**Conversation Guide for a Board Appeal (NOD) Usability Study, March 2021**

**Intro - 5 minutes**

Start recording.

* I have started recording. I'd like to confirm: Are you comfortable if I record my screen and the audio as we talk today?

**Warm-up Questions - 5 minutes**

Before we look at the website, let's start with a few warm-up questions.

* Can you tell me a little about yourself or your service history? I send 24 years 11 months and 19 days. I was in the field hospital then taught the LPN course.
* If yes, what was the last thing you were doing or looking for on the site? I think I was registering and I think I was answering questions about the COVID Vaccine.
* How was that experience? It was very difficult but I felt like they went in circles asking the same thing in different ways.
* Have you ever tried to file a claim for a disability with the VA?  I did.
* If yes, how was that experience? It was convoluted to say the least. The paperwork in itself, getting the paperwork, filling it out and sending it back. It was a little challenging. Well for someone that doesn’t own a printer by choice, I still have not purchased a printer, it always makes it challenging.
* Let’s take a look at the prototype now. Since this is a prototype, some buttons and features will work, some will not.

**Task 1: [Request a Board appeal]:**

Imagine that you have logged in to VA.gov and you have navigated to this page (Board Appeals Info page) because you disagree with a decision VA has made about one or more issues you have submitted a claim for.

Starting on this page, please walk me through how you would request a Board Appeal (also called Notice of disagreement). Please tell me what you see on each page, what you think the purpose of it is and what you would do on the page. (It is helpful if you think out loud, so I can follow what you are thinking, trying to do, and experiencing).

**Board Appeals info page**

* Take a look at this page and tell me what you see here, and what you would do on this page: On the top there’s a home board appeals and decision reviews so I would click on request decisions, no I think I would like board hearing with the judge.
* Purpose of the page and what you would do: It gives me the options I have if I disagree with their decision.
* What are your first impressions of this page?
* Is anything on this page unclear or confusing? 1 year to complete, wow. I think that is disgusting, I could be dead in a year but I could be dead tomorrow. That is disturbing especially if I am appealing an injury I want to be paid for. I am assuming it is due to covid. Nothing happens quickly at the VA. You can submit more evidence and submit it within 90 days of the request but then at number 1 it says you cant so which comes first the chicken or the egg. In my opinion it is confusing.
* Anything confusing in option three: yes. I am so confused here, maybe it is just me. It says the veteran law judge will review based on already submitted evidence and you cannot have a hearing so I guess I get three different options, a direct, or submit more evidence, or request a hearing but they don’t all go together. Okay so there’s no conflict. Hearing request will take more than a year.
* How would you continue: Choose one of the three. I would get option 2 and use VA form 10182, download, complete, submit then wait a year to hear back. I could do request a hearing then have a virtual or a va conference. Or request the direct review.
* Take a look at the page: how would I do the direct review. Okay request board appeal online or by mail. That would have been the same form I would have downloaded. I would online, I guess I would do it by mail than.
* What about online: I see mail, or I could click on request a board appeal.

**Veteran detail pages**

* What do you see: I would click continue or I could click finish the application later. It is straightforward. I would click yes or no; I would hope to click yes. Why does it have to be a male. Everyone assumes the veteran would be a male, maybe have a general neutral name.
* Any other comments? No it seems straightforward; it is the basic information.
* What is happening when you click: I am double clicking.

**Issues eligible for review page**

* Tell me what you think the purpose of this page is and what you would do on this page: I see headaches and tinnitus I don’t see arthritis. I would click add issues to add it. Very good, then just save it. Reading the legacy appeals box. It is required I check that box.
* What if there are 5 issues you know the va had, if you only see two, is there a way to get information on why they aren’t all list: I would scroll to the top to the link that says why aren’t all of my issues listed. Reading box.
* What do you think: I don’t like it. They should list it and have pending if they are in receipt of it if . If I am submitting electronically they would have had to received it. I would feel like I would need to add the issue again since they haven’t processed it. I would feel like they are acknowledging that they received it.
* Legacy appeals, do you understand it or needs more explanation: I think I would need to read it 10 times to understand. So anything before 2019 would be the old way and anything after 2/1/2019 would be in the new option. Checking the box would make it all under the new process. I could be wrong I have been wrong before.
* Words or terms that are unconfusing: legacy appeals. It doesn’t explain what legacy appeals is, even if it tells me it is the process prior to 2/1/2019. Maybe putting that first then the box to check. Don’t have the box up there then the explanation. That would make it gel a little better.
* Is anything on this page unclear or confusing?
* Do you understand what opting into the new appeals process means?
* Do you understand the consequences of this choice?
* Is there any information missing on this page? I don’t see where they said the process is changing. I guess this is supposed to tell people the process has changed. I think using the withdrawing issues you selected would raise questions. I am not withdrawing any issues, even though it says it will be under the new process. I don’t get a warm and fuzzy here, it makes me feel like I am terminating my rights even though when you read further on it will be under the new process.
* Any other explanations you would like about this topic that would make it less uncomfortable: I think maybe if there was something that says the VA has changed their process. I think there is a lack of transparency here. I think I read it somewhere else they were changing their rating process.
* Any other comments? No.
* What would you do: I would go down here to need help and I would call then after waiting an hour I would ask a question in real time for them to explain it to me so I understand because I would need reassurance that I am not giving up my rights when I click the box. What if I am not okay with it, I still have to click the box for them to process the appeal.

Imagine that you see only half of the issues you have previously registered, on this page. What would you think and do?

Imagine now that you want to make a Board Appeal for 2 issues: let's say for Tinnitus and Arthritis (in your left ankle). Let's assume you have all the info and documents at hand to make a Board Appeal.

**Board review option page**

* What do you see on this page and what would you do here? Which one would I choose. How did I know you would go to that one. I submit more then I wait over a year and I still don’t like the decision then I request a review and two years later my legs falling off, that’s hard. That’s the reality of it.
* Is anything on this page unclear or confusing? I am disappointed with the option to add me click on; it tells you that you can submit more evidence but cannot have a hearing. The law judge isn’t the quickest, the faster way is the direct review.
* Is there any information missing on this page? No, the whole process needs to be scraped and revamped. The new chief of the VA isn’t a veteran but yeah. I don’t think there is any way to simplify it, it is unfortunate that you have to go through this process, the direct review seems like they gave it a rubber stamp and then you want to submit the same things. Its like a crap shoot to see if the other person will look at it differently and give you a different reason. It’s like you and I looking out a window and me seeing the birds and you seeing the trees.

Imagine that you have learned from your VSO (Veterans Service Organization) or attorney, that you need to submit new evidence, but that a hearing is not necessary. What would you do on this page?

**Additional evidence page**

* What do you see on this page and what would you do here? If I ant to submit later I would click on the drop down menu. Okay.
* Is anything on this page unclear or confusing? Whatever a png is. Okay. Now I need to scan a copy.
* What next: scan the document in and then click on upload. If I needed to add another document, would I need to click on add another document for each page.
* What do you expect: if I am uploading it, it would scan all of the documents in. I know I am dreaming. I would like to add all documents at one time. If I don’t know how to make a PDF file, then I have to do it one by one. I don’t know why everyone assumes everyone is tech savvy.

**Review application page**

* Tell me what you think the purpose of this page is and what you would do here: Let’s see, I would click on it to make sure it is all correct. All my information is correct. Issues for review, I could edit it if I needed to.
* If you click edit, would it take me to the section or edit it here: I would think I could edit it here. What would I be editing. That seems like it would take me back to the beginning so it is continuity unless it will populate and update it all.
* Is anything on this page unclear or confusing? Board review, evidence at this time, PDF is there. I read the privacy policy.
* what next: Check that box then click submit request. What happens when they have a breech in their system, credit monitoring services for a year.
* Are all the information you need on this page?
* Submitted page: I started as john smith and not I am allessandra so I guess I submitted for a sex change to. Print this for records, okay. That is the option, you cant save it any other way.
* What would you like to do: click file and save as on my desktop, that would be nice for those without a printer. What should I do while I wait, nothing wait for your leg to fall off. Don’t miss the C&P, if you don’t hear back don’t request another. Here you can track the status of your appeal. That to me, is critical. It can alleviate what step is it at, logged into the system, where am I at with this process. It’ll say pending for 11.5 months unless they have found a nicer way to say that.

Imagine that you come to the page called Review Application. You review all the info on this page and notice that your old phone number is listed here. What would you do?

**Post-Task Interview - 5-10 minutes**

* Having gone through the form, how was that experience? I think it is a good thing. Overall it is good. The process is good. It is user friendly, simple; the only thing was with the first little part. It is a good forma nd makes sense.
* What was most helpful in the form? The fact that it gives the drop down, what happens, when you should do something. I like that.
* What is one thing that could be improved in the form? I don’t have an issue with the form itself, it is the process and the amount of time. Fill it out today and not hear something for a year. Once I click on the PDF , can I fill it out there or do I need to print then upload. Open it and fill it out.

**Thank-You and Closing - 2 minutes**

We really appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with us today. Your feedback is so helpful to us as we continue to work on the site and make sure it really works for Veterans.

Thanks! Lastly, do you know any other Veterans, caregivers, or service members who might be willing to participate in a future user research session? If Yes: Thank you! I'll have our team send you an email with a little blurb that you can pass along.

Great, well thank you so much again, and enjoy the rest of your day!