**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 / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ At this time no. I am not sure of any., but I am open.*
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 / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) Ask other Veterans also if I do not find it on VA.gov, in person. My church is about 80% Veterans.*
8. Can you tell me about the last time you were looking for information or trying to do something with your VA benefits? Maybe about a couple months ago I was searching around to see about death benefits. I found what I needed but I did not know exactly how to complete it.

**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...

#### First, I would go to sign in because I think I have to do that under my account that is already created. Once I hit sign in I would go to DS Logon, then they would take me through the update of my password, it will take me to a picture that I used originally to sign in, then I have to go through my disabilities, and if I see the one that is already list I can click to update my claim and upload my evidence to increase my claim and wait for the process.

#### Is this something you have done before? Yes.

#### What do you see when you log in? A list? Yes.

#### When you use VA.gov do you always sign in first? Yes, I always sign in because if I see something I need right away they will make me sign in to gain access anyways.

#### You find what you want, then they make you log in, and then you lose your place? Yes.

#### Pretend you are using a public computer and you did not want to log in, I want to see how far you can get without signing in. Does that make sense? Yes.

#### You are looking for how you may increase your disability rating. Okay. I would click file a disability compensation with VA form. Click sign in to start your application. Once you read through all this stuff, it sometimes it gets kind of, my mind is not what it use to be. I read through all these bullets. I get frustrated because the VA has all my records, but they still want me to upload all this information. If I get too frustrated, I would go to my chapter DVA.

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

#### It was easy to find so 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 could either go to my payment history or I could go download my benefit letter which is sometimes better because I could use that in the civilian world as proof of income. It gives all my information from the military, and it will always be up to date. For just myself I would just go to my payment history, but I would usually just go to my bank website because that is quicker for me.

#### Clicks on download benefit letter, and then I would have to sign in to get my information.

#### 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 down and clicks on burials and memorials. Eligibility is right here. I would go through this and see what I needed.

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

#### 5.

#### When I said stop here and you said thank you, is that because you did not want to read the whole page? Yes.

#### 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...

#### Actually, I would do the same thing, the benefits letter, which I would just go to download my benefit letter. I could also give them my DD-214, but I do prefer to give them my benefits letter because you can remove what you do not want to give out. DD-214 is also more difficult is get a hold of. You will have to sign in to get all your information.

#### 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...

#### For me I would Google search the pay chart. I wouldn’t even come to VA.gov.

#### If I told you I wanted to do it. I would have no idea.

#### Scrolls down the page. I have no clue.

#### Your way would be to ask Google? Have you done that before? Yes, and yes. I have figured civilians know more about our disability rates compared to Veterans.

#### When you do a Google search about this, do you end up on a VA site or a non-VA site? A non-VA site.

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

#### 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...

#### Education benefits here. Then click on hopefully I can click on eligibility. I know they give an eligibility letter that will have the amount of months left. Scrolls and reads the page. I would kind of go through find your education benefits form. I get Chapter 35 under my husband. I just called the 1-800 number and they sent me the paperwork to me and mailed in back in.

#### Is your husband also a Veteran? Yes.

#### At this point would you call, or would you continue filling out the thing you started? I would start until I get tired and use the 1-800 number as a last resource.

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

#### It would be a 2 because maybe I am just lazy trying to figure out which heading this would fall under. I know it takes a little effort on our part to help find it, but sometimes I feel like it is buried under too many clicks. Sometimes we just want to get in and get it done.

#### Are you currently using education benefits? I am about to start using it again in the fall.

#### How do you see the last amount of money they last payment they sent the school? They mailed me the check and I pay the school. So, I would just check my bank account.

#### 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 look at the payment history. You would have to sign in. Oh yeah you will see the payment history for your VA payments. I got it. You go into payment history and then it will show you when you sign in.

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

#### Now that I know it is there it is a 5.

#### This is a task you never knew you could do on here but now you do know you can do it on VA.gov. Yes.

#### 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 page finds a VA facility. I have had to do this before to make sure that I was covered if I needed it. Once I was here, I would type in my city and state.

#### 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...

#### I did it before, but I came across it on accident. Scrolls page. I am thinking under records or healthcare. Let me see. Reads description. Clicks on VA healthcare. I think for something like this I would go to MHV because they have a button that states it is for sharing records. I don’t see anything that stands out here. Oh wait, get your VA medical records. Clicks link. Scrolls page. And of course, you would have to sign in.

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

#### I would say it was about a 3 because now that I know it is there, it is not a quick scan. You have to read under each heading. After reading I eventually 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...

#### Secure message. Scrolls down. Go back to healthcare, and I am sure I saw that earlier. Scrolls, use VA secure messaging. I use the heck out of this one. I am always on MHV I don’t use the VA.gov to contact my doctor.

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

#### A 4 would be the best because once you are here it is easy to find, but everyone is always pushed towards MHV even at the VA.

#### You are just used to doing it through MHV? Yes.

#### 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:

#### 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? Finding the VA location, just the things like common task, other search tools, the things that are cut straight to the point. I like things that are to the point and not having to search through the website. Even the older generation want to be able to easily find certain things. Quick points.
2. What was *unclear or didn't work well* for you? I think if I sat there and just read it, but we aren’t pushed towards VA.gov we are pushed towards MHV. The only reason I would come to this site is for education, burial, or pension. I would not come here for medical.
3. What would you like to *change or add*? Not really. Just don’t bury so many things so deep. After two clicks I would stop because I don’t want to have to click 5 times to get to what I am looking for.
4. Where would you have signed in on this page? Under the red line that states to talk to Veteran crisis line, there is a sign in button.
5. 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? The area that I am in is close to Fayetteville and we see a lot of homeless Veterans, so I am not sure if they are really doing anything. It is hard for me to believe they are doing much of anything to help. On every corner there are homeless Veterans. To see how they are pushed to the side. I am not sure if they are getting the help or not accepting the help.
   2. You are aware this is a real problem? Yes, and they are not getting the help being this close to the biggest Army bases. To know I did everything I could to get the benefits I could, and I was denied up front but because I came back, they approved it. When you get denied, you get discouraged and do not go back so they just stop fighting. Those are the same ages of people who are standing on the corner with one leg and when we try to send them to the DVA to get their help they state they have already been denied and so they don’t want to go back to them. If I don’t speak up, I am one of the people contributing to the problem—someone has to make noise.
   3. Is there something we can do on this page to help or are you just stating a frustration with the VA in general? I have seen photos like this before where it looks like they are helping them. I have seen the staged photos. I want to see them in the streets help them. I want to see the people out there actually caring for those Veterans. People having to wait for travel reimbursement shouldn’t have to wait a month for their money.
   4. What kind of information would be helpful to show here?
   5. How often should the information be changed?
6. 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?
7. Can you tell me about how you usually look for information on web pages in general? (not specifically VA or government websites) *RECORD: type into search box / click on links (browse) / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_* I do it all. I do that and depending how pressed for time I am I may just do a quick Google search. My big thing is my Veteran support system. They may be able to walk me through how to get to where I need to go. I also read through a lot of the page. I sometimes use the search bar on the page if I am unable to focus or if I cannot find what I am looking for.
8. 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!