# Our editorial workflow

During the course of our work on the VA.gov modernization project, our team has developed the following editorial process. The process draws on our team’s collective knowledge, industry best practices, and trial and error.

We’re always open to modifying this process to make it easier to use. If you have questions or comments, or want to propose a workflow change, let us know! We’d be happy to schedule a time to chat.

## Step 1: Identifying the need for content

The first step in our process is identifying the need for content (whether that’s new content or content that needs to be edited). We identify needs in a few different ways:

* **Through external requests**: Requests from the product owner and requests made via Slack/email.
  + **Note**: To promote transparency and accurately track our velocity, we create new JIRA tickets for all content-related requests that come through Slack or email.
* **As the result of content audits**: Content needs identified during the course of routine audits/inventories.
* **Based on research findings**: Content needs surfaced by research with our users (internal and external).

Once we’ve identified a content need, we create a JIRA ticket for it and size the task. Tasks are assigned during sprint planning, although members of the content team can self-assign tasks if they need more work during a given sprint.

## Step 2: Drafting

Once we’ve identified a need for content, we’ll begin the drafting process. When legacy content is available, we’ll use it as a starting point for our drafts (e.g., edit it to reflect VA’s stylistic preferences and updated information). If no legacy content is available, we’ll start from scratch.

Typically, we write drafts in Drive documents. Drive allows us to easily share documents with our teammates and gather feedback (in the form of comments or edits made in Suggesting mode). We prefer not to draft directly in the CMS unless necessity requires it. Although we draft content in Drive, we’re happy to share our drafts (with stakeholders and other team members) as Word docs.

## Step 3: Editing

With drafting finished, we can move on to editing, one of the more straightforward steps in our process. Each member of the content team makes developmental, stylistic, and copy edits to their content before tagging it for peer review (the next step).

## Step 4: Peer review

To ensure we’re creating the highest-quality content possible, we peer review all newly developed content. Once a team member has finished self-editing their content, they’ll ask another member of the team to review it for accuracy, flow, adherence to the VA.gov style guide, and grammatical correctness.

Our peer review process works as follows:

* Content writer asks another team member for a peer review.
* If the team member has capacity, the content writer will create a JIRA subtask for the peer review (and assign the subtasks to their colleague).
* Once the peer reviewer has finished making edits and offering feedback, they’ll mark the subtask as done.

## Step 5: QA

After the peer review phase comes QA. All content published on the CMS goes through manual and automated QA, which you can read more about here.

## Step 6: Stakeholder review

Next, we share completed content with Shelley and Louis, some of our Pittsburgh stakeholders. Previously, we’d held coworking sessions with Shelley and Louis to walk through finalized content/get their feedback on the accuracy of that content, but this turned out not to be the best approach, given the hecticness of everyone’s schedules.

Our current approach is to share links to the staging site with Shelley and Louis. This allows them to review content when it’s most convenient for them. Shelley and Louis share their feedback via email, and the content team creates new JIRA tickets based on this feedback.

## Step 7: Iteration

Content work is never done — organizational and staffing changes mean that “finalized” content will, at some point, need to be updated.

When a content need is identified, we start this process over again from step 1.