**Transition focus group - Liz, Samara, AJ-20240305\_143624-Meeting Recording**

March 5, 2024, 8:36PM

52m 23s

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 0:04  
OK, perfect.  
It looks like we are recording.  
OK.  
Thank you so much for joining us today.  
I see we have a few folks on the line from the your team and so I would love to just to do a quick round of introductions.  
I'll start by introducing myself.  
My name is Cora Goldstein and I'm working with Jean and Nicole on the veteran transition support project.  
Really.  
Ultimately, what we're trying to do is create this solution.  
I know Gene and Nicole share a little bit about this, but we want to share a solution that makes it easy for transitioning service members and veterans to find information about benefits.  
You know, do that discovery process and begin the application process all in once.  
So speaking with the authentication, the authenticated experience team and other teams around VA will help us really understand the different aspects of that and all of the pieces that kind of go into that journey for veterans.  
So we're really glad to be speaking with your team today.  
We just wanted to hear your experience and we'll ask you some guiding questions, but also this is an open forum, you know to to share kind of your experience, the work that you're doing and also to ask us any questions if you have any questions about the work that we're doing as well and how that might align with your work.  
You know, we certainly welcome that as well.

 **Strauss, Samara** 1:14  
Cool.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 1:15  
Yeah.  
Umm, so I would love to meet everybody on the team.  
So Samira, I'll start with you.  
If you could just kind of give me a quick introduction that would be fantastic.

 **Strauss, Samara** 1:24  
Wonderful. Yeah.  
So I'm smearing Strauss.  
I work as work in the Office of the CTO.  
I've been here for about 6 years working on va.gov and for that whole time I've been working in the personalization space.  
Umm.  
So specifically on products like that might be a dashboard and various tools within the va.gov user profile, but internally have also been involved in a lot of other things as well.  
I'll pass it over to AJ.

 **Anastasia Jakabcin** 1:53  
Thanks.  
Umm, I go by usually AJ or Annas.  
Fine.  
My full name is Anastasia, so that's where that comes from.  
I'm the product manager for the authenticated experience my the A side of things and I've been with the team for probably three years, maybe four.  
I've lost track, I think 3.  
So yeah, I'm excited to get into this work and share findings with each other.  
The past of Pam.

 **Pam Drouin (Guest)** 2:23  
Hi, my name is Pam.  
I'm a researcher and designer.  
On the profile side of the authenticated experience team, I think I've been on the team maybe 10 months, but I still feel like I'm learning a lot.  
There's a lot of detail out there, said that Liz can't make us.  
But I'm glad she's on PTO, but I'll I'll share whatever I've learned, and hopefully that will help.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 2:46  
Oh, thank you so much.  
Yes, all of your experience will will definitely be helpful.  
So we're we're really glad to have you all on the call.  
And I know Samara has met with Gene and Nicole previously.  
I'm not sure if everyone on the team has met Gene and Nicole.  
OK, fantastic.  
So I will let I'm gonna pass it over to Gene to do a quick introduction and then we can do Nicol.

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 3:05  
Hi everyone I am gene dreiband.  
I'm the project lead on the VA side, helping Nicole and also Lisa, who I don't know if Lisa, count expert.  
I don't know folks.  
Know her?  
She's the lead PM on this project, but we are basically kicking off this effort to have a va.gov experience launched by Q3Q4.  
Sort of towards the end of the year.  
You know that targets that transitioning service member as well as the recently separated veteran.  
We obviously want it to be useful for people beyond that group, but we really wanted to make a focused effort on people that are going through that really drastic change in their life and all of the associated issues that come with that emotional, social, that sort of thing.  
It's more obviously than just getting benefits.  
And so we are.  
I'll pass it on to Nicole in a SEC, but we are in the process of talking to everyone we can about what we can learn about this problem space, which is why we're here today.  
So Nicole?

 **Kontrabecki, Nicole [USA]** 4:08  
Yes, hi, good afternoon.  
Nicole control Becky.  
I'm with Booz Allen and I'm the project lead for our our team and working side by side with Gene and Lisa as well.  
So looking forward to your your input today, I'm gonna be taking notes, so I'm gonna go off camera because I'm gonna be clickity clacking away over here.

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 4:27  
Same here.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 4:28  
Sure.  
Perfect.  
Thank you so much, Tina.  
Nicole, so this is great.  
Yeah.  
So we just want to make sure everybody, you know, got to meet each other on the team and we're very appreciative of you taking the time today to to chat with us.  
So I'm going to ask some questions about the work of the authenticated experience team.  
To preface this, I wanna say we very much value the work that you do and we've done a few interviews with veterans already, and we're already starting to see this theme of personalization being really important.  
So veterans are talking about how important it is not just to have a list of all of the benefits they might be eligible for and you know, kind of generic information.  
But to really have that personalized piece to help them say, OK, this is where I am, these are the experiences I've had.  
This is what I'm hoping to accomplish and having that personalized path so as we're hearing that emerge, we are especially interested in the work that you all are doing around authenticated experience.  
My VA personalizing that experience for veterans, so we're very interested in what you have to say and I'll ask a few questions and we may have some follow up kind of conversation or follow up questions about it.  
But we just wanted to learn more about your work.  
And as Gene said, you know, learning more about this problem space too and how we can work together.  
So the first question, and I would say also to you, I'm gonna ask these questions to the group.  
So anyone can feel free to to chime in.  
The first question I have would be if you could tell us a little bit about how authenticated experience my VA helps to support benefit enrollment and discovery for veterans.  
And I know that's a broad question, so feel free to narrow it down or ask for for me to clarify if that's helpful.

 **Strauss, Samara** 6:10  
I would say very little.  
The page shows UM.  
Links for applying for healthcare filing a disability claim and applying for GI Bill benefits on the healthcare the disability.  
Claim link and the education link are persistent.  
Umm, because education stuff isn't personalized and the disability claim stuff you can file more than one claim so you if you filed a claim, it doesn't mean that you don't need to file another one, you can file many claims healthcare link doesn't show after people are enrolled in healthcare because you can only if you are enrolled in healthcare.  
There is no need to apply again, that is be uh, the mightiest role in benefit enrollment.

 **Anastasia Jakabcin** 7:01  
Yeah, I think it's.  
I would like to summarize point agree.  
It's very little.  
I think we've we've improved.  
I think our help because before if the user didn't have, I'd never filed a claim or didn't have healthcare.  
Those sections didn't even show on my VA, so relatively speaking, I think we've like saying we show those links now than we did, which is more than we had before.  
But yeah, I agree it's it's very it's minimal.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 7:31  
That's that's really helpful to hear for us too.  
And I'm I'm curious.  
So you've mentioned for example, the healthcare piece, it doesn't appear unless someone's already enrolled in healthcare.  
How does that process happen?  
Is that a pretty automatic?  
Oh, I'm sorry.  
Go ahead.

 **Anastasia Jakabcin** 7:44  
I was gonna say just to clarify, it does now.  
Sorry, I should have clarified.  
We made some enhancements in the lab.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 7:47  
Ohh.

 **Anastasia Jakabcin** 7:49  
Gosh, I've even lost track.  
Now when we made that, I guess it was in the last calendar year, right, Samara, that we changed those states to be present all the time.  
It used to be conditional so that the healthcare section only showed when you had healthcare or health had applied for healthcare.  
And so now it's it shows all the time.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 8:07  
Yeah.  
And so I'm curious then, yeah.  
So that's helpful to know that it shows all the time and I'm curious to know what kind of drove that transition from going from where it before only showed up if you were enrolled.  
And then now it's a persistent kind of state so people can click on it wherever they are in the process.  
Is that kind of what drove it was just wanting to have that available to everybody or was there something else that kind of drove that change?

 **Strauss, Samara** 8:34  
I would say it's a little bit of both.  
Umm.  
Definitely like a small bit of like discoverability we thought would be helpful, but really a lot of those changes were driven by like overall accessibility and usability.  
Umm, because of stuff was like appear like either like started to appear and then disappeared cause data like was updating or you know it like people can't even discover the thing if they don't know what's there.  
So it it was some level of discoverability, but it was, it was like largely just like a usability.  
Umm.  
Maintainability.  
Accessibility.  
All of the things.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 9:15  
That makes sense and I wanna pull on that thread of accessibility a little bit.  
So I'm sure you know, with veterans that have diverse needs and you know diverse kind of web browsers and accessibility, all of that.  
I'm sure there's a lot of need to be mindful about that, so I'm curious if there are other either accessibility issues that you've run into any checks that you've done.  
Processes are kind of initiatives to make my VA kind of more accessible.  
If there are, I'd love to learn more about those as well.

 **Anastasia Jakabcin** 9:46  
Uh, yeah, I can jump in on this one.  
So the accessibility stuff that scenario was talking about in one of the reasons why we we changed and made the change that we did was to summarize point like the page would start to load, you'd see the healthcare title and then sort of a spinning dial for a second within that.  
And then when the API is finished and said oh, there's nothing to show here for the user, that section would disappear.  
So that's those are some of the things that like performance and accessibility that we were trying to improve upon.  
That's not a great experience for the user to have that jump around on the page or have the screen reader catch it for a second and then it turns off the things we've done since then we are we are designers.  
Well, you consistently like proactively work with accessibility.  
We don't usually wait for the collaboration cycles to say like, hey, how's this look?  
We usually are proactively asking them throughout the design process and checking in with them to make sure that things are accessible and following the design system and all that.  
I'm actually about to submit my VA for a another like holistic round of testing through the 508 office.  
So that's those are some of the things that we do to mean teen accessibility.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 10:57  
That's great to hear.  
And I know, I'm sure Gene and Nicole would say the same thing.  
It's inspirational for us too, as we're thinking about what we're developing and trying to be proactive like you said and not just waiting for the collaboration cycle to come back around and say, oh, it's time to do an accessibility check.  
But yeah, it's great to hear that your team is thinking about that all the way through and that's something we definitely will kind of carry forward in our work too, as being being mindful of accessibility all the way through design and development too.  
I think it's much easier that way than trying to go back and realizing we have a big problem later on and then trying to do a big, big clean up effort.  
So that's really helpful to hear from us.

 **Anastasia Jakabcin** 11:32  
Yeah, definitely.  
And you know, it can be.  
I think sometimes designers can be maybe discouraged if they look at like the limitations of what things are in the design system, but I think of it as like they're there for.  
It's there for a reason or it's that way for a reason, because these things have been, like, vetted and tested and like, there's always room for improvement.  
But you know, there's a reason why these things are inexistence and a lot of it is for accessibility. So.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 12:00  
Perfect.  
Yeah, that's that's really helpful information for us to have in terms of, yeah, thinking about the accessibility is there.  
And I see a gene.  
You have your hand raised.  
You have a question?

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 12:11  
Yeah, I mean, I didn't know if you were gonna get to this already, but I just had an idea.  
Just curious about what is the kind of the next 12 months road map for the personalization, accessibility team, broad strokes, we're not to go into huge depth here.

 **Strauss, Samara** 12:32  
Umm, so sorry.  
You kind of combine personalization and accessibility into one thing.

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 12:37  
Of no, no, no, I didn't mean accessibility.  
I I just met sort of like what is your team working on over the next 6 to 12 months?  
I mean, I know accessibility is 1 subset of that.  
I just had to kind of help me see the conversation.  
So I know if there's maybe specific threads that we can pull on.

 **Strauss, Samara** 12:55  
Yeah.  
There's a lot of there's a lot of, like, maybes.  
So on the profile side of things, a lot of the work we tend to do involves other teams coming to us, whether those are teams within octo or outside of octo that have some sort of need to add information to the profile or update information on the profile.  
So we have an outstanding request to add race and ethnicity information to the profile.  
As an example, we haven't done that yet because of some internal stuff that needs to be worked out first, but that's, you know, a typical thing that that our team works on on the my VA side of things, I have them doing some work around the notifications and indicators, things like that.  
I would say that's all very much in its early days.  
I could get more into that if it's of interest to you, but that's high level.  
Umm.  
And then on AJ's side of things we already, I think you guys already know that we're doing some work research around onboarding specifically, what does it mean to onboard to bea.gov since that, you know, the the transition piece of things you know has been a a of organizational interest for years.  
No one really asked the question, though, like specifically if we're onboarding people to the website like, you know, what is the, what role does the website have an onboarding people to this organization.  
So we're doing some research around that as well.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 14:32  
Thank you so much.

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 14:32  
Perfect.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 14:33  
And yeah, that was a great.  
That was a great question, gene, to to situate and just kind of situate our understanding of the work that you're doing.

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 14:42  
Yeah.  
I think just to be clear, I know and we know we had this conversation a couple of weeks ago.  
I think there's probably some broad overlaps in the work we're doing and the concept of onboarding, but I think what we're hearing is obviously va.gov is only one piece of the puzzle.  
You know, there's we've heard things about social media outreach having an individual advocate at physical locations or at various different ways.  
So I don't think that it's a one to one like we're definitely looking a little bit more broadly that for right now and just kind of hearing what comes up.

 **Strauss, Samara** 15:16  
Yeah, I think from my experience, the work that's happened in this organization so far has been people are really aware of like the broad scope of transition.  
But then they wanna, like, shoehorn some sort of solution into like a digital solution.  
And like, that's not really going to work if you're not asking the questions.  
Like what is this digital platforms role?  
Like what can the digital platform do?  
It can do, or should probably do some things, but it's not going to be able to do everything.  
It's not going to hold your hand when you walk into a van.  
For the first time, it's not going to like be there for you as you're wondering.  
Like what career should I choose?  
Like the website can't tell you that like you know, there's all sorts of things or you know that the website can maybe be an Ave to but like transition is is a is a life thing.  
It's not necessarily just a website thing.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 16:13  
Absolutely.  
And it's interesting, we, we heard something like that in one of our interviews today about having that advocate and having, you know, where a website where this, you know, kind of experience this digital experience as part of it.  
But then people also wanna have that in person, touch point or maybe a phone call touch point.  
And this is part of the solution, so that makes a lot of sense too, and it's honestly having these conversations has brought into our thinking about our solution and how we would need to coordinate with other teams to make that a really full and well rounded support for our veterans.  
So I know somewhere you mentioned some upcoming potential changes to the profile and some things that might be added to it.  
I'm curious if there have been any other recent, you know, recent updates that your team has made.  
Umm or anything.  
And if you could share a little bit about recent updates that have been made, maybe tell us a little bit about, you know kind of the rationale for adding or changing some of the things that on the profile?

 **Strauss, Samara** 17:09  
Yeah, that's a great question actually.  
I think I really want Pam to talk about our military information work that we've attempted to do, and we're having a lot of difficulty with because it highlights there's times when we have great luck and everything goes well with like the data we have and we can plug it into the profile and either show it and or show it in a lot of people to update it if that is allowed from an organizational perspective, some of the work we're doing, we're trying to do right now with regards to military information, we're having a lot of difficulty.  
With like data quality.  
So I think something like that could be great for Pam to talk about and just highlight like work that we're trying to do.  
And because it is relevant to like the transition space where everyone wants all these like magic things and but like the data is really the thing that like makes or breaks all of it.

 **Pam Drouin (Guest)** 18:00  
Yeah, I'm happy to talk about it.  
I'm I'm I feel like I I get so close to finishing these research findings.  
It's been massive.  
I think it was in the fall.  
We had a request to enhance the military information section of users profile and was months of trying to grapple with these.  
These these these like data properties and then the values and so we decided we really need to get access to real veterans data and look over it with them and see what are they seeing because just looking at the data dictionaries was not not really telling us what veterans would see.  
So it felt really nerve wracking to you can't just flip a switch on and then it's expected it's gonna make sense to people.  
And I'm really glad that we did the research that we did.  
Umm, it was sort of a A3 part.  
Well, actually a four part structured hour with veterans where I had some interview questions to understand their military history and the ways in which they use their military data, both to get compensation, disability assistance, things like that, but also in helping with their jobs, both with when they were serving, but also when after they separated.  
The second part was showing their data.  
We basically Tom pulled like extracted Vader data through like SQL queries, put it in a CSV for me and then I copied it and put it in mural to make it a bit more friendly to look at with people and we walked through across the branches.  
Here's the data.  
Here are the values.  
What makes sense is meaningful to you.  
What's missing still, and yeah, unfortunately it's kind of a mess.  
Umm, I do think there is some value of some some things that we can surface like active duty versus inactive reserves that with something that really resonated with people.  
They like seeing that kind of specificity displayed, but yeah, there I don't know that we'll be able to really show MOS like the military occupational specialties, their codes, the job titles, the locations or like locations, I think are the biggest thing where there's just not enough like data coverage.  
And even even when we would see people with deployment history, they would maybe see one country, but they would have missing countries or like their date ranges wouldn't make sense or they were duplicate rows.  
I think the I don't mean it in a trite way, but like people were troopers when we were walking through this data and we just had to be very honest that we this is a very early days kind of project.  
We just kind of need to see how is this coming across to people because we don't wanna put things in front of people without, you know, understanding the effects of that.  
I'm trying to think of something else that was maybe relevant.  
A lot of people wound up mentioning their DD214, which I don't know if your team was familiar, but they would say, oh, well, this information is in my DD214 or I would just go to my DD214.  
So I I think the the findings will be interesting, but there's.  
Yeah, I think there's some stuff that we can do in the profile that where we can enhance people's information and make it a little bit more useful, but it kind of comes down to to what end, for what purpose and is something else already doing it better.  
And that might just be the DD214.  
So any other questions I can elaborate on?

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 21:48  
That is an incredibly helpful overview of the work that you're doing, and to get that in front of real, you know, representative users to to see is this making sense?  
Are there pieces that are standing out either for good or bad reasons?  
That's really helpful to know.  
And yeah, I mean, I would love, you know, I have a couple just kind of in the weeds questions because this is very helpful for us to hear too.  
So we're there particular parts of the record or the profile that veterans wanted to see or they wanted those things to kind of stand out at the top?  
Yeah, I guess I'll start there.

 **Pam Drouin (Guest)** 22:24  
Ah, let's see.  
I mean, I think.  
Accurate dates because the dates that we were able to pull really didn't align with people's recollections.  
And one thing I learned from this research is that people remember their dates.  
Like every date that happened to someone, it was.  
It was a pivotal, you know, change in their life and their career.  
So when they saw dates that didn't make sense and they couldn't understand what triggered that date, that was something that they didn't want.  
Gosh, I feel like there was one thing that was missing that it's it's not popping to mind.  
Maybe it will be later.  
Trying to think locations was just the other thing where, umm.  
Although MOS, you know the job that someone did is very important in helping someone like establish a claim and and get the the support that they need based on the job they were doing.  
Location provides this added context where it may not matter what job they did because of where they were and the time period that they were in.  
That information is something they need to be able to provide, and with the data we are able to pull it just wasn't able to sort of answer those questions.  
I'm trying to think of what else?  
Umm.  
Duty station was something I don't think we pulled and that was something that felt missing.  
Also unit assignment and I wanna say I think we did pull that, but the just the values that were pulled were just not not useful at all.  
They they they were like something like null value.  
You know, things like that.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 24:10  
That's helpful.  
And that answers the other question I had too.  
I was curious if there were pieces you pulled that maybe were not as helpful for veterans, so that that's really helpful to hear too.  
And you'd mentioned having that kind of, oh, sorry.  
Go ahead, samara.

 **Strauss, Samara** 24:25  
Yeah.  
Pam, I'm curious whether especially cause I think it could be interesting to this group whether discharge status came up.

 **Pam Drouin (Guest)** 24:34  
No.  
God, yeah.  
Yes, because I I we ran into a situation a few times where there was a separation.  
I think the field title was something like separation like narrative reason for separation text and there where I think 211 of them wasn't able to make it but one of them showed weight control failure which was termed in another field like column a military violation and the the participant that saw that they were like that wasn't true.  
I never got in trouble, so seeing something come across like that was very upsetting to them.  
And then there was another person where I don't remember which column data column it was.  
It was something around it, something like honorable discharge but severance pay.  
But this person was like I never got severance pay.  
My DD214 says no severance pay.  
I was supposed to get severance pay and was like I I I I have been owed 7 years worth of this money and it's not that much but it means something.  
And this person had been trying to get, and you've been fighting for almost 30 years.  
Like to to get like the appropriate amount of like compensation for everything that he had been through, because I think a month no, a week before completing bootcamp he incurred an injury based on someone injuring him.  
So that was really hard to sit through.  
So that that's where, like, yeah, discharge.  
Some people might find that helpful, but other people might find it really upsetting, either because it's not true or there's something incorrect in there and you know a number of people, I assume.  
How do you think you're we would go about correcting that data?  
And there were.  
There was a wide variety of ways that people would try to do that, but, and I think almost all of them, it was like this is such a hassle, you know, this is such a an arduous thing I have to do for something that should be right to begin with.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 26:41  
That is really helpful to hear for us to hear, because that is certainly something we'll think about and and especially thinking about if veterans want to, let's say, appeal their discharge status or other information on their profile, it's definitely of interest.  
So where did you have a question?

 **Strauss, Samara** 26:58  
I had a comment that I just wanted to add.  
You know, it's a really tough position and a tough call sometimes around showing data.  
In this case, I think the data quality was so poor that like we're gonna go back to our stakeholders and be like we don't think this is, this is a viable path at this time.  
Ah, that being said, sometimes it is helpful to just show people their data, because if it is incorrect, they may not know that that VA has something incorrect on file for them.  
And while it's a huge pain.  
Eventually, they could probably get it fixed and not saying it would be easy or fun, but if you don't even know that what your data is or what data V has about you, like we as the profile team are in a position sometimes where maybe something does show up and it's incorrect.  
If it's not something that can be fixable from the interface, you know it'll be a pain to correct, but at least you have the opportunity to know that you need to correct it, and if it is something like an address or something that can be fixed, then people can correct that from the interface.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 27:59  
Absolutely.  
There's definitely a benefit to just people being able to know what what data is on file for them and knowing.  
Like you said, it may be an urges process to make those changes, but to at least know and then if someone is, let's say, being denied for benefits or they're not getting the option to apply for something they understand.  
Why and can start to address that and it looks like a gene has a question or comment as well.

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 28:21  
Yeah, just a couple of quick things.  
If the I don't know if I've actually seen this research, if that's something you could make available, that would be great for us to to review, even if it's not totally in its finalized state, I think you mentioned that it was still in progress or did I, I don't know if I misunderstood, but you know, we're not gonna.  
I don't think we're gonna misinterpret it or share it around, but it would be helpful for us to see some of that behind the scenes because I think there is a lot of assumption on this project that we can just get that data.  
And to your point, I'm gonna go back to the DD214.  
A lot of weight has been put on discharge status as this kind of like catch all, like at least we can use that to determine whether somebody's eligible yay or nay.  
Sounds like first of all, we don't have good data quality on the digital side and I guess where I'm going with that is, uh, I'm just going to say the words digital to DD214 and see if that makes everybody have an opinion, because I don't know if that's something that already exists.  
If there's a plan to do it, if it's all basically a PDF like wouldn't format is it even in these days because it's not all physical paperwork anymore, is it?  
But we can't use it.  
We can't just ingest that data as it is today, can we?  
I'm just trying to understand the whole like why can't we just use that very naively?

 **Strauss, Samara** 29:46  
Yeah.  
I want to Passover actually back to Pam to talk about because she's working on synthesis, so I don't know the status of her report.  
So Pam, that would be something that you could answer.

 **Pam Drouin (Guest)** 29:58  
Yeah, absolutely.  
I'm trying to wrap up the rating today or tomorrow, but I will want up here to be through it before I share it with my team and I think after my team reads it then I would be happy to to share it out with your team.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 30:16  
That would be much appreciated.  
Thank you so much.  
And and as Gene said, we're not, we're not going to share it, you know, with any any other teams.  
So it would just be for our information and and our kind of understanding.  
But this is really interesting and very relevant to the work that we're trying to do.  
So that's very helpful.  
And I have a question that's kind of related to genes.  
Question too about the paper to digital piece.  
So we know that a significant proportion of our veterans are 65 or older.  
There were several veterans that served before.  
There was probably widespread computer systems, and so you can tell me I don't know if this is the right question for this team and if not, that's OK you can tell me that.  
But I'm curious for pulling in that information for the profile.  
If you have veteran who, let's say, served during the Vietnam era, is that information pretty accurate to the way that records were kept back then?  
Are there questions about kind of data quality or holes in the data, or is that something that you notice so much as being a time related factor?

 **Strauss, Samara** 31:16  
OK so and my brain.  
There's like 4 questions that I need to answer.  
One of them is around.  
I don't know whether we were specifically in Pan's Research.  
Looking at units, location, dates and time, location, location, places and dates, and then military occupational specialty, I think discharge status came up, but Pam did we like really evaluate whether discharge status was correct or incorrect.  
If we didn't, that's OK.

 **Pam Drouin (Guest)** 31:44  
Yeah.

 **Strauss, Samara** 31:44  
But I I think Gene may have walked away with that conclusion and I I wanna make sure if we don't know that that that's clear.

 **Pam Drouin (Guest)** 31:47  
I.  
I did like everything that was honorable.  
Well, and I would have to do a count, but they were all honorable discharge.  
We didn't talk to anyone who was dishonorably discharged.  
I can't recall offhand if there were any like null values for that, but my recollection is everyone was like that was correct, but it was the like narrative reason for separation that was either like null for some people or just the regular separated because of time served.  
That wasn't the phase, but it's just easiest Phase I could grab, but then there were like the two instances of there was, there was a a narrative given that a person didn't agree with. Yeah.

 **Strauss, Samara** 32:37  
OK.

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 32:38  
Was.  
Thank you for the clarification.  
I I do that, I think that's one part of it.  
I think there is also an aspect that we are trying to solve, maybe not in an automated way, but the disambiguating all of the benefits where your discharge status other than honorable discharge does not disqualify you from everything.  
But it does carry with it a stigma and it makes it a little bit even harder to reach those folks, whether the reason was valid or not.  
Again, I don't want to get into that in great depth, but the point is of I went through the TAP class and I couldn't thread the needle in terms of where all of them landed on which ones are only for honorable discharge, which one was for everybody.  
It's really, really hard to make sense of even like 8 or 9 benefits, so I can't imagine how it gets when we start to talk about the broader range.  
But that's, I don't know if we have that data point evaluated.  
It sounds like we don't and that's OK.  
We're not tasked with solving that problem either.  
It's just something I wanted to know.

 **Strauss, Samara** 33:41  
Great.  
Yeah.  
So I would say if there are questions around like data quality with with regards to discharge status Gene, I think I already connected you with Angela Allen.  
She would be a person to connect with to figure out.  
Like who to talk to?  
Or I forget if you guys have to submit a ticket or or what that looks like in terms of determining like overall like how you know how many people have a discharge status is ever.  
Is it like 100% of entries or 100% of people?  
Or is it like 10% of people?  
I doubt that, but like kind of some of that type of thing.

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 34:15  
Yeah, we've started that communication.  
Nicole and I are in communication.  
It's in in progress.

 **Strauss, Samara** 34:22  
Well.  
Alright, back to the question about.  
So then there was the question about the digital DD214.  
I think that's been like a pipe dream of some people's internally to octo for a while.  
Like that would be wonderful.  
I have no idea if anyone ever tried to actually determine whether that is a thing that would ever be possible, given that it is a document owned by DoD.  
Obviously do D would have to be on board for something like that, so I have no idea if that is ever really like in earnest, been pursued by anyone or if it's been an idea that people have had but kind of stopped there.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 35:06  
That makes sense.  
And we know that there are challenges too in terms of getting that information and coordinating with DoD, so that that makes a lot of sense, yeah.

 **Strauss, Samara** 35:09  
Yeah.  
Yeah, I think that would be wonderful.  
And and there and my brain is also like, why don't we do that?  
But it's like of course, like I'm not an expert in in D2, in the DD214 and I don't know all the challenges associated with it.  
I don't know if the data in it can be pulled or if it's just like scans of paper like.  
I have no idea.  
So umm yeah, I I don't really know enough about that to to provide like a helpful answer on like any more than any more than that.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 35:42  
Yeah, we understand that, that, that that makes perfect sense.  
And yeah, that's the I think that's the big question we all have is like what it what is this?  
What form does it take?  
Where's that information coming in?  
It would be helpful though, if you could just give us an overview of how information is coming into the profile.  
So if there's any pieces that are being automatically populated or pulled from other sources, if you could walk us through that, that would be very helpful for us to understand as well.

 **Strauss, Samara** 36:07  
Sure.  
Do you still want information on dates and overall data quality?

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 36:13  
Yes, I'm sorry.  
We're throwing a lot of questions at you, yes.

 **Strauss, Samara** 36:15  
It's it's totally fine.  
I'm trying to make sure we get to all of it.  
OK, so the overall data quality question, if we're talking specifically about military data, this engagement that we've been in for like four or five months now, it's been a long time that we've been trying to do anything that moves it forward.  
We already show people's branches of service, or more than one if they have it, and then they're periods of service.  
Umm, I would say that being said, you know I would check in with Angela Allen and the Vader team on overall data completion.  
I think we asked about that at some point.  
I just don't remember, but I know it like before a certain period of time, like a lot of data is missing.  
So, you know, I don't know that we've like, ever.  
I don't know that I've ever sat in on a research question and we've done a lot of them with older participants where like they had no military history.  
We're like the site, like, totally didn't register that they had served like, I don't know that I've seen that.  
But you know, I my guess is at some point in time, you guys have have the conversation with someone about, like the fire that happened to all of the like in the 70s.  
I think to like all of the Vietnam records or probably older as well.  
So I know that there's just like a lot of data missing, so I would say TLDR.  
Check in with Angela Allen about like just overall data quality or periods of service.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 37:42  
Thank you.  
Yes, we can definitely check in with Angela and we've heard, you know, bits and pieces about that too.

 **Strauss, Samara** 37:46  
Yeah, I'm sure you have.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 37:46  
And and data loss of the time, yeah.

 **Strauss, Samara** 37:49  
Cool.  
And now to answer your question about where the data comes from, the profile that can depend on what what piece of information.  
So, very confusingly, there is a back end system called VA profile.  
It is not run by me.  
It's not run by Octo, it's an outside team.  
They manage a lot of data though.  
At this point in time, it's grown in the last few years and so they support a lot of the data that we show in the profile on Vladeck of, but not all of it.  
So military information is actually one of those things that is now coming through via profile, which connects downstream to Vader.  
Umm, direct deposit information is something that comes from financial systems, so that doesn't come from a profile.  
Name like legal name and birth date come from MPI, so we get information from quite a few places.  
But I think now actually most of our information is coming from MVA profile.  
But again, they're not a one to one with our team.  
They integrate with a lot of systems at VA, so they're not there solely just to supportva.gov and I, I just say that just because people often think when I say MVA profile, they think it's like has to do with the website and and it is a totally separate thing which is good.  
Insofar as they're one of their goals is to like is to make sure they're connected to a bunch of systems.  
At VA so if someone updates something on va.gov, that'll propagate to a bunch of places.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 39:18  
That's so that's super helpful for us to know too.  
And to have that coordination to have that level of coordination, because I think what we're hearing from veterans right now is that they, they want that they want that level of coordination, they want to know if something is updated in one place that they won't have to reenter it or go back and get it fixed or updated somewhere else.  
So that's very helpful for us to know and also to understand that that connection with VA profile and how it's it's separate, but it's also very important and kind of underpinning a lot of what's happening on the VA website as well.  
So in terms of thinking about our questions for for your team, I think those are the major kind of questions that we have just in understanding the work that you've done and some of those those aspects as well.  
I'm going to pause and see Gene and Nicole.  
If either of you have any questions or other thoughts that you'd like to add.

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 40:12  
I will say this is more of a conversation and not necessarily a, you know, the end here, but the one of the things about this project is and I think there are gonna be some less technical interventions, better copy and information architecture and all that.  
But if we are pursuing a digital solution, there's this longer term view where that stuff you were talking about with onboarding is going to come up where if somebody is coming to a for the first time or maybe even for the first time in a long time, can we help them start to see these benefits, you know, let's and in this hypothetical future world where we're we're linked up to V8 profile.  
Can we help them with the some of the dependencies like make sure to get a disability rating before you do this.  
Ohhh, you are leaving the service in 90 days according to what you're telling us, which means you have to file.  
You know you're using this form instead of that other form.  
You know, like we're trying to figure out ways to help people make sense of it.  
Does my VA or the profile not not the profile?  
Does my VA seem like a potential home for this, or is there another effort that we should be thinking about where you know, like how do we create an integrated experience where they log into VA and it guides them to like the tasks that they need to do in a smart way?  
I'm not looking for the home with the sub domain here, I'm just kind of understanding the topic at a high level.

 **Strauss, Samara** 41:48  
I would say this is a really hard question to answer for a few reasons, but the reasons I think that are relevant to this call is.

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 41:50  
Yeah.

 **Strauss, Samara** 41:57  
The scope of my view, at least as of now, is really supposed to show you like your current status of things.  
It's not been something where we've really toyed with it becoming either status of things and also a place where we're showing you suggestions about how you manage your stuff.  
Could it do some of that in a probably light handed way?  
I'll say maybe I'm not gonna say definitely.  
I I won't say no, but I think there could be room potentially.  
Umm, that being said, I think that any solution is gonna be more than just one page.  
I'm not saying you're saying it's going to be one page, I'm just sharing.  
Those are my thoughts that you know any any, any decent solution is going to be more than one page.  
And so I I don't really.  
I don't know that I actually really have a vision of how it takes shape.  
I think people in the past have wanted my VA to do a lot more than we really think it should do, and that's not because it necessarily should have done those things, but because there was really nowhere else for stuff to go.  
So that in this conversation before has come up about like, well, why don't we show benefits suggestions on my VA?  
And I'm like, well, that's not really the point of the page.  
It it could maybe do that in some like light way, but like it's not gonna become.  
And I'm not again, I'm not suggesting you are saying this, but like, it's not gonna become like a benefits explorer.  
Like and that's just not.  
That's not what it should be.  
OK, so I I don't really know that that's that's kind of a probably.  
Longer and more nuanced explanation than you were looking for, but I I don't.  
I think maybe my VA could do some things.  
I don't think it does all the things, and I definitely don't think it becomes this like benefit suggester.

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 43:53  
No, and I am not a big fan of overloading functionality.  
Again, I come from design, so I'm usually on the other end of of this conversation.  
You know, give it a dashboard.  
Give it a million different features, but at the same time, if our digital solution ends up moving us in this direction and the longer term not saying that my VA has to be the home for it.  
But we probably as an org VS an octo and all the interrelated parts need to have that conversation about is there a home for this?  
Is this the right you know, beyond the?  
Is this the right solution?  
Because, yeah, that's we might be able to lead them there from my VA, but it probably needs its own dedicated space because it can be a pretty heavy application in the future.  
I don't know.  
I'm not sure exactly where I'm going with this other than I'm just kind of envisioning where a future of this thing might exist and how it might look, but I'm no.  
Yeah, that's, that's helpful.  
I think it's way too early for that conversation and in in any real sense.

 **Anastasia Jakabcin** 44:56  
Yeah, I think if I can jump in here, I think one of the consistent themes that RT, I think both of our teams have come across in the last, I mean since the beginning of time.  
But I think even more prominent in the last like 18 months or so is just how, how do all of these things fit together into a cohesive logged in experience?  
And as Samara said before, like our team used to be authenticated experience and for a long time we were kind of like a junk drawer dumping ground of like ohh well like this should go here.  
And to summarize, point like we don't want me to come back again that we know that that's not what you're suggesting.  
We're saying that one of the things that we're trying to tackle and it's it's not going to be just a one team solution here is is trying to figure out what does that holistic logged in experience look like that incorporates like end to end experience for veteran from the time they first come to va.gov, whether it's because they're they're newly transitioned to veteran status or the like you said haven't been there for a while or they're a my healthy vet migration person who's usually spend all their time over there like, these are the things that we.  
Thinking about and the way most of our teams are structured is we're very focused on like this is the claims team.  
This is the health team.  
This is so we don't.  
There's not a lot of bandwidth to think holistically, so I want to take the opportunity that anytime we get to talk with another team to like, keep that in mind and of the like, what is it mean holistically to sort of like merge in with everything as opposed to creating another fiefdom as a word, we use a lot in this space.

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 46:30  
I feel like our project teams are going to have a shared project proposal and then the next year or two based on that conversation alone, but we're trying to keep things small for this MVP.  
But no, that's really helpful context.  
And I think that makes sense.  
I don't know which teams are tackling that problem, but I I'm seeing it has to go in that direction eventually.  
You know longer term 3D, five years, whatever that looks like.

 **Strauss, Samara** 46:59  
Yeah.  
And you know, I almost like.  
It's hard because I've realized you guys are probably in a really tough position where some stakeholder wants some wrong division and like so that they feel like, oh, this whole thing is gonna get solved.  
And I can like go show it to my higher ups and like he'll really good about myself.  
And I think that is and and again I'm just saying like what has happened?  
I'm not saying that you guys are subscribing to like that is a good idea.  
You know, I think that's one of the reasons why like nothing has happened, because, like, I don't really think like you guys or we should have to think about some grand vision or where does like some much more complex tool live in like 3 to five years one that's going to be a lot different probably in that time just naturally because that's what websites do and two like let's see where like some of the little threads that you guys are probably thinking about, it sounds like you're already thinking about benefit disability before discharge like kind that.  
Type of thing like or getting discharge status in and seeing what we can do with that like I'm of the mind and it sounds like you guys probably are too.  
Like, let's see why some of those threads take us and like I realize you guys are the ones that have to manage the stakeholders and I don't.  
And this case.  
But I'm like, maybe if we just start doing something, we'll actually start getting somewhere instead of having to worry about, like, how do we build some wacky benefits navigator that we're also never going to build?  
And I know you know that like, I don't know.  
I just.  
I wanna encourage, I'm guess what I'm saying is you guys have a lot of support here for like being able to start small and seeing where the journey takes us.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 48:32  
Well, thank you.  
It's very, very reassuring for us to hear that because, yeah, I think it, it's something that we're trying to figure out is kind of where that starting point will be.  
Right now, we're doing the interviews and and trying to get as much information as we can, but then in terms of the design and where do we focus, where do we start focusing our development?  
What is the ultimate scope of this MVP?  
Honestly, that's one of our big research questions.  
That's something we're trying to figure out is what should the where should we be drilling in?  
How deeply should we be drilling in?  
So it's really helpful to hear that, that we have that support and I think that our teams have a lot of aligned interests doing, you know, kind of figuring that out.  
Yes, as as you all know and as Gene knows, we're definitely you know managing the stakeholders and trying to kind of come, I guess bring together different ideas of what this MVP should be and what it should include.  
But there are gonna be a lot of questions that we will have to answer in the future too.  
Umm.  
And kind of moving forward and I see Pan's question about the slack channel.  
We do have one so we can go ahead.  
Ohh, perfect genes already on top of it.  
Yes, we do have a channel, so feel free to join it and we'll add you if you need help getting added to it as well.  
So we definitely I want to just reiterate something that Gene said to this is the start of a conversation like we definitely want to keep working with your team, keep you in the loop about what we're doing.  
If there's anything that we can share that is helpful to your team too, as we're kind of going through this, I think gene and Nicole, I think once we have research findings from all these interviews, we are definitely planning to share those as well.  
So we want to keep, we want to be able to support your work just as you were supporting ours and keep this line of communication open.  
We really appreciate you taking the time to talk with us today.

 **Strauss, Samara** 50:14  
Thank you guys so much.  
I'm really excited to see where this work goes and I know again stakeholders are gonna want you to do some big magical thing.  
And I would say if stakeholders were willing to do something small, we could have done something small.  
I'm not kidding.  
Literally, year and a half ago and would probably be a lot further along in this journey.  
So don't be afraid to just make some progress and not worry about doing a big magical thing.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 50:35  
OK.

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 50:38  
We appreciate the solidarity and I'm trying to find the right way to say no but or yes and or whatever version of that that releases in something root results in something getting released without it becoming the all singing all dancing solution that solves everybody's problems in the MVP.

 **Strauss, Samara** 50:55  
Yeah.  
Yeah, it's just not going to happen.  
And obviously like you know this, but it's like then that's like then we're just wasting everybody's time.  
So they'll come around once they see some progress somewhere.

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 51:08  
True, true.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 51:11  
And Nicole has been really diligently taking notes for us.  
So Nicole, I just wanted to pause and see if you have any questions or anything you'd like to share as well.

 **Kontrabecki, Nicole [USA]** 51:22  
No questions at this time been focused on trying to take your words verbatim here, so I'm sure after I review my notes, I will come up with many of questions.  
But no, not not at this time.  
Gosh, it's so great to chat with your team again.  
Echoing what Gene said, thanks for your support.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 51:43  
Wonderful.

 **Kontrabecki, Nicole [USA]** 51:43  
And that's it.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 51:45  
Thanks so much, Nicole.  
And yes, thank you so much for your support.  
Thank you so much for chatting with us today.  
We've we've learned a lot that is gonna be very helpful for our efforts and and just focusing and kind of figuring out what those next steps should be.  
So we really appreciate it.  
I know that we'll all get to chat again in the future, I'm sure, but just want to thank you again for your time.  
Quickly, justicar notes.  
So after this, once the recording is done doing whatever it needs to do, I will make sure to share that with the team.  
So Liz can see it as well.

 **Strauss, Samara** 52:13  
Great.  
Thank you so much.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 52:15  
Of course.  
Thank you and have a good rest of your day.

 **Strauss, Samara** 52:18  
You too. Bye.

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 52:18  
Thank you.

 **Pam Drouin (Guest)** 52:18  
Thank you.

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** 52:19  
Thank you everyone.

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** 52:19  
Thanks.

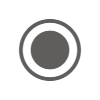
 **Anastasia Jakabcin** left the meeting

 **Kontrabecki, Nicole [USA]** left the meeting

 **Pam Drouin (Guest)** left the meeting

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** left the meeting

 **Dreyband, Yevgeny** left the meeting

 **Goldston, Cora M. (liberty It Solutions, Llc)** stopped transcription