**Product Outline**

**Problem Statement**

Veterans and their family members with limited English proficiency (LEP) don't have access to essential VA content online in their native language.

We outline 3 key aspects of this problem:

1. **Lack of a sustainable, strategic approach to translated content:** VA has existing guidance for complying with Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, 65 Fed. 50,121 (Aug. 16, 2000). But VA currently doesn't currently prioritize localization of digital content in a programmatic and sustainable way. Some translated materials do exist, but they're scattered and there is no current organization-wide program to ensure that we're translating essential content or keeping translated content accurate and up to date.
2. **Other readability and health literacy issues that further compound the problem:** Research has shown that low health literacy causes risks to both the person and the health care system, and that as anxiety increases, readability and health literacy decrease even further for everyone.
   1. **“**People with low health literacy use more health care services, have a greater risk for hospitalization, and have a higher utilization of expensive services, such as emergency care and inpatient admissions. Vulnerable populations include older adults, immigrant populations, minority populations, and low income populations.”[[1]](#endnote-1)
   2. “Anxiety acts as both a catalyst for information seeking and an obstacle to the ability to read and interpret written messages…when [no information] is found or when the message itself is difficult to comprehend, anxiety is likely to rise…This cycle…can fuel panic and lead to maladaptive behaviors, such as unnecessary trips to emergency rooms or overuse of other emergency resources.”[[2]](#endnote-2)
3. **Congressional pressure:** Additionally, Congress has recently asked VHA to provide COVID-19 content (and other essential content) in Spanish. As we work to meet this important and timely need we also need to be working toward an effective and sustainable approach for the future.

**Objectives:**

Through research, analysis, and stakeholder interviews we will accomplish 2 things:

First. we will identify and prototype a scalable and sustainable potential solution to provide Veterans and their family members with LEP access to essential benefit and service content in their native language that is:

* Accurate
* Timely
* Compassionate
* Clear and written in plain language

This solution will take into consideration the complexities that product owners, content creators, and local site administrators face with providing high-quality translated information that can be easily kept up to date.  
  
At the conclusion of this project, we will have an evaluation of this solution to present to leadership as a potential long-term solution for supporting translated content across essential benefit content on VA.gov. (Should we also say something about sharing our experience/findings with other government website owners?)

We will also provide a report detailing further the needs of our Veterans and family members with LEP and recommendations for how we can best prioritize and scope content translation to support those needs.

Specifically, our objectives are as follows:

1. To provide English-as-a-second-language (ESL) or limited-English-proficiency (LEP) Veterans, other family member beneficiaries, and family caregivers access to plain language health and benefit content, so they have equal access to the information and benefits they have earned.
2. To meet federal/agency requirements for providing translated benefit information.
3. Provide turn-key solution for content writers/editors using an automated workflow and machine-aided human translations.
4. Launch an MVP to demonstrate the recommended approach is viable, scalable and sustainable.
5. Identify requirements to stand-up an MVP including:
   1. Budget
   2. Process for selecting and on-boarding a SAAS for integration with Drupal
   3. Integration points
   4. Dependencies

The audiences we will address include:

1. Vets/caretakers
2. Product Owners
3. Writers
4. Local Sites (?)

**Desired User Outcomes**

* Limited English proficiency (LEP) Veterans, family members and caregivers have a better understanding of the VA benefits and services they have earned.
* Product Owners and writers have a sustainable, automated approach for providing translated content.
* Local Sites….TBD

**Undesired User Outcomes**

* Veterans, family members and caregivers find content confusing or unhelpful.
* Veterans, family members and caregivers can't easily find or use translated content.

**Desired Business Outcomes**

* Meet [federal/agency requirements](https://www.lep.gov/13166/eolep.htm) for providing translated benefit information.
* VHA demonstrates to Congress that we are providing essential COVID-19 information in Spanish and working towards viable longer-term approach
* DEPO/OCTO Health provides a solid recommendation for a sustainable localization program at VA, based on MVP, data and user feedback
* VA provides relevant, easy-to-find, high-quality content for LEP Veterans and their families in the languages they most need (Spanish first)
* Product Owners and writers have a clear, manageable process for providing translated content and keeping it up-to-date

**Undesired Business Outcomes**

* VHA can't demonstrate progress on translation efforts in a timely way
* DEPO/OCTO Health can't gather the data we need to make solid recommendations for localization
* VA continues with a scattered or unsustainable approach to localization

**Measuring Success**

**Baseline Analytics:**

From March 15, 2020, to December 31, 2020 the total number of Pageviews visiting the coronavirus FAQs in Spanish was 144k.

The total number of pageviews across VA.gov with browser set to “Spanish” from Jan 1 -20 was 55,505k.

(more data will be added once we have dashboard set up)

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

* Analytics around the engagement and usage for the translated page(s)
* Measurements for search and direct traffic to the Spanish pages
* Call center inquiries
* Direct user feedback via usability testing
* We will include a Medallia survey on translated pages to collect customer feedback.
* Shorter time to market?
* Reduction in translation costs?
* From KPI worksheet:

|  |
| --- |
| - Customer Engagement/Accuracy (might be an averaged customer engagement metric across all translated content on VA.gov) |
| - Time to generate translated content - Time to deploy translated content (north star metric) |
| - Net Promoter Score (NPS) - how likely to rec? |
| - Average satisfaction rating across translated [VA.gov](http://va.gov/) |
| - Error rate |

**Objectives and Key results (OKRs)**

* Objective 1: Meet Veterans' and their family members' need for Spanish language information for VA health care and benefits while continuing to gather experience and data for a scalable long-term localization solution
  + Key result 1: Provide Spanish language versions of Coronavirus pages by 1Q.
  + Key result 2: Launch MVP for by **2Q** 2021.
  + Key result 3: Satisfaction rating for translated content
  + Key result 4: Customer Engagement
* Objective 2: Provide writers with an automated workflow to request, track and manage translated content
  + Key result 1: Improve time to generate and deploy translated content from 4+ weeks to xx days.
  + NPR/Satisfaction survey

**In Scope**

* Providing Spanish versions of the Corona FAQs, Research Volunteer and Covid Vaccine pages
* TBD for long-term MVP

**Out of Scope**

* Site-wide roll-out or centralized translation management
* Updates/changes for English version of pages found during translation effort (bugs will be captured and addressed by team owners)

**Assumptions**

* Include indication of which assumption you think is most risky. Your Solution Approach (next section) should describe how you'll validate that assumption w/your initial set of functionality
  + Some Veterans and their family members need or prefer COVID-19 and other content content about VA health care and benefits in Spanish.
  + Users will be able to find and easily link/toggle to translated content.
  + Google translate widget or machine learning alone will not be an acceptable translation option for our MVP and Tier 1 content.
  + An expeditious process for engaging with localization providers and funding will be available by mid-Feb 2021. **(RISKY)**

**Solution Approach**

**What are you going to build now, and why have you decided to start there?**

We are going to start with translating the coronavirus FAQs page via front-end solution (not involving Drupal). We'll then widen translation to an MVP using a long-term option.

For the longer-term MVP we will be investigating options using a combination of machine and human translators which we expect to a more efficient approach to providing and updating translated content.

**Why this solution / approach over other solutions / approaches?**

This is the quickest and simplest solution that allows us to start providing translated content while conducting research and gathering data to help inform a longer-term solution.

**What have you explicitly decided to not include in this initial set of functionality, and why?**

We're not including Drupal integration for Corona/Covid work because we don't have the resources to support the work.

**How will the solution / approach evolve after this initial build (knowing that this will likely change as you learn from users along the way)?**

* + We'll base the evolution on data and user feedback. We expect that we'll move toward a machine-and-human translation approach as part of a broader localization program.

**Dependencies on Other VA Systems**

* + Drupal
  + CMS
  + Lighthouse API (???)

**What’s Next**

* Conduct stakeholder interviews (internal)
* Investigate budget and how to engage with potential software partners
* Develop a technical design doc to captures all the integration points used by the VA.gov websites

**Go-to-market Strategy**

**How are Veterans and others using this product going to know it exists?**

We'll need to reach specific audiences who may need content translated into Spanish (see below)

**What marketing, outreach, or communications are necessary for this product to be successful?**

Outreach may include:

* Working with the VA health equity office, center for minority Veterans, patient advocates, and relevant VSOs to communicate to LEP Veterans and family members that we invite them to try this offering and give us feedback to help us improve the experience.
* Targeted social media and other communication outreach efforts
* [Link to Release Plan](https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/blob/master/products/content/spanish-translation/coronavirus-mvp/product-outline.md#go-to-market-strategy)

**Launch Dates**

* Target Launch Date
  + January 20, 2021 for coronavirus FAQs page
  + MVP TBD
* Actual Launch Date
  + January 22, 2021 for coronavirus FAQs page
* What date will you evaluate impact after launch?
  + **Updated:** 3 months post launch (mid-April 2021)

**Solution Narrative**

**Current Status**

Preparation work continued, but development work was delayed due to lack of people and ability to implement as well as concerns with Google Translate widget quality. We kicked-off the first phase of this project with the VSP platforms team on 11.24.20.

**Key Decisions**

**Screenshots**

**Before – could be a process flow diagram of what we had to do for Corona FAQs**

**After – show simplified version for MVP**

**For Reference**

For WIP usability session discussion guide, mockup Spanish content, project brief:  
<https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/tree/master/Products/Global/Benefits%20Spanish%20Localization>

For research plan:  
<https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/tree/master/Products/Global/Benefits%20Spanish%20Localization>

Our feedback review session notes:  
<https://app.mural.co/invitation/mural/workqueue2001/1558543337827?sender=caroladsva8096&key=2cc8b8c8-50be-4b5d-85c4-2903a14c8e8c>

Deck from user research share-out.  
[VA.gov-Spanish-benefits-link-user-research-061019.pdf](https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/files/3273454/VA.gov-Spanish-benefits-link-user-research-061019.pdf)

Coronavirus MVP Docs

<https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/tree/master/products/content/spanish-translation/coronavirus-mvp>

**Communications**

* GitHub Label: TBD
* Slack channel: [#vsa-content-localization](https://dsva.slack.com/archives/C01GCADCMQT)
* Product POCs: [danielle.thierry@va.gov](mailto:danielle.thierry@va.gov)
* Stakeholders: Dave Conlon

**Team**

* VA Digital Strategist(s): Danielle Thierry
* Product Manager: Sharon Kasimow
* Design Lead: TBD
* Eng Lead: Fareez Ahmed
* Engineers: TBD

**Implementation Info**

**Status**

**Technical Decisions**

**Product Decisions**

1. <https://nnlm.gov/initiatives/topics/health-literacy#:~:text=People%20with%20low%20health%20literacy%20use%20more%20health,immigrant%20populations%2C%20minority%20populations%2C%20and%20low%20income%20populations>. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/E1B32CF9E602F287902AD91F1D10DA7D/S1935789320001512a.pdf/public_health_communication_in_time_of_crisis_readability_of_online_covid19_information.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)