



VA Mobile App

Status Update

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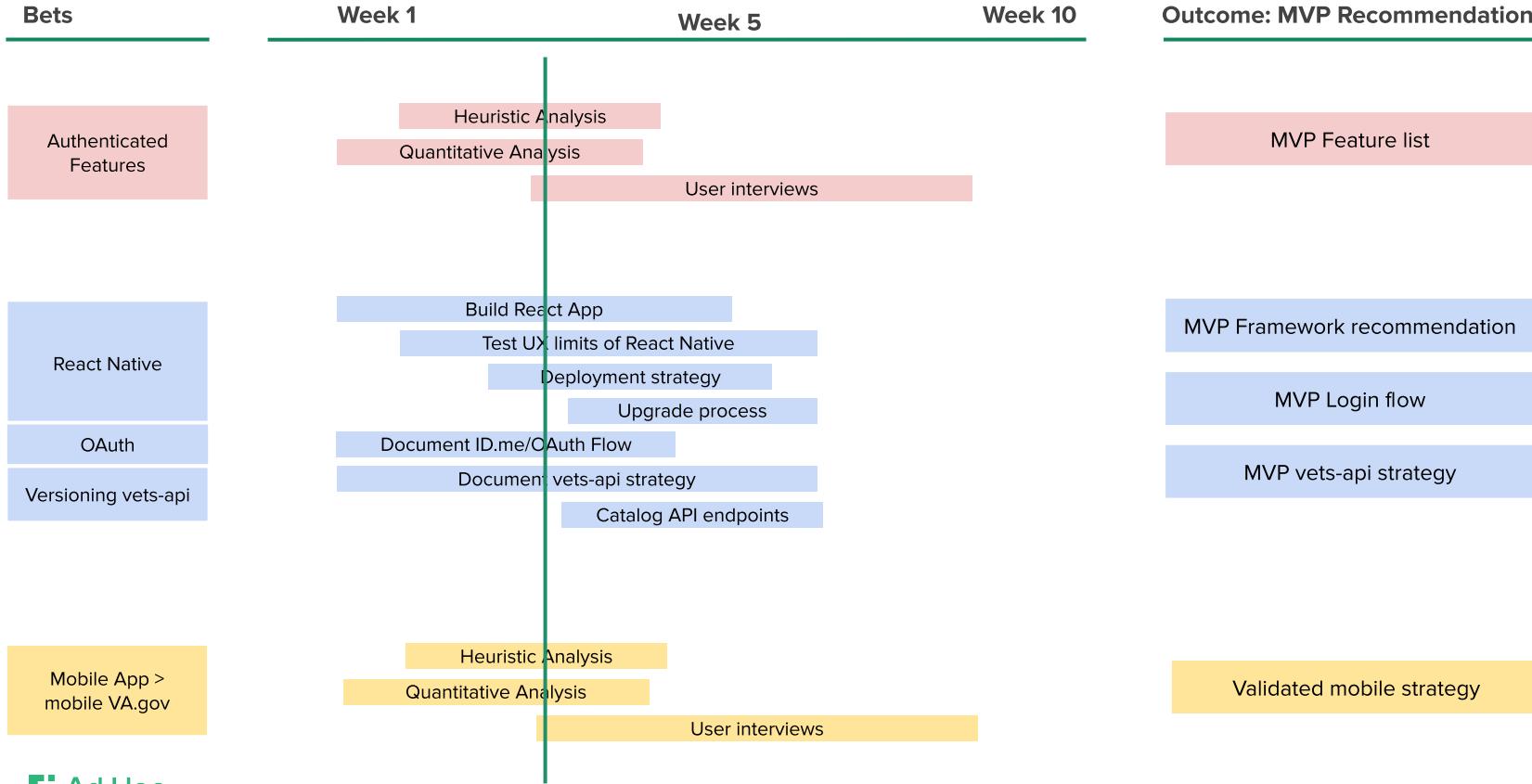
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Integrated Roadmap

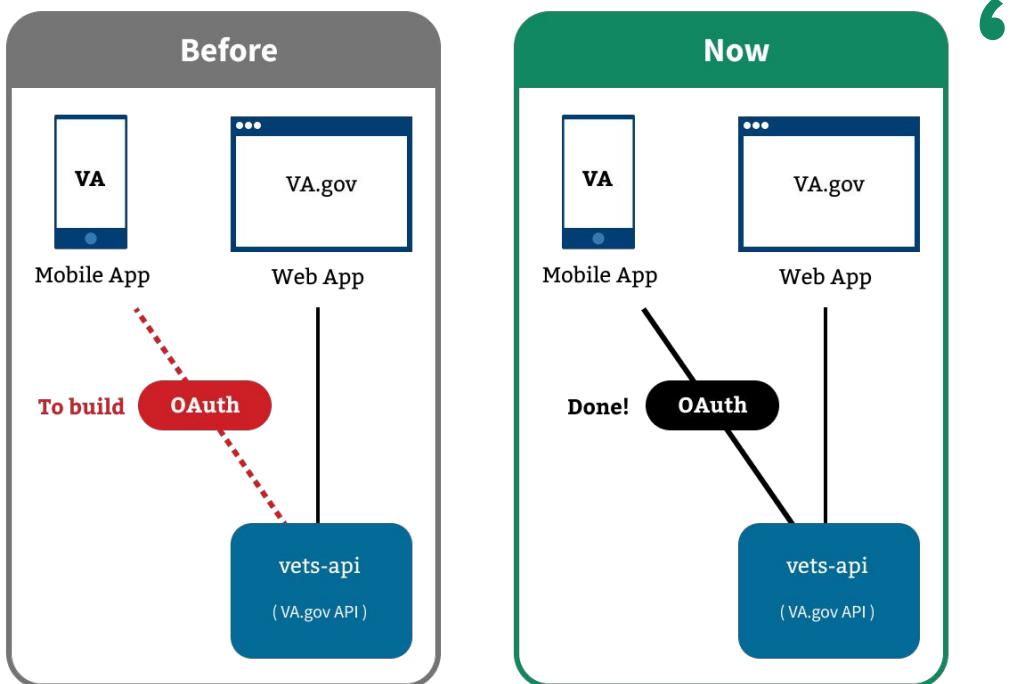


Key Takeaways

1. Login works!
2. We have access to Lighthouse APIs
3. Using React Native sped up our development
4. Custom UX was relatively easy to implement with React Native
5. The existing VA experience can feel fragmented
6. A high volume of Veterans check their claims status online, and do so repeatedly
7. 50k people call each month about claims and correspondence, even though calling the VA is a frequently cited pain point.
8. Healthcare is the biggest driver for engagement with VA online
9. Mobile presents opportunities to expand the accessibility of VA digital tools

Login works!

VSP team added PKCE support for mobile oAuth to let us get an authentication token from Lighthouse



“

I use the [USAA] app more, because if I login on a desktop, it makes me request a passcode and I then have to say whether I want it texted or emailed...

On my phone, it reads my fingerprint, I put in a 4-digit pin and boom!"

—P5

<https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/blob/master/products/va-mobile-app/tech-research/Mobile%20App%20Discovery%20-%20Login%20Recommendation.pdf>

We now have access to Lighthouse APIs

We connected end to end: mobile client -> oAuth PKCE -> access tokens -> /claims

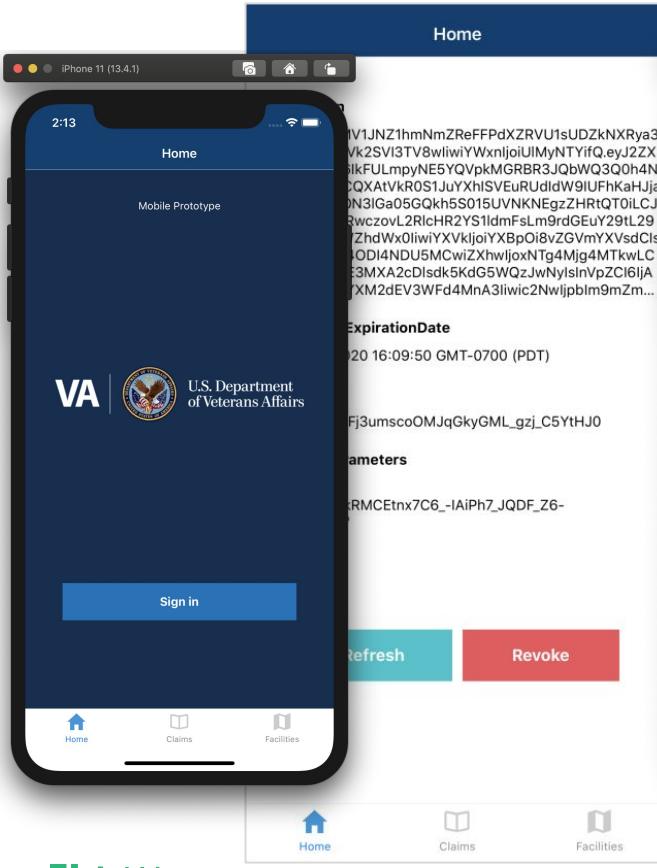
Available today

- Benefits API → Claims status
- Facilities API → Facility locator
- Veteran Verification API → Limited Veteran Profile (e.g., service history)

Needs to be added to Lighthouse

- Appointments API → Scheduling
- Secure Messaging API → Mobile messaging
- Prescriptions API → RX Refill
- Profile API → Expanded Veteran Profile
- Upload supporting Evidence → Camera functionality

Demo



This image displays two overlapping mobile screens. The top screen shows a "Claims" section with a list of claims. The first claim is titled "Claim for Compensation" with a status of "Open" (last updated December 5, 2019). The second claim is also "Claim for Compensation" but with a status of "Closed" (last updated November 27, 2019). The third claim is "Claim for Dependency" with a status of "Closed" (last updated April 10, 2019). The bottom screen shows a similar list of claims, with the first one being "Claim for Compensation" with a status of "Closed" (last updated June 13, 2016).

This image shows a mobile screen displaying a list of facilities. The header says "Facilities" and includes a "Search near me" bar. Below it, it says "2418 results". The list includes several entries, each with a location pin icon, the facility name, and its address. Examples include "VetSuccess on Campus at Tarrant County College (North East Campus)" in Hurst, TX, and "Arlington Vet Center" in Arlington, TX.

React Native sped up development time

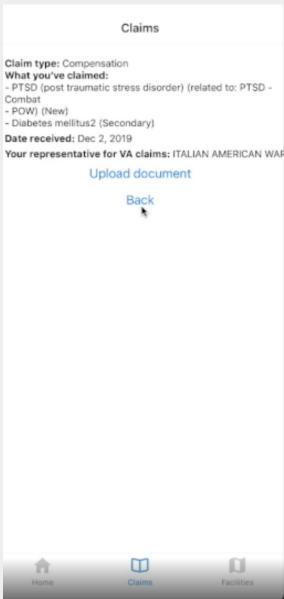
In < 2 weeks, we built a 5 screen app with 5 API integrations, deployed to both platforms

	React Native	Native iOS & Android
Number of screens to code	5 screens	5 x 2 = 10 screens
Number of codebases	1	2
Language/ecosystems	JavaScript and React	Swift and Java or Kotlin
Distribution	Write once, deploy twice	Separate deploy paths

Custom designs were relatively easy to implement

Coding in React and CSS made it easy to create a custom, VA branded user interface with elements like a progress bar.

Last time ↓



New →

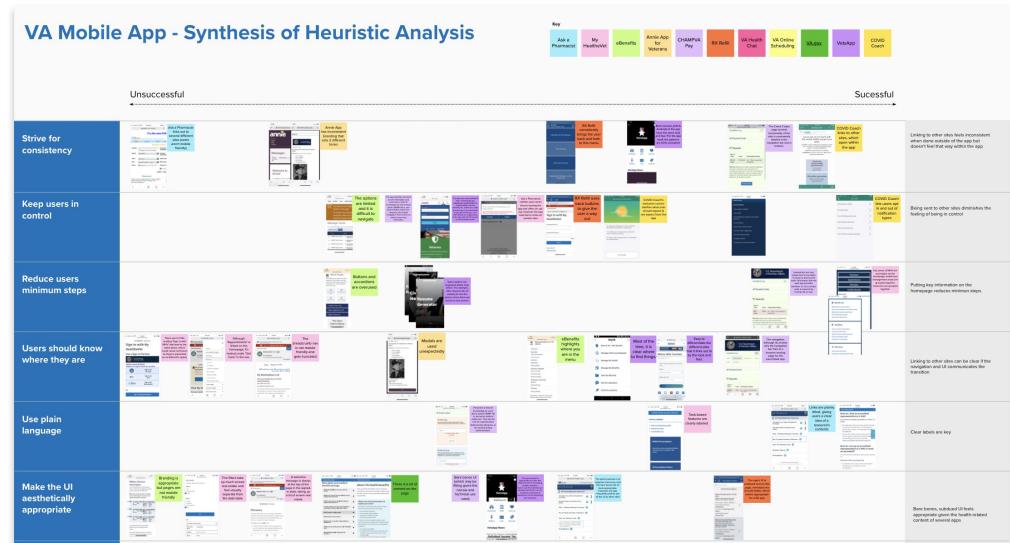
Four screenshots illustrating the evolution of the VA claims interface. The first two are side-by-side, while the third and fourth are stacked vertically.

- Left Column:** Shows a "Your Claims" list with items for "Claim for Disability" (Current status: Evidence gathering, review, and decision, with a yellow "Additional documents needed" callout), "Claim for Dependency" (Current status: Initial review), and "In progress".
- Right Column:** Shows a "Your Claims" list with items for "Claim for Disability Compensation" (Progress: Step 3 of 5, with a yellow "Additional documents needed" callout), "Claim for Dependency" (Current status: Complete, with a green "Closed" status bar), and "Claim received: March 28, 2020".
- Bottom Row:** Shows a "Your Claims" list with items for "Claim for Disability Compensation" (Progress: Step 3 of 5, with a yellow "Additional documents needed" callout), "Claim for Dependency" (Current status: Complete, with a green "Closed" status bar), and "Claim received: March 28, 2020". The "Additional documents needed" callout is highlighted with a yellow arrow pointing to the step 3 icon.

The interface features a dark blue header with the VA logo and "Menu >". It includes sections for "Your Claims" (with sorting dropdowns), "Additional documents needed" (with upload file buttons), and "Please upload a copy of your DD-214" (with a "Why do we need this?" dropdown and "Upload files" button). The "In progress" and "Dependency" sections have green bars at the top, while the "Disability Compensation" section has a yellow bar at the top. The "Dependency" section also includes a "For you, this probably means Mid-June 2020" callout. The "Received" section includes a "What you've claimed" list with PTSD and Diabetes mellitus2 items, and a "Your representative for VA claims" section with the same representative information as the first screenshot.

The VA can feel fragmented to Vets, both in person and online: 33 mobile and 15+ web apps

Via a heuristic analysis, we found most apps heavily linked to other apps or websites, requiring users to interact with more than one app or site at a time. This diminishes the feeling of user control. Further, most interfaces did not feel as modern or mobile friendly as they could be.



<https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/tree/master/products/va-mobile-app/ux-research/heuristic-analysis>

<https://app.mural.co/t/adhocvasu2804/m/adhocvasu2804/1588084628284/38297b32e1af307bbc385f87689995952a9802ba>

The existing VA experience can feel fragmented to Veterans

This theme that has come up in the interviews we have conducted this week, both in relation to VA apps and sites, and interacting with the VA more broadly.

“

I don't want to have to deal with 3, 4, 5 apps...no one is going to want to figure out which app has what they want. That's worse than figuring out which website.”

P6

“

Once the ball is passed from Community Care to VA, [it would be nice to] know that is was received, be kept in the loop 24/7..I have spent 30 mins on phone one day, 30 mins on a phone another day.”

P5

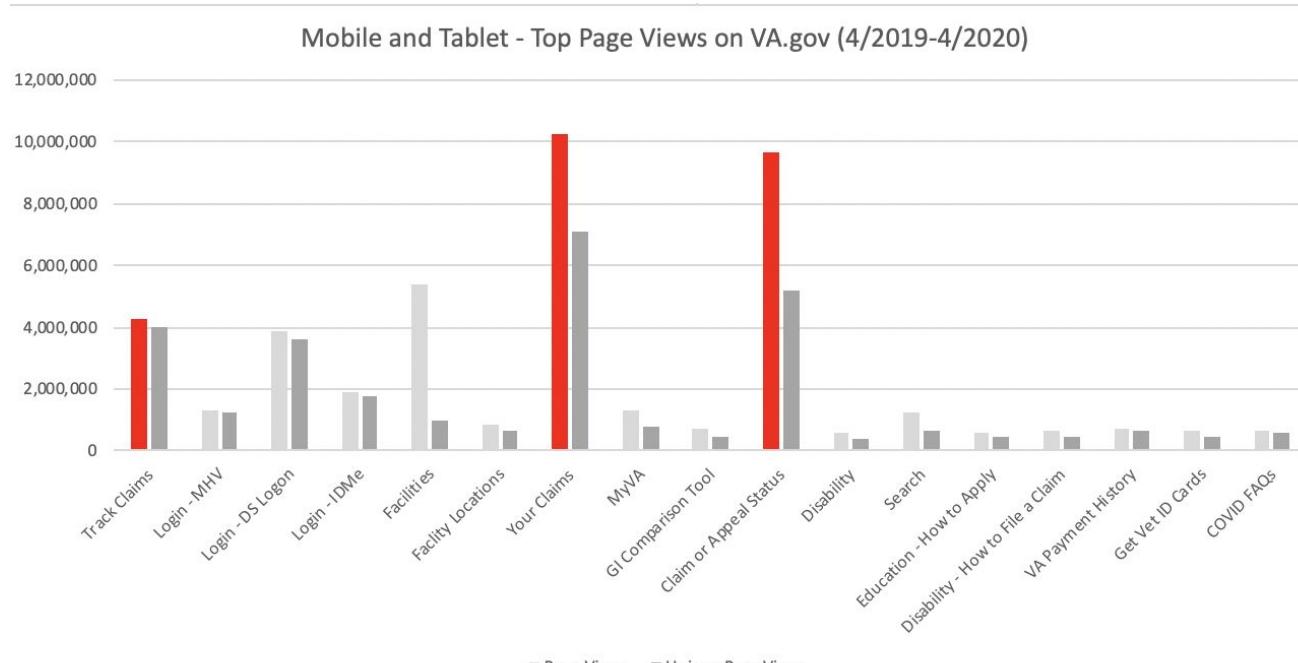
“

The VSO is awesome. I would actually be very upset if she left...I've seen my VSO 5-6 times since 2017 to have something explained to me in a bit further detail.”

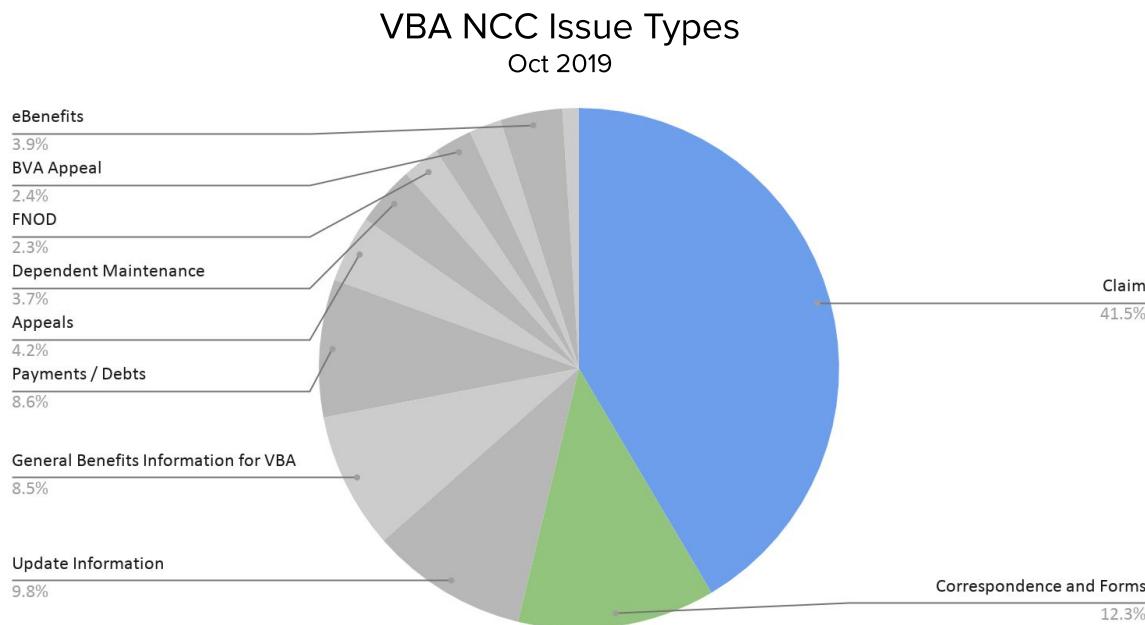
P1

A high volume of Veterans check their claims status online, and do so repeatedly

The highest volume of pageviews on VA.gov on mobile is for Claims, among both new and repeat users. The data suggests that Vets on their phones may make frequent checks to their claims status



50k people call each month about claims and correspondence, even though calling the VA is a frequently cited pain point.



“

[I would use an app] so you don't have to call and get routed around to a lot of people.”

P5

“

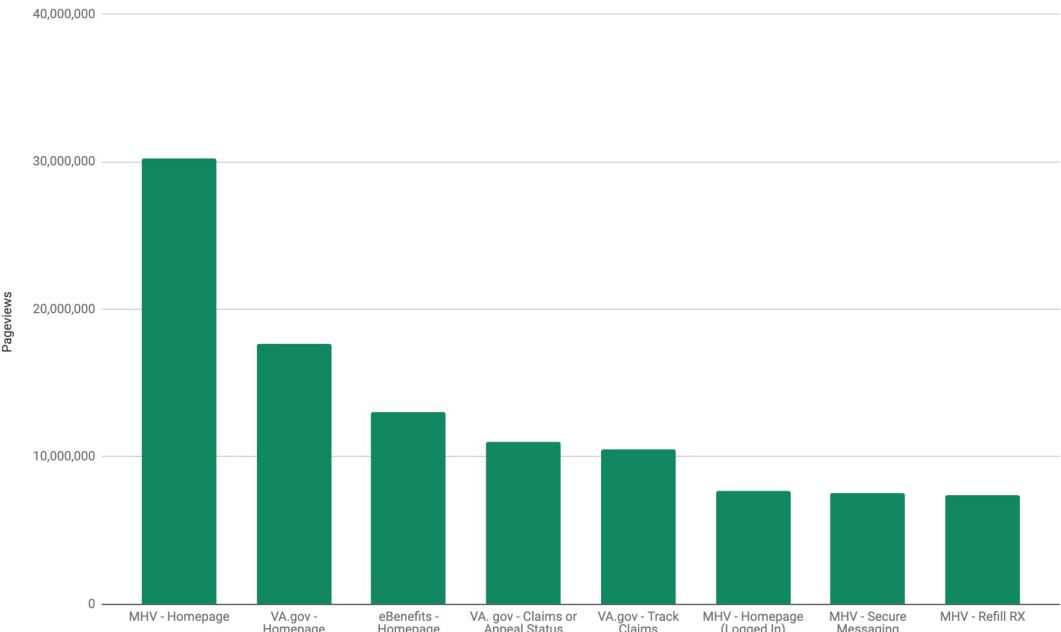
The only thing I do sometimes is call and get a letterhead that has my name, social and my rating.”

P1

Healthcare is the big driver for engagement with VA online

Top Page Views

4/2019-4/2020



3 out of 4 participants we have talked to so far use VA medical benefits for themselves. 2 out of 4 had managed medical benefits on behalf of another Veteran in their family.

Mobile presents opportunities to expand the accessibility of VA digital tools

- VSP Accessibility SME providing guidance
- Discovery on iOS Accessibility Inspector
- Validated we can add labels and traits to improve experience

“

Technology is in flux when it comes to low vision..the apps have gotten a lot better. If apps are developed for voiceover, they work pretty darn well.”

P6

“

If apps have accessibility built in they are easier to use because there's less clutter. Small screens are much more streamlined, so it's easier to find things.”

P6

“

If [an app or website] is good, that goes back to the way it is designed. It has to be user friendly at all levels...it can't just be geared towards people who are tech savvy.”

P5

Next Steps

- Finish this round of user interviews next week
- Iterate on mockups and plan concept testing
- Integrate basic accessibility using React Native and test
- Integrate native functionality (document scanning plugin)
- Explore persistent logged-in state