

Process simplification: A state court toolkit

**National
Center for
State Courts**

January 2022

Introduction

The judiciary and its partners recognize the continuing need to simplify legal processes and systems so that people can navigate the procedures, forms, and interactions with clerks and judges without legal help. Process simplification (or improvement) means developing court processes that are easy to understand, learn, and use. When court processes are clear to understand and follow (like shown by the cover's process map for divorce with children), it is more likely that user experiences with the courts will leave them feeling more fairly treated than if they are required to navigate burdensome and difficult-to-understand processes.

Collaborative process mapping and simplification—approached through the lens of human-centered design—will help your court better understand your court processes, your users' journeys, identify key pain points and areas for improvement, and strategize best ways to pilot and implement positive changes. The work can also advance a court's ongoing review of ensuring that its policies and processes are more just, equitable, and inclusive for all its users.¹

This toolkit will help you do that.

¹ The Ford Foundation's approach to defining diversity, equity, and inclusion may be a helpful reference during this work if your court has not already committed to its own:

Diversity is the representation of all our varied individual and collective identities and differences (race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, tribe, caste, socio-economic status, thinking and communication styles, etc.). We proactively seek out and engage with a variety of perspectives because we believe we can only advance justice when we affirm our similarities and understand and find value in our differences.

Equity seeks to ensure fair treatment, equality of opportunity, and fairness in access to information and resources for all. We believe achieving equity is only possible in an environment built on respect and dignity.

Inclusion builds a culture of belonging by actively inviting the contribution and participation of all people. We believe every person's voice adds value, and we strive to create balance in the face of power differences. We believe that no one person can or should be called upon to represent an entire community.

<https://perma.cc/L7EL-VY2L>. See also, American Bar Association, "Diversity in Law: Who Cares?" (April 30, 2016), <https://perma.cc/92RE-CPT8>

Background

Process simplification takes a complex process and splits it up into more simple tasks. Each task is studied and any confusing, unnecessary, or wasteful steps are changed. When court services are required, they should be available simply, effectively, and as proportionately as possible, while maintaining fairness and justice. Streamlined procedures and practices help reduce time and expense and typically improve access to justice.

Process simplification examples include:

- Reduce steps in a procedure that allow a court user to complete the process much quicker;
- Use guides (using both words and images) to show a court user through a procedure leading to fewer failures and less user frustration;
- Improving communication to deal with a specific problem area or issue needing reform (like scheduling or document management);
- Simplify a website or source of legal information, so that it is easier for users to access and find what they need; or
- Make a process transparent (from start to finish), making it easier for inexperienced court users to use.

State courts have been simplifying processes in some form for decades. Improvements ideally promote court services that are just, efficient, accessible, and proportionate to the citizens' needs and resources. In turn, public confidence is likely to grow because—the research shows—simpler rules can foster more predictable outcomes.²

² Richard Zora, "Some First Thoughts on Court Simplification: The Key to Civil Access and Justice Transformation," 61 Duke L. Rev. 845, 864 (2013), <https://perma.cc/8BHA-7V3C>

Small claims court,³ small estates, joint simplified dissolutions of marriage,⁴ informal trials for custody and child support matters,⁵ a simplified procedure for civil actions in district courts,⁶ and summary jury trials⁷ are familiar examples. Welcomed efficiencies include allowing filing by fax and now e-filing. Many jurisdictions have been conveniently handling search warrant requests electronically and not by an officer appearing at the magistrate's house in the middle of the night for a face-to-face swear-to and wet signature.⁸ Drivers can dispute or pay their tickets online rather than travel to the courthouse.⁹ Prospective jurors can avoid appearing for a canceled trial by phoning the court the day before. The Massachusetts Trial Court created a forms management governance structure and adopted plain-language standards.¹⁰ The Tennessee Supreme Court approved plain language court forms for use in uncontested divorce cases without children in 2011.¹¹ Texas (in civil cases)

³ The Massachusetts Judicature Commission first proposed the small claims procedure and, in 1920, the legislature acted. "Small Claims Procedure is Succeeding," *Journal of the American Judicature Society*, 8, no. 1 (June 1924): 247-257. <https://perma.cc/H7UN-7K7S>

⁴ (Illinois) 750 ILCS 5/Pt. IV-A, <https://perma.cc/4RAT-SNE7>

⁵ Idaho Fam. Law. P. 707 <https://perma.cc/V8Z6-4DY7> See also the 2010 evaluation report of the Informal Custody Trial (ICT) published in March 2014, <https://perma.cc/57Q6-5RZ6>. Oregon similarly has an informal domestic relations trial (IDRT) process, <https://perma.cc/J9PK-ZM3S>

⁶ Colo. R. Civ. P. 16.1, <https://perma.cc/KJ5A-88KF>

⁷ Paula L. Hannaford-Agor, "Short, Summary & Expedited: The evolution of civil jury trials," National Center for State Courts (2012), <https://perma.cc/UFV2-6Y4T>

⁸ Elaine Borakove and Rey Banks, "A Guide to Implementing Electronic Warrants," Justice Management Institute (2018), <https://perma.cc/4YUC-9ASJ>

⁹ Lyle Moran, "Lawyers and Judges Optional? Online dispute resolution promises to increase access to justice, but challenges remain," *ABA Journal* (October 2021), <https://perma.cc/MSQ8-UZ5E>

¹⁰ Massachusetts Trial Court, "Simplification and standardization of court forms," <https://perma.cc/3H4Y-FPE5>, "Forms Principles" (January 2018), <https://perma.cc/U272-37D2>, and "Readability Guidelines" (October 2013, revised January 2018), <https://perma.cc/N9T5-DQ8A>

¹¹ Tennessee Supreme Court, "Universally accepted court forms for use in certain divorce cases now available online," (September 1, 2011), <https://perma.cc/9SN6-JRUU>

allows alternative service by social media or email.¹² Many jurisdictions replaced in-person notary requirements with signatures made “under penalty of perjury” in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.¹³ These examples are not exhaustive.¹⁴

In practice, the implementation sometimes has not been “simple” in the eyes of all stakeholders. E-filing “simplification” (the goal) probably does not come to mind if court rules or local practice (the systems) still requires that a hard copy with a wet signature be filed after the pleading has already been faxed or e-filed. Perpetuating inefficiency and saddling the users with unnecessary expense is discouraged because it exacts the long-term cost of lost public confidence in the courts as their place for dispute resolution.¹⁵

While simplifying processes can be a challenge, the urgency remains great reminds Federal Third Circuit Judge Stephanos Bibas in *Rebooting Justice*:¹⁶

For the first century of this country’s existence, a literate citizen could represent himself in court effectively. We have drifted so far from those roots that some regard simplification as impossible and argue that the only answer is to find more lawyers to handle more cases. To the contrary, the only realistic answer is to lessen the need for lawyers.

¹² Tex. R. Civ. P. 106, <https://perma.cc/8QD5-ZK5F>

¹³ The Pew Charitable Trusts, “How Courts Embraced Technology, Met the Pandemic Challenges, and Revolutionized Their Operations,” (December 2021), <https://perma.cc/6AJZ-MPGA>

¹⁴ Undocumented and ad hoc simplification efforts happen all the time but under less ambitious labels and without publicity. Richard Zora, “Some First Thoughts on Court Simplification: The Key to Civil Access and Justice Transformation,” 61 Duke L. Rev. 845, 879 (2013), <https://perma.cc/8BHA-7V3C>

¹⁵ Ronald W. Staudt, “Access to Justice for the Self-Represented Litigant: An Interdisciplinary Investigation by Designers and Lawyers (with P. Hannaford),” 52 Syracuse L. Rev. 1017 (2002), <https://perma.cc/5X9M-CSR8> (“The various survey findings served as a wake-up call to courts that if they wanted to regain their status as trusted public institutions they would have to do a better job of serving the needs of their primary constituents, including self-represented litigants.”)

¹⁶ Benjamin H. Barton and Stephanos Bibas, *Rebooting Justice* (pp. 8-9), Encounter Books, Kindle Edition.

The American Academy of Arts & Sciences embraced this call-to-action with its 2020 *Civil Justice for All* report:

The goal of every innovation in civil justice, including data collection, should be to improve the access and user experience of everyday litigants, regardless of whether they consult lawyers. While expert assistance is crucial in many legal matters, ordinary people should be able to understand their options, follow standard procedures, track their own interests, and exercise basic rights with confidence that the law can work for them.¹⁷

The good news is that courts and the public know how access expands when there is an unwavering commitment to process simplification and its cousins plain language and human-centered design.

- Failure to appear rates fall when the written criminal summons form is redesigned and simplified with plain language.¹⁸
- Fewer defaults in civil debt-collection cases are entered when there are plain-language mailings.¹⁹
- Failure to appear rates fall when text-message reminders are sent.²⁰
- And non-court agencies have seen more successful applications and less staff time handling fewer rejections when common forms and processes for public benefits, driver license, ID cards, and vehicle registrations are simplified.²¹

¹⁷ American Academy of Arts and Sciences, *Civil Justice for All* (Cambridge, Mass.: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2020), <https://perma.cc/48MN-KSVA>

¹⁸ Alissa Fishbane, Aurelie Ouss, and Anuj K. Shah, "Behavioral nudges reduce failure to appear for court," *Science* (2020), <https://perma.cc/7YPY-2NUS>

¹⁹ Daniel James Greiner and Andrea Matthews, "The Problem of Default, Part I," (June 21, 2015), <https://perma.cc/RD4A-AJWM>

²⁰ Margaret Hagan, "If you text them, will they come?" (2019), <https://perma.cc/T3NP-ANCC>

²¹ Civilla and the Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation at Georgetown University, "Preparing for human-centered redesign: A readiness guide for state and local public benefits agencies looking to improve application, renewals, and correspondence," (Fall 2021), <https://perma.cc/8LL9-HQ9A> (Appendix B)

It is self-evident *why* process simplification has been included in many state Justice for All and strategic plans.²² Researchers have also noticed how court employees are eager to share their insights and ideas for improving processes.²³ The great challenge can be *how* to approach the mapping, planning, and implementation work. Again, this toolkit will help.

Toolkit Resources

The process-mapping and inventory checklist and three recommended resources break down the planning and implementation steps for process simplification efforts, no matter their scope.

Process-mapping and inventory checklist

The sample process-mapping and inventory checklist that follows is a series of common, court-themed prompts to help planners approach process mapping and strategize system improvement. Resolution 3 encourages the mapping and evaluation of all court processes in a case—from filing to final disposition—to ensure that each requirement is purposeful for the dispute resolution.

²² Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice, “Advancing Access to Justice in Illinois: 2017-2020 Strategic Plan,” (May 2017). <https://perma.cc/7VH7-XWDH> (“Process Simplification Principle: Court users should find that court procedures and policies are streamlined and efficient and communicated in plain language to allow for a positive user experience with the court system while still preserving substantive and procedural fairness and due process rights.”)

“Massachusetts Justice for All Strategic Action Plan,” (December 22, 2017) <https://perma.cc/62HY-7CQ6> (“Simplification and standardization of legal processes, particularly continuing the work of the courts to simplify court processes, represent at once the most complicated and the most valuable improvement toward 100% access to justice. Simplification and standardization benefit all stakeholders in the system, and will lay the necessary foundation for making it easier to navigate the system successfully.”)

²³ Katherine Alteneder and Eduardo Gonzalez, “Voices in the Civil Justice System: Learning from self-represented litigants and their trusted intermediaries.” A study prepared for the Florida Commission on Access to Civil Justice, (March 2020), <https://perma.cc/54VH-BAWY>

This mapping and rigorous process analysis will ideally inspire minimizing the number of steps “because each step in the court system inevitably involves so many people, so much expenditure, and such opportunity for delay and error.”²⁴

Instructions: *This inventory-question series should be used for each step of the mapped court process. If, for example, a mapped process has seven steps, these inventory questions should be duplicated and answered for each step.*

The court’s current practices are to be outlined in items 1-11.
Section 12 is where forward-looking proposed changes can be recorded.

Identify the process that you are examining:

Mapping/Inventory Step:

1.0 Current statute(s):

[List name and add hyperlink]

2.0 Current court rule(s):

[List name and add hyperlink]

3.0 Current administrative order(s):

[List name and add hyperlink]

4.0 Current court internal operating procedure (IOP):

[List name and add hyperlink]

²⁴ Richard Zora, “Some First Thoughts on Court Simplification: The Key to Civil Access and Justice Transformation,” 61 Duke L. Rev. 845, 870 (2013), <https://perma.cc/8BHA-7V3C>

5.0 Current court form(s):

Consider factors such as how many forms are necessary to complete this action.

What additional documents are necessary to take the process to the next step?

Do the available forms help with the entire case or just the first filing?

[List names and add hyperlinks]

Also account for:

- Non-English format (specify):
- Plain language title, content, and easy-to-understand instructions:
- Proper font size:
- Is each field necessary?
- Does the content match or stray from what other authority requires?
- Does each form field have a peer in the case management system (CMS)?
- Estimated length of time to complete the form:
- Times per calendar year form is filed with the court:
- Notary or signature in front of court clerk required:
- E-signature available:
- Is e-filing (or email filing) available and, if so, are there user instructions or issues about how to e-file?
- E-service available:
- Fee required for any filings, forms, file copies, transcripts, or service-related fees (including notice by publication):
- Fee waivable:
- Accepted payment types (and any convenience fee):
- When and why does the clerk reject the form?
- How often is the form rejected in a calendar year?

6.0 Other filing:

- E-signature available:
- E-filing available:
- E-service available:
- Fee required:
- Fee waivable:
- Accepted payment types (and any convenience fee):

7.0 Current court notice:

- Non-English formats (specify):
- Plain language:
- ADA-accommodation information included:
- Court contact information included:
- Party/case information pre-populated in form/(CMS):
- E-service available:
- Text/email reminders available:

8.0 Current help resources:

- Are there available legal resources for this action?
- Do you have an easy-to-understand list for free and bar association referrals?
- Are the help resources easily found on the court's website? Are they easy to use and [WCAG-compliant](#)? [insert hyperlink]
- Are the help resources easily found on the bar associations and legal aid websites? [insert hyperlink(s)]
- Are the help instructions consistent for each entity that shares court-related legal information?
- Is in-person help available? Who staffs it? When is it available?
- Videos. Are they captioned? Other languages?

- Form downloads in a calendar year:
- Telephone and during what days/hours:
- Courthouse signage:
- Non-English assistance:
- Contact volume and inquiry nature logged:

9.0 Court hearing currently held:

- How many court hearings are currently required to complete this step?
- Is each hearing necessary?
- In-person appearance mandatory (are there transportation or parking fees?):
- Video appearance available:
- Are there computer kiosks available at the courthouse or across the community for video appearance (if desired)?
- Telephone appearance available:
- Who notifies the parties about the hearing?
- Average hearing length:
- Average in-person wait time before hearing:
- Do the rules of evidence apply or are they relaxed?
- Who prepares the post-hearing orders?
- How are orders served on the parties?
- What court-annexed requirements are necessary to complete this action (such as parenting class, court-ordered mediation)?

10.0 Pain point from internal/external feedback:

11.0 Strong point (positive feature) from internal/external feedback:

12.0 Needed improvements to simplify:

Can anything be combined or eliminated?

How many different staff within the court review the document? Are processes repeated or redundant?

Is any work duplicated?

Are there delays that can be reduced or eliminated?

How can this be changed to increase efficiency?

Can a change in resources reduce costs or save time?

Can a technology change improve the process?

How will improvement be measured?

- Statute (and would the change have a (multiplier) cross-effect on other matters)
- Court rule (and would the change have a (multiplier) cross-effect on other matters)
- Administrative order (and would the change have a (multiplier) cross-effect on other matters)
- Court IOP
- Form/instructions
- Online resources
- Navigator resources
- Court staff training

Appendix A²⁵

Resolution 3: In support of process simplification is the authorizing resolution for this toolkit. Especially when onboarding stakeholders, it is a helpful reminder for why this work must continue with urgency.

Appendix B²⁶

Preparing for human-centered redesign: A readiness guide for state and local public benefits agencies looking to improve application, renewals, and correspondence.

Published in late 2021 by [Civilla](#) and the [Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation](#) at Georgetown University, this established public-sector “how-to” guide walks readers through process simplification and human-centered design planning. In a user-friendly way, it outlines how to approach:

- Understanding problem areas (p. 9) by
 - ✓ Studying baseline data
 - ✓ Observing frontline staff
 - ✓ Connecting with key stakeholders
 - ✓ Interviewing users and frontline staff
 - ✓ Completing the court forms and any online submissions yourself to gain first-hand familiarity with the processes
 - ✓ Creating a process map of the users’ experience with the court process
- Scoping the simplification effort (p. 10)
- Modifying and completing six readiness checklists, including understanding the needed conditions and resources for success (pp. 20-27)
- Planning smaller-scale (visual redesign, plain language, reducing length, pre-filling information, expanding translation options, and the

²⁵ Online version available at <https://perma.cc/2R5D-USK9>

²⁶ Online version available at <https://perma.cc/8LL9-HQ9A>

like) or large-scale redesign (perhaps adopting standardized forms to be accepted in all courts, limit discovery, relax the rules of evidence, simplify motion practice, permit electronic service of process, and the like) (p. 28)

Appendix C²⁷

Listen > Learn > Lead: A guide to improving court services through user-centered design.

This guide summarizes the design-sprint process used in the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System (IAALS) Court Compass project. It explored user-friendly, streamlined, and accessible solutions that help people through the divorce and separation process—even when they cannot afford or choose not to hire an attorney. It complements Appendix B’s best-practice steps.

²⁷ Online version available at <https://perma.cc/Z96L-DQU4>

Appendix A

**CONFERENCE OF CHIEF JUSTICES
CONFERENCE OF STATE COURT ADMINISTRATORS**

Resolution 3

In Support of Process Simplification

WHEREAS, the process used to resolve legal disputes is an adversarial one, designed for parties represented by lawyers. However, since the turn of the century, the rise of self-representation in many civil case types is a widespread phenomenon that is likely to permanent. Self-represented individuals are more prevalent than represented individuals in many civil case types, yet the court processes they must follow are designed for lawyers; and

WHEREAS, there has been increasing recognition of the need to simplify legal processes and systems so that people can navigate the procedures, forms, and interactions with clerks and judges without legal assistance. Self-represented individuals should not be disadvantaged in resolving their legal issues because they do not understand procedures and forms that can be modified for easier use; and

WHEREAS, process simplification must be accomplished for the benefit of all court users. The experience of court users directly relates to public trust and confidence in courts. If court processes are clear to understand and follow, it is more likely that a user's experiences with the court system will leave them feeling more fairly treated than if they are required to navigate burdensome processes that are not easy to understand and do not clearly explain how they can resolve the legal dispute; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that courts can make large-scale meaningful changes to streamline and improve existing policies and procedures. Many courts implemented emergency changes to allow self-represented litigants to email or e-file documents, increased adoption of self-certification for documents and reduced notary requirements, and reduced requirements for wet signatures; and

WHEREAS, the Conferences' Civil Justice Initiative and the Cady Initiative for Family Justice Reform identified challenges to family and civil cases in state courts, including high caseloads, limited staffing, increased numbers of self-represented parties, and complicated procedures; and

WHEREAS, all court processes in a case, from filing to final disposition, should be mapped out and evaluated to ensure that each requirement is purposeful for the resolution of the dispute. Simplification may require modification of court rules, standardized forms, statutes, case management systems, and may require partnership between courts, the private bar, human services providers, and other branches of government; and

WHEREAS, at the 2020 Annual Meeting, the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators adopted Resolution 4, which encouraged courts to simplify court processes to allow self-represented litigants to engage in the justice system and be treated fairly; and

WHEREAS, at the 2015 Annual Meeting, the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators adopted Resolution 5, which set the aspirational goal of establishing 100 percent access to effective assistance for essential civil legal needs for all court users through a continuum of meaningful and appropriate services;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators urge their members to create or modify court rules and work with other branches of government to amend or create new statutory language as appropriate with a goal of creating simplified procedures and revamping existing procedures that are onerous, inefficient, or confusing for self-represented litigants, court staff, judges, or the private bar. These reforms should be made after consultation and collaboration with civil legal aid attorneys and others such as court users to ensure that proposed modifications address the right problem areas. This work may include authorizing informal trial processes that relax the rules of evidence for civil matters where self-representation is common so that litigants may admit evidence they deem relevant, judges ask questions of both parties, cross-examination is eliminated between the parties, and lawyers have a defined coaching role. Also, jurisdictions that require parties to file proposed orders may consider making such requirements permissive for self-represented litigants; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators support and urge the National Center for State Courts to develop a process simplification toolkit to identify lessons learned from process simplification reforms from across the country. The Conference of Chief Justice and the Conference of State Court Administrators likewise encourage all courts, the National Center for State Courts, and all justice system partners to engage in rigorous evaluation of innovative efforts, provide guidance, develop best practices, and share resources.

Adopted as proposed by the CCJ/COSCA Access and Fairness Committee and the CCJ/COSCA Public Engagement, Trust, and Confidence Committee at the CCJ/COSCA 2021 Annual Meeting on July 28, 2021.

Appendix B

preparing for human-centered redesign

**a readiness guide for state and local
public benefits agencies looking to
improve applications, renewals, and
correspondence**

Fall 2021

A guide from Civilla and the Beeck Center for
Social Impact + Innovation at Georgetown University

project credits

This guide was written by Katie Sullivan and Sara Soka, Social Safety Net Benefits Fellows at the Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation at Georgetown University, in partnership with Lena Selzer, Co-Founder and Senior Director, and Gabriela Dorantes, Design Lead, at Civilla.

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beeckcenter social impact + innovation

This guide is part of a larger initiative by the [Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation](#) at Georgetown University to document innovations in social safety net benefits delivery driven by human-centered service design, data-informed practices, and responsive technology with a goal of spreading proven practices more widely.

civilla

[Civilla](#) is a nonprofit design studio dedicated to changing the way our public-serving institutions work through human-centered design.

To discuss anything in this guide further, feel free to reach out to us at beeckcenter@georgetown.edu and hello@civilla.org.

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about this guide

The social safety net supports roughly 1 in 4 Americans at some point each year.^{1,2} These programs—which include Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), among others—are meant to help people access healthcare, food, and other supports they need to improve their lives.

Complex application and renewal processes can often make it difficult for residents to secure and keep the benefits they're eligible for. These burdens have negative consequences for people who are supported by these programs, and also lead to inefficiencies for frontline staff.

Redesigning applications, renewals, and correspondence to meet the needs of residents and caseworkers is one of the most impactful things state and local government agencies can do to strengthen public benefits delivery. Taking a human-centered approach to redesigning the application process for its largest benefits programs, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has slashed form length by 80 percent, reduced application times by more than 50 percent, and cut caseworker processing time in half.

¹ Irving, S. K. & Loveless, T. A. (2015). Dynamics of Economic Well-Being: Participation in Government Programs, 2009–2012: Who Gets Assistance? Current Population Reports, P70-141. United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2015/demo/p70-141.html>

² Moffitt, R. A. & Ziliak, J. P. (2020). COVID-19 and the U.S. Safety Net. Fiscal Studies, 41(3), 515-548. doi: [10.1111/1475-5890.12243](https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-5890.12243)

If you are a director or staff member at a state or local benefits agency interested in taking a human-centered approach to redesigning benefits delivery to be shorter, simpler, and more user-friendly, this guide is for you.

This guide provides practical insights to help you prepare for redesign, including:

- **Types of redesign you could take on**, depending on the problem areas you're trying to address
- **Examples of large-scale and smaller-scale redesigns** for applications, renewals, and correspondence that have been successfully implemented
- **Conditions and resources needed for each redesign** approach, including checklists to help you assess your readiness
- **Guidance on paths forward** to help you get started with your agency's redesign project

getting started with redesign



1ST SAW ONLINE

LIKE THE OTHER ONE BUT DIFFERENT

SOMETHING YOU ARE SUPPOSE TO BE KEEPING UPDATED

PERSONAL + WORK INFORMATION

SET ALARM + CALENDAR (SET 3 DAYS BEFORE)

SO MANY DIRECTIONS

OO LOOKS HERE

SHOULD BE SCHEDULE 1ST

WAYNE CO DHS HAMTRACK WOODY PLAZA
12140 JOSEPH CAMPBELL ST.
HAMTRACK, MI 48212

You can complete this form online!
Go to www.michigan.gov/rebrdge/ to renew your benefits and access your case.

It's time to Re new!

Prepared for:
Sylvia Wentworth-Farthington

If you do not complete the following requirements, your [Food Assistance Program] benefits will end on: [May 15, 2019]

- 1 Application and proofs due (April 26, 2019)
You are required to submit a completed application and proof documents. Complete, sign, and date this Redetermination Application. Collect necessary proof documents and make photocopies of them. Submit your completed application and photocopies of proof documents by April 26, 2019. You may submit the forms by mail, or by fax, or by bringing them into a local MDHHS office.
- 2 Interview on (April 31, 2019 at 11:15am EDT)
You are required to have an interview with a MDHHS Specialist. Interviews are not required for Healthcare or Childcare (CDC). A specialist will call you or meet you at a local office on (April 31, 2019) within 15 minutes of 11:15am EDT. Call your specialist (listed at the top of this page) before your interview date and time if you need to reschedule the interview.
- 3 Receive your results.

HE DIDN'T MISS PAPERS

ON PHONE OR IN PERSON?

WAYNE CO DHS HAMTRACK WOODY PLAZA
12140 JOSEPH CAMPBELL ST.
HAMTRACK, MI 48212

You can complete this form online!
Go to www.michigan.gov/rebrdge/ to renew your benefits and access your case.

Redetermination Application

Prepared for:
Sylvia Wentworth-Farthington

If you do not complete the following requirements, your [Food Assistance Program] benefits will end on: [May 15, 2019]

- 1 Application and proofs due (April 26, 2019)
You are required to submit a completed application and proof documents. Complete, sign, and date this Redetermination Application. Collect necessary proof documents and make photocopies of them. Submit your completed application and photocopies of proof documents by April 26, 2019. You may submit the forms by mail, or by fax, or by bringing them into a local MDHHS office.
- 2 Interview on (April 31, 2019 at 11:15am EDT)
You are required to have an interview with a MDHHS Specialist. Interviews are not required for Healthcare or Childcare (CDC). A specialist will call you or meet you at a local office on (April 31, 2019) within 15 minutes of 11:15am EDT. Call your specialist (listed at the top of this page) before your interview date and time if you need to reschedule the interview.
- 3 Receive your results.

If you need help, contact your local office before (April 26, 2019).

types of redesign

In this guide, we'll focus on the following three opportunities for human-centered redesign:

Applications

Redesigning benefit program enrollment forms and processes

Renewals

Redesigning benefit program recertification forms and processes

Correspondence

Redesigning notices, letters, and other communications for benefit programs

Within each of these categories, there are a range of different possibilities for redesign. The type of project you take on will depend on the problem areas you're trying to solve and the resources available to support your effort.



understanding problem areas

One of the first steps you'll want to take is identifying problem areas across applications, renewals, and/or correspondence that redesign could help address.

Contextualize these issues by spending time with core users (residents and frontline staff) to understand their experiences and needs. A few ways to do this:

- **Analyze baseline data** to identify potential issues and gaps—such as enrollment and renewal rates, reasons for application and renewal failure, application and renewal processing time, form lengths and time to complete, volume and reasons for calls, field office lobby visits, etc.
- **Observe frontline staff** processing benefit program applications and renewals, residents filling out application and renewal forms, and resident and staff interactions at field offices.
- **Connect with key informants** (such as benefit program administrators, field office managers, and community organization staff) who can provide insight on problem areas.
- **Interview residents and frontline staff** (caseworkers, lobby staff, registration clerks, call center staff, etc.) about their experiences with applications, renewals, and correspondence.
- **Complete application and renewal forms yourself** and read through correspondences to gain first-hand familiarity with the processes.
- **Create a journey map** of resident and caseworker experiences with applications, renewals, and correspondence.

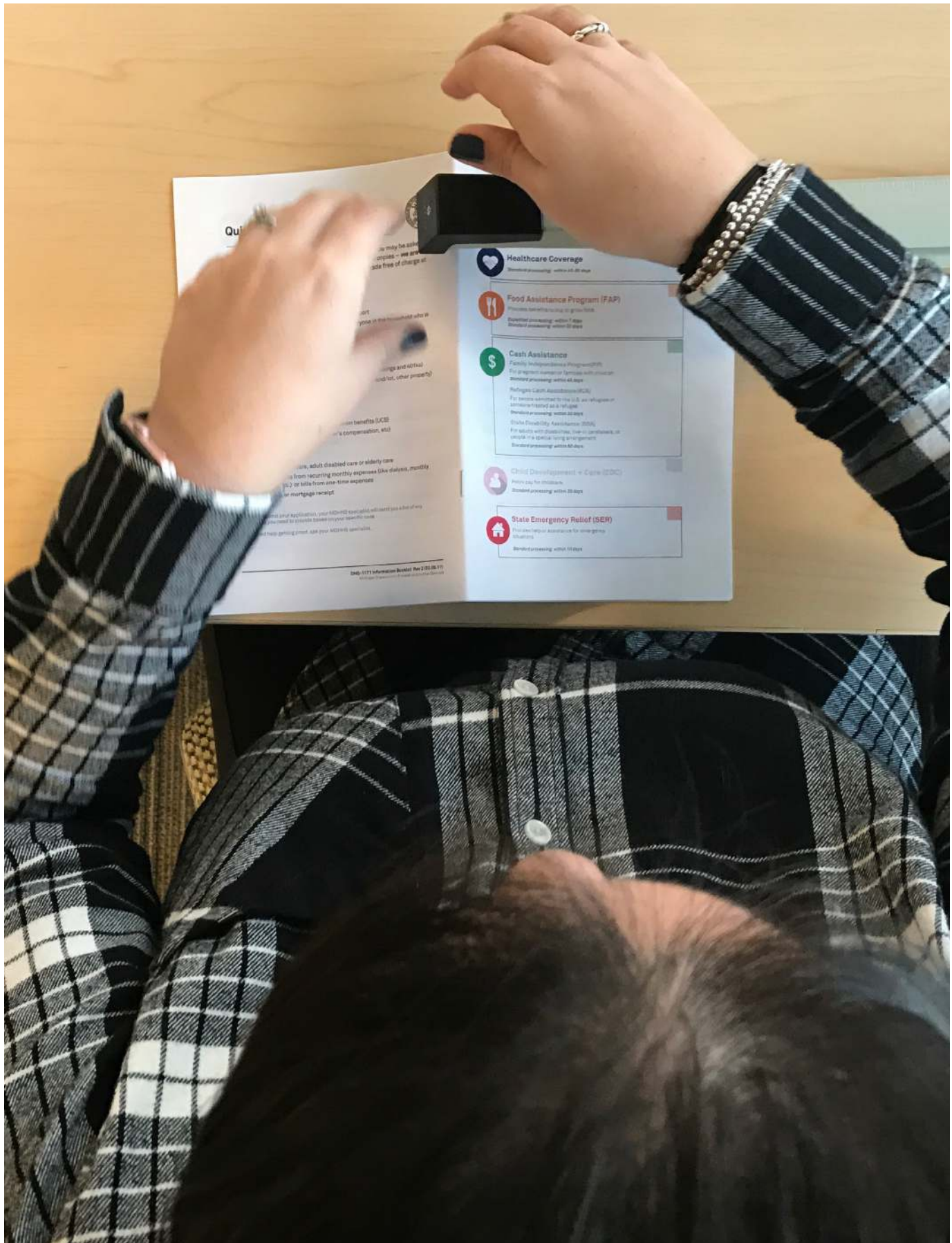
Check out [18F's Methods for human-centered design](#) and [Code for America's Qualitative Research Practice Guide](#) for best practices on conducting discovery research. For a primer on user research methods and real-life examples from Michigan and Missouri, head to [Civilla Practica](#) to access online courses on human-centered design and user research.

scoping your redesign effort

Once you've surfaced problem areas, you can begin brainstorming possible solutions with core users (residents and frontline staff) and key stakeholders. As part of this process, you'll want to think about your agency's capacity to effectively design and implement change.

Large-scale redesign efforts can significantly benefit residents, frontline staff, and government agencies. But they also require substantial resources to bring to life. For agencies that aren't yet ready to take on full-scale redesign, there are often incremental changes that can be accomplished more quickly and with fewer resources. These smaller efforts can still make an immediate difference and serve as a testing ground to build momentum toward a larger effort.

The next sections will provide an overview of what large-scale and smaller-scale redesign projects look like and help you determine the right size and scope for your initiative, based on the resources and conditions that exist within your agency. We encourage you to start with the large-scale redesign section and use the readiness checklist to assess whether you're ready to take on such an effort (and identify specific areas to address as you prepare) or are better positioned for a smaller-scale project.



large-scale redesign



case studies

Large-scale redesign efforts have the potential to catalyze big changes at the systems level that positively impact residents, frontline staff, and government agencies.

While your redesign initiative will be unique to your agency, below are examples of how the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is transforming social safety net benefits delivery through human-centered redesign.

Applications

In 2018, the MDHHS launched a [redesigned benefits application](#) which integrated the state's largest public assistance programs—including healthcare, food assistance, cash assistance, child development and care, and state emergency relief—for 2.5 million residents across the state into [one form](#).

Previously the longest public benefits application in the U.S., the combined forms across these five programs totaled 64 pages, 1,000 questions, and 18,000 words. Complex and vague language found in the forms could be overly confusing, and questions were often repeated across multiple forms or phrased in a way that made residents feel interrogated. For frontline staff, incomplete or inaccurate forms translated to substantial energy correcting errors, resulting in an average processing time of 50 minutes per application.

The redesigned application form removed redundant questions, streamlined content, and made forms more accessible by employing best practices in visual design and plain language. Caseworker interview scripts were also standardized and updated with questions for complex cases no longer covered in the application form.

To make sure changes were adopted and sustained, the agency used a peer training model to train 5,000 frontline staff across more than 100 offices on redesigned forms and processes and foster a sense of ownership among staff who would be implementing the changes. They also trained more than 3,000 staff from 600 community partner organizations who support residents with benefits program enrollment.

The application redesign effort has:

- **Slashed application length** by 80%, with a majority of residents able to complete the streamlined application in under 20 minutes;
- **Improved application completeness** by more than 20%;
- **Cut caseworker time** spent correcting errors by 75%; and
- **Halved processing time** for caseworkers.

On the heels of this initial success, MDHHS has since rolled out a modernized online enrollment and case management portal which enables residents to easily manage their benefits from their mobile phones with similarly impactful results.

The agency has also made policy and process changes to enable same-day benefits determinations, saving time for residents and caseworkers and reducing procedural denials due to inaccurate or incomplete applications.

Assistance Application

Submit this form by mail, fax, or bring it into a local MDHHS office

Find your nearest location at www.michigan.gov/ContactMDHHS or call 855-ASK-MICH

Apply online: www.michigan.gov/mbridges

← Refer to the Information Booklet for details on each program

Welcome!

Fill out the Assistance Application
Answer questions about you and your household.

Fill out Program Details:

- Healthcare Coverage
- Food Assistance Program (FAP)
- Cash Assistance: Family Independence Program (FIP), Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), State Disability Assistance (SDA)
- Child Development + Care (CDC)
- State Emergency Relief (SER)

Submit your application for one or more programs
It will be sent to your local MDHHS office for review and follow-up.
You may need to interview with a MDHHS Specialist.

Receive your results

What language do you prefer?

If you do not speak English, have a hearing impairment, or have a disability, let us know how we can help you (an interpreter, sign language, TDD/TTY phone number we should call, assistance listening device, etc.) or bring your own support.

إذا كنت لا تتحدث اللغة الإنجليزية، تعاني من إعاقة سمعية، أو لديك إعاقة، أخبرنا كيف يمكننا مساعدتك (مترجم فوري، لغة الإشارة، رقم هاتف TDD/TTY يجب أن تصل عليه، جهاز الاستماع للمساعدة، إلخ....) أو أحضر أجهزة المساعدة الخاصة بك.

Si no habla inglés, tiene una discapacidad auditiva o tiene una discapacidad, háganos saber cómo podemos ayudarlo (un intérprete, un lenguaje de señas, un número de teléfono TDD / TTY al que debemos llamar, un dispositivo de asistencia auditiva, etc) o puede traer su propio apoyo.

If you are refused help, call 855-275-6424.

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

MDHHS-1171 (5-18)

Case #:
ID #:

Renewals

Residents enrolled in public assistance programs must go through a renewal process at least once per year to keep their benefits.

For residents, undelivered forms, complex directions and questions, and unclear due dates create a burdensome experience at best. At worst, these barriers can result in residents losing their benefits due to errors or failing to submit their forms on time.

These challenges have a direct impact on frontline staff, who must spend significant time providing guidance to residents in field offices and over the phone, correcting errors and tracking down missing information on forms, and processing new applications from residents who churned off the program and must reapply.

To address these pain points, MDHHS redesigned renewal forms and implemented them statewide in 2020, integrating renewals for healthcare, food assistance, cash assistance, and child care programs. Residents complete one core form, along with short supplements for specific programs. Similar to applications, renewal forms were redesigned to reduce length, simplify language, and highlight key information, due dates, and next steps.

To further streamline the process, forms come pre-filled with information from residents' case files, and the agency has enabled automatic verification using relevant existing documentation.

Data from the pilot found that redesign:

- **Increased renewal submissions** by 12%;
- **Increased renewal forms submitted on time** from 75% to 95%;
- **Cut resident errors** on renewal forms by 60%;
- **Decreased lobby visits** for renewals by 50%;
- **Saved caseworkers** a combined 200,000 hours per year; and
- **Improved successful renewals** by 15%.

MDHHS OFFICE
101 MICHIGAN STREET
ANYTOWN, MI 48123

Care Name: Jane Doe
Case Number: 6123456
Doc: 11/16/2021
MDHHS Office: Any County
Specialist: C. Nilla
Phone: (123) 123-4567
Fax: (123) 321-7654
Specialist ID: cvilla



Redetermination

Renew your benefits

JANE DOE
1234 WAY LANE
ANYTOWN, MI 48123

Full legal name:
Jane Doe
Your due date:
October 23, 2021

Your benefits will end if you do not submit the form for: Food Assistance

Here's what you need to do:

- 1 Answer the questions on the form.
- 2 Sign and date the form at the bottom of page 4.
- 3 Send the form to us by 10/23/2021. Don't wait!
 - Submit online at michigan.gov/mibridges
 - Mail your form in the envelope we sent you
 - Turn in your form at your local MDHHS office

You're required to have an interview with a MDHHS specialist, unless you are renewing for Healthcare or Childcare (CDC).

Type of interview:	Interview date and time:	Appointment location:
Phone	9:00am on 11/1/21	N/A

A MDHHS specialist will contact you if you are scheduled for a telephone interview. You are responsible for calling your specialist before your interview date if you need to reschedule or would like an in-person interview. If you do not keep your appointment, submit your completed form and submit all required proofs by the due date your benefits may be expired, canceled, delayed, or reduced. Your Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits will end on 10/30. You must submit your redetermination form or filing form by 11/15/21 in order to receive uninterrupted FAP benefits.

? If you need help, contact your local office before your due date.

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

MDHHS-1010 (Rev. 4-20)

Send these proofs

Please provide proof of all **income** for your household and any changes you write down. Some examples include:

Income (Last 30 Days)

Employment Income

- Pay stubs
- Employer statement

Stopped/Started/Changed

- Employer statement

Additional Income

- Pension
- Child support

Self-Employment Income & Expenses

- Tax return
- Expense receipts
- DHS-431

Assets

Proof of Current Assets

- Bank statements
- Property deeds
- Copy of Direct Express card & ATM receipt

← Not required for Child Care (CDC) or Healthcare (unless on a deductible, older than 64, disabled or in need of long-term care services)

Only required for FAP and Cash if requested

Expenses (Last 30 Days)

Proof of Expenses

- Proof of rent/mortgage
- Utility bills
- Child support

← Not required for Child Care (CDC)

How to submit

Submit proofs online (michigan.gov/mibridges), by mail, or turn them in at your local MDHHS office. When you submit documents provide copies - we are not able to return original documents.

If you need help getting proof, contact your local office.

Correspondence

Building on the momentum from applications and renewals, MDHHS has directed its energy toward addressing another pain point for residents and frontline staff: correspondence.

The notices and letters that Michigan sends to inform residents about benefits updates and actions are often hard to understand for the people receiving them. Institutional language and poorly designed correspondence (e.g., notices that are long and dense, use complex legal language, unclear due dates, etc.) can result in people missing important actions on their case or needing to seek assistance through lobby visits and calls, all of which create avoidable burdens for frontline staff. Poorly designed correspondence also impedes trust with residents.

MDHHS OFFICE
101 MICHIGAN STREET
ANYTOWN, MI 48123

Case Name: Jane Doe
Case Number: 6123456
Date: 9/1/2021
MDHHS Office: Any County
Specialist: C. Nilla
Phone: (123) 123-4567
Fax: (123) 321-7654
Specialist ID: civilla

Child Development + Care (CDC)

Provider verification needed

JANE DOE
1234 WAY LANE
ANYTOWN, MI 48123

Name:
Jane Doe

Your due date:
November 1, 2021

Before MDHHS can pay your child care provider, you must complete this form.

Here's what you need to do:

- 1 **Choose a child care provider.**
 - If you need help, search for licensed providers online at [Greatstarttoquality.org](#) or call 877-614-7328 for assistance.
 - If your child care provider is a License Exempt provider, they must complete the Child Development and Care (CDC) License Exempt Provider Application. The application can be found online at: [Michigan.gov/childcare](#).
- 2 **Sign and submit this form to MDHHS.**
 - Submit online at [Michigan.gov/MiBridges](#)
 - Mail your form in the envelope we sent you
 - Turn in your form at your local MDHHS office

MDHHS will send you and your child care provider notices once the form is processed. If approved, the child care provider can begin billing.

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
MDHHS-4025 (Rev. 12-20)

1 of 2

Provider Details

Child Care Provider Information

Provider Provider ID #

Provider Address (Street address, City, State, ZIP Code)

Provider Phone Number Provider Email

Where are the child(ren) listed below cared for?

Licensed Child Care Center
 Licensed Group Home
 Licensed Family Home
 Home where child lives
 Provider's home

← If the provider is license-exempt and not related to the children, care must be provided in the children's home.

Child information

← Need more room to write? Attach a list for additional children. Be sure to include the same information.

Please list all child(ren) in the family needing care.

Name of child	Date of birth	Date child care began	Is the child related to the provider?	If yes, how are they related?
<input type="text"/>	/ /	/ /	Y N	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	/ /	/ /	Y N	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	/ /	/ /	Y N	<input type="text"/>

Sign Here

I have told the truth; I understand that I can be held criminally/financially responsible for providing false information on this form. I certify that I have read and agree to all rules in the CDC Handbook posted online at [Michigan.gov/childcare](#).

For more information and requirements, see the CDC Handbook at [Michigan.gov/childcare](#). If you need help, contact your MDHHS specialist.

Signature of Parent or Substitute Parent Date

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services will not exclude from participation in, deny benefits of, or discriminate against any individual or group because of race, sex, religion, age, marital origin, color, height, weight, marital status, gender identification or expression, sexual orientation, partisan considerations, or a disability or genetic information that is unrelated to the person's eligibility.
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

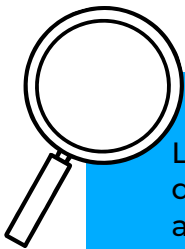
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
MDHHS-4025 (Rev. 12-20)

2 of 2

In 2021, MDHHS began redesigning correspondence for 15 core notices, including verification requests, appointments, and case actions letters across the agency's largest benefits programs. The redesign has focused on making notices more accessible, understandable, actionable, and transparent. Changes include simplifying language and clarifying instructions, restructuring notices so that the most relevant information for residents comes first, and using visual design to make the content more approachable while drawing attention to due dates and actions.

Feedback from user testing is promising. Residents report feeling that redesigned notices are clearer and more inviting, help them better understand what they need to do and take immediate action on, and strengthen their trust with MDHHS.

During user testing, one resident noted, "It makes me feel like they actually took the time to review my file before sending me this form." A caseworker exclaimed, "This is awesome! I can see less phone calls already!"



Large-scale, human-centered redesign provides a transferable model across different states and agencies. While MDHHS is an exemplar, several other state and local agencies around the country are adopting this model with similar outcomes.

The **Missouri Department of Social Services** is currently implementing a large-scale redesign for applications, renewals, and correspondence across its largest benefits programs. The new designs build off of the Michigan work and are seeing similar success. During user testing interviews, residents noted that the new forms felt more "approachable" and less "dehumanizing." One frontline worker explained, "I like that this [application] is shorter. It's very simple and has all of the questions we need to make a determination." Another worker shared, "We ask so many questions [on the current renewal form] that have nothing to do with a determination and it's like, 'why are we asking [participants] these things? It just makes things harder for everyone.'"

readiness checklist

The following checklist includes conditions and resources that underpin a successful large-scale redesign initiative, based on previous efforts that have been implemented in other states.

We encourage you to use this checklist to assess your agency's readiness to take on a large-scale redesign and identify specific areas to address as you prepare.

Project Leadership + Operations

Large-scale redesign must be a top priority for the agency, otherwise the project risks being de-prioritized by inertia, competing agendas, and other roadblocks that will inevitably come up. Set your project up for success by ensuring:

- Your agency/department has established leadership and a core team committed to seeing the project through from start to finish.
 - Directors and deputies of departments that oversee eligibility and enrollment for benefit programs are fully bought-in on redesign. As project sponsors, they can help secure stakeholder buy-in and unblock institutional obstacles.
 - The project lead reports directly to director-level leadership and has capacity to dedicate at least 50 percent, if not more, of their time to redesign. This person is capable of setting a vision, advocating for prioritizing user voices in decision making, and integrating processes and requirements across policy, legal, data, technology, and business. They are trusted and can navigate dynamics across all levels of the agency (from leadership to frontline staff), and have authority to remove barriers along the way through executive decision making.
 - You have established a core team with the skills and capacity to take on redesign. This includes a user researcher/service designer, graphic designer, policy analyst, legal counsel, data analyst, technical specialist, communication specialist, and training specialist. These individuals should serve as liaisons to the agency's wider policy, legal, and technical teams.

- You have a group of specialists on staff who are able to dedicate time and energy to the project as needed. This includes frontline staff, policy analysts, technical specialists, business process specialists, and translators.
- If you are planning to bring in outside support for redesign, the agency's procurement process is set up to identify the right vendor/partner. This includes the ability to assess human-centered design capacity and agile software development experience with modern government, and developing RFPs/RFIs accordingly.
- You have the funding to take on a large-scale redesign project and sustain newly redesigned forms, technology changes, and processes once they are implemented. This might come from federal matching funds, state budget, foundation support, or other sources.
- Your agency's leadership is ready for the type of culture change that comes with taking on a large-scale redesign effort. This includes willingness to challenge existing processes (the way things have always been done) and navigate difficult decisions across policy, legal, data, technology, procurement, budget, and other areas to make necessary changes that meet user needs.
- You are prepared to engage internal and external stakeholders—including residents, frontline staff, community partner organizations, unions, legislature, other state agencies, and federal agencies (USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), etc.). You understand stakeholders' motivations and priorities, where you might encounter resistance, and how to align them around a shared vision for the project.

User Research + Design

In order to keep the experiences of residents and frontline staff at the center of your redesign efforts, it's important to incorporate user input throughout all stages of the project—including during discovery research, designing and testing, piloting, and implementation. This will ensure you're tackling the right problem and prioritizing user voices in decision making.

- You have the ability to recruit people to participate in user research. You'll want to consider engaging core users—such as residents, caseworkers, lobby staff, and call center staff—as well as key informants—such as community partners and advocacy organizations. You'll want to ensure that people who participate in research are diverse and representative of the range of users who access your benefit programs.
- You are able to train team members involved in user research on how to conduct user interviews, user testing sessions, observations, and site visits. You will also train them on how to analyze data and identify patterns to make informed decisions.
- You have processes in place to store user research data in a way that maintains user confidentiality and complies with privacy and security regulations.
- Your team understands the current process for making changes to existing forms and either has the authority to make decisions or can work with decision makers to go through redesign. This includes having the ability to reimagine how things are done and change agency processes.
- Your team has the ability to prototype and test new design ideas and solutions. This includes having the resources to do 3-4 rounds of user testing per component.
- If you plan to translate applications, renewals, and/or correspondence, start with forms and notices that already come in other languages. You will need native speakers to translate and review materials for accuracy and readability.

Policy

Change can create conflict with stakeholders who have valid reasons for the way things have been done to date. Get your legal and policy teams on board with human-centered redesign from the start so that they can partner with you to create new forms and processes that center people's experiences and meet laws and regulations.

- Your legal and policy team—or teams, if there are separate teams for different benefit programs—has a strong understanding of relevant federal, state, and departmental laws and policies. They are also open and empowered to make decisions about where there is room for interpretation with policy implementation, including what information and language is required on forms and notices, and what can be rephrased, removed, or collected in other ways.
- You are able to connect with federal agencies (FNS, CMS, etc.) and national policy research centers and nonprofits that can provide outside guidance on how other states interpret and implement policy.
- Your policy team has the ability to revise policy manuals to standardize practices and interpretations among county and field offices across the state. Manuals should use plain language and include examples of varied implementation as appropriate.

Technology

Your technology systems are what make it possible to implement redesign. You'll want to think about technical implementation early, as it can be a place where projects get bogged down, especially depending on the complexity of your data and engineering needs and how your existing systems are set up—for example, whether systems are modern and flexible or static; if data is housed across multiple systems; and whether you need to build, change, or integrate systems.

- You have the ability to update the online benefits website/portal so that online applications and renewals reflect new language, question structure, and other changes. Consider a full redesign of the website/portal if it is not already mobile-friendly, or if it doesn't currently function in a way that allows residents to manage their full case online (uploading documents, reporting changes, viewing letters, etc.).
- You are able to make changes to your correspondence management system to integrate new forms and notices, remove unnecessary form fields, and pre-fill form fields. For renewal forms, the correspondence management system can be updated to collate core forms with relevant supplements.
- Your existing backend case management systems are integrated so data can be shared across benefits programs. If this isn't feasible, you are able to integrate document storage so forms can be viewed in multiple systems.
- You can make updates to case management systems to remove data entry fields that aren't necessary for frontline staff to make application or renewal determinations.
- Your systems are set up to generate reports that surface relevant outcomes data. See the evaluation section for examples of impact metrics.
- You have processes in place to comply with data privacy and security regulations. This includes securing relevant approvals for data sharing and use, if necessary.
- You are able to establish a process for ongoing systems maintenance and protocols for escalating and resolving technical issues that arise.

Implementation

Implementation is an essential, yet often overlooked, step for successfully rolling out redesign efforts. You will need to find ways—through outreach, training, and other means—to bring stakeholders along so they can embrace and successfully implement new solutions.

- You are committed to onboarding frontline staff so they buy into implementation and are able to adopt new solutions. This includes allocating time and resources to properly train staff, ideally using a peer training model or another proven approach.
- If agency or frontline staff must take on additional responsibilities to support implementation, you have the ability to rescope roles and workflows.
- If internal agency or department processes need to be updated, you have the authority to make changes or are able to work with decision makers to do so.
- You have channels to communicate with other internal stakeholders who aren't directly impacted by redesign so they are aware of the effort. Prepare to explain the why, what, when, where, and how behind the project, as well as how it may affect them.
- You are committed to informing external stakeholders (residents, advocates, community partners, providers, unions and workforce development organizations, etc.) so they will support redesign and are aware of any changes that may impact them. This includes developing communications materials and marketing campaigns, and conducting outreach to reach key audiences to raise awareness. It also involves directly notifying residents so they are aware of the changes, and training partner organizations that help residents apply for benefits.

Evaluation

Make sure you have a way to measure the impact of redesign on outcomes and user experiences. This is key for communicating the value of redesign to stakeholders, which can help you build momentum for expanded efforts. It also helps you identify places where you can iterate and make improvements post-launch.

- You have identified key impact metrics and have a process for collecting, assessing, and measuring data across short-term and long-term outcomes. Example metrics include: time to apply, application and renewal submissions, approval and denial rates, days to determination, completion and error rates, caseworker processing time, reasons for lobby visits and calls, etc.
- You have access to the data you need to evaluate impact, and you have processes in place to comply with data privacy and security regulations. If necessary, you can secure relevant approvals for data sharing and use.
- You are committed to leveraging evaluation data to identify gaps and inform continuous improvements to redesigned forms and processes.

Governance + Sustainability

It's important to establish a governance model so that redesign efforts are sustained long-term and not rolled back over time. To accomplish this, you'll want to build in a system of accountability and clear processes for continuously improving and expanding on redesign.

- You are able to appoint a team that will be responsible for sustaining changes and overseeing continuous improvement.
 - These individuals should have the training, skills, and capacity to take on these roles. Examples of skillsets needed include: user researcher/service designer, graphic designer, technical specialist, policy analyst, and legal counsel.
 - If you are planning to bring in an outside partner/vendor for redesign, there is a clear transition plan that includes upskilling the agency team members who will be responsible for sustaining changes moving forward.
 - There should be one person who reports directly to director-level leadership with the authority to remove obstacles and make final decisions of whether or not to implement new changes.
- You are committed to developing a framework for future decisions to follow a human-centered design process. This includes how changes are submitted, vetted, user tested, approved, implemented, and evaluated. For example, creating a decision tree can provide structure for how to assess and incorporate future changes to forms. Similarly, creating a form for formally submitting change requests—that, at a minimum, asks for a description of the change, who it will impact, and the rationale behind the request—can support a process where updates are made with intention.
- You are committed to creating accountability structures to ensure redesigned forms and processes are sustained. This includes, where relevant, revising metrics for performance reviews for leadership and staff to reflect changes.

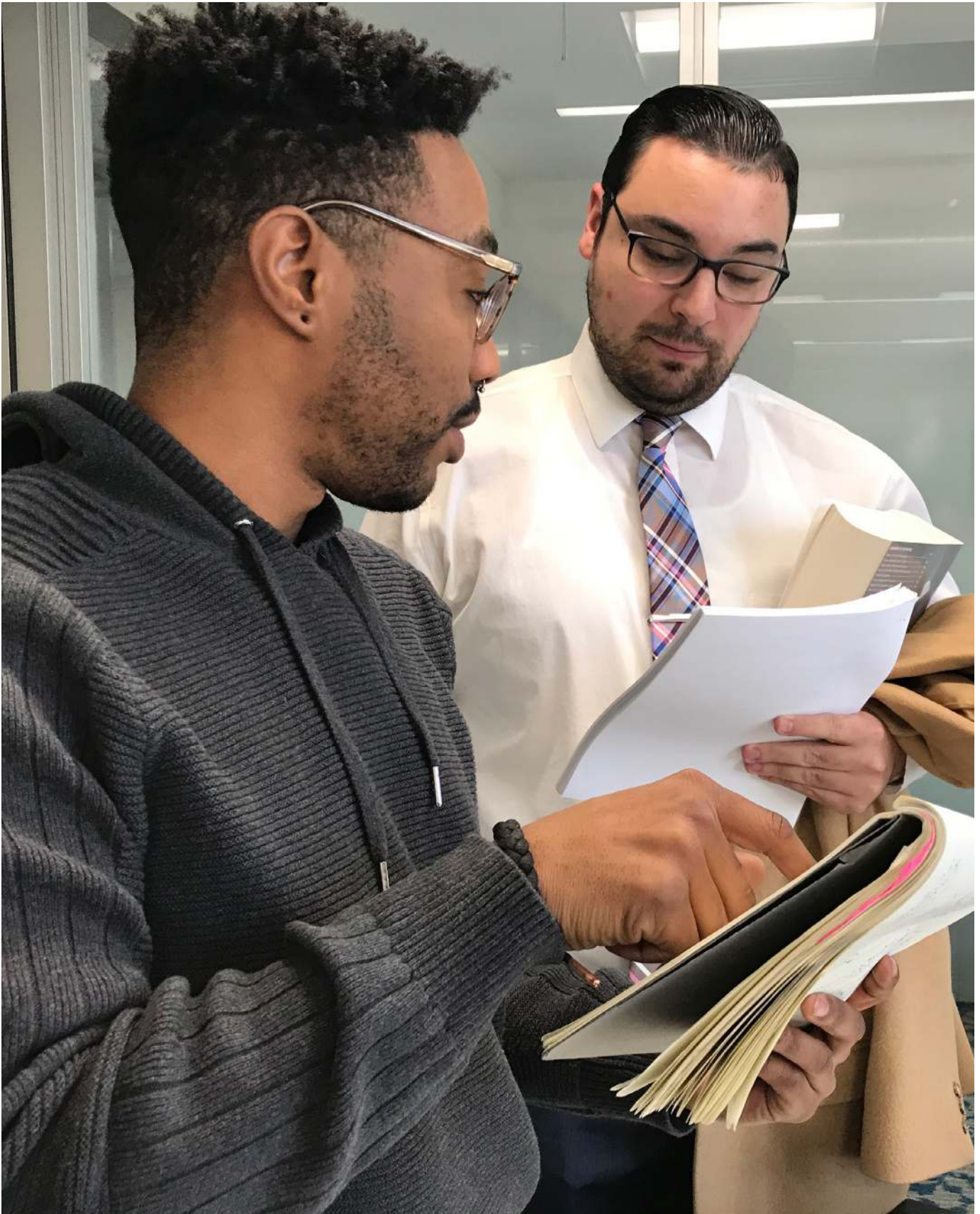
paths forward

→ **Large-Scale Redesign**

If you've met most of the conditions in this checklist or feel confident that you can address them soon, you're likely well positioned to take on a large-scale redesign effort. Read on for an overview of the major stages of redesign and practical resources that will equip you for success.

→ **Small-Scale Redesign**

If meeting the checklist conditions now or in the near future seems like a stretch, a smaller-scale redesign project might be a better fit. Jump to the Smaller-Scale Redesign section, starting on [page 34](#) for examples of different types of incremental changes you can make, resources and conditions needed for each, and practical guidance as you get started.

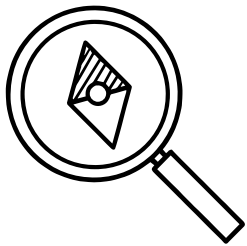


roadmap for large-scale redesign

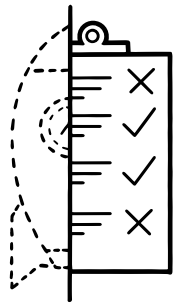


roadmap for large-scale redesign

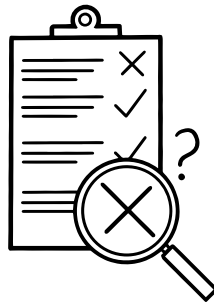
As you prepare to take on a large-scale, human-centered redesign effort, you'll want to plan for these four phases:



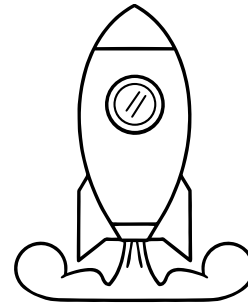
Research



Design and Testing



Pilot



Implementation

Research

The first step of redesign is understanding the experiences and needs of your core users (participants and frontline staff). Instead of relying on assumptions, ground your understanding of the problem and potential solutions in user interviews, direct observation, and baseline data analysis.

You should also conduct a landscape analysis to understand policy requirements, business processes, previous precedents for change (successful and unsuccessful), complementary or competing agency priorities, stakeholder and funding needs, technical requirements, and other considerations that affect your project.

Design and Testing

After you've identified potential solutions, you'll take an iterative approach to prototype, design, and test ideas, and integrate feedback on them. As a best practice, break the design process into shorter sprints where you quickly develop and get user input on components/features early and often. You should prepare for 3-4 rounds of testing per component.

By keeping users at the center of your design process, you ensure that you are designing solutions that fit their needs. This process also minimizes the risk of spending time and resources designing a solution that doesn't address the problem.

Pilot

Once you've designed and user tested your solution, it's time to pilot it in a real-world setting. Piloting your redesigned solution allows you to test it with a broader, more diverse set of users, which can help you uncover unexpected use cases, surface potential issues that need to be addressed, and pressure test the solution at scale before launch.

Implementation

Once you've piloted your solution and ironed out any remaining kinks, you can turn your sights to launch. Just as your redesign process centers on users, so too should implementation. Residents, frontline workers, and other internal and external stakeholders should be informed about changes to forms and processes. Frontline staff and community partner organizations should be fully onboarded ahead of rollout.

You should also develop a clear plan for evaluating the impact, including defining short and long-term outcomes. Check out [Code for America's Safety Net Scorecard](#) for metrics to consider. It's important to remember that implementation isn't the end-goal—sustained impact is. Establish a governance model to sustain changes over time and support continuous improvement.

Ready to get started with large-scale redesign?

As a next step, check out [Civilla Practica](#) on:

- Foundations to Human-Centered Redesign
- Design Principles: Visual and Content Design
- Applications | Renewals | Correspondence

These free, online courses are meant to help you get your redesign effort off the ground. The self-guided courses will walk you through developing and kicking off your project, equip you with tangible skills in design and user research, and impart lessons learned from Civilla's work in Michigan and Missouri.

smaller-scale redesign



Redetermination
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Health Care Financing Administration
Financial Application

Redetermination
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Health Care Financing Administration
Financial Application

Redetermination
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Health Care Financing Administration
Financial Application

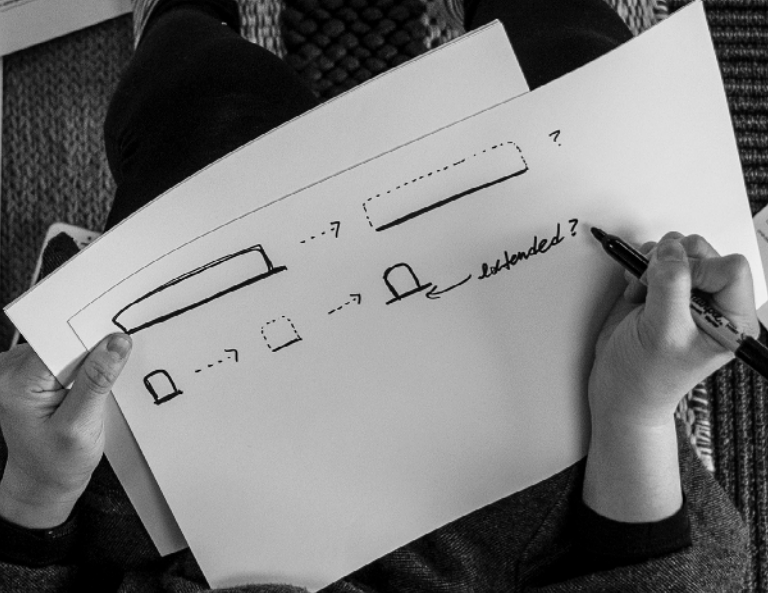
Financial Application
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Health Care Financing Administration

PROGRAM SPECIFIC
Assets
Expenses
MAY 1, 2011
Automatic Renewal?
54321

Redetermination
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Health Care Financing Administration
Financial Application

Redetermination
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Health Care Financing Administration
Financial Application

CASH, MA - over 64, blindness, disability or
factible



Financial Application
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Health Care Financing Administration

Financial Application
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Health Care Financing Administration



smaller-scale redesign

Smaller projects are great because they allow you to make incremental improvements quickly and with fewer resources. They're also lower-stakes opportunities to test out and demonstrate the impact of changes, which you can use to build momentum toward a larger-scale effort.

There are many different types of smaller-scale projects you can take on, depending on the problem areas you want to address and the resources available to support redesign. You'll be able to do many of these initiatives by yourself (depending on your skill set) or with a small team. You can also take on one or multiple incremental changes.

While you don't need to meet the full set of conditions and resources in the readiness checklist for an incremental redesign project, set yourself up for success by ensuring:

- You have approval and authority to take on the project.
- You are willing to engage relevant internal and external stakeholders early and often.
- You have a process for incorporating user research and testing throughout all stages of the project.
- You can ensure changes are effectively implemented. Depending on the type of redesign you take on, this might include training frontline staff and partner organizations, notifying and onboarding residents, making technology changes, etc.
- You have a way to evaluate and report impact.

Below are examples of smaller-scale redesign projects that you might take on to incrementally improve applications, renewals, and/or correspondence.

Visual Redesign

Streamlining visual design of applications, renewals, and correspondence makes it easier for residents to navigate forms and notices. This can increase their ability to complete forms accurately and on time, which can

in-turn make processing easier for caseworkers. Key elements to consider for visual redesign include: updating fonts and text sizes, increasing text hierarchy, adding color and spacing, and highlighting key deadlines and actions.

Visual redesign typically requires user research, graphic design, and policy reviews, as well as light technical changes like updating forms in the correspondence management system.

As a next step, check out the Civilla Practica course on [Design Principles](#). This online course will introduce you to general principles of visual redesign, best practices for accessibility, colors, and fonts. We also recommend taking a look at the MDHHS [style guide](#) for tips and the [redesigned application](#) to see them in practice.

Simplify Language

Simplifying the language used on forms and in notices can help residents with lower literacy understand communications. It can also reduce confusion stemming from legal or policy jargon, increasing people's ability to accurately complete the forms and take action on timely notices. This can help reduce call center volume, which in-turn frees frontline workers to focus on more complex cases.

Simplifying language typically requires user research, communications design, and policy/legal reviews, as well as light technical changes (if you're updating online forms and notices).

As a next step, check out Civilla Practica course on [Design Principles](#). This online course will introduce you to best practices for voice, plain language, and readability. We also recommend reviewing the [Federal Plain Language Guidelines](#). To see how MDHHS simplified language, read through their [redesigned application](#) for residents.

Reduce Length

Reducing correspondence length by cutting non-essential text makes it easier for residents to digest key information. Shortening applications and renewals by removing questions that aren't necessary to determine eligibility and benefit allotment helps residents complete forms faster and ensures that eligible residents aren't dropping off in the process.

Reducing length typically requires user research, service and/or communications design, and policy/legal reviews, as well as light technical changes.

As a next step, check out Civilla Practica on [Design Principles](#), which will introduce you to best practices on streamlining form and notice length.

Pre-Fill Information

Pre-filling forms with known information—so residents only need to make updates when something has changed—removes the time burden for residents of filling in details that the agency already has on file. This makes it faster and easier for residents to complete forms accurately and on time.

Pre-populating information typically requires user research, data, and engineering resources, along with policy/legal reviews.

Review federal and state guidelines for pre-filling information on renewal forms and correspondence for benefit programs. The U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has issued federal requirements for [Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program \(CHIP\) renewals](#), whereas you’ll want to review state requirements for SNAP, WIC, and TANF.

Expand Translation Options

Translating applications, renewals, and correspondence into commonly spoken languages other than English improves accessibility for communities that are often underserved.

Expanding translation options typically requires user research and data resources to identify language needs, as well as native speakers to translate and review materials for accuracy and readability. This work may also require light technical changes.

As a next step, check out the Civilla Practica course on [Design Principles](#), which will introduce you to best practices for translation. The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services [Guidelines for Translation](#) is another good resource.



conclusion



next steps

Redesigning applications, renewals, and correspondence to be more human-centered can have powerful effects on the lives of residents who access public benefit programs and the frontline staff who support them.

In light of the [American Rescue Plan Act](#)—which provides landmark funding for technology modernization, cross-government collaboration, and other infrastructure to improve benefits delivery—and heightened public support for investing in the social safety net and systems of equity, now is the moment for state and local government agencies to take on human-centered redesign.

Whether your agency is ready to overhaul applications, renewals, and correspondence through a large-scale redesign effort, or is better positioned to make smaller-scale, incremental changes, taking a human-centered approach helps ensure that redesign is grounded in people's experiences.

We hope that this guide helps you prepare for human-centered redesign by giving you a framework for identifying the right size and scope for your redesign project. As you get started with redesign, we encourage you to use the checklists and refer to the resources we've shared to ensure that your agency is set up for success.

get in touch

We love hearing from leaders and staff at state and local government agencies to learn about your experiences.

Feel free to reach out to us if you have questions or want to share how you're thinking about redesign to deliver a more human-centered safety net in your state.

beeckcenter@georgetown.edu

hello@civilla.org

glossary

Applications: Forms and processes (interviews, verifications) associated with resident enrollment in public benefit programs.

Case management system: This is the electronic system, sometimes referred to as the backend system, that frontline staff use to access, update, and manage resident case files—including all data, documents, and correspondence.

Churn: When residents who are eligible for benefits lose coverage and then must go through the application process to reenter the program within a short period of time (typically less than four months). Churn results in a lapse in coverage, and occurs most frequently around interim reporting and renewal periods.

Correspondence: Notices, letters, and other agency communications sent to residents with information about benefit programs.

Correspondence management software or system: Sometimes called customer correspondence management (CCM) software, correspondence engine, or forms and mail management, this is the electronic system that manages the creating, prefilling, collating, and sending of outgoing forms, letters, and notices—electronic, paper, mail—for residents on public benefits programs.

Frontline workers/staff: Field office lobby staff, caseworkers, eligibility workers, call center staff, and other staff employed by state or local government agencies that support residents with enrolling in and maintaining public benefits.

Human-centered design/redesign: An approach to design that centers on user experiences to understand problems and develop solutions that address their needs. Iteratively prototyping and testing potential solutions with users, and continuous improvement are key tenants to the human-centered design process.

Integrated applications and renewals: A combined form that allows residents to apply for or renew multiple public benefits programs at the same time. Because residents who meet the income eligibility for one program are often eligible for other programs as well, integrated applications and renewals can help residents save time and increase their enrollment across programs for which they are eligible. Integrated applications can also streamline workload and processing time for frontline workers.

Online benefits portal: A digital or web-based site where residents can apply for and renew benefits, check and manage their case, and receive information about benefits programs in one place.

Public benefits agencies: State and local government agencies that administer public benefits programs. These often have names like Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Social Services, and Human Services Agency.

Public benefits programs: Also called social safety net benefits, means-tested public assistance, and social welfare, these are government-sponsored programs that provide cash assistance or in-kind benefits (goods, services, waivers, vouchers) to low income individuals and families. Some of the largest programs include:

- **Healthcare:** Medicaid, Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
- **Food and nutrition assistance:** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- **Cash assistance:** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

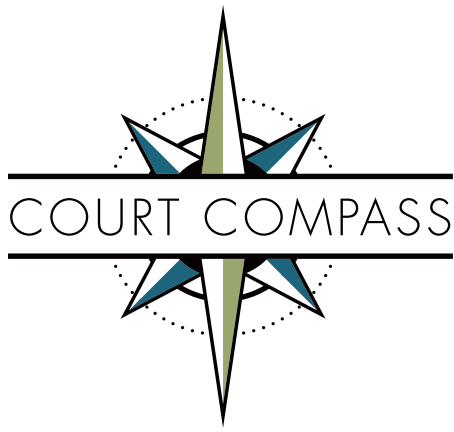
Renewals: Forms and processes (interviews, verification documents, interim reporting) associated with redetermination or recertification of eligibility for public benefit programs. While requirements and timing differ by program and state, residents must typically renew at least once per year in order to keep their benefits.

Residents: Sometimes called clients or participants, these are people who are enrolled in public benefits programs or are eligible but not enrolled.

Fall 2021

Civilla + Beeck Center

Appendix C



LISTEN > LEARN > LEAD

A GUIDE TO IMPROVING COURT SERVICES
THROUGH USER-CENTERED DESIGN



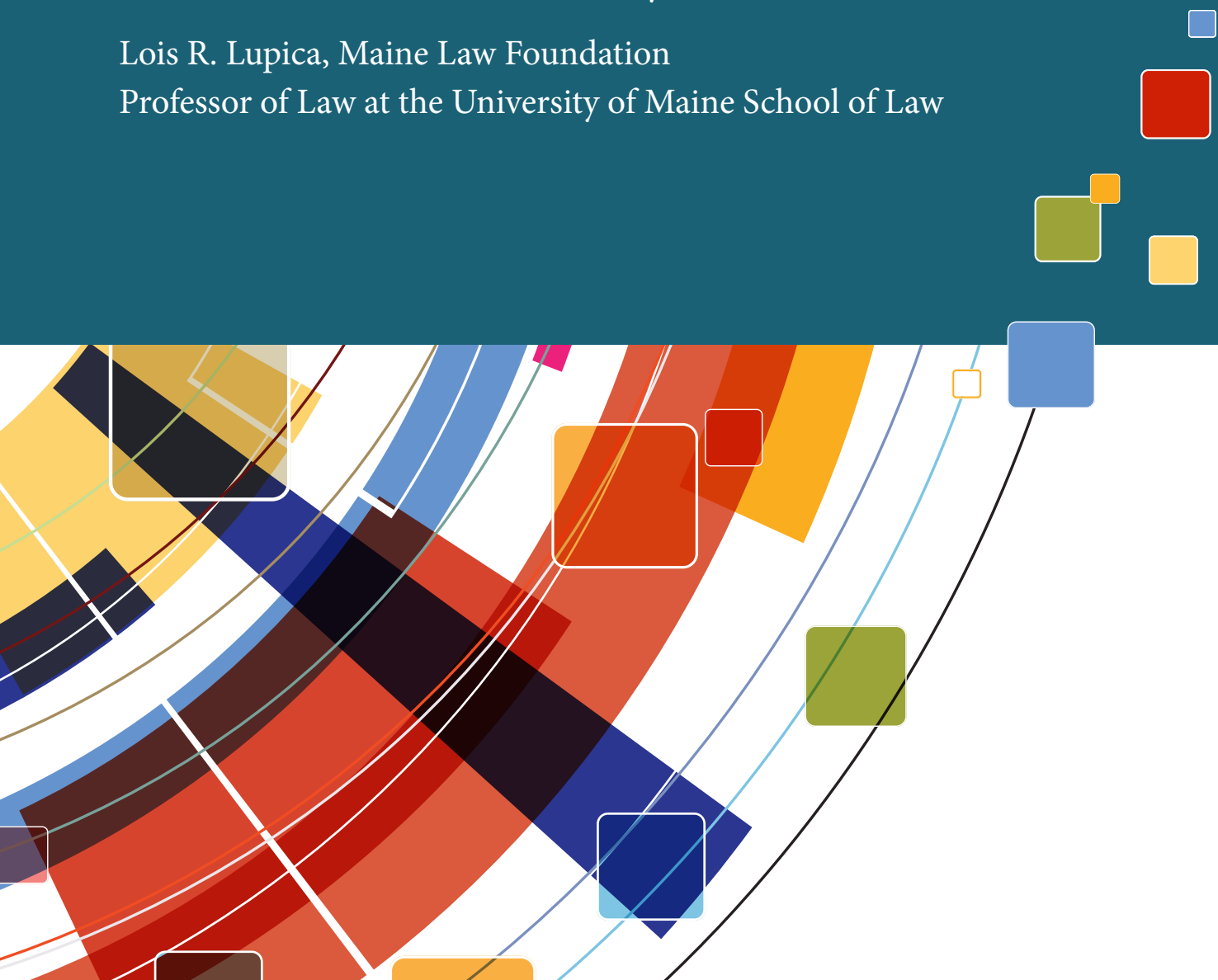
COURT COMPASS DESIGN SPRINT TEAM:

IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System

Margaret Hagan, Director, Legal Design Lab at Stanford Law School

Dan Jackson, Executive Director,
NuLawLab at Northeastern University School of Law

Lois R. Lupica, Maine Law Foundation
Professor of Law at the University of Maine School of Law



A NOTE ABOUT THIS SHORT BOOK

IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System, is a national, independent research center at the University of Denver dedicated to facilitating continuous improvement and advancing excellence in the American legal system.

IAALS launched the **Court Compass** project to explore user-friendly, streamlined, and accessible solutions that help people through the divorce and separation process—even when they cannot afford or choose not to hire an attorney.

The project directly incorporated **court user feedback** in the process of designing family justice system solutions through in-person design sprints with self-represented litigants and other court system stakeholders. These design sprints facilitated the testing and refining of new processes and services in real time.

This guide is an overview of the **design sprint process** used in the Court Compass project and a broader reference on how to use this process for court process reform in areas beyond divorce and separation.

This guide's **intended audience** includes those who work on serving the public and delivering justice to court users, such as courts, self-help centers, legal aid organizations, community service providers, universities, startups and technology companies, and others.

WHAT IS A "DESIGN SPRINT"?

A design sprint is a time-limited group exercise that uses principles of human-centered design to guide collective brainstorming in pursuit of an easy-to-grasp challenge.



The format, while inherently flexible, generally consists of activities that involve discovery, definition, brainstorming, prototyping, and testing.

Design sprints can be as brief as one hour and as long as one week. At their core, they are a condensed version of the human-centered design process intended to yield new solutions to longstanding problems.

Outcomes can form the foundation for a more in-depth design process or serve as a proposed solution ready for an implementation or beta phase.

PHASES OF THE DESIGN SPRINT PROCESS

1. Discover – Explore what court users perceive to be challenges and opportunities in the current process.

2. Identify the Problem – Define the contours of the problem and those who are involved in the process at issue.

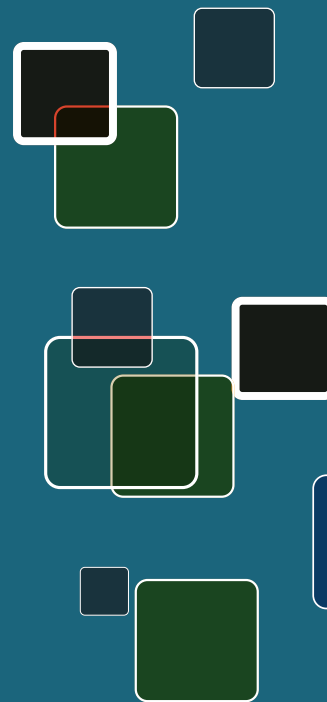
3. Brainstorm – Engage in structured, creative thinking about potential service, product, and process solutions.

4. Build – Develop concept prototypes around the highest-impact solutions.

5. Test – Solicit feedback through interactive, real-time testing of developed concept prototypes.

6. Refine – Revise the prototyped solutions based on the feedback received through the testing.

7. Debrief – Share feedback on process and ideas that were not already covered.





BENEFITS OF ENGAGING USERS THROUGH DESIGN SPRINTS

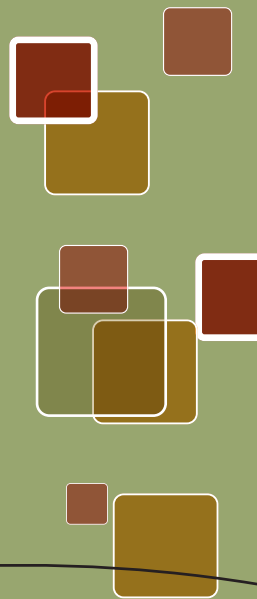
- Improve empathy with court users by understanding their experience and perspectives on the process.
- Identify key needs of court users (stepping away from prior assumptions about user needs).
- Review existing services and explore ways to make them more understandable and effective.
- Spot opportunities for new services, processes, or tools.
- Host a fun and dynamic session that builds a community of collaborators.
- Advance creative system redesign in a single session.



LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR AND EXECUTING THE DESIGN SPRINT

These are the high-level issues to consider in planning a court process design sprint, which are detailed throughout this book:

- 1. Determine the Problem/Process to be Improved**
- 2. Identify the Necessary Stakeholders**
- 3. Reach and Recruit Participants**
- 4. Develop the Design Sprint Protocol**
- 5. Logistical Considerations**
- 6. Collect Feedback on the Sprint**



1

DETERMINE THE PROBLEM/PROCESS TO BE IMPROVED

The first step is to determine the problem you wish to address or what process you wish to improve. The IAALS Court Compass project focused on the divorce and separation process. For a successful design sprint, the problem should be something that can be quickly and easily summarized. If you can't state the challenge in a couple sentences, a more complex design process is likely called for.

2

IDENTIFY THE NECESSARY STAKEHOLDERS

Litigants – The Court Compass project identified **self-represented litigants** in divorce and separation cases as the core Court Compass stakeholder group. We considered those who represented themselves *at any point* in the process as having “self-represented.” We specifically targeted self-represented litigants whose case closed within the last two to three years.

Engaging litigants in court process redesign is crucial, but reaching and recruiting this stakeholder group can present unique challenges. The Court Compass design sprint process highlights a number of best-practice strategies.

3

REACH AND RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS

Best Practices for Litigant Outreach –

A strategy that includes email and mail letter outreach invitations will reach the largest potential participant group (and, to the extent possible, will not bias in favor of the tech-savvy).

Where appropriate, the initial outreach invitation to participate in the design sprint benefits from a clear connection to (or partnership with) the local court or service provider. This establishes legitimacy and facilitates trust on the part of the sprint participants.

Recruitment should begin sufficiently in advance of the design sprint date to ensure maximum availability, but not so far out that the date is too removed to consider or remember. Four to six weeks should usually suffice.

A registration process (by phone and online) can help organizers ensure that participants meet all eligibility criteria before guaranteeing registrants' participation. This process can also screen for individuals who may be unnecessarily stressed or traumatized by participating in the sprint—a particularly important consideration with divorce and separation cases. Be attuned to participants whose experience is so extreme that it will dominate a small group discussion.

COURT COMPASS PROVEN PRACTICE: OUTREACH LETTER TO SRLS



INSTITUTE *for the* ADVANCEMENT
of the AMERICAN LEGAL SYSTEM  UNIVERSITY of
DENVER

[DATE]

[FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME]
[STREET ADDRESS]
[CITY], [STATE] [ZIP]

Dear [FIRST NAME],

The legal divorce process can be difficult—especially for people who don't have a lawyer. Experts from IAALS at the University of Denver, Stanford University, and Northeastern University are working with court users, volunteer [STATE] judicial system employees, and other stakeholders to identify ways to improve the divorce process in our state.

We need input from people who actually experienced the process to help us figure out what needs to change. If you did not have a lawyer for at least part of your divorce, we would like to hear your ideas on how to make the [STATE] family court system better.

What are we doing?

We are reaching out to people in your area—whose recent completed divorce is a matter of public record—because we want to hear your voice. The [STATE] Judicial Branch provided this public information from your closed case in order to get feedback about the court process.

Your input is very important to us. IAALS is hosting a **one-day workshop** in [CITY, STATE] on [DATE] from [TIME].

What is IAALS?

IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System, is a national, independent research center at the University of Denver dedicated to improving the civil justice system for all those who need it. IAALS is conducting these workshops in different states across the United States to make suggestions to courts about court processes from a court user view. IAALS will *never ask you to share personal information* about yourself, your family, or your case.

How can I participate?

IAALS is offering court users like you an incentive for your participation in this one-day workshop. Those who are selected to take part will receive a \$150 gift card for their participation.

Ready to sign up?

You can **sign up** to be considered for participation in any of the following ways:

- Register online at <http://iaals.du.edu/courtcompass>
- Email CourtCompass@du.edu
- Call toll-free 1-833-663-6177

IAALS will provide you with a \$5 gift card to Target or Amazon just for signing up. Workshop space is limited, but if you are selected to participate you will be offered a choice between a \$150 Amazon or Visa gift card for your time and effort in helping us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Natalie Knowlton".

Natalie Knowlton
Director, Special Projects
IAALS, Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System
University of Denver

COURT COMPASS PROVEN PRACTICE: INCENTIVES TO PARTICIPATE

Showing appreciation for litigants' participation is an important and effective means of increasing participation rates. IAALS has found that many participants cited a dearth of financial resources as the reason they did not have an attorney in their divorce cases.

The Court Compass project employed a dual monetary incentive structure:

- All self-represented litigants who registered to participate in the design sprint received a \$5 gift card. Registration did not guarantee participation in the sprint.
- Those who were selected to participate received a \$150 gift card at the conclusion of the design sprint. Participants were given a choice between an electronic Amazon gift card or a physical VISA gift card. Most participants selected the VISA option. *Be sure to clear any financial incentives with your partnering organizations to ensure compliance with applicable ethical rules.*

Additionally, the Court Compass design sprints were largely held on Saturdays, which facilitated litigant participation. Accessible parking was a primary consideration in facility selection.

COURT COMPASS PROVEN PRACTICE: COMMUNICATING WITH LITIGANTS

If possible, designate a single person to be responsible for communication with litigants. **Consistency in communication** will help forge a connection with, and provide support to, workshop participants.

Whether registration is done online or by phone (best practice is to offer both), **following up promptly and respectfully** to any litigant outreach will set the stage for a positive working relationship.

Many litigants demonstrate some degree of curiosity or skepticism when first responding to a design sprint invitation. **Describe the workshop in short, simple terms**—for example, “We’re trying to improve the divorce process, and we’d love your input.”

Maintain a **waiting list** of interested litigants—plans change and some participants may withdraw in advance of the workshop.

Provide **logistical details** about the workshop (time, place, what to expect) about 10 days prior to the event, and provide a reminder a day or two ahead of time. It’s also wise to set some common-sense ground rules that are conveyed to participants in advance. This will guard against including people who are not comfortable with the creative exercises that make up a design sprint.

COURT COMPASS PROVEN PRACTICE: RULES & PARTICIPANT INFORMATION



WORKSHOP RULES AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Workshop Rules Acknowledgment

To ensure that everyone is comfortable voicing their opinion and speaking freely, participants must agree to the following rules:

- Address one another on a first name basis;
- Refrain from sharing any official titles with other participants;
- Be open-minded;
- Be respectful;
- Be inclusive;
- Be honest;
- Encourage others to speak/voice their thoughts;
- Take turns speaking;
- Engage full-group discussions;
- Do not solicit any business during our design sprint (including before or after);
- Do not take any photographs or recordings on your personal device(s).

Confidentiality

Though we are not asking about personal or private information, during the course of the workshop, participants may share such information with their teams as part of the process. Participants must agree to not share any such information with any third parties outside of the workshop to ensure that the confidentiality of such information is respected.

By signing this form, you acknowledge that you have read each of the above rules and agree to follow all of them.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

3

REACH AND RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS

Non-Litigant Stakeholders – While litigants will likely be the key stakeholder group for many court process improvement sprints, it is usually essential to identify other stakeholders—individuals inside or connected to the court system who have direct experience with the issue or problem.

Court Compass design sprints engaged **court employees, judges, practitioners, legal aid staff, technologists,** and other **providers** serving divorcing and separating families.

Be sure to ask your partnering organizations to send participants who have open minds and creative spirits. The wrong vibe, especially from an employee of the courts, can inhibit ideation.



4

DEVELOP THE DESIGN SPRINT PROTOCOL

The Court Compass project team experimented with several different protocols, but each broadly followed a similar path:

PROCESS MAPPING

Self-represented litigant participants are asked to map their journey through the divorce and separation process, including challenges and opportunities they encountered.

PROBLEM & SOLUTION BRAINSTORM

Building from the individual case mapping, full sprint teams are asked to document broad problems and opportunities in the current process.

DEVELOP & TEST SOLUTION

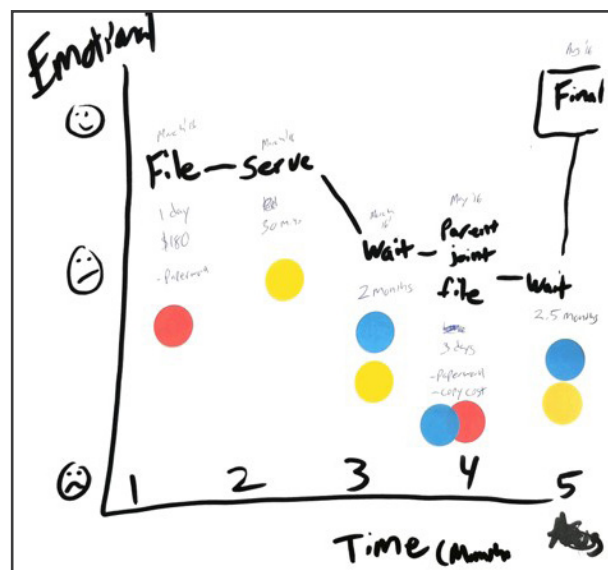
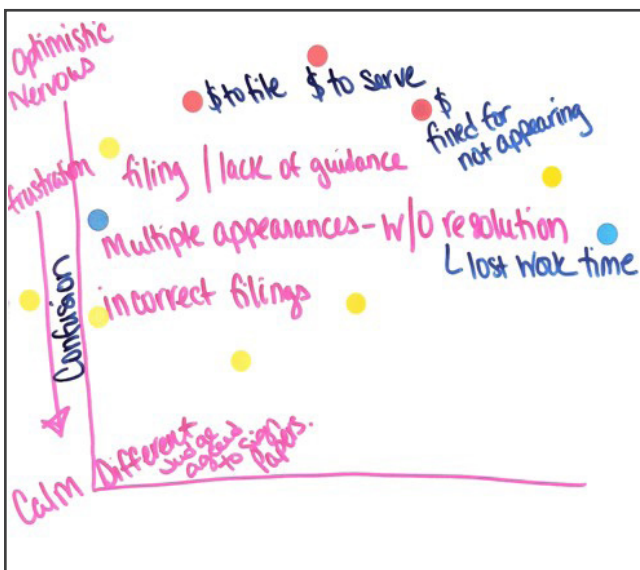
Teams brainstorm product, service, and policy solutions, ultimately selecting one to prototype and test with other teams.

PROCESS MAPPING

Self-represented litigant participants are asked to map their journey through the divorce and separation process, including challenges and opportunities they encountered.

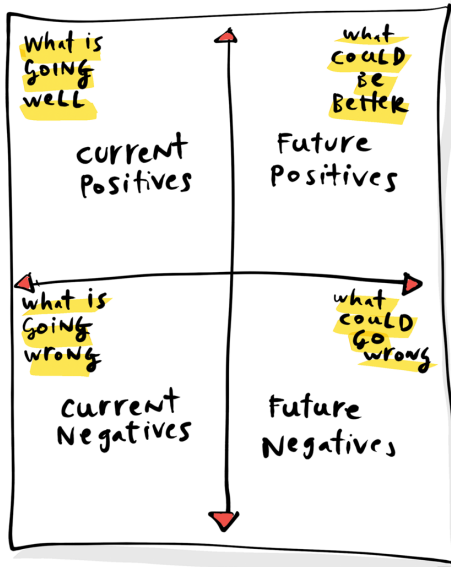
During the first stage of the design sprint, participants were asked to outline their perceptions of a self-represented litigant's legal journey. The self-represented litigants mapped their personal journey. For others, they mapped the journey as observed from their personal/professional vantage point. In addition to the procedural steps people took, these maps included other details of the experience:

- Emotions experienced during various steps of the process, including components that were particularly confusing and/or frustrating
- Time required to complete various steps of the process
- Money spent during the various steps of the process



PROBLEM & SOLUTION BRAINSTORM

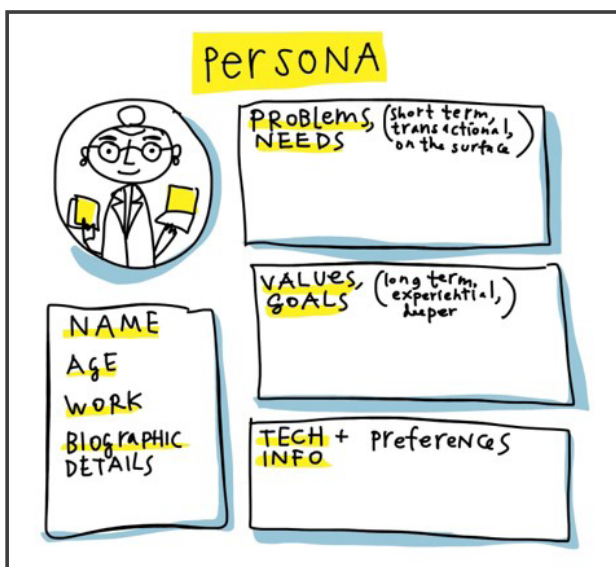
Building from the individual case mapping, full sprint teams are asked to document broad problems and opportunities in the current process.



Sprint teams of four to six people populated a matrix with ideas on what is going well or not so well in the current process. This activity also asked teams what meaningful opportunities and potential challenges might exist in the future.

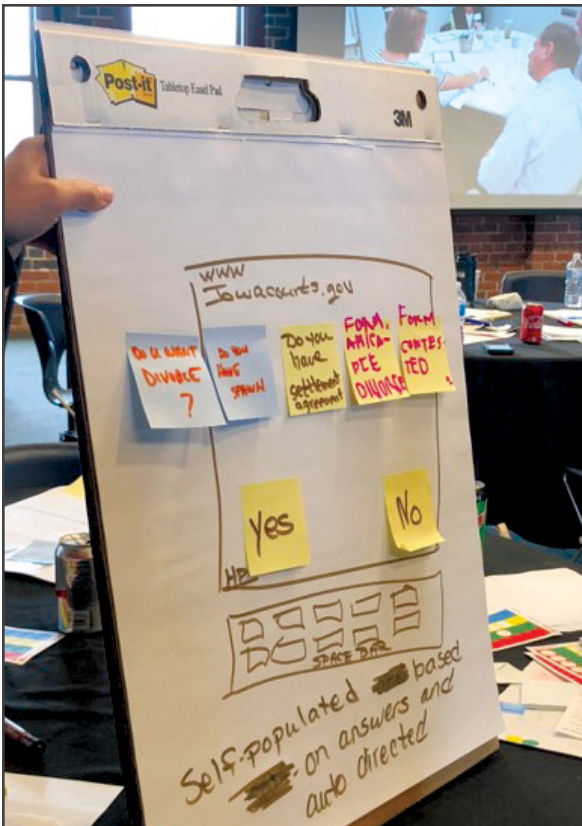
During this brainstorming stage, sprint teams identified a real or hypothetical user in the divorce and separation system around whom to develop solutions.

Teams then addressed the question: How might we help **[USER DESCRIPTION]** to achieve **[GOAL]** because **[INSIGHT INTO USER SITUATION]**?



DEVELOP & TEST SOLUTION

Teams brainstorm product, service, and policy solutions, ultimately selecting one to prototype and test with other teams.



Teams selected one of the many solutions they developed to prototype—building rough sketches, creating tangible props, mimicking interactive service solutions, etc. The goal of these prototypes was to make them detailed enough so as to be able to test them within the team and with other sprint teams.

This exercise facilitated real-time feedback on the various prototypes, which allowed for real-time improvements to the tested product, policy, or service.



COURT COMPASS PROVEN PRACTICE: PARTICIPANT EMOTIONS AND COMFORT

The underlying issues in divorce and separation cases are often very personal and very emotional. Litigants who have experienced these issues (particularly self-represented litigants, given their proximity to the procedural aspects of these cases in addition to the underlying emotional issues) may encounter difficulty at times when sharing their experiences.

IAALS offers the following practices from the Court Compass design sprints (that build on prior IAALS user-centric research on the divorce process) for ensuring that potentially vulnerable sprint participants are comfortable throughout the process:

- **Assess during the recruitment process whether the person might be unnecessarily traumatized by participation.**
- **Circulate design sprint ground rules in advance so that all participants know to be respectful and encourage everyone to have a voice and participate in the sprint.**
- **Give participants an opportunity at the start of the sprint to share their personal experience.**
- **Watch for discomfort throughout the process and ensure that participants know they are free to leave at any time without compromising receipt of their gift card.**
- **Where necessary, intervene in a group discussion to either reestablish ground rules or pivot the discussion toward more fruitful territory.**

5

LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Location – All Court Compass design sprints were held in neutral, non-intimidating environments. University facilities, bar association offices, hotel conference rooms, and community centers are all potential venues. Important factors when considering the room itself include: natural light, big walls, and no expensive art/decorations.



Time and Date – All but one of the Court Compass design sprints were held on a Saturday. This date was selected to facilitate litigant availability. Broadly speaking, however, the date of the sprint should be selected based on the circumstances and needs of the participants.

5

LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Length – Depending on the focus of the sprint, the availability of key stakeholders, and the desired depth of prototype development, testing, and iteration, a design sprint for court process reform could range anywhere from a half day to several days. (Google Ventures partners Jake Knapp, John Zeratsky, and Braden Kowitz set out a week-long sprint process in *Sprint: How to Solve Big Problems and Test New Ideas in Just Five Days*.)

The IAALS Court Compass project team tested a variety of sprint formats, including:

- A full day, 9 AM to 5 PM design sprint;
- A half day, 9 AM to 1 PM design sprint; and
- A three-quarter day sprint from 9 AM to 2:30 PM.

Based on participant feedback, the 9 AM to 2:30 PM format was used for most of the Court Compass sprints. This format provided sufficient time for a productive sprint without requiring that participants commit a full Saturday to the event.

5

LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Sprint Teams – The number of participants in each sprint will depend on the issue and the composition of the stakeholder group. For example, the IAALS Court Compass project team set a goal for 15 self-represented litigants and 10 court stakeholders (clerks, attorneys, judges, etc.), broken up into five teams. We endeavored to compose diverse teams in terms of self-represented litigants and other stakeholders.

Staffing – Sprint discussions and the materials generated during the sprint provide a wealth of information on problems, opportunities, and solutions. Sprint organizers should plan on staffing each sprint team with a dedicated notetaker to preserve the discussion. Google Forms provides an easy and organized way to take and condense notes; it is important to test any note-taking technology platform in advance.

Coaches and Facilitators – The one to two main design sprint facilitators who guide the protocol throughout the day benefit from having additional help facilitating discussion across the teams. These extra facilitators (maximum one per team) can be your own staff or partners you work with, and can help by moving from team to team to ensure that:

- Conversation is flowing and not stalled;
- Discussion is on topic;
- Everyone is participating; and
- Participant questions are answered quickly.

Facilitators can also help teams work through contentious discussions and, where necessary, diffuse tense situations.

COURT COMPASS PROVEN PRACTICE: SAMPLE SPRINT PROTOCOL I

In this Court Compass sprint protocol—which was used in more than half of the sprints—participants moved from problem identification to opportunity identification to testing solutions.

TIME	TASK
9:00 – 9:15 AM	Team, Project, and Facilitator Introductions
9:15 – 10:00 AM	Mapping the Status Quo / User Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do positives and negatives occur? • What are some key breakdowns? • What are the specific pain points? • Where are the areas of opportunity?
10:00 – 10:45 AM	Develop Stakeholder Personas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are they (demographics)? • What is important to them? • What are their main concerns? • What are the big priorities?
10:45 – 11:00 AM	Break
11:00 – 11:30 AM	If we didn't have any constraints, what would we change about the divorce process? Processes? Services? Products? Wildcard ideas?
11:30 – 11:45 AM	Select top three ideas and create a one-line description
11:45 – 12:15 PM	Lunch Break
12:15 – 12:45 PM	Develop Concept Prototype (create sketches, diagrams, improvisations)
12:45 – 1:00 PM	Break
1:00 – 1:30 PM	Group Prototype Testing and Refinement
1:30 – 2:15 PM	Plenary Reporting on Prototype and Feedback
2:15 – 2:45 PM	Closing Thoughts and Recommendations

COURT COMPASS PROVEN PRACTICE: SAMPLE SPRINT PROTOCOL II

In this Court Compass sprint protocol—which was used in later sprints—participants selected from a number of initially prototyped solutions and further developed and refined these solutions.

TIME	TASK
9:00 – 9:15 AM	Team, Project, and Facilitator Introductions
9:15 – 10:00 AM	Mapping the Status Quo / User Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do positives and negatives occur? • What are some key breakdowns? • What are the specific pain points? • Where are the areas of opportunity?
10:00 – 10:45 AM	Review Prototypes from Previous Sprints: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pros and cons of prototypes? • Changes we would make to the prototypes? • Additional prototype ideas? • Rank prototypes as high, medium, low, or no.
10:45 – 11:00 AM	Break
11:00 – 11:45 AM	Choose the highest ranked idea to work on and list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target user; • Must do's for prototype; • Must not do's for prototype; and • Nice-to-have recommendations for prototype.
11:45 – 12:15 PM	Lunch Break
12:15 – 1:00 PM	Develop Concept Prototype (create sketches, diagrams, improvisations)
1:00 – 1:30 PM	Group Prototype Testing
1:30 – 2:00 PM	Refine Prototype Based on User Feedback
2:00 – 2:30 PM	Closing Thoughts and Recommendations

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COLLECTING FEEDBACK ON THE SPRINT

At the conclusion of the Court Compass design sprints, participants were given an opportunity to share any final thoughts on the substance of, or the process used during, the sprint. IAALS administered an evaluation form to facilitate continuous improvement of the project design sprints.

Please rate your level of agreement with each statement below.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I understood the instructions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. The process maps were easy to use.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Workshop activities happened in an order that made sense to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. The workshop activities were engaging.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The workshop activities produced useful ideas for improving the divorce process.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. All group members contributed ideas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I felt comfortable expressing my views in the workshop setting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I felt others were comfortable expressing their views.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I was able to contribute to the workshop activities in a meaningful way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I felt all group members actively participated throughout.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. I felt comfortable in the physical space where the workshop was held.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6

COLLECTING FEEDBACK ON THE SPRINT

The Court Compass project team analyzed the exit questionnaires on an ongoing basis and considered protocol amendments and other changes for future sprints in response to participant feedback.

How likely would you be to recommend a workshop like this one to a friend, family member, or colleague?

Extremely Unlikely											Extremely Likely
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

What were the most positive aspects of the workshop?

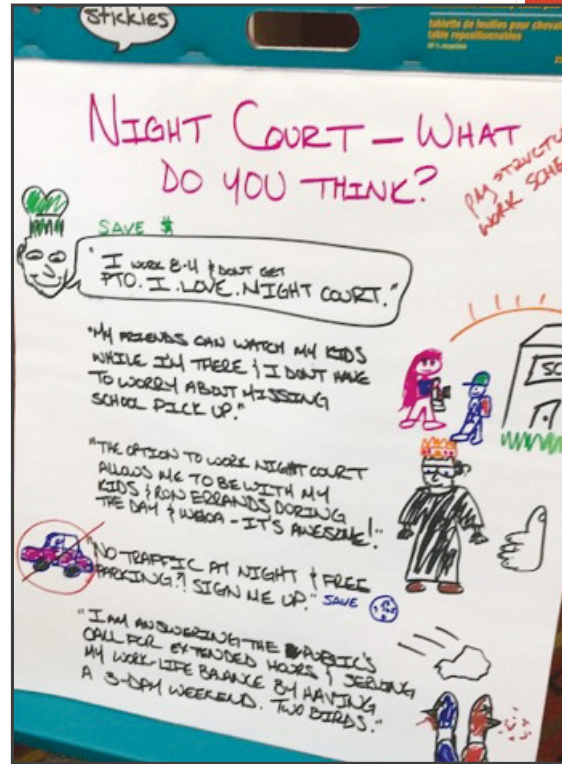
What could we do to make future workshops better?

Additional Comments

Ideas/Prototypes that Have Come Out of Design Sprints



Family Law Resource Agency



Night Court



Court Concierge



Divorce Triage

Further Resources

For further information on design sprints, please visit the following websites:



IAALS' Court Compass website provides information on the project and how design sprints play a role.

<http://iaals.du.edu/courtcompass>



Legal Design Lab is an interdisciplinary team based at Stanford Law School & d.school, working at the intersection of human-centered design, technology and law to build a new generation of legal products and services.

<http://www.legaltechdesign.com/>



The NuLawLab at Northeastern University School of Law merges creative arts and law to create novel approaches to legal empowerment. More information is available on the NuLawLab website.

<http://www.nulawlab.org/>

Good Luck on Your Design Sprint!

Tell us what you think: CourtCompass@du.edu



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