Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
2022 Plain Writing Act Compliance Report

I. Introduction

The VA Plain Writing Act Compliance Report for 2022 demonstrates VA's continued compliance with the Plain Writing Act of 2010. The report provides examples of VA's accomplishments, best practices as well as VA's communication and training efforts to promote plain language writing. The report includes VA's ongoing efforts to identify innovative solutions to employ plain writing and web optimization principles to reduce barriers and evaluating Veteran and customer satisfaction for continued improvement.

While VA ensured continuity of operations and achieved noteworthy progress while serving Veterans in a pandemic, the shift in customer behavior and expectations emphasizes VA's focus on personalizing communications with customers through individualized and tailored experiences. VA continued to work on digital transformation by supporting VA's role in the COVID-19 response and with technical solutions to expand Veteran-facing communications.

VA has set aggressive goals and surpassed expectations. VA was named by the [Partnership for Public Service](#) as one of the Top 5 [Best Places to Work](#) in the Federal government among large agencies in 2021 – VA's first time ever in the Top 5. VA has also been named the Most Improved Large Federal Agency.

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) mission of putting Veterans first correlates to our focus on three core duties: providing all Veterans timely, world-class health care; ensuring that they have access to the benefits they have earned; and honoring Veterans with a final resting place that is a lasting tribute to their service.

The Department's Fiscal Year 2022-2028 Strategic Plan reinforces VA's commitment to serving Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors by 1) providing clear and consistent communications at every phase of the Veteran's life journey; 2) communicating in a variety of languages and in various ways to ensure equitable access to information and supporting those with physical and/or intellectual disabilities; and 3) educating employees on communication approaches to deliver accurate and consistent information, benefits, care and services to Veterans, Service members and their families and caregivers.

VA's Core Values – Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence – known as "I CARE", describes how VA will accomplish its mission and serve as a guide for all our interactions with our customers.

As the largest integrated health care system in the United States, providing services to over nine million Veterans, the Department is taking action to become a Federal model for inclusion, diversity, equity and access (I-DEA) in its cultural transformation action plan by improving health equity and reducing disparities to ensure access to high quality care for all Veterans.

VA's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access Strategic Plan

VA will promote a collaborative culture that promotes a diverse, competent, high-performing workforce to best serve Veterans and their families. This includes revamping VA's communications efforts to better reach underserved communities in rural or remote areas, outlying communities or Veterans with limited English proficiency.

The Secretary's four foundational principles of advocacy, access, outcomes and excellence, in addition to I-CARE Values, played a key role in the development of the Secretary's I-DEA Task Force recommendations to elevate and identify strategic opportunities across VA's vast ecosystem of I-DEA. The workgroup recognized the importance to communicate VA's perspective on I-DEA by connecting them to VA's I-CARE core values, characteristics and customer experience principles to ensure a sustained change of foundational and core values. The workgroup's recommendations are proactive, share the burden with underserved communities, embody accountability, and cultivate jointness across VA to create a holistic and integrated VA mission and strategy for I-DEA.

II. Senior Agency Official for Plain Writing

- Carrie McVicker, Executive Secretary, Office of the Secretary

- Prevolia Harper, Deputy Executive Secretary, Office of the Secretary

- Vivian Drake, Staff Assistant, Plain Language Coordinator, Office of the Executive Secretary

VA Administrations and Staff Offices also provide continued support to the Plain Language efforts of VA.

III. Ongoing Plain Writing Actions

VA received a top grade in 2021 from the Center for Plain Language in their annual Federal Report Card with an A+ for organizational compliance for staffing, communication, and training as required by the 2010 Plain Writing Act. The Center acknowledged VA as most improved in the ways the Department has embraced plain language over the past decade to communicate information clearly to Veterans, their families and their caregivers. VA also received a B- in Writing Quality from the Center's review of VA's Coronavirus webpage and Freedom of Information Act request webpage on the ease for the public to find, understand and use the information it needs.

VA uses best practices to ensure all communications have concise, consistent and easy-to-understand language, tone and graphics to create a helpful experience for Veterans and the public. This includes using the following style guides:
- VA Executive Secretariat style guide
- VA's Public Affairs Guidelines

- [Associated Press Stylebook](#) rules
- [VA.gov content style guide – VA.gov Design System](#)

VA also use multiple channels and methods to ensure Veterans and the public are clearly informed and understand their benefits, care and service options and how to access directly in VA's network and in the community. VA's social media pages are:

- https://www.facebook.com/VeteransAffairs
- https://twitter.com/DeptVetAffairs
- http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/
- https://www.flickr.com/photos/VeteransAffairs/
- https://www.youtube.com/user/DeptVetAffairs
- https://www.instagram.com/deptvetaffairs

Great examples and accomplishments of written public communications and efforts are:

Veterans Health Administration (VHA)
Use of style guides consistently helps ensure plain language writing when communicating care and benefits information to Veterans and the public. Standard operating procedures explain writing, editing and approval process, associated timelines and requestor's responsibilities. Also, peer review takes place between the subject matter expert review and routing materials for leadership approval. Sharing links to materials uploaded into MS Teams channels allows multiple reviewers to simultaneously view documents while ensuring version control. A single working document enables the content creator to address comments and edits using plain language. The examples below align with best use of plain language writing.

Office of Healthcare Transformation (OHT)
VA Minority Outreach for COVID-19 Working Group provided insights into their stakeholders, suggested effective products and gave feedback on developed products and distributed products to their stakeholders. The Working Group created more informed content, products that better addressed target audiences, and generated a partnership for distribution. Comprehension and usability testing was done with the COVID Minority Outreach Communications Group and VA Public Affairs Officers, and in the case of the brochure and fact sheets, with Veterans.

Products Developed
- 9 videos produced and released via a variety of outlets
- Vaccine hesitancy communications [toolkit](#) to include:
- 3 "Help you understand…" (dispelling myths) Fact Sheets
  - Women's Health
  - Minority Health
  - Racial and Ethnic Minority Health
- Minority-focused brochure
  - Getting Your COVID-19 Vaccine for Veterans from High Risk Communities
- Posters
  - A Shot of Hope! Stay informed at www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/
  - It's OK to Ask About COVID-19 Vaccine – Female Veteran
- COVID-19 [Questions landing webpage](#) to house products

Office of Rural Health (ORH)
- ORH Annual Report, *Thrive*, highlights Fiscal Year 2021/s accomplishments to improve the health and well-being of rural Veterans nationwide at

https://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/docs/ORH0776_2021_ORH-Annual-Report_Final_508c.pdf
- *The Rural Connection* newsletter highlights innovative ways VA is working to increase access to care for rural Veterans and reaches more than 83,000 subscribers, including rural Veterans, their caregivers and Veteran advocates at https://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/newsroom/newsletter.asp
- *VA and faith leaders address rural Veteran mental health crisis* promotes ORH's Rural Community Clergy Training Program in collaboration with VA's National Chaplain Service at https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/101107/va-and-faith-leaders-address-rural-veteran-mental-health-crisis/
  - Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IjQS8AXGT7U
- ORH collaborated with National Rural Health Association Today to promote a new podcast focused on late-life Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in helping older Veterans with late-life PTSD at https://nrha_weblink_test.informz.net/informzdataservice/onlineversion/pub/bWFpbGluZ2luc3RhbmNlaWQ9MTA1NTM5NTk=#n14777378

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access
- VA and Indian Health Service broaden scope to serve American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans at https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5743
- Promoted the impact of rural Veterans' mental health as a result of VA's tablet program at https://www.facebook.com/100019592933068/posts/987164358613319/?d=n
- Promoted efforts to provide rental assistance to Native American Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness at https://www.facebook.com/100019592933068/posts/932907320705690/?d=n

Integrated Veteran Care (IVC)
IVC, formerly Offices of Community Care and Veterans Access to Care, strives to consistently use clear communications with Veterans and the public. This includes simple, concise language and writing to ensure Veterans are clearly informed and understand their care and service options and how to access care, both directly in VA's medical network and in the community. The below examples demonstrate how IVC communications use plain language writing when providing care and benefits information to Veterans.

- American College of Healthcare Executives annual meeting; Access Talking Points for VHA leadership
- Referral Coordination Initiative Fact sheet
  - Veteran-facing - External Veteran Fact Sheet Final 022321.pdf (sharepoint.com)
  - Staff-facing - RCI Internal Fact Sheet Final.pdf (sharepoint.com)
- Care Optimization in Emergency Department (CO-ED) website - Emergency Room, 911, Or Urgent Care? | Veterans Affairs (va.gov)
- Centralized Authorized Emergency Care – Communications materials to inform and educate community providers, Veterans and VA staff about VA's new, universal emergency care reporting process
  - Provider-facing - Emergency Medical Care–Information for Providers - Community Care (va.gov)
  - Veteran-facing - Emergency Medical Care - Community Care (va.gov)
- Community care claims processing is a complex undertaking. Ensuring providers understand their role and responsibilities considering changing legislation, VA policy

and technology is a continuous effort. [File a Claim for Veteran Care - Community Care (va.gov)](#)

- Monthly Provider Advisor newsletter for community providers delivered via GovDelivery
- Monthly VA Roundup newsletter for VA staff delivered via GovDelivery
- IVC Key Message Playbook

Newsletter educational series

- *Access News* – Includes a four-part, "How To" Plain Language series to provide instruction and emphasize use of plain language when communicating internally and externally to Veterans and the public
- Plain language "Tip Sheet" – shared with staff and used by comms team members to implement plain language protocols. [Plain language - VA.gov Design System](#)
- Enable continuous education and technical improvement for VA communicators
  - National Association of Government Communications School
  - GOV Delivery training
  - Public Relations Society of America Training
  - Adobe Communication Trends Seminar

Health Outcomes Military Exposures

- Fact sheet at [10 Things to Know About Airborne Hazards and Burn Pit Exposures (va.gov)](#)
- 2021 Agent Orange Newsletter at [Agent Orange Newsletter - 2021 - Public Health (va.gov)](#)
- Military Exposures and Your Health Newsletter, Issue #6 at [Military Exposures & Your Health - 2022 -Issue #6 - Public Health (va.gov)](#)

War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC)

- WRIISC Advantage - A National Newsletter for Veterans and their Health Care Providers at [WRIISC Advantage: Fall 2020](#)
- WRIISC – A Guide for Veteran Health Care Providers at [Gulf War Fact Sheet-Providers (va.gov)](#)
- WRIISC Airport Hazards – Concerns Information for Providers at [Airborne Hazards: What Do Providers Need to Know? (va.gov)](#)

Discovery, Education and Affiliate Networks

- Annual Report: https://www.va.gov/DEAN/YIR/2021_DEAN_Annual_Report_Final.pdf

Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA)

- 75th Anniversary Annual Report
- OpEd (Word doc attached) at [How partnerships improve VA quality of care, train health care professionals (militarytimes.com)](#)
- [OAA: VA's Hidden Gem](#)
- [VHA selects three David M. Worthen Award recipients for excellence in health professions education - VA INSIDER](#)
- [Office of Academic Affiliations expands nurse residencies to 28 new sites - Vantage Point](#)
- [Opportunities for VA physical and occupational therapist trainees - Vantage Point](#)
- [Rural Texas VA hosts post-graduate pharmacist program - Vantage Point](#)

- [Gaming, simulation teach how to manage difficult airways - Vantage Point](#)

OAA Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access
- [Minority Summit expands diversity, partnerships with Minority Serving Institutions - Vantage Point](#)
- [Native American, rural Veterans connect with nurse - Vantage Point](#)

Office of Research and Development (ORD)

- **Fact sheets:**
  - [VA Research on Kidney Disease](#)
  - [VA research on COVID-19](#)

- **Infographs:**
  - Mortality after emergency care: VA vs non-VA hospitals at [Mortality-after-emergency-care-VA-non-VA-hospitals-full.jpg (3300×2550)](#)
  - Bladder cancer outcomes: Race disparities fade in VA at [Bladder-cancer-outcomes-full.jpg (3900×2004) (va.gov)](#)

- **Current articles:**
  - VA researchers at the Truman VA in Missouri are testing a new radioactive tracer drug for its ability to show whether and where prostate cancer has spread in the body at [VA clinicians testing new radioactive tracer drug to track prostate cancer in the body](#)
  - A VA study finds trauma-sensitive yoga is an effective therapy for women Veterans who developed PTSD following military sexual trauma at [VA researcher aims to help survivors of military sexual trauma with PTSD](#)
  - In two studies, a team of VA researchers concluded that those infected with COVID-19 may experience long-term cardiovascular and mental health effects at [VA research spells out COVID's down-the-road risks for cardiovascular and mental health](#)
  - A large genetic study by the VA Million Veteran Program has found that a person's height may also affect their risk for several common health conditions in adulthood at [Height may be risk factor for multiple health conditions](#)

- **VA Research Week Videos:**
  - Brain Games: The Code to Catch Cancer; Heartwarming Innovation; Fighting for Veterans, Life and Limb at [VHA YouTube Playlist](#)

- **Social Media** uses plain language, animation and video formats to relay intricate VA Research study findings to the public via social media channels. Examples are:
  - [Smartphone app to prevent suicide](#)
  - [Vaccines provide modest risk reduction for long-COVID](#)
  - [Computer simulations show muscle weakness caused by PAD](#)
  - [VA St. Louis finds COVID-19 patients can face serious health concerns](#)
  - [MVP researchers find genetic markers for PTSD](#)

- **VA Research Nuggets (1-minute audio spot):**
  - [VA-developed prosthesis helps people who've lost one or more fingers, except the thumb](#)

(Winner National Association of Government Communicators Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Award, Audio-Commercial/Public Service Announcement, Award of Excellence)

- **National VA Research Week Campaign:**
  - 2022 VA Research Week toolkit and resources
  - https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/vacovhacomm/Research-Week

- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative** to develop a diverse pool of highly talented, motivated VA investigators through new research awards.
  - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Research Initiative
  - 2022 DEI Research Supplement Awardees
  - VA grants first diversity, equity, and inclusion research awards
  - Air Force Veteran among 10 new awardees in VA diversity, equity, and inclusion research program

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

In terms of best practices, VBA ensures it follows communication and style guidelines as outlined by VA's Executive Secretariat and VA's Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs. VA primarily uses the Associated Press stylebook rules. Additionally, VBA uses an established concurrence process to ensure products and communications developed by VBA's Strategic Engagement staff are properly routed for writing style and content and given final approval by senior leadership.

Following are examples of significant VBA accomplishments as it relates to written in public communications:
- VA Life insurance program coming in January 2023 for Veterans with established service-connection at https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/103790/valife-insurance-program-coming-january-2023-veterans-with-service-connection/
- Nine new cancers added to the presumed service-connected list related to particulate matter at https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/102843/nine-new-cancers-added-to-the-presumed-service-connected-list-related-to-particulate-matter/
- Disability compensation and benefits available to Vietnam War Veterans at https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/101624/disability-compensation-and-benefits-available-to-vietnam-war-veterans/
- VA proposes updates to disability rating schedules for respiratory, auditory and mental disorders body systems at https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/100285/va-proposes-updates-to-disability-rating-schedules-for-respiratory-auditory-and-mental-disorders-body-systems/
- Veterans Benefits Guide now available in both print and digital formats at https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/95660/veterans-benefits-guide-now-available/
- VA plans expansion of benefits for disability claims for conditions related to certain toxic exposures at https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/89496/breaking-news-va-plans-expansion-benefits-disability-claims-conditions-related-certain-toxic-exposures/
- Choose VA VRRAP Campaign served 15.2M impressions to the Veteran audience, garnering over 145K clicks to garner maximum awareness about the VRRAP program in a clear and concise manner. Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP) | Veterans Affairs (va.gov)

VBA received several recognitions/awards for its clear communications as follows:

- Honorable Mention in the 2022 Hermes Creative Awards competition – Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment services
  - Link to video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_-k57qaZYhs
- 2021 MarCom Awards
  - PLATINUM WINNERS
    - Best Video: Animation – Home Loans Public Service Announcement
    - Best Video: PowerPoint Presentation – Buy a Feature
    - Best Print Media: Magazine Special Edition – Stars and Stripes Veterans Benefits Guide
  - Best Strategic Communications: Study – Human Centered Design Questionnaire
    - GOLD WINNERS
      - Best Digital Media: E-newsletter – Veterans Benefits Newsletter
      - Best Print Media: Magazine Writing – Stars and Stripes Special Publication
      - Best Print Media: External Newsletter – Veterans Benefits Newsletter
      - Best Video: PSA – Protect Those Who Matter Most with VA Life Insurance
      - Best Video: Radio PSA – Insurance PSA (attached)
      - Best Video: Motion Graphic – Veterans Rapid Retraining Assistance Program
    - HONORABLE MENTION
      - Print Media: Direct Mail, Postcard – Pension Poaching postcard (attached)
      - Print Media: Writing, Speech – GI Bill 77th Anniversary Video Remarks
      - Digital Media: Social Media – VBA Facebook Site
      - Digital Media: Social Media – VBA Twitter Site
      - Digital Media: Social Media – VBA Instagram Site
      - Digital Media: Writing (Web), Blog (Single Post) – Military children qualify for a variety of VA benefits
      - Video/Audio: Video/Film, Government – VA Benefits News (Mr. Burke episode)

- Examples of operational/technological process improvements, which also promote use of plain language, include:
  - GI Bill Comparison Tool: Your Future Starts Here at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_E_a1_b5kk
  - Digital GI Bill Introduction at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhOiYjXMGP0

- Examples of improved communications/documents to promote equity in policies, programs and activities:
  - VA makes it easier to buy a home on tribal land - Vantage Point
  - Protect your benefits: Beat pension poachers to the punch - Vantage Point

National Cemetery Administration (NCA)
NCA's plain language accomplishments include the use of media, websites, mobile apps, blogs, Facebook, tweets, podcasts, social media, as well as layout and design of web content for easy access, readability, and navigation.

- Veterans Legacy Memorial at https://www.cem.va.gov/VLM/index.asp
- National Cemetery Administration – Facts about the National Cemetery Administration at https://www.cem.va.gov/facts/Facts_About_NCA.asp
- Underserved Communities Plain Language Social Media Posts

- o Pride Month at
  https://www.facebook.com/NationalCemeteries/posts/pfbid02VrVo2AF99h2BTNScpqLQJfX7dTn7d77JjMTKwnM3GFsyUSBD5v4nE7q495hQpxpXl
- o Caribbean American Heritage Month at
  https://www.facebook.com/NationalCemeteries/posts/pfbid02hx4cA6fLzftcUMWKHBEdGs3CQUMFzQo5R26NUongR7nPAw2eiEZHyk6UGa6oFFu9l
- o Asian Pacific Heritage Month at
  https://www.facebook.com/NationalCemeteries/posts/pfbid0rUTXaoFFA2nVTRXmhcYDWwDRaT3WdiR1pW9FAJsuZGERjzQhxGQDgeMJhuaLwHNol
- Technology and Veteran Projects
  - o Veterans Legacy Program at
    https://www.facebook.com/NationalCemeteries/posts/pfbid0nhbpSekthiWozTNucD1w4qwP9i9eFWnwKpoToKRg6ctTYbunrSoAcUv3GGDZZ3Vql
- Veterans History Project
  - o Gold Star Families at
    https://www.facebook.com/NationalCemeteries/posts/pfbid02tr4YSwK7UAexXAisv9HhgrdsmE9rqq5PVfTHMh5hVMRLJuxZTdL3SYvWcL9H6Xg7l
- Interactive Cemetery Map -
  https://www.facebook.com/NationalCemeteries/posts/pfbid0zRDV567VnhToEdSf87YiKZmBUT3KPf7fq3gzZ6Dzs2WeBT1tvQYeJmNoXoBu9jXcl
- Partnerships
  - o Carry The Load -
    https://www.facebook.com/NationalCemeteries/posts/pfbid0hybLzA8MRezHtJ33YarVNxMyNceTZQLzsxymCgFBQRqsPLrR81d4eG1Rb3Hse5hfl

Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA)

BVA utilized Vantage Point news site to clearly explain a new technology (Virtual Tele-hearings) available to Veterans to allow them to have their appeal heard at the location of their choosing. The Vantage Point article explained how to get a virtual tele-hearing and outlined needed requirements and technology. This example can be found as the first item on the Board webpage in the rotating banner www.BVA@va.gov or at https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/85732/howto-get-a-virtual-hearing-at-the-bva/. The Board has updated its webpage to include the use of Web banners and a total redesign of www.BVA.va.gov to ensure Veterans are able to find and understand useful information related to appeals.

Veterans Experience Office (VEO)

VEO adjusted publication review process to better address consistent use of plain language and their branding across directorates and products. VEO's central communications team reviews all external outreach materials to ensure documents meet plain language writing standards and relevant VEO and VA guidelines, including branding compliance and formatting consistency.

VEO employed Google Analytics to track documentation effectiveness, consulting available data to refine methods in designing, writing and disseminating information. Developed and deployed survey to measure VetResources effectiveness, seeking customer feedback designed to help improve how we share information through this program.

VEO Best Practices

- Leveraged meetings with VEO communications practitioners across directorates to discuss plain language writing guidance and use.
- Served on the Web Governance Board, which meets biweekly to address common issues, including Plain Language Act compliance.
- Provided communications support to the Web Governance Board 6102 Working Group, which meets biweekly to update Handbook 6102. The handbook includes guidelines for content writers and editors as well as a section explaining the Plain Writing Act and its requirements. Support included revising content to be more closely aligned with plain language.
- Delivered a variety of Adobe InDesign, Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint templates for internal users to develop high-quality visual materials consistent with VEO branding. Templates include multi-page reports, one-pagers, and presentations. Employed Google Analytics to track documentation effectiveness, consulting available data to refine methods in designing, writing and disseminating information.

VEO Best Examples

- Serving America's Veterans: VA FY2022 Q2 Report VA | Serving America's Veterans
- VEO 2021 Improving Customer Experiences Report https://www.va.gov/ve/docs/cx/customer-experience-improvements-2021.pdf
- Blog: Help recognize VA's health care heroes. *Note: This blog was highlighted in a May 2022 edition of VetResources, a subscription-based weekly newsletter developed using plain language writing and distributed via mass email. VEO received nearly 300 engagements within a one-week period following the article's publication and newsletter dissemination.
- Blog: Veterans Crisis Line helps identify, support Veterans in crisis
- Blog: VA's mobile app offers Veterans convenient access to VA health and benefits
- Developed weekly graphics summarizing VetResources and Outreach Event information for use on social media channels, allowing for broader dissemination of valuable resources in a visual, concise format. https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1038264633484876&set=a.879874175990590
- VA Welcome Kit (Version 3.0): https://www.va.gov/files/2021-11/va-welcome-kit-color.pdf
- Veterans Experience Action Centers (Kentucky): https://scontent-den4-1.xx.fbcdn.net/v/t39.30808-6/283653057_392973846210811_6724418438350929407_n.jpg?_nc_cat=109&ccb=1-7&_nc_sid=730e14&_nc_ohc=uHfyT-5g4HUAX_ApbFb&_nc_ht=scontent-den4-1.xx&oh=00_AT-pLobx7CfIcw3DplB-t3FcDn_Dg5ajkPRc2v0hULglQw&oe=62A6C3C4
- Virtual Veterans Experience Action Centers (Maine): https://pbs.twimg.com/media/FFhx7OTXEAkVPlQ?format=jpg&name=medium

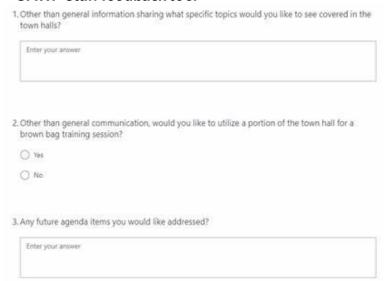**VEO Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access**

- Updated the VEO Style Guide to include new graphics designed to promote diversity in all published works.
- Continued refining VA and VEO reports to ensure diverse audience representation, such as incorporating new trust data across multiple races and ethnicities.
- Vet XL Women Veterans Together Flyer at https://d1ndsj6b8hkqu9.cloudfront.net/pictures/images/000/673/937/for_gallery_v2/fd0c0717.jpg

- Vet XL Minority Veterans Together Flyer at https://d1ndsj6b8hkqu9.cloudfront.net/pictures/images/000/490/249/for_gallery_v2/78f9dc52.png

Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection (OAWP)

OAWP promotes and improves accountability within VA by educating employees and stakeholders on whistleblower rights and protections. OAWP's website provides Differences between OAWP, Office of Special Counsel, Office of Inspector General, and Office of Resolution Management and links to these offices as well as makes available the Complaint and Disclosure form for filing electronically. OAWP uses the following staff feedback tool.

- **OAWP staff feedback tool**

- **OAWP staff communication hub at** OAWP Communication Hub - Home (sharepoint.com)

Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPIA)

On the VA News, formerly the Vantage Point news site, Digital Media Engagement (DME) publishes several stories each day, approximately 150 stories each month, most of which are used on VA's social media platforms. This is the primary content that DME delivers to its vast

community of Veterans, dependents, survivors, caregivers, service members, and followers. The content must be important and relevant to the community's needs (health and benefits information), and it should be timely, actionable, and easy to read and understand. While DME's content aims to meet these needs, the two posts below are excellent examples of delivering vital information and updates and resources explaining how VA is helping and informing Veterans during a public health crisis. The writing is direct, declarative, in active voice, simple in construction, and successful. Examples include:

- [SECVA Monthly Press Conference: Employee resilience, backlog, timely care - Vantage Point](#)
- [Nearly every death from COVID-19 is preventable: SecVA - Vantage Point](#)

VA Research
VA Research writes stories and profiles of VA employees making a difference at VA for Veterans. The Research team often takes complex stories with heavy medical jargon and distills it for the lay audience. While the writing is technical in nature, it is approachable, exciting and similar to reading the future of VA health care in real time. DME's community finds the content valuable and exciting, and often engage with it, and wanting to know more while inquiring about how to participate.

- [Veterans share their stories on a VA podcast that emphasizes the importance of research - Vantage Point](#)
- [VA medical center director: Good research, good clinical work complement each other - Vantage Point](#)

Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (CFBNP)
VA CFBNP provides CFBNP partners with information and resources through regular webinar recordings, Facebook postings and events. CFBNP provides a quick start guide to start a Veteran Ministry or Welcome Center.

- 62 Recorded webinars posted on website: [Resources & Webinar Recordings - Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (CFBNP) (va.gov)](#)
- Upcoming CFBNP Events: [CFBNP Calendar - Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (CFBNP) (va.gov)](#)
- Weekly post on CFBNP Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/VACFBNP/
- How to Start a Veterans Ministry or Welcome Center: [CFBNP Calendar - Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (CFBNP) (va.gov)](#)

  General News Submissions:
  https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/100331/veteran-wins-super-bowl-tickets-thanks-to-vet-tix/
  https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/62324/als-veteran-lives-life-on-his-terms/
  https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/78131/titan-from-helpless-helping-hundreds

Office of Management
VA's Fiscal Year Agency Financial Report was awarded the Association of Government Accountants' Certificate of Excellence in Accountability Reporting (CEAR), in May 2021, the second consecutive year in which VA received this distinguished award. The CEAR award is the highest form of recognition in Federal Government management reporting. This report provides financial and performance information demonstrating our commitment to fiscal transparency and responsibility to providing Veterans with world-class health care, ensuring access to benefits;

and honoring them with a lasting tribute for their service. See U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Agency Financial Report at VA FY2021 Agency Financial Report 11_15_21.

Office of Information and Technology (OIT)

The Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) continuously works with our partners across VA to launch accessible, inclusive, plain language content and tools for Veterans. Here are a few of our more recent highlights:

- Migrated the legacy, program-focused content around managing Veteran debt to the modernized VA.gov environment. We redirected a 12-page, program-focused website to one plain language, Veteran-focused content page. This page provides an entry point to new, accessible, Veteran-tested tools to help Veterans manage their VA debt online as well as 3 supporting, plain language, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) resources and support content pages to provide supplemental information.
- Launched an accessible, plain language flagship mobile app to help Veterans more easily manage their health and benefits. The app currently has a 4.5/5 rating in the Google Play store and 4.8/5 rating in the Apple app store.
- Launched a new Resources and Support section of VA.gov. This section provides targeted, SEO-optimized, accessible, plain language content designed to empower Veterans to fully understand and use their VA benefits and services. We are continuing to add relevant content to this new section, based on top VA.gov and broader SEO search terms, top contact center inquiries, and top questions from the retired Information Routing and Inquiry Service product. We are also continuing to test and improve the usability of this section and the readability of the content. Example: A resources and support article on COVID-19 testing
- Modernized VA medical center websites to help Veterans better access and manage their care. We have worked with Veterans Health Administration digital media and VA Medical Center (VAMC) partners to migrate nearly 140 VAMC websites to the modernized VA.gov environment. A recent 508 compliance report showed that the modernized VAMC sites are 98% compliant. In addition, we've nationalized key content across sites to ensure consistent, accessible, plain language content. Examples:
  - Register for care: 50,370 customized words across local sites ➟ 365 reusable nationally standardized words
  - Billing and insurance: 41,952 customized words across local sites ➟ 304 reusable nationally standardized words
  - Medical records office: 111,780 customized words across local sites ➟ 810 reusable nationally standardized words

Multilingual Content

The OTCO has established a translation and quality assurance process for ensuring accurate, plain language, and culturally relevant vital benefit content for Veterans and family members with limited English proficiency.

Healthy Equity During COVID 19

OIT worked closely with our partners across Veterans Health Administration to help address health equity issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. Examples include:

- A COVID-19 vaccine equity landing page dedicated to answering the specific COVID-19 vaccine questions and concerns of Veterans of color;
- Continuously updated plain language COVID-19 vaccine hub, with easy toggling between English, Spanish, and Tagalog content; and

- Continuously updated plain language [Coronavirus FAQs page](#) with answers to top Veteran questions about how the coronavirus pandemic impacts their VA benefits and services, with easy toggling between [English](#), [Spanish](#), and [Tagalog](#) content.

Accessible, Inclusive Plain Language Content and Tools

The VA Office of Information and Technology's (OIT) IT Strategic Communication (ITSC) program was named Team of the Year by Ragan Communications and PR Daily for its ability to coordinate and execute OIT's COVID-19 messaging. ITSC was recognized for excellence in communication strategy, tactics and execution.

ITSC also received a Gold AVA Digital Award for the "ToWin21" Midyear Review video and Platinum Hermes Creative Award for its "Continuing VA's Digital Transformation" Year in Review Report. The Mid Year and Year in Review were selected for creatively presenting OIT's accomplishments through imaginative storytelling that visually highlighted:

- How VA technology positively impacts Veteran care.
- Why VA is committed to delivery of world-class digital experiences for Veterans; and
- Where VA plans to propel the Department's capabilities and services through IT modernization.

Electronic Health Records Modernization Integration Office (EHRM IO)

EHRM IO incorporates plain language in all its communication products, including news releases, fact sheets, infographics, blogs, public-facing website and social media.

EHRM IO Website houses up-to-date information for the public to learn about the program itself, how it will affect Veterans, the deployment schedule of the new electronic health record (EHR) and frequently asked questions. Basic information and benefits are compiled into fact sheets, which can be downloaded; the EHRM IO team is currently in the process of converting these PDFs into web pages for easier readability and search optimization. The website is also fully Section 508 compliant and designed for a simple and straightforward user experience. Examples include:

- External site homepage: https://www.ehrm.va.gov/
- External site deployment schedule page: https://www.ehrm.va.gov/deployment-schedule
- Fact sheet: External site webpage: https://www.ehrm.va.gov/factsheets/program-overview
- Fact sheet: External site webpage: https://www.ehrm.va.gov/factsheets/patientPortal
- Infographic: External site webpage: https://vaww.ehrm.va.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/EHRM_Benefits.pdf
- Blog: External site webpage: https://www.ehrm.va.gov/news/article/read/electronic-health-record-system-saves-hours-a-day-for-lab-staff
- Blog: Vantage Point: https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/103957/behavioral-health-leaders-help-staff-with-new-electronic-health-record-system/
- News release: External site webpage: https://www.ehrm.va.gov/news/article/read/VA-brings-new-electronic-health-record-system-to-columbus-ohio-medical-facilities

EHRM IO Style Guide was created by EHRM IO to foster uniform language, terms and messaging about the program. The internal website also features an EHRM dictionary, program templates, graphics, guides and a robust searchable question and answer database that provide simplistic wording about various aspects of the VA EHRM program that employees can use to communicate externally. Internal stakeholders are educated on key

news, events and program capabilities through recurring meetings, emails, articles and blogs. Additionally, all EHRM graphical products incorporate accessibility design principles and Section 508 compliance to ensure readability for people with disabilities.

Trackers and internal concurrence process are used to ensure accuracy and consistency; though some communications can be technical in nature, this system of checks and balances ensures the content is written in plain language that anyone can understand. Checklists have also been developed for public affairs officers from local VA medical facilities to clearly convey the steps to be taken and artifacts to be produced to effectively communicate VA's modernization effort to Veterans and the public. Templated communications are provided as often as possible to ensure clear and concise writing. Finally, insights gained from a monthly analysis of internal and external website metrics provides guidance on language, areas and resources that require additional clarification or detail.

Awards were received for various communications such as the MarCom awards from the Association of Marketing and Communications Professionals. The internal site earned a Platinum MarCom Award, an infographic was selected for a Gold MarCom Award, and an honorable mention was given to a blog post and special edition newsletter. VA employees were also recognized for their achievements on the EHRM program by health IT industry organizations, which was further amplified across internal and external VA channels. Examples include:
- Frequently Asked Questions: External site webpage: https://www.ehrm.va.gov/resources/faqs
- Download a Fact Sheet: External site webpage: https://www.ehrm.va.gov/resources/factsheet
- Award for clear communication: http://enter.marcomawards.com/winners/#/platinum/2021
- Employee recognition: https://www.ehrm.va.gov/news/article/read/recognizing-a-trailblazer-in-va-health-it
- Employee recognition: https://www.ehrm.va.gov/news/article/read/two-leaders-from-vas-office-of-electronic-health-record-modernization-saluted-for-impact-in-health-it

Engagement with the Veterans Experience Office and the Veterans Health Administration's Office of Connected Care's telehealth teams has strengthened communication to Veterans, while posting almost daily on Facebook and Twitter enabling the team to share updates and educational content to the public in an easily digestible format. Banners and yellow buttons on website homepages help identify links to hot-button resources, while improved organizational components (such as icons and blocks of content) aid readers in finding pertinent information. Using virtual meeting technologies, various internal and external town halls have allowed employees, Veterans and other stakeholders to hear directly from VA leaders in a remote and geographically dispersed environment. Examples include:
- EHRM Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/EHRMVA
- EHRM Twitter page: https://twitter.com/EHRMVA
- EHRM external website: https://www.ehrm.va.gov/

EHRM IO values and supports inclusion, diversity, equity and access. EHRM IO utilizes various platforms and channels to provide clear and concise communications. It publishes articles and blogs to honor the achievements and contributions of Veterans and employees during special emphasis months. To celebrate Black History Month, the team

also hosted a special virtual event featuring U.S. Marine Corps Veteran and celebrity chef Carl Redding as a guest speaker. EHRM IO has regular engagement with and outreach to VA's Office of Tribal Government Relations, the Center for Women's Veterans and the Center for Minority Veterans to ensure two-way information sharing and perspectives, concerns and needs from each group are incorporated into the program. An example of external site blog is:

- https://www.ehrm.va.gov/news/article/read/womens-history-month-recognizing-front-line-workers

Office of Human Resources and Administration (HRA)

HRA's goals are to gain and retain top VA talent, improve employee work life and productivity and increase Veteran satisfaction. The Human Capital Service Center (HCSC) provides coordination of VA's internal development programs. HCSC's quick fact sheet reaches over 600,000 customers across VA to provide key links valuable in their professional development journey on training and learning, professional development, coaching and mentoring, internship programs, rotation and fellowship programs and employee support. Great examples of HRA communications include:

- Paid Parental Leave Fact Sheet: https://vaww.va.gov/OHRM/HRLibrary/docs/memos/Fact-Sheet-Paid-Parental-Leave.docx
- COVID-19 and Safety Protocol Testing Requirements: https://vaww.va.gov/OHRM/HRLibrary/Bulletins/2022/ochco-bulletin-20220422-01.pdf
- VETSERVE 2022: https://vaww.va.gov/OHRM/HRLibrary/Bulletins/2022/ochco-bulletin-20220415-01.pdf
- VA's "Roll Up Your Sleeve" Campaign and the Granting of Authorized Absence for Blood Donor Programs: https://vaww.va.gov/OHRM/HRLibrary/Bulletins/2022/ochco-bulletin-20220126-01.pdf

Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU)

OSDBU Communications created and implemented several plain language COVID-19 resources for small businesses to aid them through the many unique challenges and to forge a path forward. These resources include:

- VA Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization COVID-19 webpages at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/covid-19/index.asp
- CARES Act Business Resource Guide at https://www.va.gov/OSDBU/docs/COVID_19_Business_Resource_Guide.pdf
- SBA Disaster Assistance Resources at https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/covid-19-relief-options/covid-19-economic-injury-disaster-loan/about-covid-19-eidl
- VA COVID Economic Injury disaster Loan program updates at https://www.sba.gov/article/2021/nov/19/sba-announces-updated-guidance-regarding-applicant-deadlines-covid-economic-injury-disaster-loan

Factsheets

OSDBU provided information through a series of fact sheets for the Veteran and small business community to assist with navigating verification, procurement training and contracting support. Examples include:

- VA OSDBU Library of Fact Sheets Main Page at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/library/factsheets.asp

- Resources to help VOSB do business with VA at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/library/factsheets.asp#fs1
- Vets First Verification Program at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/library/factsheets.asp#fs2
- Pre-Decision Notification information at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/library/factsheets.asp#fs4
- Maintaining Vets First Verification Status at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/library/factsheets.asp#fs5

Webpages
All OSDBU webpages and pdf documents are tested for Section 508 accessibility.
- Main page at https://www.va.gov/osdbu
- About OSDBU at https://www.va.gov/OSDBU/about/index.asp
- Frequently Asked Questions at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/faqs/
- Acquisition and Support Service at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/acquisition/index.asp
- Center for Verification and Evaluation at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/verification/
- Direct Access at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/outreach/dap/index.asp
- Shared Services at
- Strategic Outreach and Communications at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/outreach/soc/index.asp
- Women Veteran-Owned Small Business Initiative at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/wvosbi.asp
- OSDBU Education and Training at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/outreach/soc/training.asp

Social Media
OSDBU's social media platform is critical when connecting with the Veteran and small business community. The sites are available on demand and is 508 compliance and produced in plain language for internal and external stakeholders.
- YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEZt3MxLqXC16PmyxoyOZ-g
- LinkedIn at https://www.linkedin.com/in/va-osdbu/
- Twitter at https://twitter.com/VAVetBiz

Outreach
OSDBU uses a plain language approach to inform all its stakeholders about VA small business programs and resources, VA small business goals, and access opportunities.
- Events Calendar at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/calendar.asp
- Media Library at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/media/index.asp
- Publications at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/media/publications.asp
- Small Business Liaisons at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/about/contacts.asp#sbl
- VA Forecast of Contracting Opportunities at https://www.vendorportal.ecms.va.gov/eVP/fco/FCO.aspx

Center for Women Veterans (CWV)
CWV participates in continuous education and training on plain language and adopting best practices from other organizations. CWV is always looking for ways to improve CWV's communication with women Veterans as well as ways to be innovative and look for new ideas.

CWV Website
The website was updated with plain language to include website banner use.
- www.va.gov/womenVet
- *Fact Sheets*
- *Social Media (Facebook, Twitter)*

CWV Best Practices
- Reviews web content quarterly and updates the website as required or needed.
- All new language and documents are updated in plain language prior to upload on CWV's website, social media, and blogs.
- CWV uses plain language in CWV's briefings and speeches.

CWV Equity in Policies, Programs, Training and Activities
- CWV ensures that CWV's briefing materials, posters, social media include the full diversity of the Nation.
- CWV's survey outreach documents are diverse and are used to ensure that women Veterans see women Veterans that look like them and their communities.
- All CWV's website content is 508 compliant prior to being uploaded for easy accessibility.
- CWV actively shares information for all communities but in this case particularly to underserved communities such as:
  - Black and African American, Hispanic and Latino, Native American, Alaska Native, and Indigenous, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and North African persons.
  - Individuals who belong to communities that face discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity (including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, gender non-conforming, and non-binary (LGBTQ+) persons); persons who face discrimination based on pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions; parents; and caregivers.
  - Individuals who belong to communities that face discrimination based on their religion or disability; first-generation professionals or first-generation college students; individuals with limited English proficiency; immigrants; individuals who belong to communities that may face employment barriers based on older age or former incarceration; persons who live in rural areas; Veterans and military spouses; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty, discrimination, or inequality.
  - Individuals who may belong to more than one underserved community and face intersecting barriers," as stated in the *Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce* (EO 13985).

IV. Communication of Plain Writing Requirements

The Office of Executive Secretary (EXECSEC) supports the Department's strategic plan that VA's communications from the Administrations and Staff Offices deliver clear and consistent messages. EXECSEC provides outstanding correspondence management and customer support to ensure that the Department's policy and messaging is clearly articulated to both external and internal audiences in a timely manner as well as reflects positive on VA. EXECSEC provides guidance on these documents and review for consistency with the Department's standards on plain language writing.

EXECSEC, in collaboration with Administrations and Key Staff Offices, provides an ongoing review and modifies the VA Style Guide and Templates as needed to further clarify information and add annotated and formatted examples of commonly used documents reviewed by EXECSEC.

The Office of the Chief Technology Officer ensures that all content and products we create for Veterans meet our high plain language and accessibility standards and meet Veterans' needs. We base these standards on plain language best practices, Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 content accessibility standards, and ongoing usability and comprehension testing with Veterans. We maintain this high level of quality through a combination of governance documentation and processes, training, continuous research with Veterans, and expert support. Additional information:

- **VA.gov Content Style Guide:** The VA.gov content style guide and VA.gov design system provide in-depth guidance and standards for ensuring accessible, inclusive content that's easy to find, understand, and act on. We continue to deepen and expand the style guide. For example, we recently added a top 10 plain language standards section.
- **Checklists:** Our content and publication checklists provide a step-by-step process for content authors to follow to ensure quality and accessibility when creating content in our Drupal content management system. We also include inline guidance in the Drupal Content Management System.
  - Content author's checklist
  - Pre-publication checklist
  Our multilingual content checklist helps content authors to ensure that their plain language English content is ready for translation.
- **Content briefs:** As VA continues to expand content across channels, from the website to the flagship mobile app to the VA.gov chatbot, we have established a template for content briefs. Our content leads use these briefs to share topic-specific content and terminology guidance and content-specific usability research insights to ensure reading comprehension and consistency across all products. Example content brief for appointment scheduling.
- **VA.gov experience standards:** Our VA.gov experience standards capture accessibility (A11y), content, design, and information architecture standards for teams building products on the VA.gov platform.

V. Training

EXECSEC provides continuous learning around plain language writing through monthly Action Officer training for VA correspondence representatives, subject matter experts and other staff across the Department on VA format, style guide and templates, naming convention, writing and standards related to correspondence to internal and external stakeholders. Action Officer training provides employees with the needed training and tools to provide a consistent quality product and increase on-time rate for correspondence requiring the Secretary and Deputy Secretary's signatures. Training ensures employees fully understand the importance of writing to our audience and how to do it effectively. In FY 2022, VA trained approximately 540 employees.

In April, EXECSEC coordinated plain language writing training, through the Center for Plain Language, for approximately 100 VA Administration and Staff Office correspondence representatives.

VA Administrations and Key Staff Offices also provide plain language writing training to staff. For example, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) provided two plain writing training sessions for approximately 60 VHA staff members.

Supervisors within Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) Southeast (SE) office assigns [Writing in Plain Language](#) and [Plain Language Writing Seminar](#) in VA's Talent Management System to ensure all staff members are using the plain language writing principles in their written products. Additionally, SE supports Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPIA) with implementation of Public Law 117-62 related to language translation requirements. SE worked with VBA's lines of business to identify outdated or irrelevant fact sheets from its public-facing website. VA will work to translate those public-facing fact sheets to the 12 languages as required by the law. SE continues to provide input to OPIA as it leads the integrated project team on this effort and will provide input to help standardize the template for VA fact sheets.

The Office of Information and Technology provides ongoing training and support to product teams building on the VA.gov platform. This includes group and one-to-one training and office hours for plain language and content design, as well as technical training and support to ensure that content authors can create accessible content in our Drupal content management system. We also provide training sessions to content authors across VA.
- **Example:** [Plain language and inclusive content design training session video](#). This content training video offers an example of a training on plain language and accessible, inclusive content design that Office of the Chief Technology Officer and Veterans Health Administration (VHA) digital media provided live to 250+ VHA content authors and offer via on-demand video as well. We are in the process of building out more in-depth, targeted trainings.

VI. Ongoing Compliance/Sustaining Change

All products built on the VA.gov platform go through our [collaboration cycle](#). These includes products like benefit applications and online tools to manage benefits and health care.

This cycle has three main touchpoints that include design intent, midpoint review, and pre-launch staging review at which a dedicated governance team evaluates products and provides recommendations for design, accessibility, quality assurance, and content. The team follows established standards for each area, with content standards based on the VA.gov content style guide and WCAG 2.1 accessibility standards. Teams must meet these standards to launch their products.

In addition to this review cycle, our [Sitewide content and IA team content leads provide direct, ongoing guidance to product teams throughout the product lifecycle](#). Through a combination of reviews, office hours, and one-to-one collaboration sessions with designers, our content leads provide in-depth guidance and support to help teams navigate more complex content flows, prepare for usability testing, and advocate for plain language with their business partners.

All products are tested with Veterans to evaluate overall accessibility and usability, as well as reading comprehension. We use an inclusive research approach, including a research tracker,

to ensure that we test content with a range of Veterans, including those with different education levels, races, and ethnicities, cognitive abilities, and those who use screen readers or other assistive devices. Example below shows a research tracker that includes the results of an inclusivity study:

Example 1, Needs more research

# of participants	7		# of no shows	1		# of AT users	0					
Category	Target	Study	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 11 12 13

General	Based on current VA statistics		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 11 12 13
Age 55-64+	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1		
Cognitive Disability	4	3	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0		
Mobile user	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0	0		
Rural	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
No degree	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Immigrant origin	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0	0		
Women	1	5	1	1	1	1	0	N	1			
Expat (living abroad)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		

Race	Targets based on VA's projected statistics											
Black	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	N	1	0		
Latinx	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
Biracial	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
Asian	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
Native	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			

LGBTQ+	LGBTQ+ Veterans are 5 times as likely to have PTSD											
Gay, lesbian, or bisexual	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Transgender	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Nonbinary, gender fluid, ge	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		

For All Vital Benefit and Service Content for Veterans and their Family Members
(Modernized VA.gov benefit and health care content, including content in the main benefit hubs linked to from the VA.gov homepage and the supplementary resources and support section of VA.gov). All benefit hub content goes through a step-by-step process.

We have built a full team of dedicated content experts in OCTO who works collaboratively with our VA digital media, communication, and subject matter expert partners to create accurate, findable, accessible, inclusive, plain language content to help Veterans and their family members explore, apply for, and manage their benefits.

Language Assistance
VA launched language assistance and resources pages in Spanish and Tagalog. These pages are always accessible from the VA.gov footer. The pages provide information about how to get language assistance by phone or in person at a VA health facility, how to resolve concerns at a VA health facility, and understanding your civil rights and how to file a discrimination complaint. The pages also link to additional available in-language resources, organized by topic for findability.

We will soon launch a mobile check-in app in Spanish and Tagalog. The check-in app lets Veterans check-in to their health appointments on their mobile phone. We are also working to translate benefit eligibility and how-to-apply information into Spanish and support broader VA efforts to further expand our multilingual content offerings.

We also invested significant effort over the past 2 years to establish a translation and quality assurance process for ensuring accurate, plain language, and culturally relevant content for people with limited English proficiency.
- Multilingual content checklist

- [Evolving translation and QA process with new State Department IAA for translation](#)
- [Translation feedback form](#)

Our standards and processes are based on significant best practice research, as well as research to determine the needs of Veterans and their family members with limited English proficiency. To prepare for translation, we conducted research around policy and best practices and interviewed representatives from eight other government agencies and the government multilingual community.

- [High-level research and recommendations overview presentation](#)
- [Research plan for Veteran multilingual content research](#)

We are working with the State Department to build a translation glossary and memory to ensure consistent, plain language terms in non-English languages. **Note:** Inclusive research tracker highlighted in above section.

VII. Department Plain Writing Websites

- The VA Plain Language website at http://www.va.gov/opa/Plain_Language.asp
- Contact Us page at http://www.va.gov/opa/Plain_Language.asp and email at VAPlainLanguage@va.gov
- Link from VA's homepage at http://www.va.gov/
- Link at bottom of the VA Open.gov page at http://www.va.gov/open/
- Links to compliance reports at http://www.va.gov/opa/Plain_Language.asp (2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 reports are available).
- Links to OMB and PLAIN at http://www.va.gov/opa/Plain_Language.asp

VIII. Customer Satisfaction Evaluation

VA and partners ensure published documents, websites and web-based applications are written in plain language and follow the Plain Writing Act of 2010 to improve transparency and accessibility and will use human-centered design as a best practice and ensure accessibility to individuals with disabilities as Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act requires. VA also customizes communications for groups and individuals whose primary language is not English and individuals with disabilities.

Testing
VA regularly tests our content with Veterans to evaluate ease of reading, comprehension and accessibility. For new, highly prominent or complex content, we conduct qualitative usability testing with a range of Veterans and family members to ensure that the content is easy to read and understand. We further monitor analytics and feedback scores to identify problem areas for further testing and refinement Examples include:

- On the 1010-CG application, Veteran representatives are required to upload documentation confirming their legal signing authority. Analytics showed that only 33 percent of documents uploaded were valid. This validity issue burdens field offices who then need to follow-up with everyone who submits an unaccepted document.
- We conducted a series of usability, plain language, and mental model research with caregivers, representatives, and subject matter experts (SMEs) to develop content and user experience changes. Those changes quickly increased the submission acceptance rate for applications requiring legal representative signatures from 33 to

60%. We continue to work with our SME partners to improve the experience around this issue.

In addition, we continually work to establish and refine content patterns that work best for specific types of information and then ensure alignment of our content to these patterns. We tested several iterations of how to present eligibility information. We then implemented this pattern (example below) across all eligibility information in the modernized VA.gov.

We also monitor analytics and feedback scores to identify problem areas for further testing and refinement. We further use SiteImprove and other quality reports to identify broken links and other potential content or accessibility issues.

EHRM IO strives to improve and solicit feedback on the clarity of our communication channels. User surveys are frequently conducted during meetings, and the team has held multiple usability sessions to observe and improve the ease of the EHRM internal website navigation. There is also an option for internal website visitors to provide feedback on every page, including if they found it helpful/informative/interesting, and why or why not. The visitor may also provide a comment and their email address so the team can respond. This feedback is also taken into consideration to improve the website, artifact or way in which information is conveyed. This guidance is then applied to the external website and other communication channels. In addition, the external website solicits feedback on the Contact Us page, encouraging visitors share their thoughts to improve the website and tailor it to their information needs. VA's EHRM program is among multiple program offices are poised to comply with the new law requiring federal government agencies to translate web pages into multiple languages. For example, Contact Us: External webpage: https://www.ehrm.va.gov/about/contact-us

IX. Conclusion

VA continues to ensure that writing and sharing of information is clear, concise and informative, both externally and internally so important messages are understood and to build trust with Veterans, stakeholders and employees. VA's messages demonstrate our appreciation for each Veteran's sacrifice and service as well as our commitment to improving their health, well-being and economic security.

The Department's focus on promoting inclusion, equity, diversity and access is essential to the Department's mission of providing benefits, health care and services to all Veterans. Reliable data was used to tailor communications to reach Veterans inclusive of all communities and help them at all stages of their lives.