IA Priorities

### **User research framework for evaluating the IA of VA.gov**

**The problem**

VA.gov does not have a framework and process for evaluating the overall health of the site’s information architecture (IA). With the COVID-19 pandemic and high unemployment, Veterans depend on their VA benefits even more today than in the past. For the last year, 18% of page views on modernized VA.gov pages show Veterans checking the status of their claims. To best serve Veterans, we need a framework and process for doing research to understand how and why they use VA.gov.

**The approach**

Create a systematic and consistent way to measure the site’s usability and usefulness over time. Monitoring analytics and doing user research to test top tasks and content at regular intervals will give us a “yardstick” to:  
1) understand how specific changes to the IA of the site affect its audiences, and  
2) help steer strategy and design decisions.

Currently we do a great deal of user research for VA.gov; however, these efforts focus on specific tools and content – they do not assess the overall IA “health” of VA.gov for both desktop and mobile. This repeatable framework for monitoring analytics and doing user research on top tasks would include:

* usability testing of top tasks,
* using analytics to track how changes to the site affect user behavior related to top tasks, and
* reviewing the IA of VA.gov as it relates to top tasks (i.e., an expert review).

#### **Problem statements**

How might we better understand Veterans’ needs over time and measure how well VA.gov is meeting their needs?

How might we set up a repeatable user research framework to be used to evaluate the IA of VA.gov consistently at regular intervals over time?

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| Desired outcomes | * A documented 3-part user research framework with instructions * One round of research to use the framework and to test it * Refinements to the framework * Definition of a “usable” and “healthy” information architecture for VA.gov * Findings and recommendations for improvements to IA * A format for reporting findings and recommendations |
| Dependencies | The team working on the user research framework would need time with these very busy teams:   * Analytics & Insights Team * Authenticated Experience Team * Platform IA and Documentation Team |
| Staff needed | * Senior user researcher (full time) * User researcher (half time - ideally) |
| Definition of done | Framework established and documented with instructions, findings and recommendations reported, and format for findings delivered. |
| Estimated timeline | 6 months |