



VA Mobile App

Status Update

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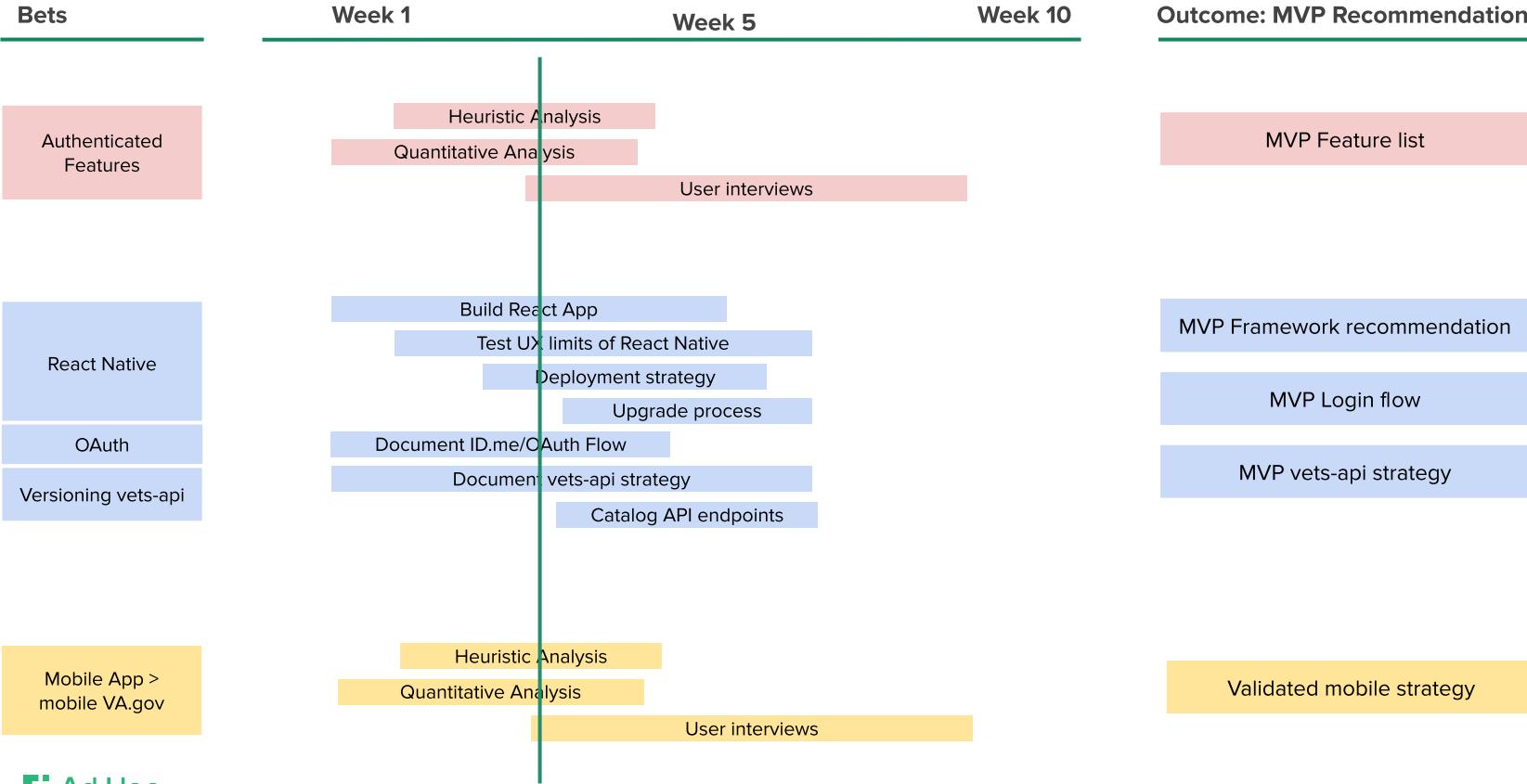
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Integrated Roadmap

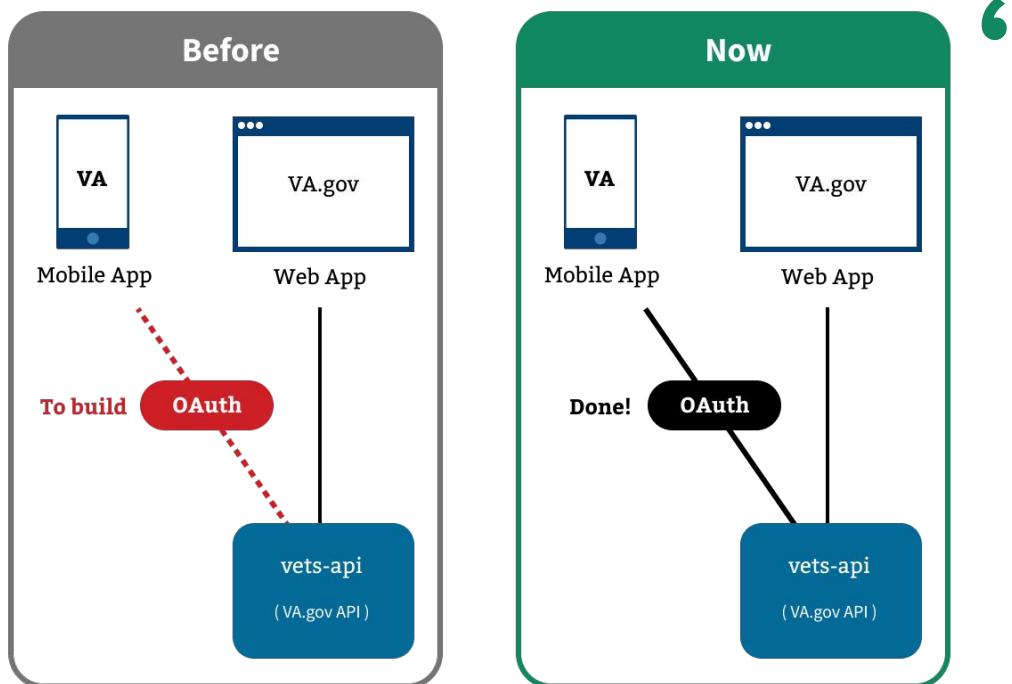


Key Takeaways

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

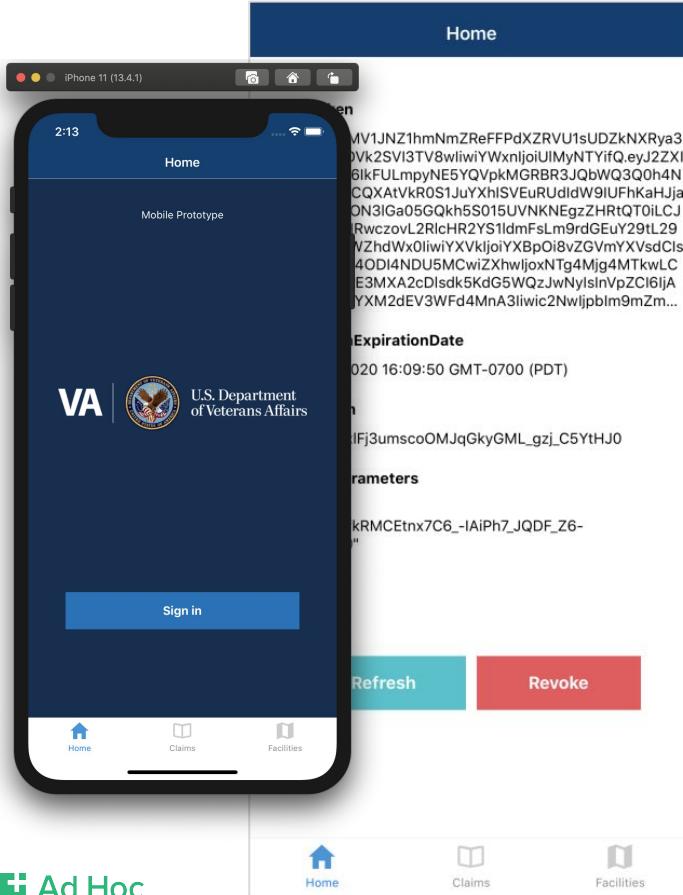
Available today

- 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 contains three screenshots of the VA app interface. The first screenshot shows a list of claims. It includes three items: "Claim for Compensation" (Status: Open, Last updated: December 5, 2019, Submitted: December 2, 2019), "Claim for Dependency" (Status: Open, Last updated: November 27, 2019, Submitted: November 20, 2019), and "Claim for Compensation" (Status: Closed, Last updated: April 10, 2019, Submitted: April 10, 2019). The second screenshot shows a "Claims" screen with a large green "Complete" button. The third screenshot shows a "Facilities" screen with a list of locations, including "Campus at Tarrant County College" and "Campus at University of Texas". The bottom of each screen features a navigation bar with icons for Home, Claims, and Facilities.

React Native sped up development time

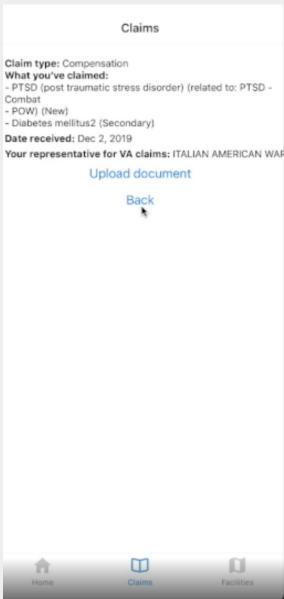
In < 2 weeks, we built a 5 screen app with 5 API integrations, deployed to both platforms

	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 ↓

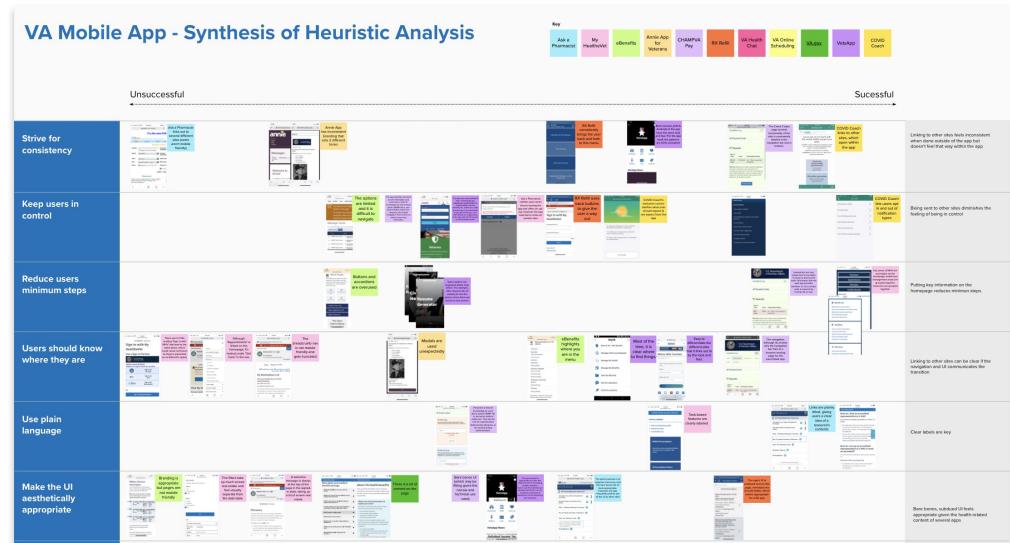


New →

Four screenshots illustrating the evolution of the VA claims interface. 1. The first screenshot shows a basic list of claims with a "Back" button. 2. The second screenshot adds a "VA" logo and a "Your Claims" section, with one claim highlighted in yellow. 3. The third screenshot adds a progress bar at the top, showing steps 1 through 5, with step 3 highlighted in yellow. 4. The fourth screenshot adds a "Please upload a copy of your DD-214" message with a "Upload files" button, and the progress bar is now fully visible. 5. The fifth screenshot adds a "Disability claims are typically processed in about 100 days." message and a "For you, this probably means Mid-June 2020" callout. 6. The sixth screenshot adds a "Claim received March 28, 2020" message and a "What you've claimed" section with a list of conditions. 7. The seventh screenshot adds a "Your representative for VA claims ITALIAN AMERICAN WAR VETERANS OF THE U.S., INC" message.

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

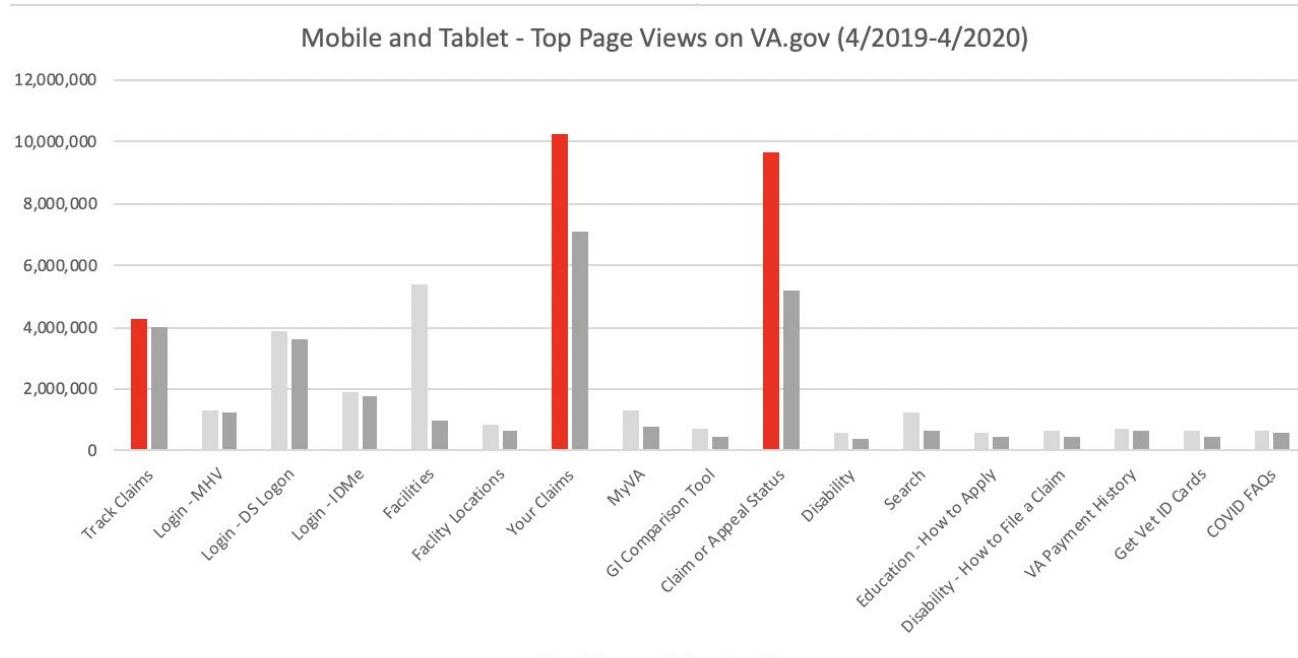
“

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.”

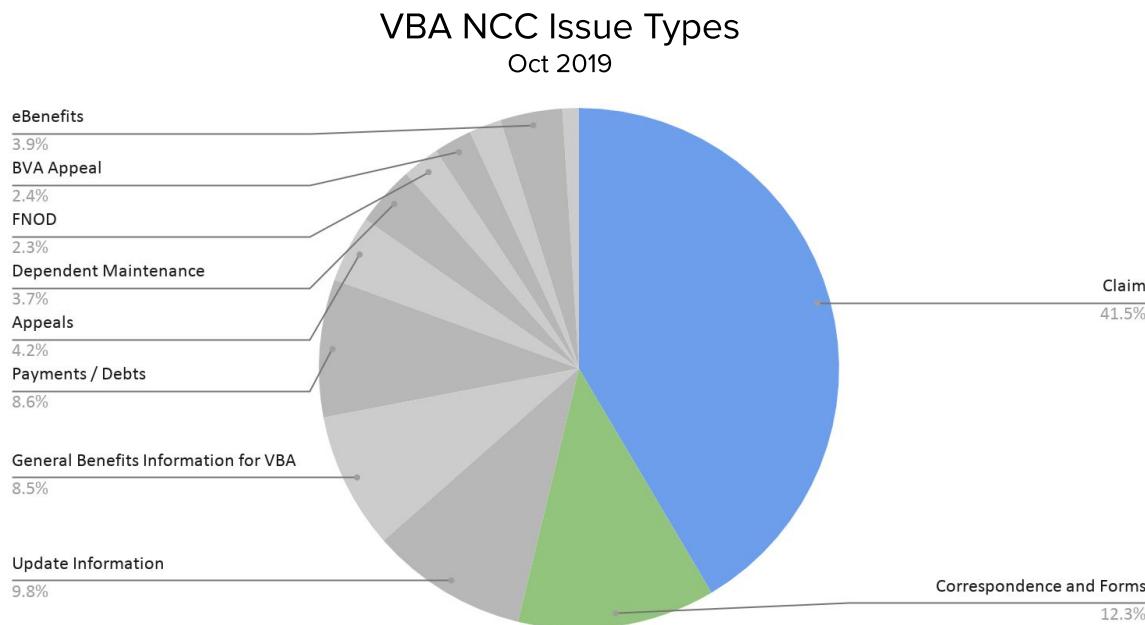
P1

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

“

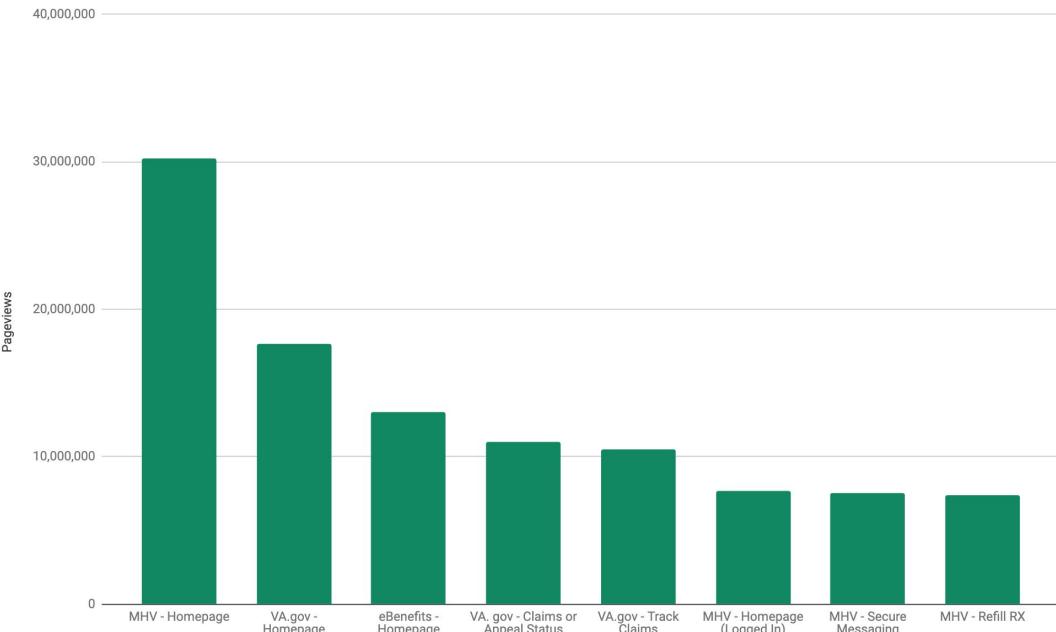
The only thing I do sometimes is call and get a letterhead that has my name, social and my rating.”

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