# Conversation Guide: VA.gov Home Page Redesign ROUND 2 Usability Testing

## Warm-up Questions - 5 minutes

Let’s start with a few questions...

1. What kind of device are you using today? *(Computer / Tablet / Smartphone) It is an iPhone 13*
2. I will be sharing a web page link with you during the session. How would you prefer to receive the URL? I could dictate it to you or put it in the Zoom chat. *NOTE how to share URL: dictate / Zoom chat*
3. *(If using assistive technology:)* How would you rate your level of experience with using [specific assistive technology, such as a screen reader]--beginner, intermediate, advanced, or expert? Intermediate
4. *(If using assistive technology:)* How long have you been using [specific assistive technology]? The last 2 years; it is based on how I feel physically or even how my mental health is. If I am struggling, then I typically have to comprehension sake.
5. What VA benefits, if any, do you have experience with? *RECORD: health care / education / career services / disability / housing loans / pension / life insurance / burial benefits / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ VRE, browsed through the home loan benefits. I work with a Post-9/11 counselor through the VA*
6. How do you typically get information and benefits from the VA? *(Google / Facebook / MHV / eBenefits / Contact center call or email / VA.gov / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) newsletters I get in my email, eBenefits, browse sometimes word of mouth.*
7. Can you tell me about the last time you were looking for information or trying to do something with your VA benefits? It was for VRE approval. Went to ebenefits.va.gov.

How did it go? Not well, I was looking for a letter of approval to send into the school and I could not find it. I was redirected to VA.gov and it was not useful at all. I also looked for the letter that I received that broke down my disability I received but I could not find it. I was only able to get the disability breakdown because I called the center.

## User Tasks

Now I'm going to ask you to do a number of things that you may or may not have done before. For each task, I will stop you at a point when I feel like we've done enough, and I won't ask you to sign in.

*(if a task is taking too long, could say "Let's try a different task...")*

### IF/WHEN participant wants to sign in before doing a task...

* How would you do that? *(RECORD: "Sign in" button in header / "Create account" button below header /*
  + *"Sign in or create an account" button on a content page > Sign in or Create account link / My VA button )*
* *(If "Create account" button)...*
  + What are your impressions of what you see?
  + Is this what you expected? *(RECORD: Yes / No / Confusion / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*
  + What would you do next? *(RECORD: colored sign-in button / Create an account link below / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*
* *(If not currently on the home page)* Could you please go back to the original page you were on? How might you do that from here?
* Do you have an account? *(Yes / No / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*
  + *(if No)* What do you think about **whether** you **need** an account?
  + Why or why not?
  + *(Given whether they already have an account, did they use the appropriate button/link to sign in vs. create an account? Yes / No )*
* If you were on a public computer and didn't want to sign in, is there anything you could do from this web page?

### Task 1: [Message your doctor or get a health care message] - Ideally IF *HAVE* VA HEALTH CARE

Let's pretend that you had a doctor's appointment at the VA last week, and now you have a follow up question for the doctor. How could you contact them? So, what I am looking for is a link that says messaging or sign in. Sign in is really where I would go. VA health care is where I would click. So, I clicked on VA health care and Use VA Secure Messaging. So, to be honest I am already frustrated because this is kind of slow. I feel like this is not going to get anywhere. It is a lot of information, and it is overwhelming.

If you see here, the secure messaging. For someone like me who is familiar with the system, I am looking at it and it is giving me a lot of ways to login. It is a transition period, I guess. I am still getting used to it even though it has been out for a while. I have had bad experiences with the VA.gov website itself. I think the information is useful, but it just seems like a lot of information to look at. There is too much information on this page. It is so overwhelming. I have seen this screen; it does not give like a clear way of going into the system because it changes the system. When I log into my myhealthevet and it is sending me over to VA.gov. It always sends me over to VA.gov. for me that has been the most frustrating part about the transition to VA.gov.

I would login through myhealthevet or ID.me. Say I am looking to something on myheatlhevet, it will send me over to VA.gov.

* How would you rate the ease of finding what you were looking for on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is *difficult* and 5 is *easy*? And why? Uhm it was fairly easy so I would say about a 4.

### Task 2: [Show that you're a Veteran (with benefit letter or Veteran ID card)]

Suppose you need to show that you're a Veteran for a special discount at a store. From this web page, how might you request proof of your status as a Veteran? I would go to VA benefits health care, and I would go to disability. So that didn’t work. That doesn’t help me with what I need so I am going to try disability compensation. Then I would go to manage. Then I would go to download your VA benefit letters. Then I would sign in and I would be able to download the letters that would show my benefits, my service, or even my medical.

* How would you rate the ease of finding what you were looking for on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is *difficult* and 5 is *easy*? And why? Uh, 2. Uhm it is a lot of links and its something that I look for often uhm because a lot of the times there has to be a certain date, so I often have to reprint the letters. It is a lot of steps to get to the place that I need to be. However, I give it a 2 because it was clear steps but too many of them.

### Task 3: [Find a mental health counselor or therapist]

Pretend that you've been going through some challenges in your life recently, and you want to talk to someone about how you're feeling. How would you do that? I would click talk to a veterans crisis line at the top. I actually do call so I usually have the phone number saved in my phone already.

* How would you rate the ease of finding what you were looking for on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is *difficult* and 5 is *easy*? And why? 5

### Task 4: [Updates in VA benefits (VA promo)]

From this web page, how could you learn about recent changes that may affect benefits and services offered by the VA? Uhm I would think it would be in the VA news. So actually, no. I would go to press releases (at the bottom of the page). Yeah this would be where I would go to see any changes.

Is it for like my personal case or in general? Okay yeah I would go to the news press release or important news. The reason I kept scrolling was because VA news doesn’t always current news to me cause a lot of things they cover is stuff I have already dealt with over the last 13 years I have been with the VA. Press releases would be more recent. VA news probably has stuff I have already read in the newsletter or seen on the news.

What are your impressions of what you're looking at? *(news / benefit / ad / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

How would you get more information about this? *(Learn what the PACT Act means for you / Read the full article / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

* How would you rate the ease of finding what you were looking for on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is *difficult* and 5 is *easy*? And why? Uhm, I would say 5.

### Task 4A: [VA news]

How could you learn what else is new--see if there are other stories from the VA that might be relevant to you? *(More VA news / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)* uhm, probably more VA news.

* How would you rate the ease of finding what you were looking for on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is *difficult* and 5 is *easy*? And why? 5

### Task 5: [Review or update your dependents]

Say that you just got married. How would you tell the VA about your new spouse? I would have to sign in. I would go to disability compensation to log in to add or remove a dependent. I would sign in through ID.me or use the eBenefits. This one I would use ID.me.

* How would you rate the ease of finding what you were looking for on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is *difficult* and 5 is *easy*? And why? 4, uhm not so much the links just because I kind of feel like the first link I clicked was ambiguous. Oh there is a link at the bottom that says dependents on your disability benefits. I probably should have clicked on this.

### Task 6: [Check the current disability compensation rates]

You'd like to see VA's current disability compensation rates. How would you find these? Oh I would search that. \*types in compensation chart\* clicked on compensation rates but saw I chart I have never seen in my life.

Is the information on here current? I mean that would make a difference.

I would go back and research compensation rates 2022 and then that would be the first link. This is pretty straightforward.

* How would you rate the ease of finding what you were looking for on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is *difficult* and 5 is *easy*? And why? A 3. The link isn’t there but it is easy to search if you search for the right phrase. I was a little quick with tapping and instead of compensation rate I did compensation chart and it was showing me the compensation chart for disability but not the actual rates.

### Task 7: [Compare VA education benefits and rates by school]

There are several universities in your area, and you want to figure out which one to attend in order to maximize VA's coverage of your tuition and housing. How would you figure that out? I would look for education benefits. So I would look for information. I suppose Post 9/11 GI Bill and other VA education benefit rates so yeah I would use the GI Bill Comparison Tool. So I would search by location.

* How would you rate the ease of finding what you were looking for on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is *difficult* and 5 is *easy*? And why? Uh actually that was a little easier than I thought it would be, uhm, but it was kind of happenstance so I would say a 3.

### Task 8: [File for a VA disability increase] - Ideally IF *HAVE* VA DISABILITY COMPENSATION

Your hearing loss from your time in the military has gotten worse over the last year and you want to try to increase your disability rating. How would you do that from the web page? Uhm, I would go to uhm, let me see. I would go to disability at the bottom and then I would file a claim. Actually, that wouldn’t be the right thing because I already have that. So I would file for a VA disability increase at the bottom. Which it looks like it is the same form.

It does surprise me because had I known it was the same form I would have just used the previous link I had clicked on. I like that it shows you the respondent burden.

* How would you rate the ease of finding what you were looking for on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is *difficult* and 5 is *easy*? And why? 5 actually. I feel like now that I have been scrolling through the website with intention I am able to understand the website a little more. But it has taken a little getting used it. I have gone to the Va.gov website before I feel like I am always going in circles. I have even gone as far as going to the, for my records, uhm I have even gone straight to the website just to get a copy of my medical records and stuff.

## Post-Task Interview - 10 minutes

*Type into #feedback-backchannel: "Any questions you want me to ask?"*

1. *(IF using a screen reader–ASK WHILE STILL ON A CONTENT PAGE, NOT HOME PAGE)* If you wanted to share your thoughts on this web page with the VA, how would you do it? *(Feedback button on bottom right of page that's not the home page / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*
   1. Have you *ever* done this before?
   2. If so, how, and when?
   3. Could you please go back to the original web page you opened? How would you share your thoughts on this web page?
   4. *(Want to see if screen reader users can/will use the Medallia feedback button)*

Could you please go back to the original web page you opened?

1. What worked *well* for you? Uhm, it gives me the sense that it is a website map, the first page and my unfamiliarity was kind of overwhelming initially. It requires me to pay attention and read but it is a lot easier than the VA.gov I am used to.
2. What was *unclear or didn't work well* for you? Initially, like I said, it was really overwhelming. A couple of times that we did the links, I think it was like the VA letter or something, that took a little longer than the other task but even then, I think it is straightforward now that I have used the website if that makes any sense.
3. What would you like to *change or add*? Uhm I would put the search at the very bottom just because if I cant find it after scrolling through the whole page, I am going to search. That may be backwards for everyone else but I like to scroll through to see what I can find before I search because I might be able to find something else I really need. I really like that the VA benefits and the health care have descriptions. I would put those up higher and Idk. If it were to speak to the reader as if they are task oriented it would be a lot easier to stay on task instead of “explore” even something simple like “What do you need?” or something that suggests that it is, there’s a reason I am on here, so I would look for things to do really, or even the way you have it “Popular on VA.gov” I would do the ones that say explore. Really I would just switch the headlines. I think for whatever is popular on VA. I think the PACT Act is really important to have on there so after that I would put the explore and then I would put the popular on VA and then the search tool at the bottom. The news I think it just taking up extra space to be honest. If I am looking at the website it’s because I need something more particular.

So when Ive used the VA.gov, these are the links I usually look for. Since those links are first (popular on VA), I just clicked on what I knew already.

News taking up space, any comment on the news that is there: sounds like corporate to me. It sounds like someone is taking my money. I think it's soliciting to veterans and I don’t like that.

1. *(IF entered email address for VA updates)* What would you expect to happen?
2. *(IF haven't already discussed)* Can you look under the Search box and tell me about the links you see under "Other search tools"?
   1. What do you think they are, and when might you use them?
   2. *RECORD comments about Find VA location, VA form, benefit resources and support*
3. *(IF haven't already discussed)* Do you have an account that you use to sign in on VA.gov? *(Yes / No / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*
   1. *(if No)* What do you think about **whether** you **need** an account?
   2. Why or why not?
4. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you think I should know? Uhm, no. I think this is very easy on the eyes even the colors work well together and they contrast each other enough. It's not too bright and it’s not too dark. I think the fonts are good. The space between the headline and the links, maybe they should be different fonts because I overlooked it. It’s too close or if it was centered even, that would allow me to easily find the first link. (the headline) I didn’t realize there was a link, I thought it was part of a description or a date.

How often have you visited the current VA.gov site: 3 weeks ago when I was helping a new vet apply for her benefits. about 4 times per month depending on what I have going on with school, or my mental health, or my appointments. I travel often so a lot of the times I will look for a VA location near me. So I will look for a pharmacy nearby in case I have to pick up prescription.

## Thank You and Closing - 1 minute

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 learn about Veterans so we can improve the online tools that we provide.

If you know any other Veterans, caregivers, or service members who might be willing to participate in a future research session like this one, you can pass along the web link that you'll receive in your email from our team.

Thank you so much again, and I hope that you enjoy the rest of your day!