# 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) Laptop with an external monitor linked to it.*
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?
4. *(If using assistive technology:)* How long have you been using [specific assistive technology]?
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 / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ER visits*
6. How do you typically get information and benefits from the VA? *(Google / Facebook / MHV / eBenefits / Contact center call or email / VA.gov / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) browse the website for information*
7. Can you tell me about the last time you were looking for information or trying to do something with your VA benefits? Actually, I was doing that today. I heard that there was going to be another vaccine for the variant, and I believe I googled it and typed in VA and it brought to me a link to call a clinic but I did not complete the task. (where did you find the phone number?) I was speaking to a friend of mine and she told she had her 4th vaccine shot and she was telling it was a booster so I copy and pasted into the google site and it brought me to clinics close to where I am and it gave me a phone number to the closest location to me. And also there was a whole snippet about various boosters and who qualifies but it was vague so I made the phone call.

## 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? Well from this website? First thing I would do would be sign in. I would click the sign in link. I believe I have this ID.me.

I would click “Contact us” I would imagine. So I do not like to talk to not live person. I don’t like making phone calls. I would probably click this link “Contact your local VA facility” then click the Find VA location.

If you didn’t tell me about the website and you told me I needed to follow up for the VA doctor I went to, I would use Google to ask VA follow up questions for doctors visit and I would follow the link they give me but I would only trust the VA links. Go to VA.gov website. I believe there is a messaging box. That is how I do it. Like an email type activity and I can contact them that way. Yes I have used this messaging option to contact the VA. Sometimes I get bologna responses but I mostly prefer to have a human look at my question and answer it.

Uhm I am just going to peruse this website a little bit. Maybe I try typing in search “message my va doctor”. It says va record, va compensation, these are irrelevant. So I will just click on contact us.

* 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? The results are not what I am looking for. I was not successful in what I am trying to do, I hate to say it but it’s like a 1.

### 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? Proof of veteran membership right, so it's actually VA records. I typed in my VA records. I would click on Types of Veteran cards and it tells you how to apply for different cards.

* 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? This one was very simple, I got what I needed and I got there quickly. 5 being the easiest.

### 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 go search for, I think there’s some life crisis help line or counselor depending on how badly I need to talk to somebody. Typed in life crisis helpline, otherwise I would type in counselor. I think I would go with the first link (mental health) and see what that brings me to. I believe these would be the routes that would help 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? I think this task was very simple. I would call it a 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? I’d type in search again. “recent changes in benefit” So I am going to guess the first bullet point would be the proper one I am looking for. “The PACT Act and your VA benefits”

What are your impressions of what you're looking at? *(news / benefit / ad / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) you told me to look for recent changes for benefits for veterans. I was looking more for like benefits but I don’t think this is what I was looking for. I am still not finding what I am looking for. This is for older veterans for veterans back in Vietnam era. This is not what I am looking for.*

*I think it prompted me to look for increase in benefits or allowance or expanded education benefits.*

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? I don’t think this is what I am looking for. Im going to guess this is like a 2. I don’t find anything about the increase in benefits that applies to me. I wasn’t exposed to toxic substances or burn pits so I don’t know what that is.

### 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 / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) I would click this and see all of the various information that comes up.*

* 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? Well, it was not exactly in the front but it was there so I would call it a 3 but it was really upfront without me having to click on search.

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

Say that you just got married. How would you tell the VA about your new spouse? I guess I would go search “change in household” and I would click that as a search. So these results don’t tell me how to add my spouse so..oh wait here it is. So as I scroll down I would click on this link “important information on marriage”. As I am scrolling on this I want to see how to add a spouse. Well I mean here are a bunch of questions and answers about who qualifies and so forth. Still there is no link to add a spouse so that is kind useless. Maybe I will click on family member and services.

Maybe I will search add dependent on the main search menu. It all depends on how you phrase something on how you get the search results. This would probably be a proper way to do so. Okay so you still have to sign in. I am guessing once you sign in there is a way to add a dependent I guess.

* 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? Depending on how you phrase the search, depends on the search results. Dependent was a key word. Once I changed it, it gave me relative proper information. I would say a 4 because if I typed in the proper search word it would have led me to the right place.

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

You'd like to see VA's current disability compensation rates. How would you find these? I do that quite often. Sure enough when I type in compensation rates It gives me options. There are two options. Compensation benefit rates and rate tables. The other link only lets you know if you are qualified. Let’s see if the first link gives me the right table. What about the benefits for those without dependents. Here it shows you for 10 and 20% but why does it not list those higher percentages for those without dependents.

* 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? Yeah, I think this was pretty simple, it gave me three relevant points and compensation rates came up so I would say a 5, pretty simple.

### 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 type in search, since you gave me those words, I will just use the words you told me “maximize tuition allowance colleges and universities” okay, so it says tuition assistance top-up. I am not familiar with the term top-up but I am going to go ahead and click it to see what it leads me to. There’s a lot of stuff to read through but I am still looking for the universities that are enrolled. I don’t find the colleges. Maybe I should type in “college listings” instead. I will type in colleges and universities to see if I can find any colleges or universities that way. I am going to guess it is money I am going to be given so I am going to click on the one that says “GI Bill”. To be honest with you I would call this one frustrating.

Maybe I will try “VA Benefits and Health Care” and click on Education and Training. Maybe how to apply. There is still no listing of universities. I don’t think I will find it.

* 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? I am going to have to say 1 because I didn’t find the universities. It gave me a bunch of stuff to read but I don’t think many people are interested in reading all of that information that isn’t relevant to you.

### 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? Okay yeah get a re-evaluation, that is what it is called. \*typed in re-evaluation an existing condition for compensation\* I am looking to do a re-evaluation. \*typed in re-evaluation for compensation\* I know I have done this before. I know when I logged in there was a drop down which was pretty simple but when I am not logged in I can’t find it. \*Compensation exam\* click on VA compensation exam. Now the question is how do I set it up. I don’t need to check claim status I am trying to set up an appointment. I don’t see that option to do so.

I am going to try “appointment for compensation” to see if that gives me something that works. It still gives me disability compensation. I have already filed because this is just a re-evaluation but I am going to click on file claim. I have to sign in to start my claim.

When you login, it is pretty simple but when I am not logged in it’s not. But I got there, I think.

* 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? I gotta say somewhere between 3 and 4. The information is there but you have to type in the proper key words.

## 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? The search engine worked relatively well. I didn’t even try to use the drop downs but they may have helped me. Education I was looking for I did not find. Maybe I did something wrong but I did not find. I don’t think a lot of people have a lot of patience, especially the older veterans.

I find google has some relevant searches. Lets say google’s searches are 8 but this one is like a 6 on a 1-10. I am guessing you guys are trying to build a better website, but I am going to put out my two cents. The things most veterans are looking for, those should be the first ones to come up. They should be at the top.

1. What was *unclear or didn't work well* for you?
2. What would you like to *change or add*? Well it’s very professional because it is a government website. I would probably want more links to click on rather than the drop down. But I do know one thing, once you login everything is somewhat easier for you to find information, if you are not logged in it is somewhat hard to find. The coloring is good.

When I come to VA website, first thing I do is sign it because it is personalized.

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"? you have to scroll down. These are probably some of the topics you were asking me about. You have to scroll down to find information. It’s a little bit hidden but like I said I usually log in anyway. If I am going to try and find information, I like to find it right away. Maybe if you have these links \*popular on VA.gov\* I wouldn’t have to search.

Are these links things you think would be helpful at the top? Yeah, then I wouldn’t have to search. If I could find the relevant information it wouldn’t be frustrating.

When you browse? I prefer to have the links right there so I don’t have to search. It is all in the website design. Most websites the information is on the first page.

* 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*

1. *(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?
2. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you think I should know? I don’t know. Yeah I hope you guys can improve on this. It is almost like the new website, I am assuming we will see this all in the future. I hope what we talked about was helpful and thanks for your time I guess right?

## 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!