**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? Yes.

**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 / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*
6. 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 / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I don’t think so.*
7. Where do you typically go to get information and benefits from the VA? *(Google / Facebook / MHV / eBenefits / Contact center call or email / VA.gov / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) I don’t think I have in a while. It is usually through physical mail, or I will call. I never have used any online websites.*
8. *Are you currently using the GI Bill? No, it was in the past.*
9. *Are you currently getting disability compensation? Yes.*
10. *What about your housing loan? Within the last few years.*
11. Can you tell me about the last time you were looking for information or trying to do something with your VA benefits? A year ago, maybe when I used my VA loan again. I called. I used the phone.
12. Is that your preferred method with the VA? Yes.
13. Were you able to get to what you wanted with the VA? Yes, after a few wait times.

**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...

#### I would go to the search bar and search. Types in school. Scrolls page of results. Probably start clicking some of these links to see if there is something in there for me. Clicks resources to check it out. Reads through the page. Maybe it is on here but if it is not right in front of me, I would go back and keep going. Goes back to previous page of results and clicks on How to apply for the GI Bill. I would exit out of this one and try another one. I would go back over here and call the GI Bill hotline. If I don’t find the information after 3-4 times I would give up and call someone. Link after link and it does not show me where to go.

#### From my POV you got to where you needed to go, but in from your POV you did not get to a certain form, so you did not get to the information you wanted.

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

#### I would say a 4 just getting to the information itself was not hard at all. Getting past that would be difficult.

#### 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...

#### Goes to search bar and types in Moore County NC schools. Nothing. Types in North Carolina College. Regional offices I would click that maybe. Clicks on NC on the map. Clicks on the Winston-Salem Regional Office. There are some contacts here. I would assume the website wouldn’t have that information so I would probably search schools that are around me and see what pops up. Types in Fayetteville State University. I am thinking there isn’t going to be anything on here that would break it down that specific. I just would not expect to find that here.

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

#### Probably 1, maybe there is a certain way to search it.

#### [Anything else you would do?] Maybe under education and training. Reads through the drop-down menu. That is pretty much it for education. He clicked on view all. Scrolls down the page. Clicks on GI Bill comparison tool. This is probably it.

#### [What do you think about where you are now?] I guess it makes sense. I would put in my location.

#### [Do you want to change your rating?] I would change it to a 3 because it is still hidden.

#### [Can you tell me how you were thinking on how you would navigate the website?] It seems like you wanted to search the bar. If I have a specific question, I would expect to use that search bar like Google to find my answer.

#### [How do you usually find your way around a website you have not been on before?] I am usually not on websites I have never been on before.

#### Are search bars usually what you use? Yes, it is right in your face.

#### 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 here to file a claim for compensation. Clicks on link. Reads the page and scrolls down. Then you would sign in to start the application.

#### [When you got set up with disability did you do it this way?] I called and they set me up with all my appointments.

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

#### 5 because it is right on the front page.

#### 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 click on check your claim or appeal status, and then I would log in right here. I would expect to see any claims I would have there and somewhere to appeal or increase it.

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

#### 5.

#### 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...

#### Scrolls through the page. Looks at the headers. Clicks on disability towards the bottom of the page. Reads through the page. Clicks on about VA disability ratings. Here it is.

#### I want to see all the rates, like a table. Oh okay. Keeps scrolling the page, clicks on download the full combined ratings table. On the left sign he clicks on Compensation rates. There it is and you can go through and get the disability ratings.

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

#### I would say a 3. I think I found it by accident. I didn’t start there, but I found it.

#### 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 click on the drop-down menu and click on view all in healthcare and click on whatever I liked. This is just a general page about healthcare system.

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

#### 5.

#### 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...

#### Goes through the page. Goes to drop down menu, family member benefits. I don’t know. I think I would have to sign in and there would be an update personal information, but I would not expect to be able to do that without signing in.

#### Where would you sign in? The top right side.

#### Is there anything else you can do without signing in? I don’t think so. They would have to know it is me so I can update my personal information.

#### I would click on family member benefits, maybe. This doesn’t seem right so I would go back. I am just going to give up right now because I would have to sign in or call someone.

#### Is there anything else you would try on this page? Maybe the search, types in update spouse information, clicks on update dependent, and then I would have to sign in.

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

#### 5.

#### 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...

#### First, I would sign in, but here I would just type “update address” in the search bar. I would select the first link and I would sign in.

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

#### A 5.

#### 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 search therapist or something. Reads through the results. I don’t see anything here. Types in counseling, maybe. Reads through results. Searching the page. Clicks on drop-down menu, maybe service member benefits. Mental health care maybe, clicks on get care now, and find the nearest VA location or call. I would probably call.

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

#### A 2 because you’d think if you put in therapist or counseling the first thing that would pop up would be a phone number because that is something someone who would need help would type in.

#### 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...

#### Drop-down menu, click burials, eligibility, and then I would read through this.

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

#### A 5.

#### 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...

#### Drop-down first, request military records under burial, and then I would go to Milconnect.

#### [Can you go back to the drop-down menu, you said it was still opened to burials what do you think about it?] I think I was already on there. I thought it would clear out; you wouldn’t think a drop-down would save that.

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

#### A 5, but I don’t know how easy it would be if it started off at healthcare.

#### If you clicked on the drop-down now, what would you expect to see? What is a normal drop-down? When you open it up the first time it would start on healthcare, and I would go from there.

#### 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...

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

**Post-Task Interview - 10 minutes**

1. What worked *well* for you? The drop-down or what was on the front pages where I didn’t have to go through multiple pages. The search worked for certain things, but not when I typed in therapists.
2. What was *unclear or didn't work well* for you? Just the search bar. Maybe there is different wording I could use but I wouldn’t do that on the VA site.
3. Is there you would try when searching? “Therapist” or “Therapists” and again the results are not what I would expect. You think your first result would be a contact number. If it did not pop up immediately, I would give up—I would call.
4. What would you like to *change or add*? I don’t think so. I would just keep the common task updated with the most common searches or have a common searches section.
5. Do you think what appears seem to be common tasks? I am not sure because I do not use this site often.
6. 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? I would click on see all VA news and if you were homeless you could click on housing. It doesn’t do anything for me. I am not homeless I would assume it would be new articles or not for me.
   2. What kind of information would be helpful to show here? Probably just get rid of it and push everything up. It might provide value to someone just not me.
   3. How often should the information be changed?
   4. Do you ever sign up to receive news to your email? No, I am fine without this information.
7. 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? I assume it opens to another page and you find information on that specific topic. I overlooked the title. It looks like something that is not important, so I didn’t pay attention to it. Everything else is in other colors and sectioned off. This is all wrapped up in the search bar so I wouldn’t look at the other part.
8. 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"). It looks like something you would sign in or create an account. I mean it is there and the first thing you should do is sign in or create an account.
9. You mentioned you would sign in before searching, is that where you would sign in? No, I would sign in on the top.
10. 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? Say I go to my healthcare website, and I have to go on there to use their drop-down menus. I would go through there until I find what I am looking for.
    1. RECORD: type into search box / click on links (browse) / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
    2. Do you ever use a search box on the page? I try the search once or twice and if it doesn’t work, I stop using it.
    3. When you are on a brand-new site, is the search bar the first thing you will try? No, I think I would try the drop-down menus and if I cannot find it, I would try the search bar. If I am looking for a specific thing, I would search in the search bar. I start with a general search, and if it is an overwhelming number of results, I would narrow down my search.
    4. Do you work for the Federal Government? Yes, the Air Force, and I served in the Army.
    5. If so, when?
11. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you think I should know? I don’t think so.

**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!