Government User Research 101

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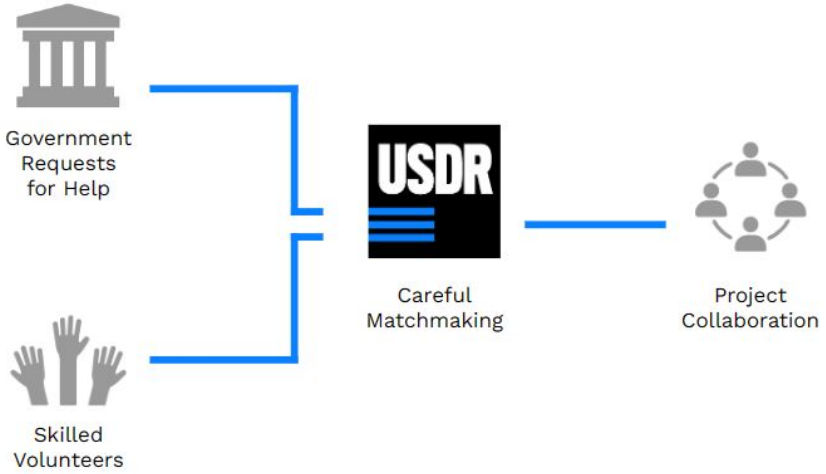
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Intro to User Research



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a non-profit organization that **provides pro-bono support to governments** looking to address critical public needs and improve service delivery.

https://www.usdigitalresponse.org/

“Government must be held accountable for designing and delivering services with a focus on the actual experience of the people whom it is meant to serve.”

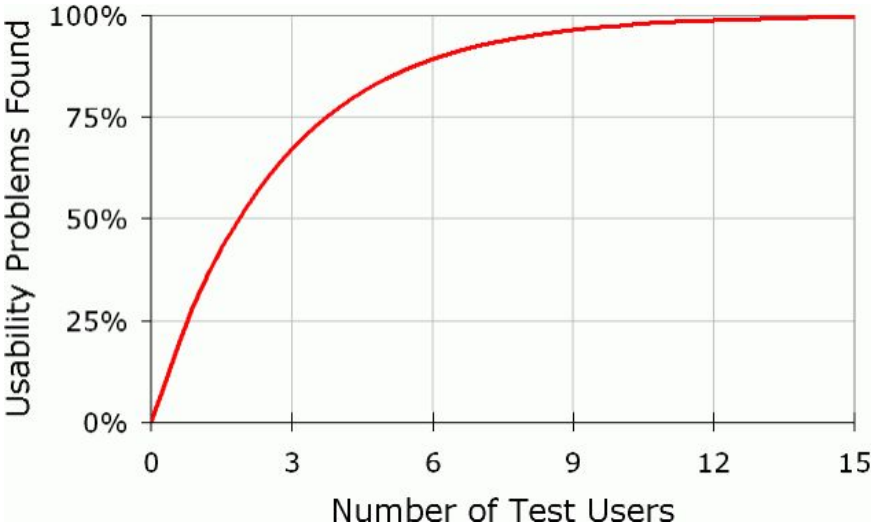
–President Biden’s 2022 Executive Order

“the actual experience of people”

What is user research?

User research is the discipline of learning about user’s behaviors, needs, and motivations by talking to them, observing how they interact with a product, or by using other data-driven strategies.

Why conduct user research?



https://www.nngroup.com/articles/why-you-only-need-to-test-with-5-users/

- Gather data to back your decisions and program delivery
- Build empathy and understanding with the residents who use your services/programs
- Uncover usability issues; talking to only 5 people can uncover 85% of issues

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“All of your team’s hard work, time, and money will be for naught if you end up making something that nobody wants to or can use.”

You can apply user research at any phase of your process

Phases	Beginning 🌱	Midway ⏳	End 🌳
How user research can help	Understand the root of issues and gain an understanding of the user's needs, goals, and pain points	Test ideas, potential solutions and work in progress	Measure and monitor effectiveness of the solution and find potential improvements
Example methodologies	Ethnography, diary studies, interviews, surveys, concept testing	Card sorting, tree testing, usability testing	Usability benchmarking, UX testing, A/B testing, analytics, surveys

How do we conduct research?

Interviews	Talk to people 1:1 (in person or remotely)
Surveys	Get insights from people indirectly
Usability tests	Give people a prototype OR a product and observe them complete specific tasks
Diary studies	Longitudinal collection of data about user behaviors, activities, and experiences
Ethnography (field)	Embed with people to learn about their culture or society
Cardsorts	Participants organize topics into categories that make sense to them, helping evaluate information architecture

Applying User Research - City of Seattle

Innovation and Performance Team

A one-stop-shop for residents and their trusted community-based organizations to apply to many benefits at once

Affordable Seattle

Powered by CiviForm

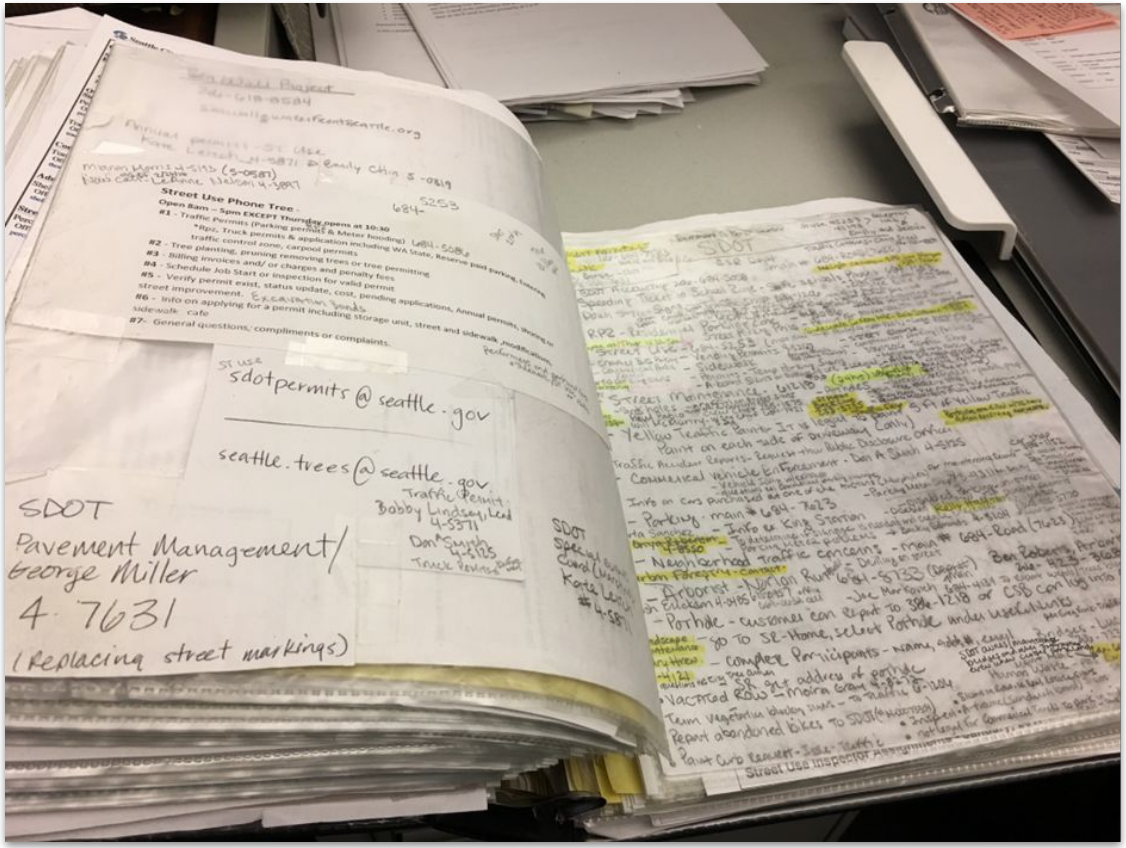
Research goals

- Decrease the cost to live in Seattle
- Make it easier for residents to find and apply to benefits

Process

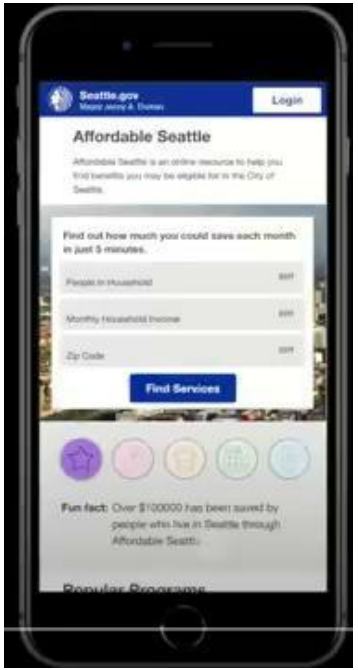
- Research
- Prototype
- Pilot
- Iterate

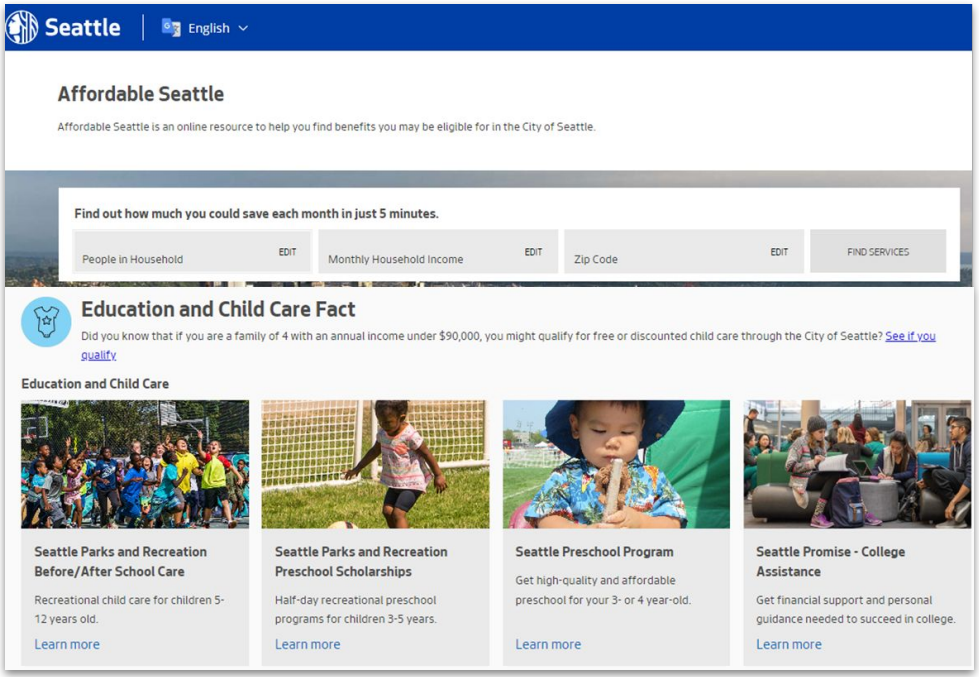
In-person observations



The staff whom we observed kept personal, handwritten lists of resources and connections to fill gaps in coordinating across programs

From prototype to pilot





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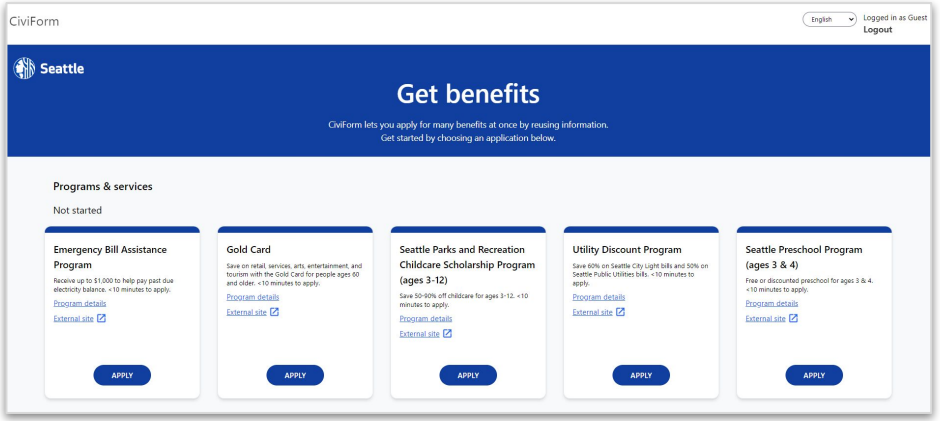
In-person observations



Community-based organization staff kept lists with logins and passwords for each benefits portal for each client

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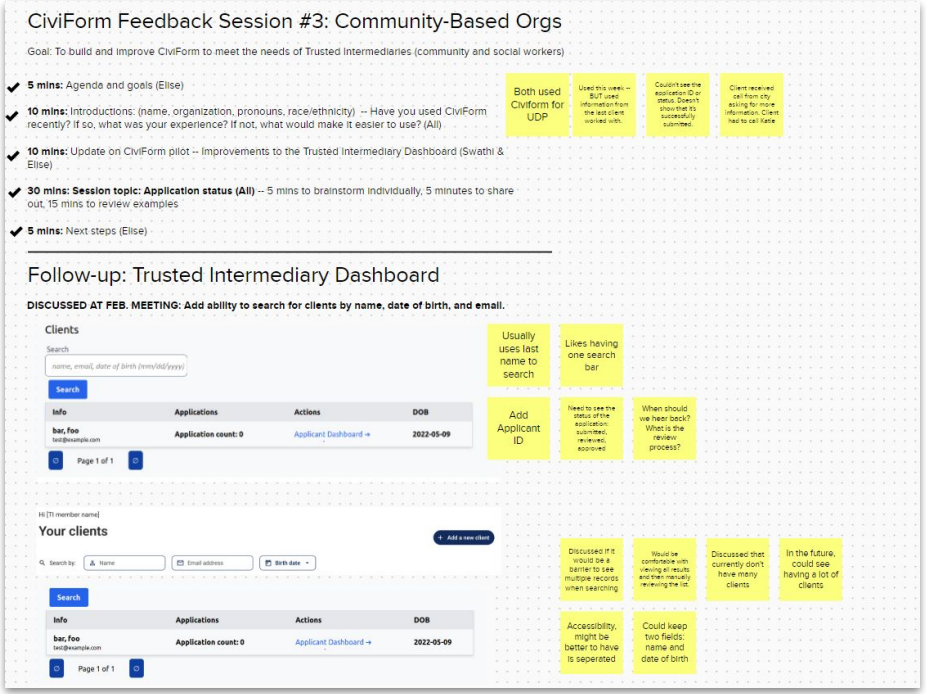
From prototype to pilot

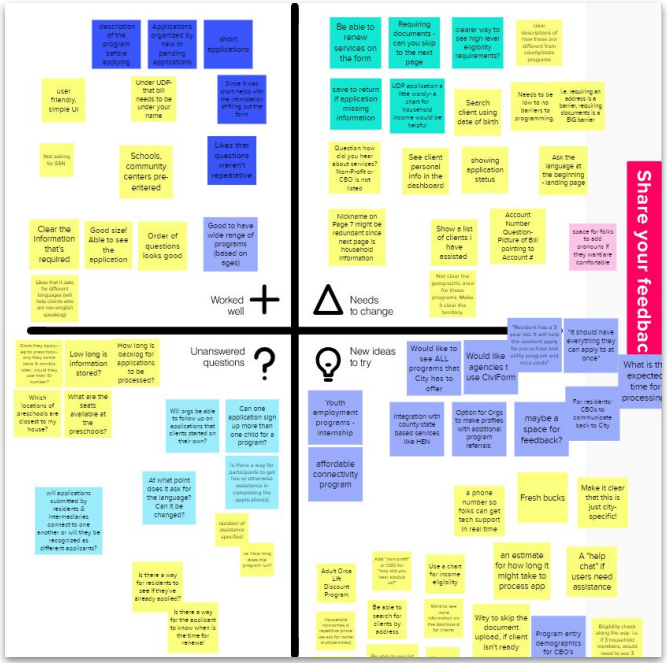




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Iterate





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Where are we going

All people have easy access to City programs that make it possible to live and thrive in Seattle and the surrounding areas.



Community liaison during a user testing session

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Continual human centered design

Lessons Learned

- Meet people where they are
- Human intermediaries are crucial
- Ease of access, clarity, and ROI is necessary to navigate services
- Digital solutions benefit those who already access the web and are in language

Questions?

Other USDR projects:

MT housing site example

Community engagement is part of the model, examples of lifting up customer voice utility assistance, housing, food, managing subcontracts, broadband internet accessibility

AGENDA

1. Opening remarks (5–10 min)
2. Introduction to User Research (10 min)
3. Applying User Research
    a. Seattle (10 min)
    b. Boston (10 min)
4. Seattle by Design Program Info (5 min)
5. Q&A (5 min)