

Lab Partnership Narratives

Summaries of select projects between the Lab at OPM and partner organizations

September, 2019

The Lab at OPM is uniquely positioned to forge partnerships across the public sector reflecting the needs of people served by and serving in government, using human-centered design. Lab partnerships are all individually customized, and can vary greatly in terms of length and engagement. Long-term partnerships with federal agencies result in portfolios that can include a mix of agency-level design education, coaching, and project work. Project work can be short- or long-term and follows a model of Lab members working side by side with partner teams, typically resulting in a set of completed design activities and strategic deliverables. Learn more about select Lab partners and projects.

USAJOBS	Page 3
The Veterans Experience Office	Page 5
Immersive Design Studio	Page 7
CDC	Page 8
Customer Experience CAP Goal	Page 10

USAJOBS

Improving the application and hiring process for job seekers, hiring managers, and HR professionals

Partner

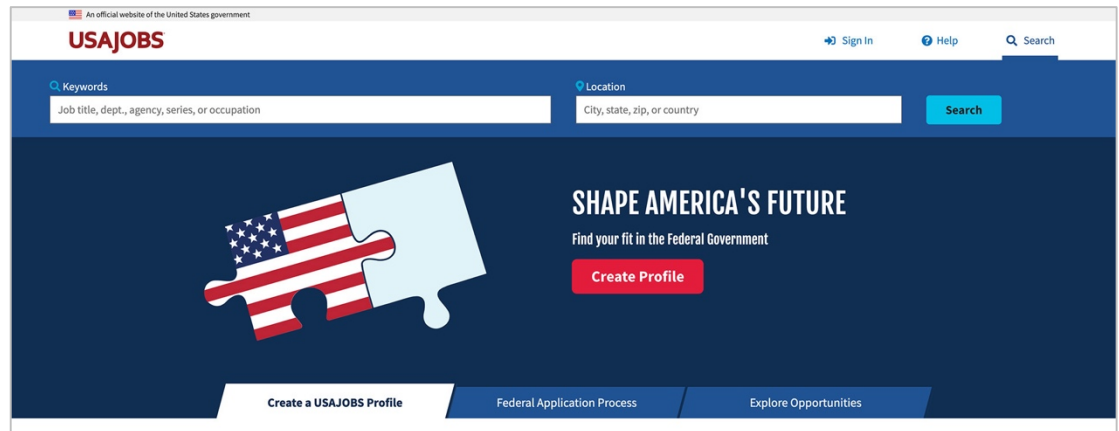
US Office of Personnel Management, USAJOBS Program Office

Engagement type

Multi-year (ongoing) partnership

Dates

Fall 2014 to June 2019



The Lab has introduced key design improvements to USAJOBS over the course of a multi-year partnership.

To improve the job seeker experience, the USAJOBS program office partnered with the Lab to integrate human-centered design and user-experience design best practices into usajobs.gov, the federal government's official employment site. Together, the Lab and USAJOBS teams have worked to solve problems through new and refined designs, features, and tools on USAJOBS.gov. Beyond the website, Lab-led research efforts pinpointed other issues within the federal hiring process that could be improved through design.

The Lab hosted numerous co-design workshops like the one pictured above to generate insights and spur design improvements.



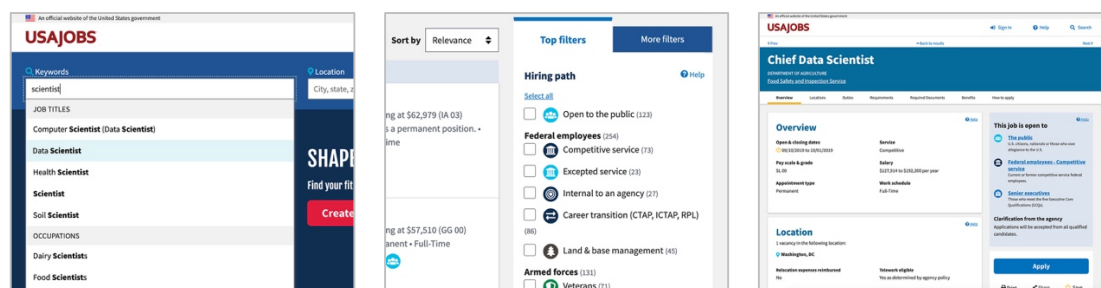
From 2014 to 2015, the joint Lab–USAJOBS design team conducted substantive qualitative research. The team spoke with more than 200 site users via focus groups and one-on-one interviews, gaining insight into their experiences, needs, and pain points in

applying for federal jobs on usajobs.gov. The results of the research led to many high-level recommendations for the design and functionality of the site, and laid the groundwork for future design work by the USAJOBS team.

From 2016 to 2018, the Lab and USAJOBS shifted their focus to co-design and development. The integrated team conducted 9 co-design sessions with a variety of stakeholder groups, primarily HR specialists, hiring managers, and job seekers. These sessions and additional design sprints eventually led to new designs implemented in 20 new releases. The team placed special emphasis on usability testing to ensure the designs met users' needs and expectations. These updates addressed many of the pain points identified in the USAJOBS experience, including:

- Clarifying eligibility to better identify when a job is open to a specific group (federal employees, Veterans, students, etc.)
- Improving keyword search
- Guiding users through the initial steps of the application process
- Creating a Help Center
- Creating a new job seeker landing page and dashboard
- Revising the job announcement (twice)
- Creating a playbook and prototype to guide HR specialists and hiring managers through the hiring process
- Creating a service blueprint for the applicant experience, which resulted in tangible improvements

Lab-led research and co-design has streamlined the process, from keyword search, to filtered search results, to the job announcement itself.



The Veterans Experience Office

Researching and designing solutions for and with Veterans

Since 2016, the Lab has served as an embedded partner in the Department of Veterans Affairs, helping establish a human-centered design (HCD) practice within VA's Veterans Experience Office (VEO). Established in 2015, VEO seeks to infuse the Veteran experience across all VA program touchpoints, so that services the VA offers can be more Veteran-centered. Throughout our tenure at VEO, we have been a formative influence in building an HCD practice both through project work and helping VEO employees build their own capacity in HCD.

Defining and measuring the patient experience at Veterans' health facilities

Working with Veterans and VA employees across a multitude of VA health facilities, we conducted in-person interviews with hundreds of individuals to hone in on moments that matter to Veterans, their families, caregivers, and VA employees. These efforts resulted in a paradigm shift for VA — to create programs and services that resonate with and prioritize a Veteran's life journey rather than reflect organizational needs.

Stakeholders

Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, National Cemetery Administration, Board of Veterans Appeals

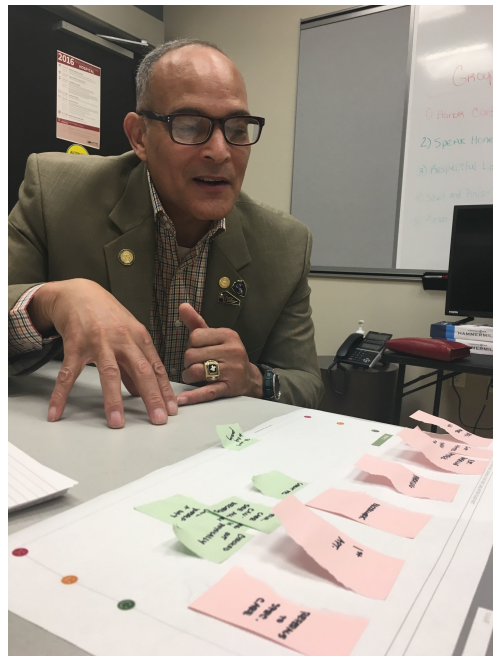
Engagement type

Multi-year (ongoing) partnership

Dates

July 2016 to present

Patient experience interview, VA health facility



Capacity building

Guided by the Lab, 16 members of the 150-member VE Office participated in a customized design-education curriculum early in 2019. After completing the Lab coursework, trained VEO team members lead and sustain design-led approaches to efforts at VEO with guidance from the Lab. Today, VEO team members have led and expanded on HCD projects across multiple VA programs and domains. Selected work includes:

- The VA Welcome Kit (A Veteran-centered introduction to VA benefits and services)
- Journey mapping across multiple VA experience and services
- HCD approaches to the caregiver and survivor experience

Digital experience

The VA.gov digital footprint is undergoing considerable evolution to meet the needs of Veterans where they are. This approach, informed by the Lab, driven first by Veteran needs, provides a more strategic approach to VA content, a deeper level of insight into key business drivers, target demographics, and audience needs and metrics.

Immersive Design Studio

Reimagining the future of employment for the disability community

Stakeholders

Veterans Health
Administration, Veterans
Benefits Administration,
National Cemetery
Administration, Board of
Veterans Appeals

Engagement type

Multi-year (ongoing)
partnership

Dates

July 2016 to present



The Lab delivered artifacts for future learning including ecosystem, stakeholder and journey maps.

Focusing on the future of work and the disability community, the Lab convened with people with disabilities and their advocates from government, nonprofit, and private sectors in a custom configuration of the Lab's coursework and capacity-building model over the course of four two-day sessions over 5 months. Experts and leaders from across government, private industry, nonprofit organizations, academia, and the self-advocacy community collaboratively mapped the current ecosystem of employment in the United States and collectively envisioned a more inclusive future of work.

Early sessions familiarized participants with the fundamentals and practice of human-centered-design. To help identify and influence mechanisms of change, Lab designers facilitated subsequent sessions and immersed participants in the co-design of tools, including stakeholder and journey maps, to help surface insights and build toward a complex system map of employment for people with disabilities.

A discussion about the application of these tools accompanied each activity, empowering stakeholders to carry human-centered design methods forward after the workshops concluded.

CDC

Stakeholders

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC), CDC Innovation Lab (I-Lab), Office of the Associate Director for Science

Engagement type

Year-long project with 5 week-long research sprints across the U.S.

Dates

Fall 2017 to Fall 2018

Veteran-centered Suicide Prevention: A Pilot Project



The joint Lab–CDC design team listened and learned during in-person interviews with 46 veterans in their communities.

Suicide is a leading cause of death for Americans overall, and has been rising nationally and in nearly every state since 1999. Veterans are a particularly vulnerable population. The good news is that suicide prevention is possible. CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (Injury Center) and the Lab conducted a Veteran-centered suicide prevention pilot project. The Lab worked with our partners to develop a new approach to address this urgent need. Building upon the latest public health research, human-centered design methods were used to explore how we might better address suicide among younger veterans not accessing health services at Veterans Health Administration facilities.

Knowing that there are many existing efforts already tackling this issue, this pilot project sought to build on prior work and help uncover opportunities where CDC's Injury Center might continue to play a unique and complementary role.

Working with 46 Veterans and 45 Veteran-focused organizations in five communities across the U.S., the effort leveraged human-centered design and a public health lens to better understand how to reach young Veterans not accessing Veterans Health Administration (VHA) services.

Organizations included:

- Education and professional development
- Case management
- Social peer support
- Recreation and volunteer
- Health care
- Financial and housing
- State and county public health
- Criminal justice and legal

Working directly with Veterans, we gained insights on how to prevent suicide among this population as they are transitioning out of military service. Promoting positive, social connectedness has been identified as a key evidence-based strategy for preventing suicide, the pilot project also placed particular focus on the role of connectedness during the transition.

Customer Experience CAP Goal

Exploring the experience of transitioning servicemembers across agencies

Stakeholders

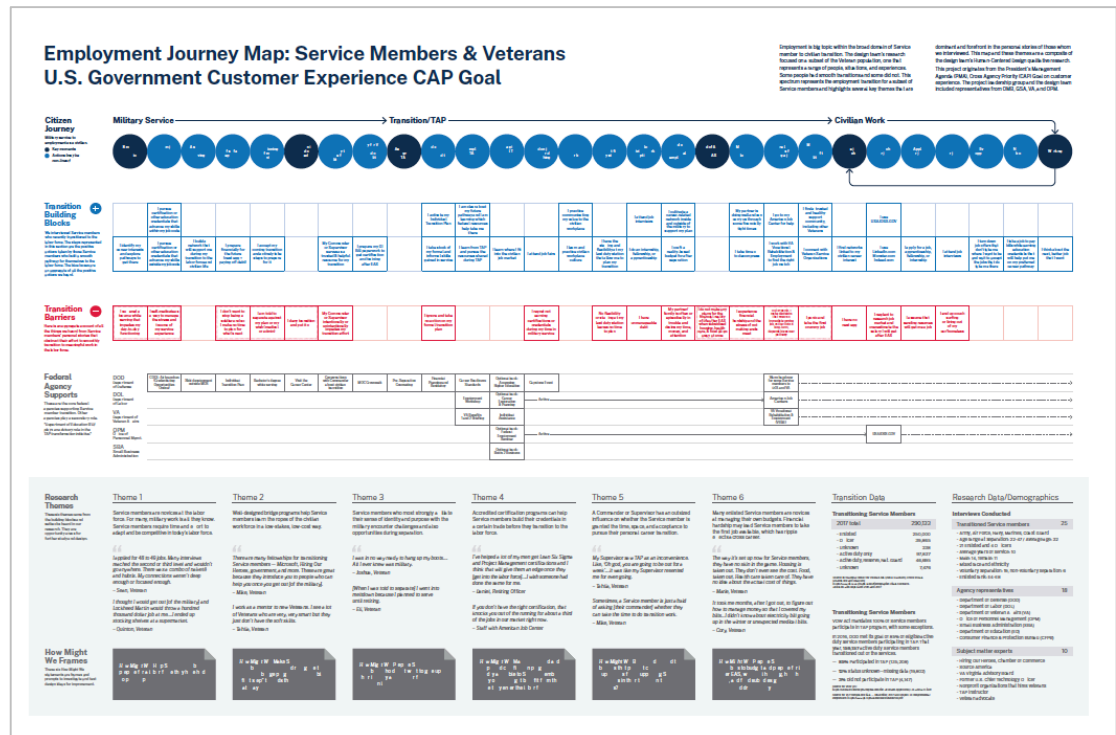
- Office of Management and Budget
- General Services Administration
- Department of Defense
- Department of Labor
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Small Business Administration
- Department of Education

Engagement type

Discrete project completed in 8 weeks

Dates

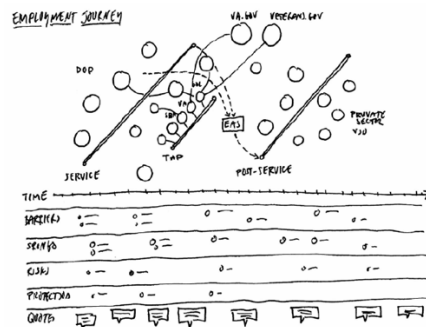
Winter 2018



The map illustrates the journey of enlisted servicemembers who leave the military and work to find opportunities in the labor market. It also highlights some of the key resources that six federal agencies offer servicemembers during their career transition journey.

In 2018, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) announced a continuation and expansion of the previous administration's Customer Service Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) goals. The new goal outlined that agencies should focus more on how citizens use and experience government services. Agencies would need to provide a streamlined and responsive customer experience across government. OMB also wanted to better understand what happens when a select group of citizens all rely on several federal agencies at once to achieve a certain goal — such as finding a job or planning one's retirement.

At left, a wall covered with research material; at right, an exploratory sketch of the journey visualization.



Given the transition and employment challenges that military servicemembers experience after leaving the service, OMB wanted to focus on the experience of servicemembers transitioning from military service. Because the Lab already had significant experience conducting design research through our partners at the Veterans Experience Office, the CAP Goal work was a natural extension of our past efforts. What resulted was a more comprehensive understanding of the cross-agency journey that service members experience when transitioning from military service.