VAMC local listings and outlined options for modernizing and unifying VA's approach – e.g. structured data + Google My Listings vs. Local Listings Service.

Result:

Shared findings with VACM Product Owner Dave Conlon and DEPO product leadership leading to decision: Local Facilities/VAMC product team will take on this initiative in 2021 as part of their wide rollout of new VAMC sites. (Note: Our team may serve an advisory role.)

Strategy Deck: https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/blob/master/products/public-websites/offsite-search/VA.gov_Search_Local_Listings_Options%202.pdf

Across the Local Listings universe (Google, FB, Yelp, Yahoo, MapQuest, etc.)

- 75% have name mismatches
- 50% have phone number mismatches
- 9% have address mismatches
- 100% locations are missing reviews

Source: Yext Knowledge Scan (August 2020)
<https://www.yext.com/knowledge/longwave/VAClinicreview>

What makes a “good” Google search result?

IHA Howell Primary Care

Photo Gallery

Specific Category

Covid Info & Online Care Links

Facility Description (with search optimized keywords)

Appointment Booking URL

Ahmad Mizyed, MD

Cardiologist in Superior Township, Michigan

Address: 5225 Old St Second Floor, Ypsilanti, MI 48197
Hours Open: Closed 8PM+
Phone: (734) 712-8000
Appointments: [InPerson.com](#)
Suggest an edit: Open in business?
Questions & answers: Be the first to ask a question
Ask a question

From Ahmad Mizyed, MD
Dr. Mizyed is a member of the American College of Cardiology and has specific interests in advanced heart failure and transplant cardiology. He is a member of the Michigan Heart Association and the American Heart Association. Dr. Mizyed also enjoys playing basketball and spending time with his children. Dr. Mizyed also speaks Arabic.

Structured Data

Structured Data

Google My Business

Local Listings Service

Pros:

- We control, relatively easy to implement

Cons:

- Google, Bing specific
- DEPO has to manage listings data

Google My Business Pros:

- Stand out on Google with a free Business Profile

Google My Business Cons:

- Manual Bulk verification: <https://support.google.com/business/answer/1445790?hl=en>
- API: <https://developers.google.com/business/api>

Local Listings Service Pros:

- Covers entire search space (FB, Alexa, etc.) with direct integrations
- Real Time updates; duplicate
- Performance dashboard

Local Listings Service Cons:

- Cost: est. ~\$250K per year annual(\$200 per location/entity)
- Data implementation required

Pre-Decisional / For Internal Discussion Only

Custom Search and “Look Up” Utilities

The VA.gov site features custom search and “look up” tools and experiences which are not powered by Search.gov. These include:

- Resources & Support (Public Websites)
- Find a Form (Decision Tools)
- Yellow Ribbon Program Schools (Decision Tools)
- GI Bill Comparison Tool (BAH)

More details about how these search utilities work (database, Drupal, etc.) will be provided by Nick Sullivan on Wednesday.

The image displays four screenshots of the VA.gov website, illustrating various search and utility features:

- Screenshot 1: VA Benefits and Health Care - Coronavirus**
Shows a search bar and a "Find a VA form" section. The "Find a VA form" section includes a search input field, a dropdown for "Form type", and a "Search" button. Below it, there's a "Frequently used VA forms" section with links to "File a VA disability claim", "Apply for VA GI Bill benefits", and "Apply for VA health care".
- Screenshot 2: VA Benefits and Health Care - Education and Training**
Shows a search bar and a "Find a VA Location" section. The "Find a VA Location" section includes a search input field, a dropdown for "School name", and a "Search" button. Below it, there's a "Yellow Ribbon school search results" section with a table showing information for New York University, including funding amounts and degree levels.
- Screenshot 3: VA Benefits and Health Care - Resources and Support**
Shows a search bar and a "Search results" section. The "Search results" section includes a search input field, a dropdown for "Resources and support", and a "Search" button. Below it, there's a "GI Bill® Comparison Tool" section with a form for entering military details and a "Search" button.
- Screenshot 4: VA Benefits and Health Care - GI Bill® Comparison Tool**
Shows a search bar and a "GI Bill® Comparison Tool" section. The "GI Bill® Comparison Tool" section includes a form for entering military details, a dropdown for "What's your plan?", and a "Search" button. Below it, there's a "GI Bill® Comparison Tool" section with a form for entering military details and a "Search" button.

The Road Ahead at a Glance

	Q4 2020	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Themes	Problem Framing	User Research	Features		
On-Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Implement Click-through Analytics▪ Launch Type Ahead POC▪ Finalize User Research Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete User Research Plan• Set Up Domo Dashboard• Update Best Bets• Launch Type-Ahead 1.0 (with Whitelist?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TBD
Off-Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Complete workflow for Castlight/Google COVID-19 test site updates and hand-over to VHA DigCom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set Up Domo Dashboard• Evolve Site Map XML• Evaluate Site SEO Optimization			