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Improving the C&P Exam Process

April 12, 2016



Veterans Experience

1. About the Veterans Experience team
2. What is Veterans Experience and how will we measure it?
3. Relationship Mapping
4. Human Centered Design
5. What We Learned
6. Next Steps



Veterans Experience

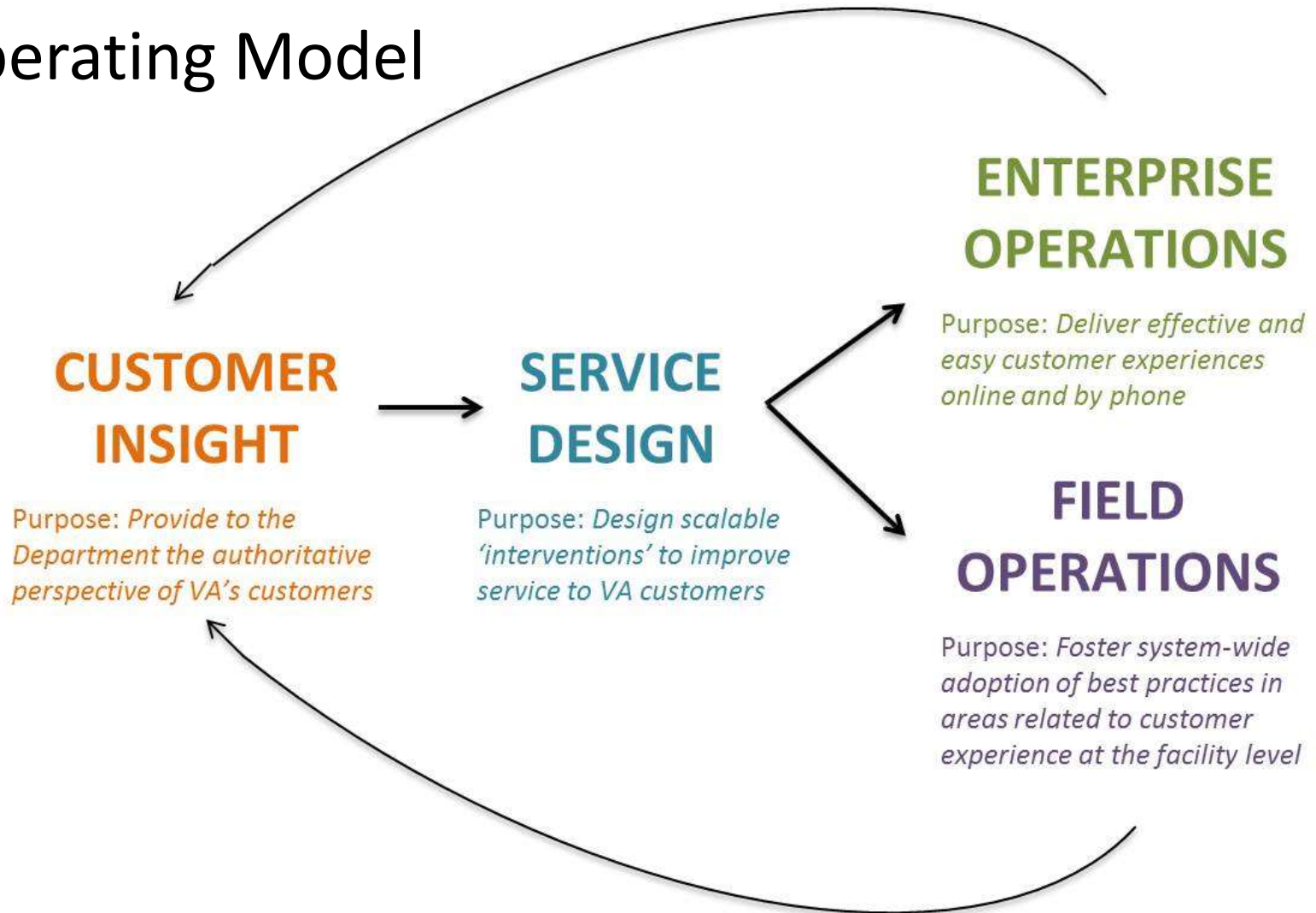
The VE Mission

Function: Create a **seamless, end-to-end journey** for our Veterans across lines of business, administrations, facilities and offices.

Purpose: Build trusted, lifelong relationships with our Veterans and their families.



Operating Model





Veterans Experience

About Our Team

Capabilities

- Customer & Employee Insight
- Service Design
- Veterans Experience Measurement
- Network of MyVA Communities
- Data Analysis/ VRM
- Field Operations

VE Initiatives

- Vets.gov
- MyVA 311
- Authoritative Veteran Record
- Journey Maps
- VE Measurement
- MyVA Communities
- CX Module
- **Comp & Pen Exam Process**
- VHA Front Line Initiatives



Veterans Experience

What is Experience?

“It is a **proactive** and **deliberate** orchestration of end-to-end journeys between a customer and a company. Each stage of the journey is architected to **understand the emotions and needs of the customer and what he or she is trying to achieve.**”

The work is then to **unite the organizational silos to deliver a one-company experience**, with value at each stage and across the journey.”

Jeanne Bliss

CXO Lands End, Microsoft, Caldwell Banker and All-State Insurance



Veterans Experience

"I got the services I needed."

Effectiveness

We have national standards to ensure that we provide a **consistent, high-quality level of service** for Veterans, regardless of VA facility

"It was easy to get the services I needed."

Ease

We work to make the service feel **predictable**, by **setting expectations** with Veterans and making sure they understand where they are in the process.

"I felt like a valued customer."

Emotion

We strive to **engage** and **connect** with Veterans through service that demonstrates empathy, making them feel like they are valued and heard.



Veterans Experience

"I got the services I needed."

"It was easy to get the services I needed."

"I felt like a valued customer."

Effectiveness

Ease

Emotion

CUSTOMER SERVICE



Veterans Experience





Veterans Experience

Agency Priority Goal

Veterans Insight Panel - Baseline

		RATINGS	% Agree or Strongly Agree
	BRAND	“I trust VA to fulfill our country’s commitment to Veterans.”	47%
VETERANS EXPERIENCE	EFFECTIVE	“I got the service I needed.”	65%
	EASE	“It was easy to get what I needed.”	46%
	EMOTION	“I felt like a valued customer.”	54%



Veterans Experience

Relationship Map

A **Relationship Map** is a tool to help us better understand the relationship between Customer and Employee Experiences.



Veterans Experience

Relationship Map

BEFORE

DURING

AFTER

**FRONT
STAGE**

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

THINKING / FEELING / DOING

ON STAGE

**BACK
STAGE**

OFF STAGE

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

THINKING / FEELING / DOING



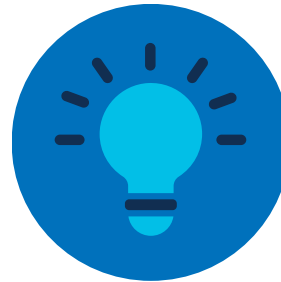
Veterans Experience

OWN THE MOMENT



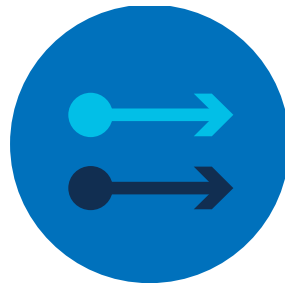
**CONNECT
& CARE**

EMOTION



**UNDERSTAND
& RESPOND
TO NEEDS**

EFFECTIVENESS



**GUIDE THE
JOURNEY**

EASE

“I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

-Maya Angelou



Veterans Experience



CONNECT & CARE

WHAT WE DO

Smile and make eye contact. Offer a sincere greeting.

Introduce yourself – your role and what to expect.

Find a way to connect in some way with each person you encounter.

Demonstrate empathy and try to imagine where the Veteran is coming from.

Begin and end the interaction on a positive note.

Say thank you and show appreciation.

WHAT WE SAY

Offer a genuinely friendly greeting
Say “Hello”, “Good morning”

Use the Veteran’s preferred name or title, or sir/ma’am when you don’t know.

“What can we help you with today, Mr. Smith?”

“Thank you for your service”

“Thanks for coming in today”

WHAT THE VETERAN FEELS

I feel welcomed and acknowledged.

I feel respected, valued and cared for.

I feel like VA has my back. ■



Veterans Experience



UNDERSTAND & RESPOND TO NEEDS

WHAT WE DO

Serve to purpose, principles and values rather than function. Always put Veterans needs first.

Actively listen without interruption and summarize what you heard to ensure understanding.

Ask open ended questions to gain a better understanding of the Veterans' needs. Ask for clarification as needed.

If a mistake or misunderstanding occurs, apologize. Never make excuses or place blame.

WHAT WE SAY

"Let me clarify what I think you said..."

"I can see how frustrated that made you feel..."

"Here is what I can do right now..."

"Is there anything else I can do for you today?"

WHAT THE VETERAN FEELS

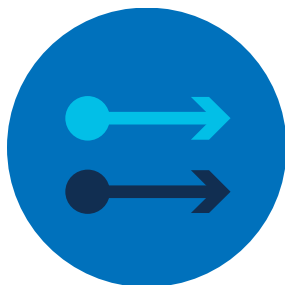
I feel heard and acknowledged.

I feel supported by VA

I feel my needs are being met. ■



Veterans Experience



GUIDE THE JOURNEY

WHAT WE DO

Use your best judgment to determine what would best meet (or exceed) the Veterans' needs and expectations.

Don't assume the Veteran understands the system and processes.

Explain the process and set expectations about what will happen next.

Make it easy for the Veteran by outlining the process, providing contact info or the correct forms.

WHAT WE SAY

"Today we are going to do XYZ"

"I can help you by..."

After this appointment, you can expect..."

"Here is what will happen next"

"Here is what you need to do"

WHAT THE VETERAN FEELS

I feel cared for and important.

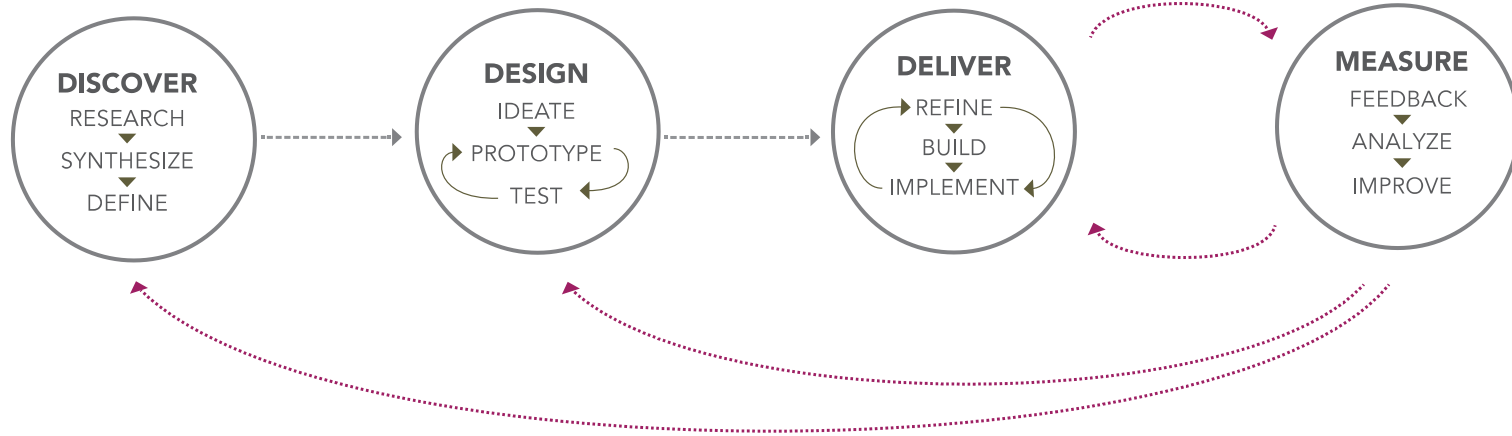
I know what to expect and what is expected of me.

I understand where I am in the process.

I feel I can trust VA to follow through on its commitment.



Human Centered Design Framework (HCD)





Veterans Experience

What We Learned



The experience is not **EFFECTIVE**

- Differences across procedures, and the exam, create concerns of unfairness.
- Each time Veterans file a claim, the process seems different.
- No amount of communication targeting Veterans will make up for what is perceived to be a poor exam experience.
- Separation programs like TAP do not prepare Veterans for future claims submissions.
- Paper claims are still being filed, and often times shuffled around or lost.



Veterans Experience



EFFECTIVE?

“My client’s claim was denied because he didn’t show up for his exam – because he had since been admitted to the psych unit at the VAMC. Shouldn’t VA know this? The last thing he needs is to come home after weeks in treatment to find out he’d been denied.” - VSO



Veterans Experience

"I got the services
I needed."

EFFECTIVE?

"I got one big lump sum payment because it took so long. That's ok for me, but what about Veterans who need help now?" - Veteran



Veterans Experience

"I got the services
I needed."

EFFECTIVE

Consistent: The service is consistent so that the Veteran has a high-quality, familiar level of service regardless of VA facility.

Accessible: The service is delivered through a variety of channels (print, digital, in person), and accommodates a variety of needs (literacy level, location, auditory, vision, physical, and mental health).

Set expectations: VA is transparent in all of their offerings, including what to expect and when; what VA can and cannot provide; and how non-VA services can assist.

Meet Veterans where they are: VA understands that different Veterans have different needs at different moments of their lives.



Veterans Experience

What We Learned



The experience is not **EASY**

- Veterans find the examination process confusing, difficult, and not designed around their needs.
- Many Veterans will continue to rely on VSOs to navigate the process with them, regardless of how well we educate and clarify
- Veterans don't know how long this will take, what is happening now, and what happens next
- Veterans don't know what documentation is required and often submit unnecessary or incomplete records
- Veterans are frustrated by having to contact multiple VA and VSO employees and facilities to find out their claim status.



Veterans Experience

**"It was easy to
get the services
I needed."**

EASY?

"VA should easily be able to identify Veterans who need the most help, using data models on demographics, conditions, and service records." - Veteran



Veterans Experience

**"It was easy to
get the services
I needed."**

EASY?

"Claims can drag on because the wrong evidence is submitted. Some Veterans come to us as a last straw. The process is too complicated for Veterans to do on their own."

- VSO



Veterans Experience

"It was easy to
get the services
I needed."

EASY

Predictable: Veterans can access, find, comprehend, navigate, and complete the process with ease.

Seamless: The different steps and touch points in the process work together to create a unified experience.

Prepared: Veterans know enough that they are ready and comfortable to participate. One of the best ways that Veterans feel prepared now is by working with VSOs, rather than on their own.



Veterans Experience

What We Learned



The experience is not **EMOTIONALLY RESONANT**

- VA falls short in managing Veterans' expectations and giving them confidence in the ratings they receive.
- The perceived lack of quality of care in the exam is as frustrating as the complicated process.
- The “checklist” approach to the DBQs feels impersonal and non-caring.
- Veterans want to be heard and acknowledged, but because VA doesn't have a consistent framework to do this, Veterans are forced to use extreme measures to voice their frustrations.



Veterans Experience

"I felt like a
valued customer."

EMOTIONAL?

“VA doesn’t take into consideration that, out of service, you’re probably at a new job and that trying to get permission to do all of these exams from a new boss is challenging, especially from a non-military boss.” - Veteran



Veterans Experience

**"I felt like a
valued customer."**

EMOTIONAL?

"I was in the Gulf War, and exposed to a lot of things. When you're a marine, you suck it up. Finally when I couldn't get out of bed, I tried to claim 'Gulf War Syndrome' but because I hadn't been to a doctor for 6 months, they denied it. " - Veteran



Veterans Experience

"I felt like a
valued customer."

EMOTIONAL?

"I had seen some doctors for PTSD, but I slacked off because of my cancer treatments. So my mental health records weren't up to date, but the cancer wasn't enough to forgive the gap in my PTSD [treatment]." - Veteran



Veterans Experience

"I felt like a
valued customer."

EMOTIONAL

Personalized: Each Veteran feels like VA is treating them like a valued individual, recognizing specific or unique needs.

Deserving: Veterans believe that it is their right to access the VA services that can support their needs.

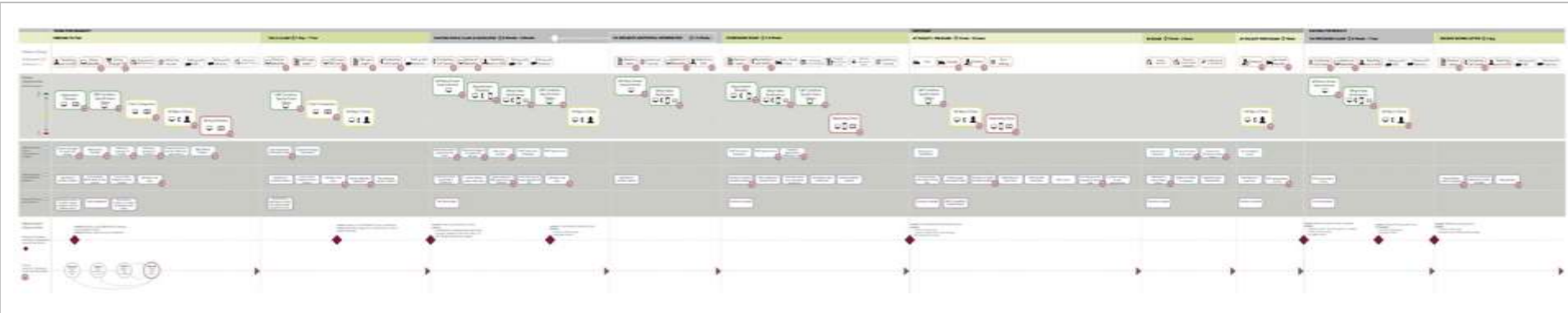
Supported: Veterans receive all of the support they need for the entire duration of a service through to completion.

Listened to: VA provides consistent mechanisms for Veterans to offer feedback and to identify areas for improvement.



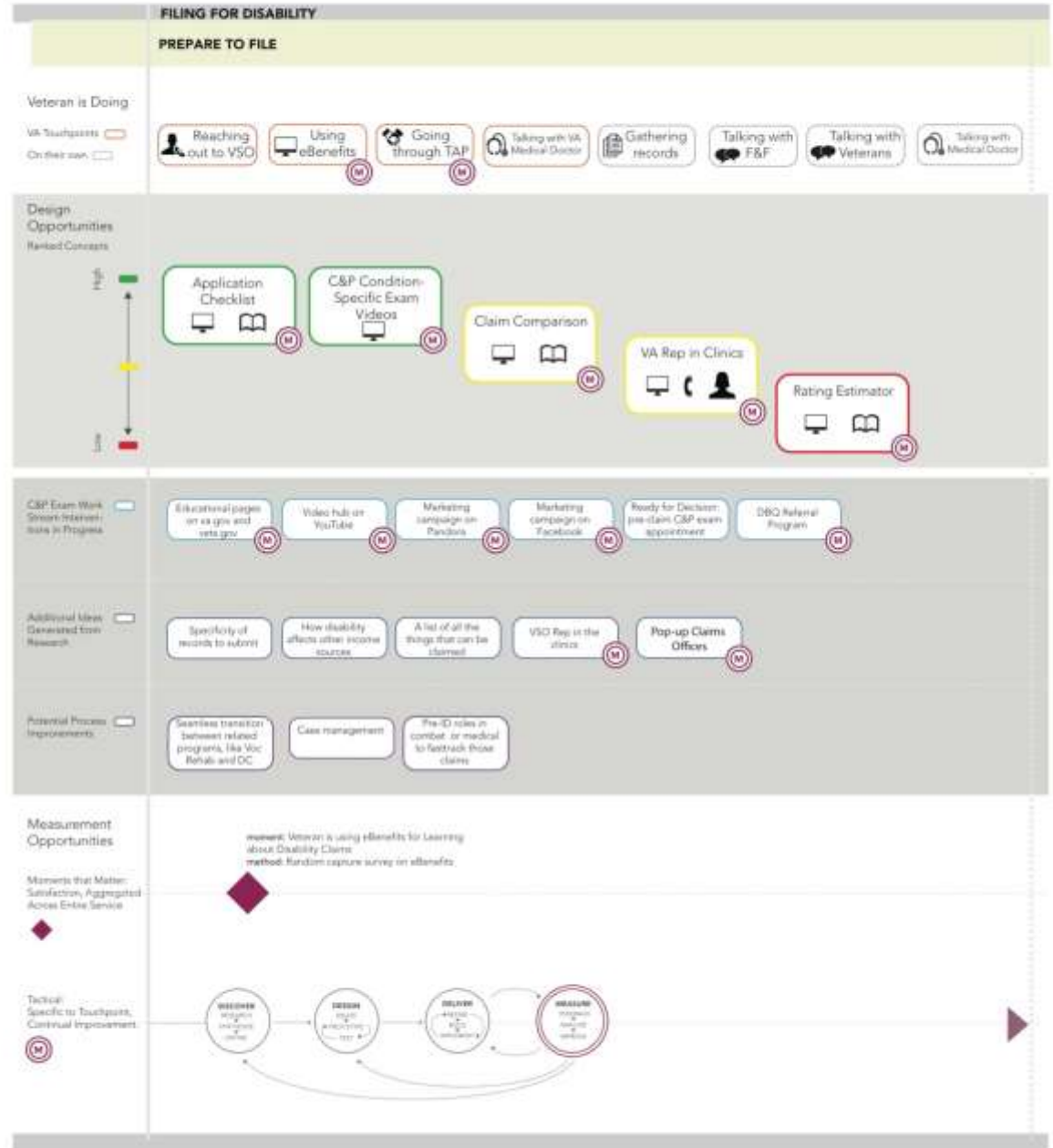
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Disability Claims Journey Map, Front Stage



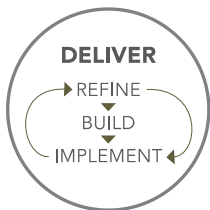


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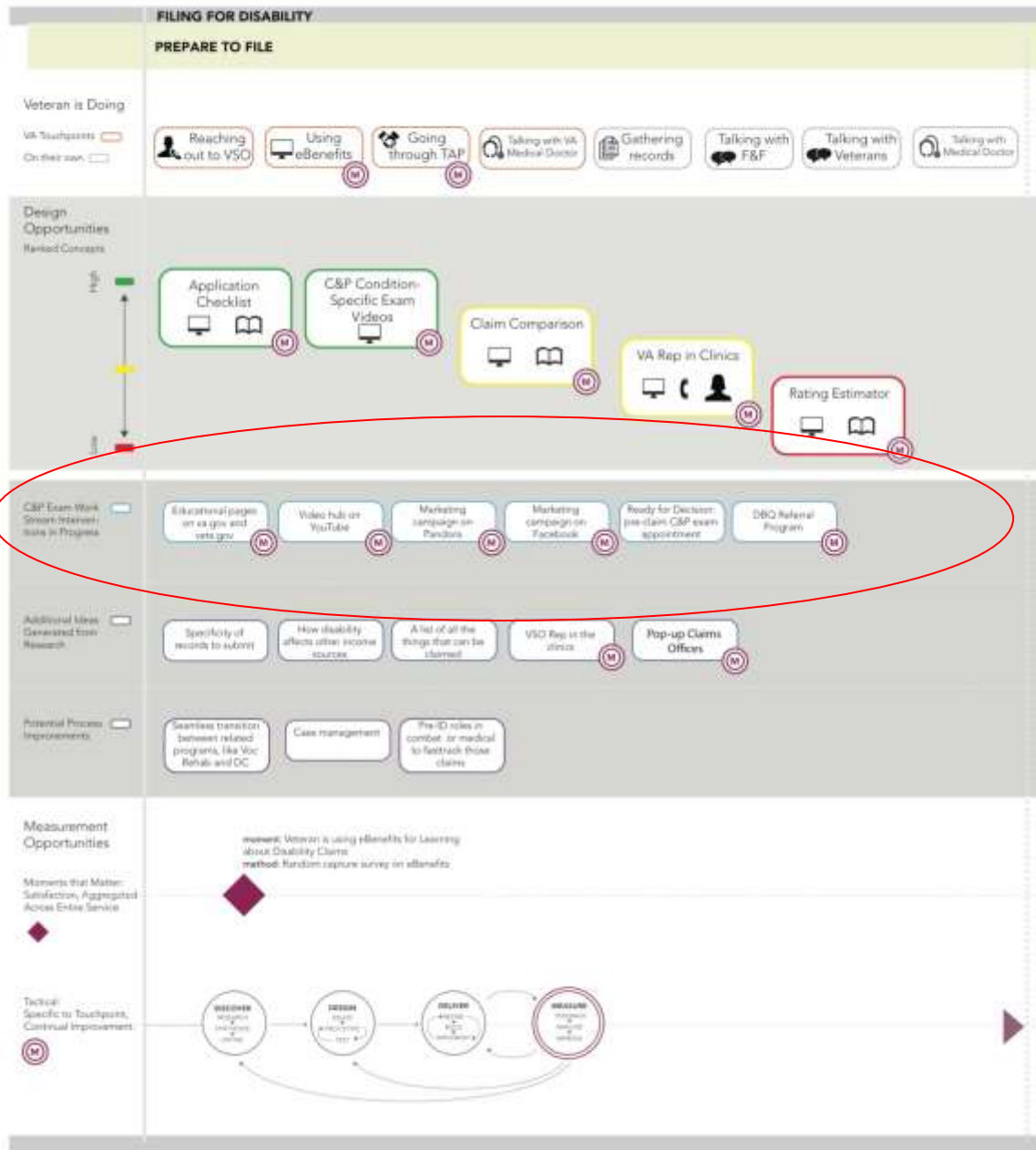




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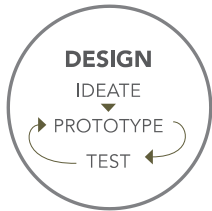


Next steps:
 Work Streams
 Develop and
 Deliver at Pilot
 Sites

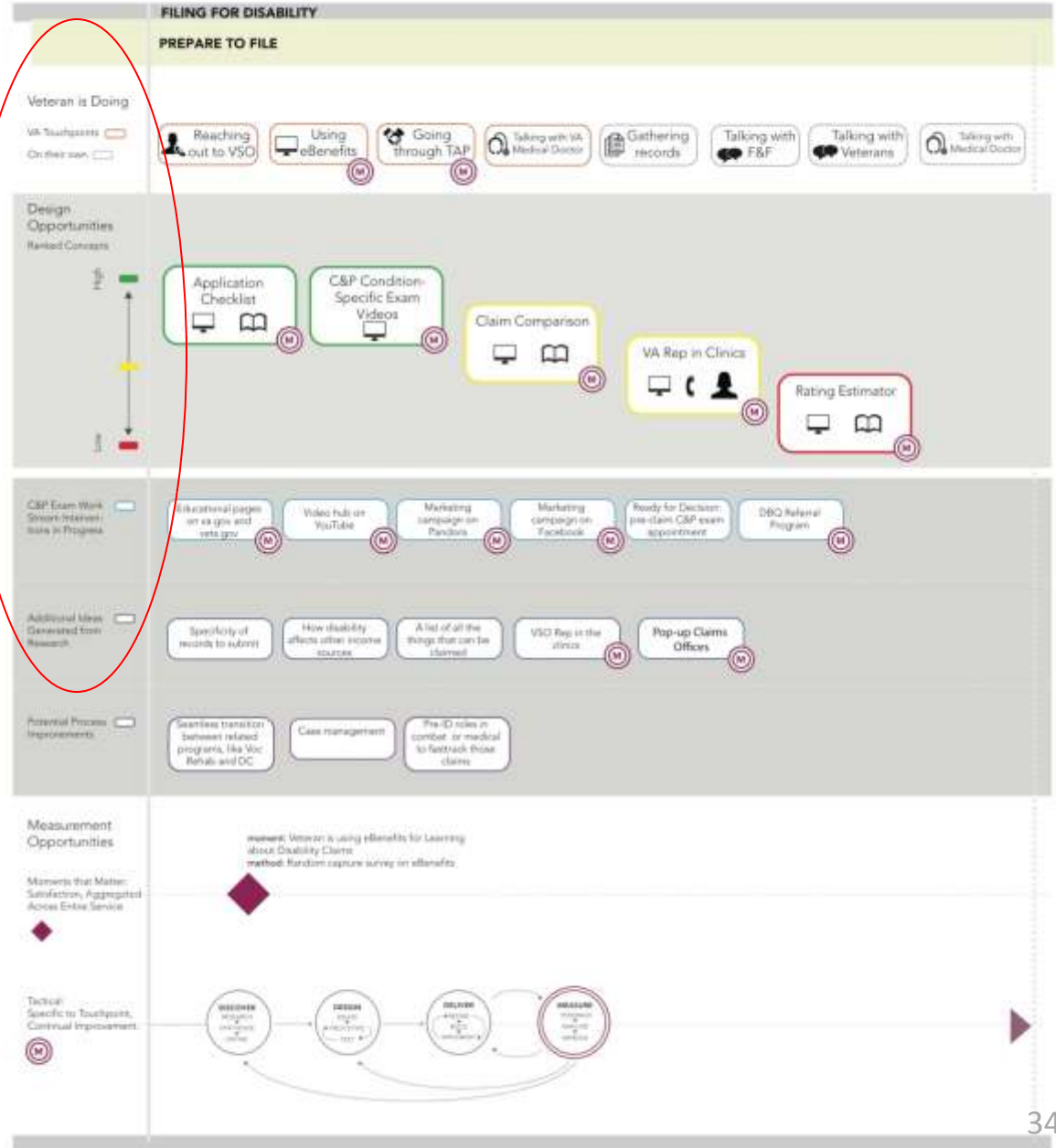




Veterans Experience



Next steps:
Developing a
Communications
Strategy Across
Entire Claims
Process (VE
effort)

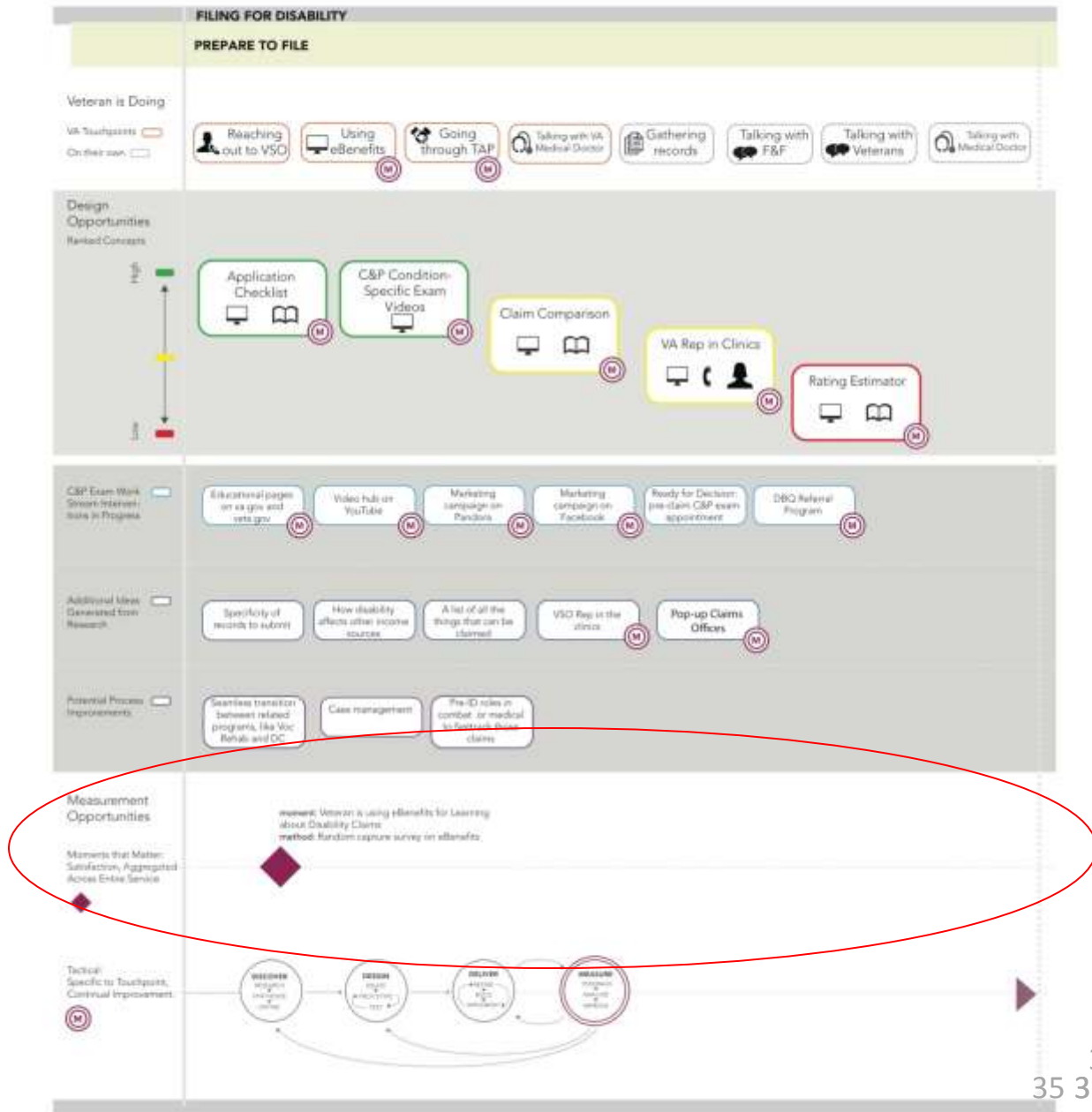




Veterans Experience



Next steps:
Measuring
Moments
that Matter
Across Entire
Claims
Process (VE
effort)





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