

Conversation Guide - Claims for Increase

for [January, 2018 round](#)

[Claims for Increase Prototype](#) (updated)

[\(old prototype version used for p1 and p2\)](#)

Also see

1. [Value proposition and project goals](#) (from problem statement)
2. [Recruiting issue with research goals](#)
3. [Session Report Template](#)

GoToMeeting logistics

In the Attendees section, make sure everyone except the participant is on mute

In the Audio section, click the drop-down arrow and make sure "Play Entry/Exit Chimes" is unchecked

When the participant is ready, begin the session with the following intro

Intro - 5 minutes (until :5 in)

Thanks for joining us today! My name is Mike, and I also have some colleagues on the line observing and taking notes. We work with the team at the Department of Veterans Affairs on a website called Vets.gov, and we're excited to talk with you today to learn how to make one section of our website more useful to you.

We'll have two parts to this discussion.

1. A conversation to learn about your background filing a disability claim with the VA
2. We'll take a look at a prototype for a new section of vets.gov involving disability claims and would like to get your feedback on it.

This entire session should take about 45 minutes. I want to be respectful of your time, so I may move us along a little faster at various points.

If for any reason and at any time you want to stop the session, please let me know. You will not be penalized in any way if we need to stop, and you will still receive your \$25 thank you.

In this session, we want to hear your honest opinions. We aren't testing your ability. There are no right or wrong answers; we want to hear whether this section of the site makes sense to you. I'm hoping this can be an honest conversation between you and me, and I promise I won't be offended by any opinions you express.

Do you have any questions at this stage?

Are you comfortable if I record this session?

I'd like to record our conversation and what we do on the screen so we can make sure to capture your thoughts accurately.

Great! I'm going to turn on screen and audio recording now.

[The moderator will begin audio and screen recording.]

Background Questions - 6 minutes (until :11 in)

First, let's discuss your experience having filed a disability claim with the VA for just a few minutes before we go into the prototype

- How long after your separation from the service did you first file a claim?
 - What led up to filing your claim? What prompted your claim/Why now? (life event, financial situation, other benefits need rating to qualify, etc.)
- How did you learn about the process and what you needed to do to submit your claim? What sources of information did you use? (VA.gov, Vets.gov or other VA resources, non-VA resources)
 - How did you decide these were reliable/truthful?
 - Are these the places you typically go to for information about VA benefits and services?
- Did you consider filing online?
 - Why/why not?
- About how long/how much time did it take you to prepare and submit your claim? (months, years?)
- Did you get help with your claim?
 - (Friends, family, VSO, other POA?) Why/why not?

(If needed) I'm sorry your prior experience was so burdensome. I'm working with a team at the VA that is trying to streamline the online application process. We're starting with a specific case that we can deliver quickly, which is updating claims for disability compensation increases.

Transition to prototype - 2 minutes (until :13 in)

Now we're going to shift gears and review a clickable prototype of a new section of Vets.gov. Have you ever used Vets.gov before? Vets.gov is a site we are working on to unify and simplify Veterans' digital interactions with the VA.

I'll ask you to show me how you would navigate the prototype to accomplish some tasks. This will help us understand how to make it better.

Please think aloud. While you are going through the site, please try as much as possible to vocalize your reactions, thoughts, and decisions as you see each page. That helps us to better share your thoughts with other members of our team.

Please use the prototype as you normally would if you were trying to accomplish this on your own

I'll give you keyboard and mouse control so that I can see what you would do on the website prototype.

First Task: Triage - 6 minutes (until :19 in)

Scenario

Imagine you've been feeling like the condition you're rated for has become more severe, and you think it's time to update your rating at VA to account for the worsening. Show me what steps you would take on this prototype.

Steps

- [Start page](#)
 - What would you do first?
 - What info do you think you would need?
 - What would you expect when you click "Apply"?
- [Disability Compensation Claim Type](#)
 - What do you think these options mean?
 - What would you choose for this situation (*remind about scenario if need be*)?
 - How long would you expect this online application process to take?

Things to watch for:

- Are participants able to self select onto the correct path (claim for increase)?
- Do participants understand what a "rated disability" or "rated condition" means?
- Would participants select "I have new conditions" if an existing condition has gotten worse?

Second Task: Sign In and Review Prior Claim - 8 minutes (until :27 in)

Steps

- [Sign In](#)
 - Why do you think you're being prompted to sign in?
 - Do you have any concerns at this stage?
 - Which option would you choose?
 - What would you do if you didn't have an account for any of these?
- [Identifying details](#)

- Is this what you expected to see?
- [Special circumstances \(flashes\)](#)
 - Why do you think the VA is asking for this information?
 - What do you think would happen if none of the above applied to you?
 - What would you do if one of the above did apply to you?
 - What would you do next?
- [Contact Details](#)
 - What would you do if you were moving soon?
- [Service History](#)
 - *can skip over it since we covered this in [VR&E January 2018 research](#)*
- [Payment method](#)
 - Why do you think you are being asked for this information?
 - What will the VA do with it?
 - Do you have any concerns about entering this?

Things to watch for:

- Does the participant expect that s/he can only apply for an increase if one of the special circumstances is met?
- What does the participant think a forwarding address is?
- Is the participant clear that payment method will be used to receive payments, not make payments?

Third Task: Your Disabilities - 16 minutes (until :43 in)

Scenario

Suppose that you had these conditions and in your recent doctor's visit, your doctor noted that your PTSD and your Intervertebral Disc Syndrome have both worsened.

Steps

- [Your Disabilities](#)
 - What would you do next?
 - (prompt to select both PTSD and Intervertebral Disc Syndrome if needed)
- [Collecting Evidence](#)
 - What is this step telling you?
 - What would you do next?
 - Do you have all the information you need to proceed?
 - What would you expect to happen if you got a phone call and had to step away from this now?
- [Treatment Records](#) (PTSD)

- (at some point) How are you feeling at this stage?
- [Treatment Records](#) (Intervertebral Disc Syndrome)
 - **additional scenario: suppose you were treated for Intervertebral Disc Syndrome by a non-VA doctor**
 - How would you prefer to provide the records (have the VA contact your doctor or upload)?
- [Authorization to Release Medical Records to VA](#)
 - Do you have all the info you need?
 - What would you do if you didn't have all the information?
 - What would happen if you left this form and came back to it later?
- [Other Supporting Documents](#)
 - Why do you think you're seeing this?
 - Is there anything you might add here?
 - If so, what would you add?
 - What effect do you think that would have?
- [Review Application](#)
 - What are you seeing here?
- [Claim Received](#)
 - What are your thoughts on the process?
 - How did it match up with your expectations?
 - Any concerns?
 - What do you think the "effective date" means?
 - What would you do with this info?
 - What would happen next?
 - What would you expect to see if you clicked "find out what happens after you apply"?
 - Think back to a previous set of forms like this on a website.
 - did you do it all at once or bit by bit over a few sittings?

Things to watch for:

- Does the participant only select one condition before hitting "continue"?
- Does the participant want to leave and come back to the application or do it all in one sitting?
- Does the participant think that more documentation is required?
- Do people expect that the VA is going to reach out to their provider in addition to any other documents they provide?
- Does the participant expect that "effective date" is a promise rather than a date to which they'd get back pay *if* their claim is approved?

(Bonus if Time Allows) Redirect to eBenefits - 4 minutes

Let me take you back to an earlier step to explore a different scenario.

Scenario

Suppose that you gotten a decision and you wanted to appeal it without adding more information

- [Claim Type](#)
 - What is this step telling you?
 - Was that what you expected? How do you feel about this information?
 - What would you do at this point?

Things to watch for:

- How frustrated does the participant seem to be redirected to eBenefits?
- Does the benefit of being able to go through vets.gov for Claims Increases outweigh the frustration of not being able to use vets.gov for these other scenarios?

Post-Task Interview - 1 minute (until :44 in)

Now that you've had a chance to explore the form and site, do you have any other questions or comments about the different pages you've seen?

Thank-You and Closing - 1 minute (until :45 in)

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 work on the site and make sure it really works for Veterans.

As a thank you for your participation, we'd like to offer you a \$X gift either as an Amazon Gift Card or through Paypal. Do you have a preference?

Great, and what's the email address I should use to get the gift to you?

Thanks! Lastly, would you like to share about this feedback opportunity with other Veterans or Veteran groups you're a part of? If so I can send you an email with a little blurb so you can easily connect folks to us.

Great, well thank you so much again, and enjoy the rest of your day!