



Community Advisory Council (CAC)

APHSA has been working alongside our Community Advisory Council (CAC) to inform, facilitate, and create this phase of the ACCESS project. This Council is made up of five people with lived experience accessing Health, Human Services, and Labor programs. They have been contributing their time and thoughts to co-create a human-centered design process and go through the process.



Empathy Phase - Customer Conversations

To better understand the experiences of program participants, APHSA worked alongside the CAC to conduct conversations with 14 people who are accessing or have accessed Health, Human Services, and Labor programs in the past three years. The conversations, led by members of the CAC, explored people's desired experiences and outcomes for programs. The insights gained from these conversations inform this journey map.



Methodology

Design Thinking: A Non-Linear Process



Source: The Design Foundation
interaction-design.org

Human-Centered Design / Design Thinking

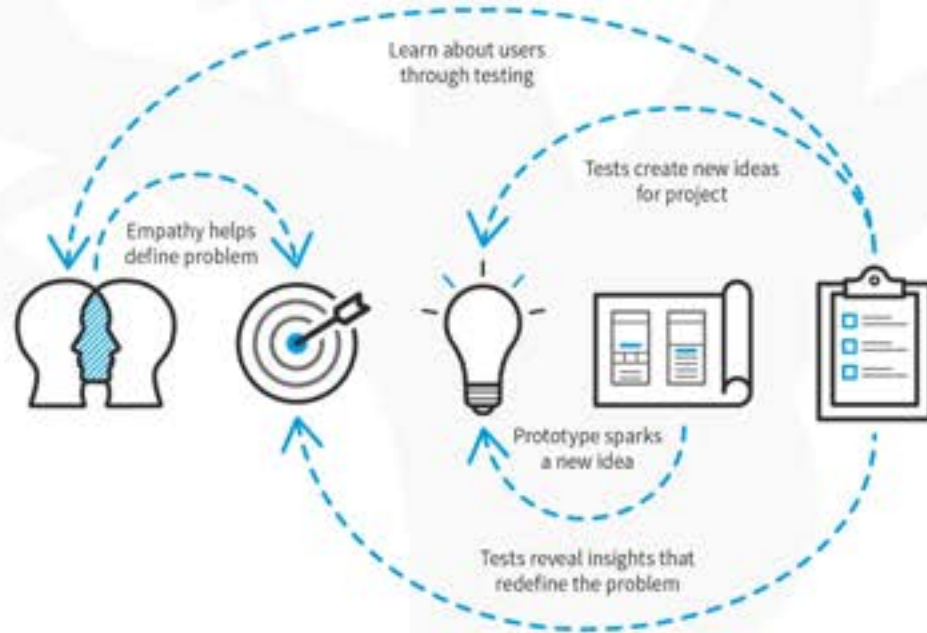
- **Empathize.** Observe and develop an understanding of your target user's needs and problems.
- **Define.** Use insights from empathy to create problem statements to be solved.
- **Ideate.** Challenge assumptions and develop innovative solutions to solve the problem.
- **Prototype.** Build flat or functioning designs to bring solutions to life.
- **Test.** Validate ideas by testing them with real users.

Community Advisory Council (CAC)

APHSA has been working alongside our Community Advisory Council (CAC) to inform, facilitate, and create this phase of the ACCESS project. This Council is made up of five people with lived experience accessing Health, Human Services, and Labor programs. They have been contributing their time and thoughts to co-create a human-centered design process and go through the process.



Design Thinking: A Non-Linear Process



Interaction Design Foundation
interaction-design.org

Human-Centered Design / Design Thinking

- **Empathize.** Observe and develop an understanding of your target user's needs and problems.
- **Define.** Use insights from empathy to create problem statements to be solved.
- **Ideate.** Challenge assumptions and develop innovative solutions to solve the problem.
- **Prototype.** Build flat or functioning designs to bring solutions to life.
- **Test.** Validate ideas by testing them with real users.

Empathy Phase - Customer Conversations

To better understand the experiences of program participants, APHSA worked alongside the CAC to conduct conversations with 14 people who are accessing or have accessed Health, Human Services, and Labor programs in the past three years. The conversations, led by members of the CAC, explored people's desired experiences and outcomes for programs. The insights gained from these conversations inform this journey map.

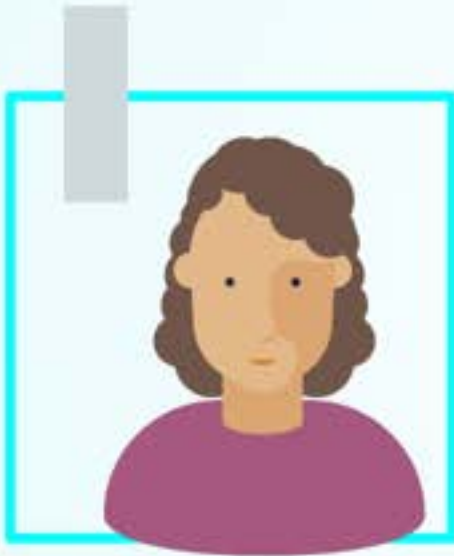




Program Awareness & Information Access



Participant Experiences



Confusion about
eligibility and
requirements



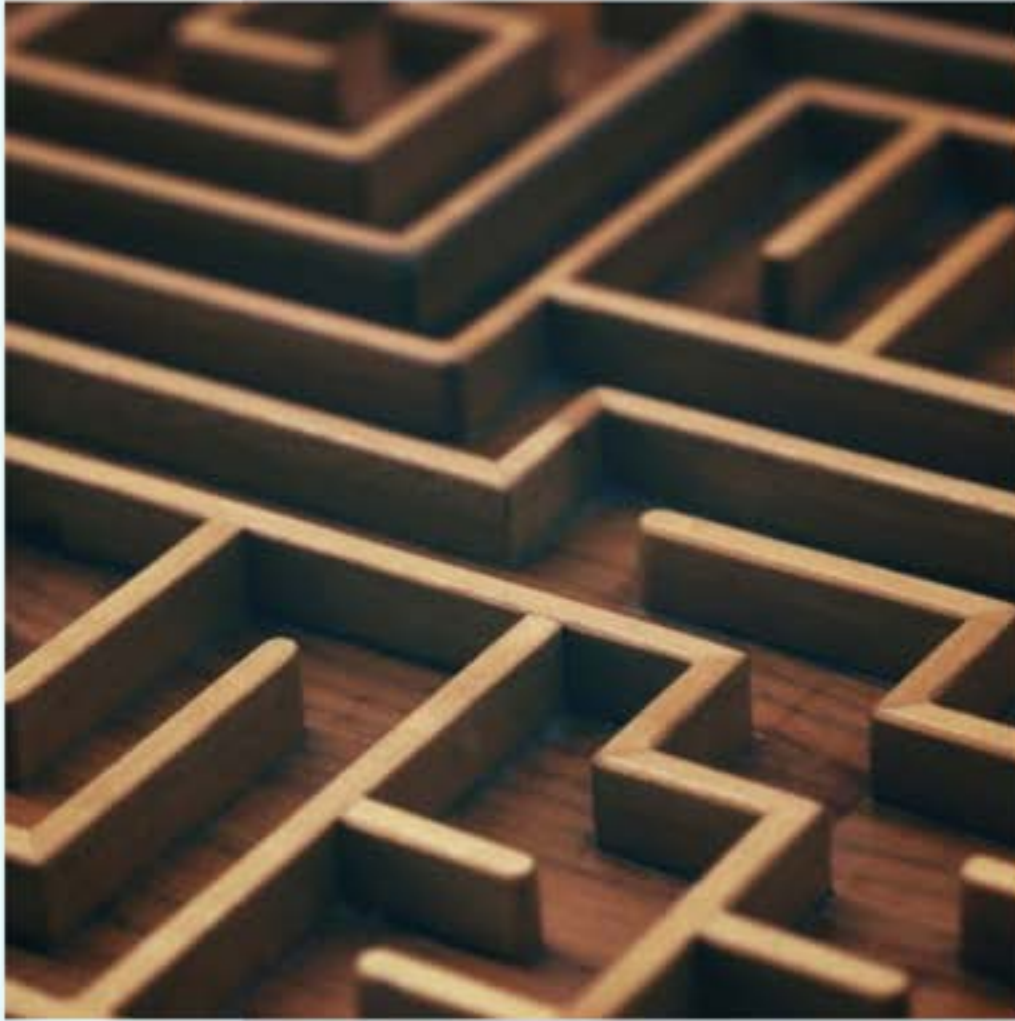
Embarrassment
about having to ask
for help



Stress about
balancing work, life,
and program
application(s)



Fear about effects
of programs on
work, family,
immigration status,
child custody, etc.



What Do Participants Want During This Phase?

- More clarity around eligibility
- More accessible language and policies
- More outreach to communities
- Knowledge of programs before facing a significant struggle
- Less stigma associated with accessing programs
- Understanding of the positive and negative impacts of programs on immigration status, employment, etc.

What is Working Well?

- Professional referrals from clinics, health professionals, and schools
- Formal and informal community navigators who share resources and knowledge with others in their community and are seen as trusted messengers



Opportunities for Improvement

- Eligibility prescreening
- Outreach and resource fairs



Participant Feedback

“People would make [programs] easier to understand. People understand stories and people understand people. People don’t always understand websites and forms and notices.” – SNAP, Medicaid, and UI participant

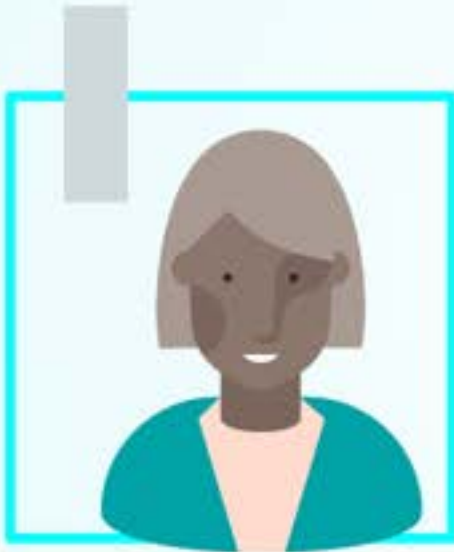




Program Access & Enrollment



Participant Experiences



Frustration and confusion about long and repetitive applications and requirements



Stress about when benefits will be delivered



Confusion about navigating online portals



Gratitude for helpful and empathetic caseworkers (and frustration in their absence)

What Do Participants Want During This Phase?

- Shorter applications with less seemingly-irrelevant questions
- Less repetitive and unnecessary paperwork
- Shorter wait times for benefit approval and delivery
- Easier verification documentation options



What is Working Well?

- Having multiple options for communication and paperwork (e.g., online portals, call centers, in-person offices, flyers and brochures)
- Participants consistently have better experiences with agencies who provide holistic services (one-stop shops) and integrated applications, rather than fragmented referrals



Opportunities for Improvement

- More education around technology and how to use things like online portals
- Integrated applications and online portals
- Cross-agency and cross-program alignment and coordination





Participant Feedback

“It felt like a job getting services and like they didn’t want to give it to you...It felt robotic and business-like, not inviting.” – SNAP, WIC, and UI participant





Support Throughout the Programs

Participant Experiences



What Do Participants Want During This Phase?

Participants want to be able to...
Participants want to be able to...
Participants want to be able to...

What is Working Well?

Participants are...
Participants are...
Participants are...



Opportunities for Improvement

Participants want to be able to...
Participants want to be able to...
Participants want to be able to...

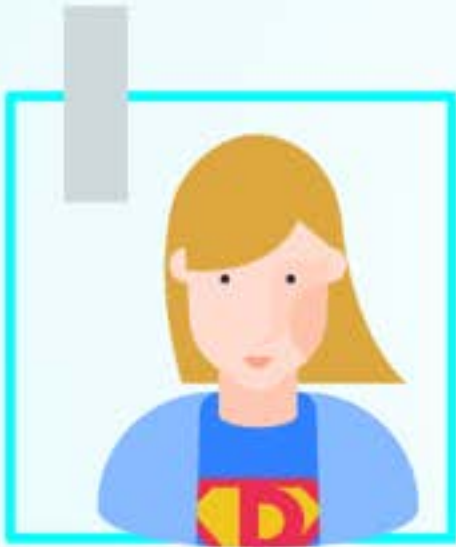


Participant Feedback

"Participants are often frustrated by the...
Participants are often frustrated by the...
Participants are often frustrated by the..."



Participant Experiences



Gratitude for helpful and empathetic caseworkers (and frustration in their absence)



Confusion about ongoing program requirements, such as recertifications and interviews



Stress about balancing work, life, and program check-ins and follow-ups



Fear about effects of new work opportunities on benefits (benefit cliffs)



What Do Participants Want During This Phase?

- More empathy from service center staff
- More clarity around ongoing program requirements
- More knowledge about local, tailored resources (especially if programs are state-administered)
- Technology supports to streamline processes and answer questions when desired as well as personal support when needed
- Understanding of the positive and negative impacts of taking on new work opportunities, especially as it relates to benefits cliffs

What is Working Well?

- Caseworkers who are caring and knowledgeable and can answer customer questions as they arise
- Tailored resources that address unique needs such as transportation, childcare, and education assistance



Opportunities for Improvement

- Trainings to create and support empathetic, knowledgeable caseworkers who can provide personalized care and support
- Regular check-ins and follow-ups geared towards long-term success and preventing gaps in support and benefits
- Local resource guides for participants and staff, especially when agencies are state-wide (rather than county-wide) and staff are not as knowledgeable about local resources.



Participant Feedback

“People are often treated like cattle, but we each have our own unique stories and needs.”
– SNAP, TANF, and UI participant







Outcomes

What Do Participants Want Out of these Programs?

Participants want to improve their skills, knowledge, and confidence, and to be able to apply what they have learned to their work and life.



What is Working Well?

Participants are engaged, motivated, and taking ownership of their learning. They are also able to apply what they have learned to their work and life.



Participant Experiences



Participants want to improve their skills, knowledge, and confidence, and to be able to apply what they have learned to their work and life.



Participants want to improve their skills, knowledge, and confidence, and to be able to apply what they have learned to their work and life.



Participants want to improve their skills, knowledge, and confidence, and to be able to apply what they have learned to their work and life.



Participants want to improve their skills, knowledge, and confidence, and to be able to apply what they have learned to their work and life.

Opportunities for Improvement

Participants want to improve their skills, knowledge, and confidence, and to be able to apply what they have learned to their work and life.



Participant Feedback

Participants want to improve their skills, knowledge, and confidence, and to be able to apply what they have learned to their work and life.

Participant Experiences



Gratitude for programs that help them achieve food security, positive medical outcomes, and general stability



Desire to create a better situation for themselves and their families



Frustration that programs are not helping them access desired occupational and educational opportunities



Fear about long-term success after programs end

What Do Participants Want Out of these Programs?

- Healthier, more empowered communities with less stress and stronger connections
- Early interventions that address root causes and build participants' skills and knowledge
- An end to generational poverty
- Benefits that increase with the cost of living and inflation



What is Working Well?

- Skill-building opportunities, assistance with resume writing, interviewing, and other important steps to achieving employment
- Ease of using EBT cards for SNAP
- Ability to use Medicaid for early and preventative appointments



Opportunities for Improvement

- Gradual off-ramps and resources to end benefit cliffs that disincentivize career progression and the choices people would like to make related to their life goals and mission
- Check-ins after participants leave the programs to determine long-term effects and ways to improve programs





Participant Feedback

“I couldn’t work as many hours as I wanted to because I would lose benefits, so I couldn’t reach the successful place in life I wanted to.” – SNAP, Medicaid, and E&T participant discussing benefit cliffs



Feedback Mechanisms

- Agencies should offer various feedback mechanisms (e.g., surveys, conversations, townhalls) throughout the customer journey and strive for more meaningful engagement with participants.
- Participants want to know their feedback has been heard and acted upon (or why it cannot be acted upon).
- Participants want to know there will be no retaliation towards them or their household.
- Agencies could consider direct follow-up and/or newsletters with more information about how feedback is being used.

