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

*June 14, 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? Not particularly. There are some aspects of the tech industry that are interesting, particularly with the biomedical devices, but it’s not something I’m interested in pursuing.
2. If you were interested in attending a high-tech training program, how would you decide what course to attend? I would try to do research online and try to engage opportunities, such as at career fairs.
3. What factors would be most important to you when selecting a course? Towards selecting a course, one would be applicability. Two would be the profession I want to go into, but as well as the reputation of the institution providing that course.
4. Have you used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before? If yes, what was your experience? I don’t believe I have.
5. Used edu benefits before? Yes, I have. It was the Post-9/11.

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?

Initially it looks like a standard VA benefits page. I think high tech is kind of out of date term. It’s just personal opinion, but high tech was more of a buzzword when everyone was getting the aol cds in the mail. If this is targeting millennials, and people coming out of the military, there needs to be more specificity. What does high tech mean? Does that mean software programming, software development […] all of the above?

VET TEC training won’t count against your GI Bill entitlement. That’s a good note because the first question that popped into my mind is if that takes away from the GI Bill and I guess it doesn’t.

Ok, so I guess my question about training areas is answered in the next question.

Alright, that all looks good. I suppose another quick way of saying this is that the stipend you get with the Post-9/11 GI Bill, that would be another easy reference to put in there so vets understand what they get.

Just a note for the section on how to apply. Putting in hyperlinks for those forms is very helpful, especially since two are referenced. Having applied for education assistance before, the va really struggles with having a single point to click. I’m just going to assume that that link is going to pull up another webpage that will pull up another link with forms that you have to scroll through on and on. If the va is going to reference a specific form, it would make it a lot easier if there’s a hyperlink directly to that form rather than having to click endlessly.

[preferred training providers] I see the narrative in there, but I don’t see how that incentivizes veterans to pick those specific providers. Is there an extra incentive, is there easier processing?

I know you guys are focused on the web content and how it’s presented. This seems like a limited list, especially given the geographic location. One in Colorado, one in Wilmington…

The only last thing I’d say is that, since you’re not limited for space with that list of companies, an additional header could go back and reference, maybe give a better description on the actual “high tech skills” that it’s going to facilitate. Some of them you can read between the lines, like software development bootcamp. With code platoon, one would assume it’s coding, but what type of coding? And then with technology professional 2 and technology professional 6. I suppose you could go over there and look on their site, but it’s going to be easier if you reference the skills that will support.

**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're moving to Detroit, Michigan and you'd like to advance your IT career by taking advantage of the VA's new high-tech program. Using the GI Bill Comparison Tool, how would you find a training course in Detroit and determine how much money you’d receive to help pay your rent while attending the course?

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

[he tried looking at military status field first]

I noticed a part of that search disappeared when I clicked on vet tec so I was trying to go back to see what I missed.

[on srp, he tried typing into search field]

Alright, two schools in Detroit. So right off the bat, it tells me I may be eligible for up to 5399 for tuition, and for housing, up to 1746/mo. Ok, that makes sense, so cick on the first one.

Alright, so this school has two different programs. The first one is in person, and the second is online and the tuition and fees is that much. [he read instructions in benefits caulculator] Alright, so that tells me that the housing allowance is just going to cover the $873 while I’m using it, and that the gi bill will not be affected. Before going on, let me see if I can look at the other program. The other program, I see that’s there’s the online rate for 12 weeks, so that’s going to be the housing allowance. Alright, so going back to the original [program], alright, so it gives the address, Because that’s good, and then Application Process. First you’ll need to apply to vet tec programs…Am I able to click on this link to apply to vet tec?

Anytime the va references a form, it doesn’t hurt to have a link to whatever the specific form is. It doesn’t matter what branch of the government you are, but having a hyperlink is handy. [he clicked on apply to vet tec link]

[on vet tec application] previous high tech experience, is that for information gathering purposes, or is that for application purposes? Is it a program for everyone? Do I have the experience?

[T told him to switch back to prototype]

One thing I’ll say is having the housing allowance like that is very helpful[...] This tool, already knowing the length of the program in advance, and what you’re going to get for the duration of the term is very helpful.

Being able to see the two programs from the DSDT, that’s all very straightforward.

*[After the participant has selected one of the DSDT programs and shared thoughts aloud.]*

**Potential Probing Questions**

1. What amount would you expect to receive to help pay your rent as you take classes?
2. What are your thoughts on why the Monthly BAH rate is different from what you will actual receive while taking the course?
3. Would you expect to receive the same benefits for both programs?
4. How would you determine what amount of BAH you'd receive for the other course?
5. What aspect of the page or the process might other Veterans find confusing or unclear? Why? I’m not seeing anything because there are multiple links on the page on the top and bottom[…] One thing I will say, under Additional Resources, it might be handy to put in an additional link to the effect of what if I want to apply for a program that I found but it’s not here? That might be able to redirect to an information page about that[…] That would help the va get a school added to the program.

**Scenario #2 (10 minutes)**

Let say you work full-time during the day and are interested in taking a web-based course in the evenings to build your technical skills. Using the site, how would you find a couple of web-based courses to compare?

*[After participant finds at least two online programs (Code Platoon & DSDT]*

If I’m doing online, obviously location doesn’t really matter, but on the left hand side, learning format, if I want just online, it’s really easy to see if I want online only, that helps. The two schools actually pop up, so that’s fairly straightforward.

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

First off, I’d go to view details for the web developer course for code platoon. [11:35]

I will say as far as being able to compare the two programs, I can go back. There’s no way to do a side to side comparison. I can see that one is 240 hours, and the other is 560 hours…[ ] If I’m working during the day, if the Chicago program is more than double the hours of the Detroit program, if I’m gong to be doing this nights and weekends and having family things going on, it would be really important for me to see what the actual time commitment is going to be. [length would be helpful on course cards].

T: anything else you’d consider in your decision-making factors? [11:40] Why is there such a big difference [in tuition and hours] between the schools? Is the Detroit school actually worth 18,000 and 240 hours or is the va going to be paying?

T: who receives the tuition, you or the school? My impression is that the school receives the tuition, and I receive the housing. I could be biased in that because I’ve used a significant portion of my gi bill benefits. The tuition is a direct payment to the school, and the housing is a payment to me.

T: thoughts on star provider? I’m not sure what that would mean to me. If it wasn’t for the information I saw earlier, I might see that as an endorsement, especially given the cost of tuition. However, with the information provided earlier, I don’t really see how that’s supposed to affect my decision. If someone else is paying for it, I don’t really think that would effect my deicioon on whether or not the va got a refund if I could find employment within 180 days. On the other side, there are more outdated technical programs, like devry, itt tech, for profit programs, they haven’t had good experience from a public standpoint. I would be skeptical that they would refund 18k if I couldn’t find a job. I would assume there’d be some small print.

T: do you have enough information here to make a decision? As far as the curriculum, the instructions, skillsets this will make me more qualified in, the last one I think is a real big one, what do these programs provide at the end as far as certification? Anyone that’s looked for a job in the last 5 years, there’s a huge certification for everything. The job market is a huge discriminator for everything. There’s different certification for different coding languages.

T: in terms of the information that you’re talking about, what do you expect to see here as opposed to on the provider side? When you click on the school link itself, just have a standardized list of information, could be bullet points, skills you’d train in, licenses, but if you kept it standard for every school, then you could quickly compare that information. […]11:49

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

**Potential Probing Questions**

1. What led you to select [Program Name] over the others?
2. If both courses offered the same certification course in the same city, how would you determine which you'd prefer? (Would user select the preferred program?)
3. How would you learn more about the contents of the course?

**Alternative version of the Search Results Page**

[Return to the result page]

We’d also like your thoughts on a different version of the results page. The version you just looked at showed a list of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . We have another version that displays a list of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ instead.  
We are interested in your thoughts on which you find most useful.

Would you rather see and be able to compare providers (like on this tab) or courses (like on this tab)?

I just think that having the programs themselves is a better format. Well, I don’t know. I’m just thinking in my head. My initial thought is, having the actual courses is a better format, even though there’s multiple schools. Being able to do search on the side, you can search by date, country, city, school…if you just wanted to see everything that was in a school, you could search the school name and it would bring up all the courses. Both the names of the schools and the names of the courses are pretty ambiguous. It’s not like I’m searching for bachelor of arts. It’s like, skill distillery, cool name, but then you click into skill distillery, and the course name, full stack…, and again, that might mean something to me if I turned a wrench in the army. I think doing the list of courses and then being able to search for schools specifically is a more user friendly format, but given the names of the courses, you could go either way. I would say, that, on the left hand side is very handy [filters]. If there was anything similar for just the gi bill in general. If they had something like being able to add the yellow ribbon, that type of specificity, that would be really handy.

T: types of institutions? I don’t quite understand what the employers only function is as far as a gi bill comparison tool.

C: part of the search disappearing? I [11:58]

**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!