**GIBCT Colmery Act Sec 116 Veteran Discussion Script**

*June 3, 2019*

**Welcome and Opening Remarks (5 minutes)**

*[When the participant is ready, the moderator will begin the session with the following introduction.]*

Thanks for joining us today! My name is [name], and I also have two colleagues on the line, Amy and Cindy. They are observing and taking notes. We work with a team at the VA that is enhancing the VA.gov website and we're interested in speaking with you today about a pilot program called VET TEC.

VET TEC is a tuition assistance program designed to help Veterans advance in IT careers by enrolling in high-tech training programs.

We’d like your thoughts on what aspects of the website work well and where we might make improvements to make things even easier for Veterans.

Before we start, I’d like to mention a few logistical details:

* We are interested in hearing your honest opinions. We are in no way testing your knowledge or ability. Our goal is to be sure that application meets Veterans’ needs. You are welcome to express any opinions you wish. We look forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas and welcome your feedback.
* If for any reason you want to pause or stop the session at any time, just let me know. I'd be happy to do so.
* By testing the site thoroughly, we hope to ensure that it’s written in a thoughtful way and gives Veterans all of the information they need to make informed decisions.
* Do you have any questions so far?
* Lastly, we generally record sessions, in case we need to confirm that we have captured your opinions accurately.

Are you comfortable if I record the audio as we talk today?

Great! I'm going to turn on screen and audio recording now. Once it's on, I'll ask again, as we like to have your verbal consent

[The meeting host will begin audio and screen recording.]

Are you comfortable if we record the audio and screen movements today?

**Warm-up Questions (5 minutes)**

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

1. What interest, if any, do you have in pursuing a career in the high-tech industry?

There’s definitely an interest there. We’re not reducing out technical capabilities, so it’s better to be onboard than not.

1. If you were interested in attending a high-tech training program, how would you decide what course to attend?

It’s based on what will be the most beneficial, something that’s naturally easy for me to learn, something that I would be able to understand. Then 2, something that would have a good return on investment, if you will.

1. What factors would be most important to you when selecting a course?

Definitely the ROI. So I’m looking at the training [fields]. Media applications seems a little vague, so I would have to understand about them some more. Definitely return on investment would be important. My degree that I’m about to receive in July is Business Information Technology [?]

1. Have you used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before? If yes, what was your experience?

Okay, let's go ahead and walk through a few scenarios.

**Think Aloud**

While you are going through the site, we ask that you please think aloud and vocalize your thoughts and decisions. The more you say about what you are thinking and wondering, the more we’ll learn. We are interested in your first reaction to each page, as well as what you are thinking as you engage with each page. If you have questions about what information needs to go in a particular field, it’s likely that many other Veterans will too. Sharing your thoughts aloud may seem strange at first, but it helps us understand what you are thinking and give us valuable information.

**Review the VET TEC Overview Page (5 minutes)**

<https://vagov-content-pr-433.herokuapp.com/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/how-to-use-benefits/vettec-high-tech-program/>

To give you a little more background on the VET TEC program, we'd like to share an overview page with you. Feel free to take as much time as you like reading the page and let us know when you are ready to continue.

Do you have any questions about what you’ve read?

So this is based off of the GI Bill? So I still have 5 months left on my GI Bil. I hope I would still be technically eligible.

**Prototype**

Let switch over to the Comparison Tool.

Just so you know, this is a prototype, rather than a real website. We create mock-ups like these and share them with Veterans in sessions like this to be sure we have everything right before we code the actual website. You'll notice that only certain links have been activated and you’ll not need to enter any data. When you click a field, text will appear automatically.

**Scenario #1 (10 minutes)**

Let’s assume you'd like to advance your IT career by taking advantage of the new VET TEC program. You are interested in finding a local training course to attend. Using the GI Bill Comparison Tool, how would you find a training course and determine how much housing allowance you’d receive while attending the course?

Please talk aloud and let us know what you are thinking.

So I want to find a local training course. In the past, when I’ve used the Comparison Tool, I’m seeing military status. I would click to make sure there would be another thing right there that wouldn’t apply to me, reserve and whatnot. How do you take classes? I would want to take them in person for sure. I would look for the city that I wanted to go go or already in, so I would just type in, right now, Baltimore, and I would see which schools are available to me and then check availability.

I guess my first question would be, with the vet tec you were saying that I do require at least one day of the GI Bill, so that is not the benefit that I would be using. I immediately saw the GI Bill, so I wasn’t sure that’s available to me. One more thing I would say is it doesn’t seem inherently obvious that vet tec is a part of the GI Bill. I work at the school as a VA Representative working as a Certifying Official. Whenever I see programs, I saw REAP, I know vocrehab, those are obvious. If someone were to look at it [vet tec] I wouldn’t know what that is. It seems like a separate program from GI. So this says VET TEC. The others say Chapter. Ch33, CH35. We know it’s a benefit chapter, so I don’t know if that makes a difference or if we’re moving away from the term chapter and keeping it cleaner. It doesn’t immediately sound like a usable program, if that makes sense. At first glance. With the explanation, it would make sense. I like the term vet tec, veteran technology.

[he clicked on search schools, then selected Detroit school]

[school page]

Technology professional 2, I have no idea what that is.

The length, can I learn 2 weeks in person what I would learn in 3 months online? I would probably call the school.

Estimate your benefits…so that’s kind of explaining to me normally what I would get for benefits. Again, is vet tec under GI Bill? It says, GI Bill pays to the school, so am I using my benefit? It makes me think immediately, yeah, you just said it. Total paid to me, that’s kind of confusing. Am I getting additional housing on top of the housing allowance? The total paid doesn’t match the housing allowance. $1746, $876, that confuses me totally.

*[After the participant has selected a program and shared thoughts aloud.]*

1. What are your first impressions of the process of searching for VET TEC providers and programs
2. What led you to select [Program Name] over the others?
3. What information on these pages is the most valuable to you?
4. What aspect of the page or the process might Veterans find confusing or unclear? Why?

**Scenario #2 (10 minutes)**

Let say you're interested in taking an online course to build your coding skills. Using the site, how would you find a couple of online courses?

[He selected vet tec on landing page, then selected Online]

And then that’s it. I don’t want to overthink it.

T: let’s say you wanted to find a couple of different online programs.

It took me to this page here [ search results]. Am I still on Detroit? Something that would stand out to me would be those that are in familiar places, Chicago. What I will say is, I can click and see any of those programs, but I would want to do some research on the programs themselves. I would do a dual tab. Given that, if these are covered, then it doesn’t really matter. Now, zoom technologies seems to be the least familiar here. TBD rate. It does help you’re showing the housing rate because that changed again. If I were to look at a couple of online schools, I would click view details. [clicked on code platoon]. I would click on maybe these two on the left [7 gi bill learn more and school site link]. I would do other things, go to just various other comparison websites. Hopefully it would be edu and not .com if I can avoid it.

*[After participant finds at least two online programs.]*

If you were going to attend one, how would you decide between the two?

I like to see success rate, graduation rate, maybe, I’d like to see how performance is and maybe some stats. “95% of veterans this program helped and they were able to find positions by the conclusion of this program.” I’d like to see how truly successful the program was for others. You know how in law school there are these little fairs they’ll have. By the middle/end of the law school, you’ll have applied to certain programs. Employers are aware of the success of the programs. They’ll start reaching out to you or you’ll reach out to them.

*[After the particpant has explored the prototype and shared thoughts aloud.]*

**Potential Probing Questions**

**Profile Page**

1. As you think about the information you see and any additional information that might be helpful:
   * What factors are most important to you as you compare high-tech training providers and programs?

It would be a nice option to be able to compare schools. I would also like to see programs. Some programs, at umbc, we have umbc training codes. If I were to click on the program, it would expand to show me what we’re learning. If it did a comparison of the school, even going back to the previous page, it even laid out the program and what it was, that would help with usability as far as trying to find the right program that suits me. Right now, it’s too vague, I don’t even know what they are. If there was a way, like a circle with an I, information that expanded. At least I would know what I was getting into. This is only reading out to me what my benefits would be, not what the program is. I would try to go to the school and see what theirs is. I’m not trying to give the perception of being lazy. It’s not inherently obvious again. I would only use this to find out exactly how much I’m getting paid.

T: Any areas that are confusing?

It wouldn’t be too confusing. When I was clicking here [ radio buttons] I was imagining it would change the benefits below. [in gray box] What I’m thinking is this would show you the total pay out at the end of the 14 weeks. 14 weeks, so I guess that would make sense. It’s almost 4 months. So I guess they would pro-rate. I was making sure everything was adding up. When I checked the GI Bill comparison tool, I would check it to make sure I was getting paid what I needed to in regards to the GI Bill. Generally what I would do is first find a school on my own. After that, afgter I made sure that their programs were good for me, I would go to the GI Comparison Tool and see what their monthly rates are. I would hardly look at what the gi bill pays to school because they would most likely cover it. If it was private, there would be a yellow ribbon program to balance out the tuition. I don’t know what the max is the gi bill pays. I would assume it covers all public universities and colleges. It’s still saying GI Bill, not vet tec. I’m thinking chapter 33, post 9/11. That’s what’s coming to mind. Not gunnery, not vocrehab. It’s the post 9/11 gi bill.

* + What factors would lead you to choose one training provider over another?
  + What factors would lead you to choose one course over another?

1. What thoughts or questions do you have about the list of programs and the information that is available?
2. What thoughts or questions do you have about the questions on the left side of the page?
3. What thoughts or questions do you have on the contents of the gray box on the right?
4. Why do you think the total amount paid to you varies from the monthly basic housing allowance rate?
5. What additional information about a program would help you make an informed decision?

**Results Page**

1. What are your thoughts on the contents of the cards?
2. Why do you imagine the tuition on each card is displayed as a range?
3. What thoughts or questions do you have about the questions on the left side of the page?
4. How did the information on this page contribute to your selection of a school?
5. How would you be interested in narrowing down the list of training providers?
6. In your mind, what is the difference between a school and a training provider?

**Landing Page**

1. What thoughts or questions do you have regarding the questions on this page? [Observe whether the user thinks to select 'VET TEC'.] [Observe to see if they notice that the search filter disappears when they select VET TEC]

**Scenario #3 (5 minutes)**

Let say you're interested in taking classes through Zoom Technologies. How would you learn about the courses they offer?

Before there was an option where I could search schools by name [ search field ].

In that case, I’m assuming, using the vet tec, it’s already filtered out what schools will accept that. [he goes to zoom] generally, I would avoid a school like this that doesn’t thave enough information. Even if there are no other students there, I could go to the dot com and see it. There’s just not enough information here, so next.

*[After the participant has explored the prototype and shared thoughts aloud.]*

**Follow up questions**

1. What thoughts or questions do you have about finding information on programs that are not listed in the comparison tool?

**Post-Task Interview (5 minutes)**

Now that you’ve had a chance to explore the site, I have a few final questions for you.

* What are your general impressions of finding information about VET TEC providers and programs in the GI Bill Comparison Tool?

I think it’s good. The name of the tool is the GI Bill Comparison Tool. I didn’t know that there were options to see other benefits. I could check other benefits on there. I thought it was solely a GI Bill thing. The Post 9/11 pays the school directly, pays the housing directly to the student. I always tell students that they can always find out how much the gi bill will pay out. I have found some of the information to be inaccurate. I have told them if they want to find out for sure to call the VA directly.

* What additional enhancements or features would you recommend to improve the overall usefulness of this site?

Rather than… a lot of the va websites tend to have the standard look. It’s not very interactive. It has this weird dated look. To avoid the issue that I had the first time, oh, gi bill, those have to be displayed as buttons. Maybe 4 across then another 4 under that, making sure it says, be sure to use the right program. If I clicked on the vet tec thing before this page, I would hope that it would have vet tec selected for me already or at least highlighted. And then, a to be sure? Option right before I click. I like the feedback options. One of the best classes I had in school was heuristics. One big thing was the feedback option.

* How likely are you to use the GI Bill Comparison Tool in real life?
* Thinking about how you typically behave, would you be most likely to use the GIBCT on a desktop, tablet or phone?

I don’t know if I would use it on a mobile phone. I would rather use it on a laptop or a desktop.

* Do you have any additional thoughts or comments you'd like to share?

I would use an app if it was an effective one. If it wasn’t, I’m just perfectly ok doing it from home or a desktop or doing it somewhere else.

**Thank-You and Closing**

*[The moderator concludes each session by thanking the participant for their time and for offering his/her opinions and suggestions.]*

Thank you very much for taking the time to give us your feedback today. We really appreciate your help!

A: doing research on other schools, other comparison sites, which are they? Not other gi bill sites. I would go to other sites. This is the only site I know that tells me mostly accurate information about the gi bill, but in regards to finding out non-military related, I would just go to various other sites. I would type into google, “best schools for vets”. If I were to do that, I would go to usnews.com. It is a pretty well-known site. Military times generally has something as well.

C: you said you’re a school certifying official. Have you had any students coming through asking about vet tec? The biggest question I’ve been asked is that everyone knows now the gi billhas been expired, and the stem program that you get an additional 12 months.

How would you learn about technology programs that aren’t listed in the comparison tool?