

I. Introduction

1. Ground rules/Explanation of focus groups
2. Background of what will be covered during the groups
3. Participant/Moderator instructions
4. Information collected will be kept private to the extent of the law
 - a. Specifically emphasize personal identifiers will NOT be shared with the VA
 - b. These groups are designed to understand your perceptions of some key organizations working on your behalf
5. Participant/Moderator introductions
 - a. Acknowledge all in room have served
 - b. When/when they served, what branch of service
 - c. What part of town you live in/what you do for a living now

II. Exploring Key Influencers Roles, Sources of Information and Barriers/Motivators to Seek Info

6. As a veteran, where do you get veteran-related information from in general?
 - a. Do you have a trusted source?
 - b. MOD NOTE: Explore the role of fellow vets
7. Where do you get information from about:
 - a. Healthcare
 - b. Education: Post 9/11 GI Bill and Montgomery GI Bill
 - c. Finance: Home Loan Guaranty and pensions
 - d. Burial and Memorial Services
8. Who helps you make decisions about:
 - a. Healthcare
 - b. Disability insurance
 - c. Education: Post 9/11 GI Bill and Montgomery GI Bill
 - d. Finance: Home Loan Guaranty and pensions
 - e. Burial and Memorial Services
9. What if anything do you talk about with your spouse/parents/significant others when it comes to healthcare?

10. What about matters such as: disability insurance, education, finances: home loan guaranty, pensions, and burial and memorial services)—who makes these decisions, who helps you make these decisions? Is it your spouse/family/, or others?

III. VA Brand Image

Now we're going to spend some time talking about the Department of Veterans Affairs...

11. When you think of the VA, what words come to mind?
12. Which of these words do you associate with the VA?
 - a. [Add in Words to probe]
13. How would you describe the VA to other vets?

IV. VA Programs and Benefits

14. What does the VA do? What does the VA offer?
15. How did you hear about these VA benefits/services you use?
16. What benefits programs are you aware of?
 - a. Probe list of benefits which includes: health care, life insurance, home loans, education and training, vocational rehabilitation, burial and memorial benefits, disability compensation, pension, benefits for dependents and survivors, transition assistance, prescription benefits
17. What programs do you use? Why?
 - a. How important/motivating/relevant are these? Why or why not?
18. What services if any do you receive as a veteran?
 - a. Do you know who that is provided by? (*If "government," do you know which agency in the government?*)
19. Which are you aware of but don't use? Why not?
20. How does what the VA does/offers fit into your life?
21. If the VA does not fit into your life, what institutions are fulfilling that need?

22. Evaluate list of what the VA does—gauge reactions. How important/relevant are these things as described?
- a. How do you feel about these benefits? Why?
 - b. Should the VA be in the business of providing all of these benefits? Some of these benefits? Why do you say that?
 - i. Probe specifically on healthcare vs. financial services, etc...
 - ii. Use “show of hands” exercise if necessary for each benefit
 - c. Are any of you interested in using any of these benefits if you don’t already? Why or why not?
23. You can get some of these benefits that the VA offers from other places as well, including the private sector, right?
- a. How do you think the VA benefits compare to what you can get from other places? Why do you say that?
 - b. What do you think the VA does better? Does worse?
24. Let’s look at these different types of benefits and talk about what your IDEAL provider would do for each of them...
- a. [GO THROUGH BENEFITS LIST] What would they offer?
 - b. Why would that be important?
25. If the VA did that, would you consider using them for that particular benefit?
- a. Why or why not?

V. Barriers to Getting Help

26. [FOR USERS] Talk about how you started using VA services?
- a. What was that process like?
27. [FOR NON-USERS] Talk about why you don’t use VA services?
- a. Why not?
28. What are the VA’s strengths as an organization and as a service provider? What about weaknesses?
29. Who were key motivators along the way?
30. What were the trigger(s) that drove you to seek out benefits?
31. What were the various motivators along the way?

32. Were there barriers that prohibited you from seeking out benefits? If so, tell us what or who?
33. What could be done to make it easier (e.g. remove barriers)?
 - a. MOD NOTE: Do not spend too much time on structural barriers (e.g. claims processing, etc...)
34. How would you encourage or get another veteran to use or consider using VA services/benefits?
 - a. What would you say to him or her?
 - b. [NON USERS] How do you react to that?
35. How should the VA communicate to you about all of this stuff?

VI. Conclusion

36. Of all the things we've discussed and evaluated tonight—what stood out the most? Why?
37. Is there anything surrounding these issues tonight that we didn't talk about that you wish we had covered?
 - a. What is it, and why?
38. [Dismiss Respondents]
 - a. If there is another group ask them to refrain from discussing until they get outside so next group can come in fresh