Participant: *Ramon (participant 3)*   
Date: 10/16/2020   
Time: 10:30 am

**Discussion Guide for Comparison Tool Redesign (Veterans and Beneficiaries)**

*When the participant is ready, begin the session with the following intro*

**Intro - 5 minutes**

Thanks for joining us today! My name is Amy and I also have some colleagues on the line observing and taking notes. Today we're going to talk about your education journey - what's important to you in selecting schools, how you go about finding information and ways to streamline your experience with the VA.

Before we start, a few things I want to mention:

* **This entire session should take about 45 minutes.** I want to be sure not to keep you much longer, so I may occasionally prompt you with the next question or topic.
* **In this session, we want to hear your honest opinions.** We are not testing your ability. We just want to improve these tools to better meet Veteran's needs. I will not be offended by any opinions you express, and I welcome your feedback.
* **If for any reason and at any time you want to stop the session, please let me know.**
* **Are you comfortable if I record the audio as we talk today?** We use the recordings to confirm that we have captured your opinions accurately. The recordings are destroyed after we complete analysis, and none of your comments will be attributed to you directly.
  + If yes: **Once I start recording, I am going to confirm that you are ok with me recording this session once more.**

*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**

Let’s start with a few warm-up questions.  
*Background: Veteran caregiver. Not a Veteran himself.*

* Are you currently using or have you ever used VA education benefits?  
  *in the process of getting it*
  + If yes, which benefit are you using?
    - Was that benefit yours or was it transferred to you?
    - Where are you in the process of deciding what school you want to go to?
    - When did you start school?
  + If no, do you plan on using your benefits in the near future?  
    *Yes.*
    - Which benefit?  
      Chapter 35 *– its for a dependent. Dependent education assistance*
    - Is that benefit yours or was the benefit transferred to you?  
      *Yes, it is in the processes of being transferred to me*
    - Where are you in the school selection process?  
      *Right now I am just waiting to hear something back from the VA*
    - When you hear back from the VA and anticipate you can use the benefit… what do you anticipate you will do with it?  
      *I’m thinking about online school.*
    - Where are you in the process of deciding what school you want to go to?  
      *I’m looking at 2-3 schools right now… ben foster and uh… university of phoenix.*
    - …
    - What kind of searches are you doing to find that information (to determine if the school accepts those benefits)  
      *Online and on TV*
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before?  
  *No, I have not.*
* As you are looking at schools and the programs, you mentioned you wanted the program to be less than a year right? Is there any information you’re looking for but unable to find at this point?  
  *at this time, no.*
  + If yes, what did you use it for?
  + How did you hear about it?
  + Do you remember when you used it (while researching schools, after you had picked a school)?

**First Topic: Researching and Picking Schools - 15 minutes**

Let's talk about when you first decided to go to school.

* What made you decide to go back to school?
* What was most important to you when you were looking for potential schools?
  + What resources did you use to research schools?
  + What was the most difficult part about picking a school?
  + Was there any information you wanted to have, but couldn't find?
* If you've started school, is there anything you know now about the school that you wish you had known earlier?
* Are there any specific programs that you as a military-connected student are interested in?

**Second Topic: Comparison Tool - 15 minutes**

*Facilitator brings up CT* I'm going to bring up the GI Bill Comparison Tool so we can walk through it together. As we go through it, let me know what catches your eye or what information you think is valuable.

Landing page:

* What would you do on this first page?  
  after hearing explanation: *ah okay that sounds like something I’m definitely going to have to use.*
* Filling in the form:  
  *I’m a Spouse, no for active duty, hmm gi bill benefit we will need to see the drop down… Dependents educational Assistance looks right. Type of institution: schools for now and lets do online only. For enter a school… go to university of phoenix.*

Search Results page:

* What do you think of the search results?  
  *hmmm okay… so these are the three campuses they came up with? Scroll down… okay… shows you everything right there huh? Okay well I see I’m looking at the top, it says I’m eligible up too… okay now I want to understand what does the housing mean? Hmm okay alright… will it change if I clicked on any one of the programs? Let’s go to independent studies... Okay not too much, can you click on view details for the top one? Oh lets go back and click on the Atlanta one.*
  + Do you see the school you're looking for?
  + What do you think of the information you see?

School profile: Quick scroll down. Settings from search did not follow to school page in estimate your benefits

* What do you think about that Cautionary Information?  
  *wow are they saying they were sued? Hmm reached a settlement, we don’t want to look like were wrong is that what that is? Uh this app goes behind the scenes huh? I’ve never heard of that before, this is my first time hearing cautionary information. I think any company or entity should have that on the site. People need to know, that’s a real good tool to have there. I’m glad I got a chance to see it here so if I see it anywhere else I will be sure to click on it. So far so good.*
* Student feedback – feedback on the school from students  
  *hmmm wow recruiting and marketing marking practices.. that’s not too far from the top.*
  + what does recruiting and marketing practices mean to you?  
    *How they recruit and what they are doing, what is being said, how they are marketing, these are complaints! That’s not cool! Somewhere in here you are lying or saying something that is not true. Looks like I might need to reevaluate my choices. Yeah this is a good tool right here!*
* Additional information   
  *My previous diploma, University of Phoenix did not accept because it was not Accredited so I need a school that is an accredited GED program.*
* What do you think of what you're seeing?
  + What stands out to you?
  + What do you think of the information you see?
  + From what you see here, what information would be most helpful to you?
  + What information is NOT important to you?
  + Is there anything else you would like to see here?

Are you familiar with any of the following programs:

* Student Vet Groups
* STEM Scholarship
* Yellow Ribbon
* Would you be interested in learning more about these programs?

**Final Topic: Making It Easier - 5 minutes**

We've talked about researching and picking a school and also the Comparison Tool.

* If you could make the process of selecting a school simple and easy, talk me through what the ideal process would look like.
  + What type of information about a school would be critical to know?
  + What people or websites would you talk to to help make a decision?
  + Are there any parts of the Comparison Tool that you would change?
  + Are there any parts of the Comparison Tool you would keep the same?

**Post-Task Interview - X minutes**

* Any questions for me?

**Thank-You and Closing - X minutes**

Well 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!

**Sample Conversation Guides *(note: these links point to resources in the va.gov-team GitHub repo)***

* [Scheduling Accessibility and Usability Study: Complex Recruit, Highly Variable based on User Profile](https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/blob/master/products/health-care/appointments/research/2017-studies/access-usability/access-usability-conversation-guide.md)
* [Veteran ID Card Discovery Interview](https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/blob/master/products/veteran-id-cards/research/discovery/discovery-conversation-guide.md)