



## **Improving Customer Experience with Federal Services**

**High Impact Service Provider Annual CX Action Plan**

**Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Benefits Administration**

*June 2019*



## HISP Annual Maturity Self-Assessment Summary

In 200 words or less total, tell us about your efforts around each core CX function by responding to the following prompts that apply.

### Measurement: 4 / 6

**Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of your efforts:**

In late 2018, VBA in collaboration with Veterans Experience Office (VEO) implemented new customer experience (CX) surveys for three call centers: National Call Center, Pension National Call Center, and Education Call Center. VBA and VEO are also engaged in research and design efforts for two additional CX surveys covering the education benefits experience and VBA decision review process. These surveys are scheduled to deploy in FY20.

**What are you most proud of?**

VBA is building a repeatable process for continued success in the CX area. We have strong senior leadership support for CX and VBA has identified CX as one of the top priorities. We are also proud to have launched human centered design (HCD) call center CX surveys and are continuing efforts to refine collection of customer feedback.

**What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?**

We are in the process of evaluating our initial VSignals (measurement) efforts and are designing refinements to obtain more actionable data. The lessons we learn from the evaluation of our initial efforts will inform future measurement initiatives.

**What's blocking you from initiating / making / fully implementing changes?**

There are no current blocks. VBA is taking the time necessary to ensure CX measurement is performed thoughtfully and in accordance with OMB guidelines. VBA is committed to ensuring proper analytics, service enhancements, and service recovery resources are available in association with CX measurements.

**What else would you like to share?**

VBA plans to expand its formal measures to include two additional call centers during FY20.

### Governance: 4 / 6

**Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of your efforts:**

To provide a single point of coordination and oversight of VBA CX initiatives, policies, and governance, the Under Secretary established a CX division within the Office of Strategic Initiatives and Collaboration (OSIC). Additionally, VBA participates in the Veterans Experience Office (VEO) enterprise level governance structure through membership on CX Navigator councils.

**What are you most proud of?**

VBA demonstrated its commitment to creating and sustaining a solid CX program through the creation and staffing of the CX division. Each individual line of business within VBA and each Regional Office (RO) also has CX as part of its expressed performance plan.

**What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?**

We are looking to formalize a VBA CX framework within the enterprise to be able to provide each VBA office with standardized approaches to CX initiatives.

**What's blocking you from initiating / making / fully implementing changes?**

There are no current blocks. VBA is working to develop a framework that supports the Secretary's and Under Secretary's goals for CX and customer satisfaction.

**What else would you like to share?**

VBA's CX office was established in January 2019.





## Organization & Culture: 4/6

### Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of your efforts:

The Under Secretary for Benefits' (USB) top three priorities are all CX centered. They are, in brief, to 1) provide benefits in a manner that honors Veterans' service, 2) be strong stewards of the resources entrusted to us, and 3) foster a culture of collaboration. These priorities serve as VBA guideposts to create a strong culture of CX throughout the organization.

### What are you most proud of?

We are proud that VBA is committed to continuously improving our processes to enhance the experience of Veterans, their family members and survivors.

### What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

We are enhancing opportunities to increase awareness with respect to CX initiatives. Additionally, we will cultivate CX by instilling CX tools at the program, national and local/RO level.

### What's blocking you from initiating / making / fully implementing changes?

There are no obstacles to implementing changes. Organizational culture change is underway. The USB has further empowered VBA leaders to apply Veteran-centric management principles throughout the organization and developed accountability to measure progress. He also supports CX efforts by recognizing organizational successes and best practices throughout the enterprise.

### What else would you like to share?

Organizational change, to include, employee engagement, leadership commitment and accountability with CX principles are incorporated into VBA process and policy improvements.

## Customer Research: 4/6

### Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of your efforts:

Customer research, including HCD interviews and journey mapping, is an essential part of the development of our formal measurement initiatives (VSignals). In addition, VBA business lines are employing various modes of customer research to inform large and small scale improvement efforts and to identify and fill potential gaps in services and benefits.

### What are you most proud of?

As an organization, VBA is increasing its use of customer research in its improvement efforts. VBA uses customer research to validate efforts and results to ensure we are meeting the needs and expectations of those we serve. VBA has increased the development and use of journey maps in its CX practice.

### What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

We hope to improve the depth of data analysis we are currently able to ascertain from the A-11 domains and further develop comprehensive data to assist us in evidence based decision making.

### What's blocking you from initiating / making / fully implementing changes?

There are no blocks at this time. Customer research takes time to develop the skills, techniques, and tools to make sure it is conducted and applied correctly. VBA is developing a customer research workshop and toolkit.

### What else would you like to share?

VBA has many customers, not just Veterans. VBA is actively engaged in research for all customers including Veterans, their family members and survivors.





## Service Design: 2 / 6

### Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of your efforts:

VBA is engaged in continuous process improvement as part of its regular business. Service design based on the feedback from VSignals (HISP measurement) is in its early stages. VBA is engaged in improving the data collection process and ensuring customer feedback can be used to drive future service enhancements.

### What are you most proud of?

We are leveraging our experience with call center surveys to inform our approach as we work to design future CX processes. This will ensure the data collected is actionable and appropriate to drive service design, recovery, and improvement efforts.

### What nascent / ongoing activities do you hope to grow?

We look forward to collecting feedback and applying customer research principles to ensure VBA programs and benefits meet the needs and expectations of those we serve.

### What's blocking you from initiating / making / fully implementing changes?

Service design has been delayed due to lack of actionable data from our current survey efforts. We are applying lessons learned from initial efforts and are developing robust survey instruments to correct this issue.

### What else would you like to share?

VBA has put a high priority on ensuring future customer feedback efforts collect actionable data to inform service design and recovery for a customer-focused approach.

## Areas of Focus

Reflecting upon our 2019 CX Maturity Self-Assessment, our HISP has decided to focus on raising our maturity in the following areas in FY19/FY20:

- Measurement
- Governance
- Organization & Culture
- Customer Research
- Service Design





## FY 2019 / 2020 CX Improvement Actions

Describe a use case where a typical customer of your program faced challenge(s) during a service experience. This case should relate to one of your organization's Focus Areas for the remainder of FY19 and through FY20.

### Example HISP Customer Profile

*Who is one of the primary customer served by your HISP? What goal(s) is this customer trying to accomplish by interacting with your service?*

A primary customer assisted by the National Call Center (NCC) is a Veteran calling about the status of a pending claim and/or appeal. Another common call is a request to update contact and payment information within VBA systems.

### Customer Needs + Frustrations

*What makes the difference for this customer when they're interacting with your service (ex. clear guidance upfront, knowledgeable employee to help them pull together an application, a fast processing time)? What common blockers might they face when interacting with your service?*

A Veteran would like timely access to a phone agent who can provide assistance and/or complete the requested actions. Although agents can complete many actions for a caller, and can provide the status of their claim, they cannot provide guaranteed timeframes for claim and appeal decisions.

### HISP Implementation Challenge(s)

*What can make it difficult for your HISP to meet this need? Is it an internal IT system, process, or unclear guidance?*

The current IT systems used by the call agents presents a significant challenge due to latency issues and outstanding defects. The additional challenge is that the current VBA VSignal survey does not connect with back-end VA systems and lacks the combined survey and operational metrics for comprehensive analysis needed to collect targeted feedback to provide actionable data to inform process improvements.

### Stats

*What data do you have that documents this experience/service? Could be something like "Less than 1/3 of our customers are connected to internet or smartphones," or "Employee engagement scores on FEVS dropped two points last year"*

VBA contact centers have weekly metrics gathered for wait and call times, call types, and service impactors.

## Action 1

### Focus Area: **Measurement**

#### **Goal to be accomplished by September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021:**

Our goal is to revise our survey to obtain actionable data that can be used to inform continuous process improvement.

#### **Critical Activities and Milestones:**

1. Revise current survey to collect actionable data
2. Obtain appropriate OMB clearance
3. Execute revised NCC Survey
4. Analyze data and apply insights to process improvement

#### **Other Notes:**





## FY 2019 / 2020 CX Improvement Actions

Describe a use case where a typical customer of your program faced challenge(s) during a service experience. This case should relate to one of your organization's Focus Areas for the remainder of FY19 and through FY20.

### Example HISP Customer Profile

Veteran thinking about using his/her GI Bill benefit to achieve a career or educational goal.

### Customer Needs + Frustrations

The Veteran may not have a clear vision for his/her education or career goal upon leaving service. S/he may not know where or how to begin the process of choosing a career path, selecting an educational institution, choosing a major, etc. S/he may not be aware that VA offers career and educational counseling to help them with this and to overcome other potential barriers.

### HISP Implementation Challenge(s)

VBA is increasing its customer research function to understand how best to reach this population, how to best communicate the scope of the benefit available to them, and to ensure the benefit being offered fits the needs of the Veteran (and other beneficiaries).

### Stats

VBA administrative data showed that the career and educational counseling benefit is underused. Many beneficiaries who might qualify and benefit from this counseling are not applying for and/or using this benefit.

## Action 2

### Focus Area: Customer Research

#### Goal to be accomplished by September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021:

Our goal is to complete customer research on the population that would benefit from career and educational counseling and improve program outreach and content to meet the needs of these customers.

#### Critical Activities and Milestones:

1. Complete customer research
2. Synthesize research results
3. Apply customer insights to business process improvements

#### Other Notes:

