**Conversation Guide: VA.gov Home Page Redesign Usability Testing**

*Start recording to the cloud.*

* **I have started recording**. I'd like to confirm: Are you comfortable if I record my screen and the audio as we talk today? I approve of this message.

**Warm-up Questions - 5 minutes**

Let’s start with a few questions...

1. What kind of device are you using today? *(Computer / Tablet / Smartphone)*
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 / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I am still active Navy. I have learned through the VA when I was going through the TAPS class. I may or may not be separating in November depending on things. I may be utilizing the VA a lot more.* I have been serving 16 years and I am a combat Veteran. I am familiar with benefits, but I have only used the housing loan.
6. Did you get your housing loan through the VA or through your realtor? I believe we were referred to the VA. Our realtor did most of the leg work with that.
7. What VA benefits that you *don't* have experience with might you be interested in exploring? *RECORD: health care / education / career services / disability / housing loans / pension / life insurance / burial benefits / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*
8. Where do you typically go to get information and benefits from the VA? *(Google / Facebook / MHV / eBenefits / Contact center call or email / VA.gov / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*
9. Can you tell me about the last time you were looking for information or trying to do something with your VA benefits?

**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.

### RECORD FOR EACH TASK...

#### Which task? (select one)

*go back to school to get degree / compare universities / qualify for disability / find a form / increase disability rating /* *amount of disability or education payment / current disability rates / GI Bill money left / find a hospital / get medical history /* *question for doctor / travel expenses / learn about health care / proof of income / new spouse / new address / talk to someone /* *burial in VA cemetery / VA home loan / proof of military service*

#### What participant does and says...

#### From the looks of things, I would click on the drop-down menu. I would sign in/ create an account first. Go to education and training to get more information on where I am going as well as talking to the VA rep at the school I am wanting to attend. I would check the eligibility and how to apply. Reads the page and scrolls.

#### Ease rating (1-5) and why:

#### I would say because I know what I am looking for I know where to go because how it is broken down, I would give a solid 8 out of 10. 4 out of 5.

#### [Why would you sign in first, and how would you do that?] Right here it states to sign in or create an account. It is right there in your face so it should prompt them.

#### Where would you click to start the sign in process? You have this right in your face or the one in the top right-hand area. If I was a returning person I would go to the top right if I was new, I would go to the one right in your face.

#### You said ideally you would create an account through TAPS class, did you do that already? Yes, I did.

#### Which task? (select one)

*go back to school to get degree / compare universities / qualify for disability / find a form / increase disability rating /* *amount of disability or education payment / current disability rates / GI Bill money left / find a hospital / get medical history /* *question for doctor / travel expenses / learn about health care / proof of income / new spouse / new address / talk to someone /* *burial in VA cemetery / VA home loan / proof of military service*

#### What participant does and says...

#### I would go to benefits, education and training, clicks view all in education, and scrolls page. I would definitely use the Yellow Ribbon tool. I would say this page would have the most information on what I am looking for. It seems a little complicated.

#### How so? Maybe I am overthinking. I guess it is pretty simple. I don’t know if there is a search bar I could input to search. I would input the schools I was looking at attending and do some research for who would use the most benefits. I have seen the comparison tool before. It breaks down the cost. I would see if any of my schools were Yellow Ribbon school, I would see if my schools accepted GI Bills, I think that is the most ask questions I would have.

#### What does yellow ribbon mean to you? It is a program that schools have that work with the GI Bill to cover the costs that is not covered by GI Bill.

#### Did you learn about that in TAPS class? Over 16 years in the service I have just heard it during my time.

#### Ease rating (1-5) and why:

#### Which task? (select one)

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#### What participant does and says...

#### Drop-down menu, go to disability, when separating you have to have an appointment to get all your issues addressed, click on eligibility, and then I would file a claim online and hope I would not have to fight to get my disability.

#### Have you heard people had to fight? Yes, I have heard it can be difficult from individuals.

#### Ease rating (1-5) and why:

#### This is a solid 5 it is right there. If you know how to read, you should be able to find it.

#### Which task? (select one)

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#### What participant does and says...

#### Drop-down menu and see if there are anything on here under healthcare or I could go to find a VA location and make an appointment. If I didn’t know what I was doing I would click on how to apply link. Reads the page and scrolls down the page. You can apply right here and Spanish translation. I could also apply by phone, in person, or online.

#### What would you do next after you found out you were eligibility? I would apply and then work my way down the list.

#### Ease rating (1-5) and why:

#### I would give it a 5 because it was pretty simple. It walks you through everything you need to do.

#### Which task? (select one)

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#### What participant does and says...

#### Drop-down menu, disability, clicks on survivor and dependent compensation, nope that is not what I need. Goes back to main page, goes back to disability in drop-down menu, I don’t see anything that is clear on what I am looking for. Would that be file a claim? I don’t feel like that is right.

#### No, it would not really be a claim. Clicks on family member benefits. Honestly with this question I have no idea because I don’t even know what I am looking for. Maybe MyVA, I would expect to see personal data. I would think to see my status, enrollment programs, and I would imagine I could update my status there.

#### Is there anywhere else you could go to update the VA? Continues looking through the drop-down menus. I am not entirely sure.

#### If this was happening to you in real life, what would you do? I would call the VA or take my marriage license to have them input that in their system physically.

#### Ease rating (1-5) and why:

#### I would give this a 2 because I don’t know what I am looking for. Just looking at the front page I have no idea what to do. I guess a search bar would be beneficial for.

#### Where would you want to see a search bar? Traditionally it would be up here. Oh, wait here it is.

#### You want to use it? Sure. Types in Add a spouse to my benefits. View or change dependents on your VA disability.

#### Do you want to leave your rating? I would change it to a 4 because you can search it out.

#### How do you normally use websites? Are search bars normally what you look for? I look for a search bar after I browse the page. I tend to look for the easiest path to what I need. If I can’t find what I need I search, and then I make phone calls.

#### Which task? (select one)

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#### What participant does and says...

#### I would go to MyVA and update my address.

#### Anywhere else you may go to do that? Records and change your address.

#### Ease rating (1-5) and why:

#### That would be a 5 it is not too difficult. Since on the left hand side it is all about record records, but if you take the time to read you will see the change of address on the right hand side.

#### Which task? (select one)

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#### What participant does and says...

#### Contact us for sure.

#### [Tell me more about that.] You have a Contact us page with phone numbers, chatbots, and hotlines.

#### [What would you be asking them when you call?] I think going off what is going on now I would probably contact VA about what my benefits regarding the burn pits. For mental health issues, scrolls down the page, clicks on mental in dark blue box on the bottom of page. Scrolls page and reads.

#### This is pretty cool, dark blue area on the bottom with list of resources.

#### Ease rating (1-5) and why:

#### 3 because it is not a 5 because you have to look for it. It is not covered in the healthcare area of the drop-down. If I didn’t know what I was looking for and wanted help I wanted the fastest easiest way to get the help. If it is going to be a chore, I will give up especially mental health issues.

#### Which task? (select one)

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#### What participant does and says...

#### Drop-down menu, disability, VA disability compensation, and I don’t see nothing on this page so I would go back and search for that. Finds compensation rating link and clicks on it. I don’t know. Goes back to main page and clicks on drop-down menu into disability. I don’t know what I am looking for. I am mildly confused.

#### I think you were actually pretty close.

#### Ease rating (1-5) and why:

#### Considering that I did not find what I was looking for I would give it a 2.

#### Which task? (select one)

*go back to school to get degree / compare universities / qualify for disability / find a form / increase disability rating /* *amount of disability or education payment / current disability rates / GI Bill money left / find a hospital / get medical history /* *question for doctor / travel expenses / learn about health care / proof of income / new spouse / new address / talk to someone /* *burial in VA cemetery / VA home loan / proof of military service*

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#### What participant does and says...

#### Ease rating (1-5) and why:

**Post-Task Interview - 10 minutes**

1. What worked *well* for you? Like I said the drop-down bar is nice because it has all the basic stuff up front. As far as all the questions it leaves a little to desire. I think breaking it up would help. For someone who hasn’t engaged in this process, some things are super easy to find and some things are not easy to find. Give me more options to find the information.
2. What was *unclear or didn't work well* for you?
3. What would you like to *change or add*? No, this right here is pretty nice, but this is all the stuff in the drop-down just the quick and dirty. Overall, it is definitely a lot simpler. I do not feel I am pulling teeth to get one document.
4. I'd like to ask you about a specific part of the first page that you looked at: the dark blue section on Veteran homelessness.
   1. What are your thoughts on what you see here in this section of the page? Considering that Veteran homelessness is at a high based on things I have seen this is useful. Is it useful to the homeless Veteran themselves if they do not have access to a phone or the internet?
   2. Can you explain what a banner ad is? If it looks like a banner ad, I would be more likely to ignore it. I did ignore it earlier. Less banner ad and more personalized. Not personalized to the individual person. My focus is on the top and bottom. I was not even paying attention to this area.
   3. What kind of information would be helpful to show here? The idea is to appeal to as many people as possible, honestly the most things people discuss would be about disability claims and appeals. At the same time Veteran homelessness is good to have here because there are so many that are dealing with that right now. Maybe I would make it more eye catching would be a slide show instead of one picture. If it is changing, I would be more likely to look at it.
   4. What other information could be here if it changed? It depends on how big you want to make it. Just hit the main points you want to hit on.
   5. Is this information you may want to be subscribed to, like to your email? Being that it does not apply to me. I think putting it on a platform that homeless Veterans may not have access to would be pointless. Being out there handing the information out instead of placing it on the website and hope they would come across it would be best.
   6. How often should the information be changed?
5. Now I'd like to ask about another part of the page: under "Search VA.gov" where it says "Other search tools". What does that mean to you? That is pretty dope. That is good. Is that static or does it change? Having two education forms next to each other is pointless. Maybe have it change every visit. It is subjected to the programmers. If possible if I come back different options are available. If I am not attending a Yellow Ribbon school that is pointless to me.
6. Is there anything else that could be added here that could be helpful? There is not anything that I would need to see I just think it is redundant.
7. Looking up a bit on the page, tell me about what you see in the bright blue box ("Access and manage your VA benefits and health care", "Sign in and create an account").
8. I'd like to know more about how you usually look for information on web pages in general--not specifically VA or government websites. Can you tell me about a web page that you went to recently and how you found what you were looking for on it? I go to Google and search what I am looking for. I will look at the first few that do not have an ad marker on it.
   1. RECORD: type into search box / click on links (browse) / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   2. Do you ever use a search box on the page?
   3. If so, when?
9. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you think I should know?

**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 email blurb that you'll receive from our team.

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