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

**P3 – Ramon Demery**

*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.

Notes – you are a Veteran’s caregiver? Yes. Not a Veteran

* Are you currently using or have you ever used VA education benefits?
  + Yes I did – I’m in the process of getting it. Chapter 35 (Amy – Veteran readiness and deployment?) It’s Dependent Educational Assistance.
  + If yes, which benefit are you using?
    - Was that benefit yours or was it transferred to you?
    - When did you start school?
  + If no, do you plan on using your benefits in the near future?
    - Which benefit?
    - Is that benefit yours or was the benefit transferred to you? Transferred. Thinking of doing online school.
    - Where are you in the school selection process?
      * I’m looking at like 2 or 3. Ben Foster is one of them. And University of Phoenix.
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before? No I haven’t.
  + 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?
  + I have to get my GED before I can go to those schools. Right now I’m looking for a program online where I can get my GED.
  + How find program? I find a few, but I’m still looking. I have to see if they accept the VA benefits first. I have to find that out…and that’s what I’m looking at right now. I’m waiting on the benefits. I’m seeing what’s out there and what’s affordable. At the same time, I don’t want to be going to school for a year so I’m looking for something that takes less time. The search is going alright. Just have to keep searching.
* What was most important to you when you were looking for potential schools?
  + What resources did you use to research schools?
    - I went online and I’ve seen a few ads on TV.
  + What was the most difficult part about picking a school?
  + Was there any information you wanted to have, but couldn't find?
    - At this time, no
* 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?
  + Was looking for CH 35 on Landing page – instead of Dependents Education Assistance.
  + Schools for now
  + Online
  + University of Phoenix

Search Results page:

* What do you think of the search results?
  + Hmm….(saw caution flags)
  + So these are the campuses they come up with?
  + Yeah, scroll down. Shows you everything right there huh.
  + I see where it says that I’m eligible up to…what’s the housing mean? Amy explained – Yeah, I remember my wife explaining that. Will it change if I clicked on any one of the programs? Let’s go Independent Study. Amy selected it. I just wanted to see if anything….it don’t matter which one I guess. Can you click on View details? (top one). Oh they got a campus here in Atlanta…yeah I didn’t see that last time.
  + Do you see the school you're looking for?
  + What do you think of the information you see?
* Notes: Search results changed when Amy went back
* Military details didn’t hold

School profile:

* What do you think of what you're seeing?
  + Cautionary – what does that mean? Does this say that they’re being sued? So we were wrong, but we don’t want to look like we were wrong. That’s what it sounds like. We’ve seen plenty of that. Wow. Okay yeah…this goes behind the scenes. I never heard of that before…this is the first time I’ve heard of Cautionary Information. Any entity like that should have that on their site. People need to know what they’re getting into. Yeah, that’s real good to have right there. I’m glad I saw that here. So far so good
  + In the last 24 months…wow. Recruiting and marketing practices…that’s second from the top. Well the recruiting…the practices that’s how you recruit. That’s how you’re getting students into your school through marketing and these are complaints. That’s not cool. So somewhere you’re lying and saying that’s not true. I might have to re-evaluate my choices. Yeah, it’s a good tool right here. Okay so…before I can find an online school to go to…and I did look at University of Phoenix and I had a diploma I had back in 2009. And they got back to me and told me it wasn’t accredited. Can I also find an accredited GED on this app? That would be helpful for me. You know there’s a lot of online scams. That same diploma I got when I was in college for 2 years…I don’t know why they wouldn’t accept it. I believe they said it wasn’t accredited. Either way I need to find a school that is doing the GED testing that the VA will accept.
  + Education and training I see that at the top
  + What type of school/degree were you hoping to do at Phoenix?
    - Real estate. Ben Foster – their program was too long. Over a year
  + 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!