**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?

No, not in the computer industry.

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

Basically, just compiling all of the majors available with all of the university. Sometimes there aren’t reliable search options for finding program. If there is, they usually don’t include filters for location.

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

Location, most importantly, eligibility by VA, and then checking the location and then lastly schedule/availability.

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

No.

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?

No questions there.

**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.

Ok. [he tried clicking the search schools button; afterwards, he was guided to locate vet tec option].

[search results: he tried typing into the search field for Detroit]. I would look at state. You can filter more if that’s there. I’ll go ahead and check out Detroit School for DT.

[school profile] It has the programs that they offer. The housing allowance is right there. What I’m thinking is, total paid to me, is that different than the housing allowance or is that the difference between the tuition payment to the school and what comes back to me? It makes me wonder if I receive 1746 and 873 or if I only get 873.

I wouldn’t change it [tuition amount field] but you can change it here just so you don’t have to go back and select a different program. Download data…that’s pretty cool.

*[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?

It’s really basic and it’s what I’d hoped to see as far as the first search opening it up. Sometimes sites only have a search function or they only have alphabetical sorting. I actually went to school for IT and I’m still in school for it. A lot of websites just don’t get maintained or have terrible search function. I can see here at the top [breadcrumb] and I can see if I need to go back.

The quickest way to search would be google. I don’t mind doing that, but if there’s a va website, I can go there instead of google. Having contact information there is important even if it’s just the website.

T: would you be interested in finding out more about this?

Even if the online program is better, I would still take the in person program since the housing allowance is better.

1. What led you to select [Program Name] over the others?
2. What information on these pages is the most valuable to you?

The length of time is a main consideration. For most veterans that I know, I’ve already chosen to go to school, and I’ve already made a decision that I’ll be in school for a certain amount of time. I haven’t felt in a rush to get a degree. I really enjoy the process because of the allowance there is and everything being taken care of.

1. What aspect of the page or the process might Veterans find confusing or unclear? Why?

Yeah, it might just be an error, but thinking about the total paid to you, the housing allowance. Just looking there, it’s a bit confusing about why the total is lower than the housing allowance. I’d like to see where that is coming from, how that is calculated. I like how it has an option for adding scholarships. It’s really helpful for determining what the total income would be.

**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?

[on search results page, he changed the option to “online only” hoping to update the cards to online classes].

I was wondering if I could select most of the schools at once or if I would just need to select one. [he clicked on code platoon]

So, I looked at the school. [he had trouble choosing a program]

T: how would you learn more information about the programs?

You definitely want more information about the programs themselves, and to have a basic comparison function, just to compare these benefits here. To get that information and compare that with other schools at the same time. I would want to know more information about the programs themselves and make a decision based on the school and the programs, not solely on the money that I’ll get. This information [application process] would be really useful here. I wouldn’t have found that out just looking at it. It’s good to know they’re on a continuous enrollment schedule. There are many jobs that don’t maybe have a degree program. You may not want to be in a traditional 2 semester program. It’s good to have contact information there. The school website would be good, too. I saw that at the top. They may not have a good website, though.

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

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

*[After the participant 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?
   * What factors would lead you to choose one training provider over another?
   * What factors would lead you to choose one course over another?
2. What thoughts or questions do you have about the list of programs and the information that is available?
3. What thoughts or questions do you have about the questions on the left side of the page?
4. What thoughts or questions do you have on the contents of the gray box on the right?
5. Why do you think the total amount paid to you varies from the monthly basic housing allowance rate?
6. 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?

[he selected in person and online to make sure he looked up all the schools on the landing page]

[search results he tried typing in the school name into the search field]

[school page] I was looking at additional resources at the top to see if there was more information about the school to keep me from scrolling down.

He clicked on the external school link in the application process tab to learn more about the school.

T: most valuable on search results page?

I’d like to know where it says tuition amount if that’s going to be covered by VA, to make sure that amount isn’t over the limit. If I’m looking for a school that has multiple programs, that would be a more important step for me, to open a school and see how many different degrees they offer, rather than gi bill students.

T: anything confusing? No, everything’s clear.

T: info on the left column confusing?

It would be nice to make a quick change and not have to go back. That’s something that might be really helpful. Having to go back and starting the search again, that would be helpful.

*[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?
* What additional enhancements or features would you recommend to improve the overall usefulness of this site?
* 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?
* Do you have any additional thoughts or comments you'd like to share?

**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: when you’re looking at a page like this, does this give you information that helps you understand what kind of program this is? No, it didn’t really occur to me. I wasn’t looking for that right off the bat, but it didn’t pop off to me either. It didn’t occur to me, looking at the programs, that one is 2 weeks and one is two months. It didn’t occur to me that one might be a certificate program and one might be a degree. It would be difficult to make a decision based on the length of completion alone. I’d still feel pretty confident in just going to a traditional program and finishing a degree, if only because I could still get a certification. I might not be willing to do an online program that’s longer than a few weeks if the housing is only going to be the 800 national average. Maybe I don’t have time for a job, maybe I’m learning the material. I would feel more confident doing the in person program. I would like to see something that tells me if it’s a longer certification program or a longer degree program.

A: How would you find out the difference between technology professional 2 and technology professional 6? I would want to get that information from the school. How do I open up the school website and look at something there. I wouldn’t want too much information on the va page, just because I’m still going to look at it on the school website, just because it can be difficult to keep up with the most current school information.

C: You said you would like to be able to compare benefits between different schools and programs at the same time. How do you imagine doing that?

It could be something like a cost comparison, or maybe something like a benefit comparison, so maybe just these numbers, bah, amount paid to me, like if there was a way I could select, like if this school has 3 different programs and I could select 2 of them, or being able to select 2 different schools and seeing information about them.