



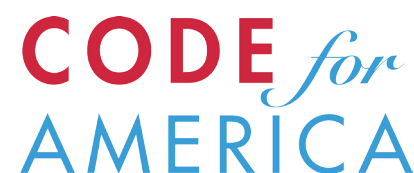
CUSTOMER- CENTERED DESIGN

A playbook for workforce service delivery

Fall 2017

FORWARD: BY VIRGINIA HAMILTON, DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Created by the team at Code for America.
www.codeforamerica.org



Thank you to Virginia Hamilton at the U.S. Department of Labor who championed this work and all of the teams that took the time to share their experience with the customer-centered design challenge as a part of this project.

Thank you to JP Morgan Chase & Co for supporting this work.

JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.

How might we use the passing of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to create incentives and encourage the innovation part of WIOA? How might we focus on our customers first and understand their needs? How might we give agencies receiving funding from the Department of Labor “permission” to experiment and learn?

These are some of the questions that sparked the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration to launch a Customer Centered Design (CCD) initiative that has trained a movement of design thinkers in the public sector across the country.

I love questions that start with “How Might We”. It’s not if, or will, or can; we are going to do something, the question is how. The word “Might” reduces commitment. And the word “We” acknowledges that innovation is a team sport. So “How Might We?” has become a question I ask every day.

Many of us who work in the public sector are uncomfortable with change, with uncertainty, and with a strategy that doesn’t have clear outcomes. CCD pushes us up against our discomfort and makes us “trust the process.” When I started talking about it several years ago, people would ask “Can we really try something and

fail? Won’t the monitors write us up?” . Others asked if it was really okay to try new things.

The new law encourages innovation, continuous improvement, and increasing customer satisfaction. There is nothing in the law or regulations that hinders improving service design. So ask your customers what they need, and try new ways to deliver. Understand what people and businesses need before offering a set of standard services.

This playbook is an excellent peek into how workforce practitioners across the country learned and implemented CCD. It can be used as a companion for those who are new to CCD, or provide deeper insights for those who are moving from skilled novice to journey level practitioner.

I would like to thank the team at Code for America and Jo Ann Tan at +Acumen for their contributions to this work and the many leaders across the country who took a chance and are now more committed than ever to their customers and to public service.

Virginia Hamilton
Regional Administrator, Region 6 Employment and Training Administration Chair, DOL Innovation Council

INTRODUCTION

Getting and keeping a job is difficult.

For the millions of people that access public workforce services each year, this process is made more challenging by the necessity of having to interact with a complex system that wasn't designed with their needs in mind. For those on the inside - the front line staff, case managers, program partners, and center managers - the process presents a different set of challenges, ranging from endless data entry and shrinking budgets to programmatic requirements that focus on administrative tasks before customer service.

With the passing of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the status quo is shifting. The larger vision is for the system to become more customer-focused and data driven. On a smaller scale, the hope is to empower workforce professionals to use their firsthand knowledge of the system to transform service delivery. Tackling this challenge requires a new approach. To inspire change, the Department of Labor (DOL) is promoting customer-centered design (CCD). CCD is a powerful process that focuses on designing with customers to create solutions that are rooted in their actual needs.

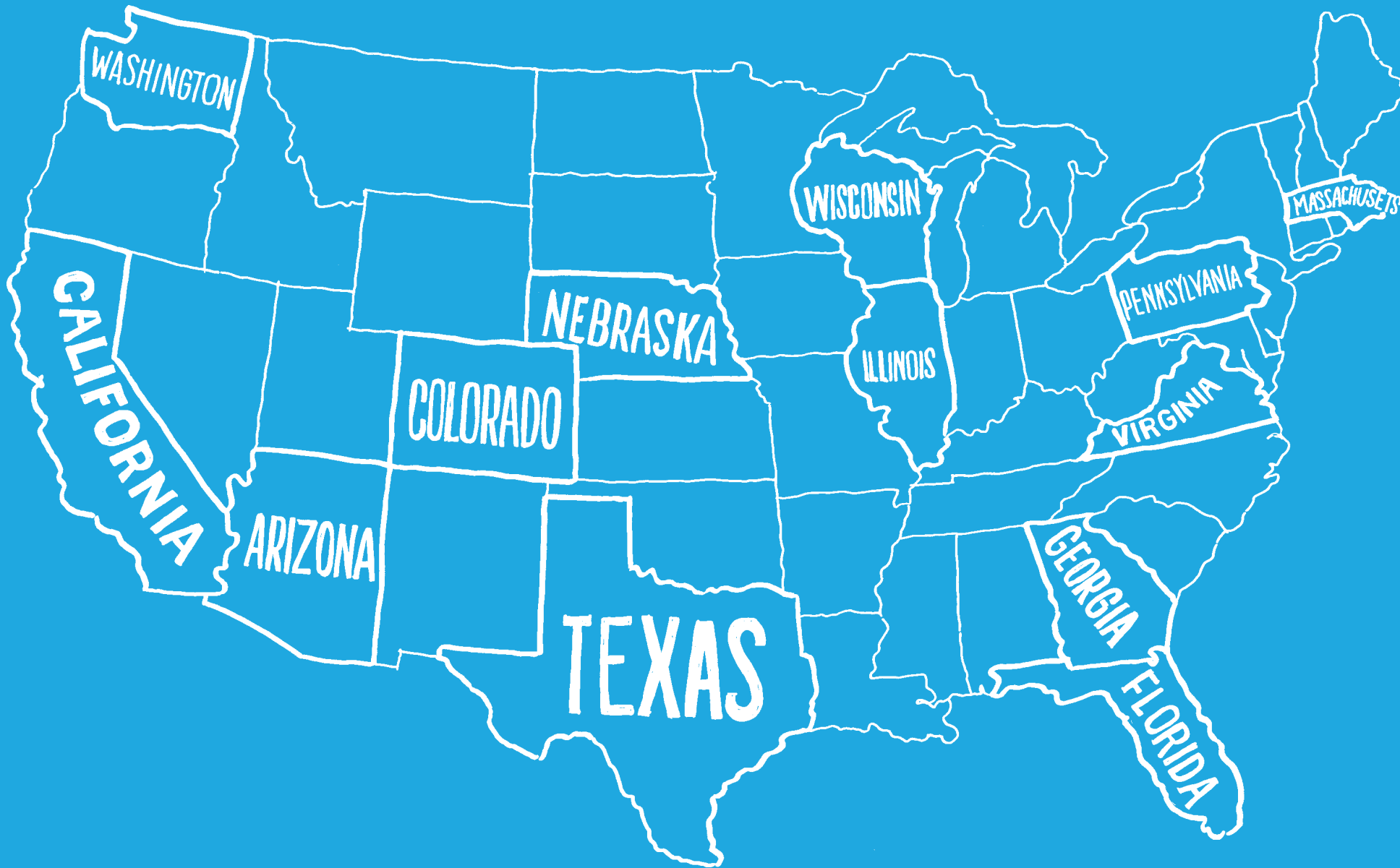
To date, 220 workforce-based teams across the country have experimented and learned with this process to improve service delivery in their organization

This playbook was developed to help craft a leaner, user-centered, and ultimately more effective system for those that need it most, with those who understand it best. The methods in this playbook are drawn from research.

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As part of this project, 25 of the teams who participated in the DOL sponsored customer-centered design process shared their insights - both positive and negative - on how CCD impacted their organization, their approach to problem solving, and their mindset moving forward. Based on their experiences, this playbook was developed to be more than a guide to CCD. Instead, it is a challenge to ask how might we do better.

25 teams hailing from 13 different states were interviewed in the creation of this document.



HOW TO USE THIS PLAYBOOK

This playbook brings together a set of practical methods and advice for those using CCD in workforce development.

It is a focused guide intended to supplement the lessons in the free Human-Centered Design class offered by IDEO and Acumen (www.designkit.org). It will help you to:

- Learn from your peers - professionals across the workforce system - that have used CCD and realized success from their efforts.
- Go beyond the materials in the CCD class. The plays presented here come directly from people like you. They are tailored to recognize the opportunities and constraints of workforce service delivery.
- Expand your toolset to use design thinking principles to approach problems in a government context.
- Find support in your journey, especially if you are new to the CCD process.

Design thinking is a skill that may be uncommon in your organization. Learning how to use it effectively requires practice. The following seven plays will help build an understanding of CCD and provide insight into what to expect as you and your team move through the process.

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“Having different agencies work together was as a great way to get better insights and share information from different perspectives”

Operations Coordinator from Nebraska

DESIGN IS A TEAM SPORT

How It Works

To inspire creative thinking and innovation, form a diverse team that captures a range of disciplines, skillsets, and backgrounds. Include customers whenever possible as they will have a different experience than staff with the problem that the team is trying to understand. Program partners and community groups with shared scope and knowledge of the issues are also useful partners that will bring a fresh perspective to the work. Many teams reported the engaging diverse partners in the project resulted in relationship building and continued collaboration long after the CCD class had been completed.

The ideal team size is 5-8 people. Although teams outside this range can be successful, smaller teams lose the benefit of multidisciplinary collaboration, while

larger teams can make coordinating schedules and decision making arduous. Remember that co-creation requires flexibility and understanding. While the team's ability to meet regularly and commit to the process are strong indicators of success, a little creativity can ensure that interested parties can still participate even while balancing full schedules.

Remember that co-creation requires flexibility and understanding.

Consider using conference calls, lunch meetings, and keeping perpetually busy members involved by giving them the role of reviewing the team's work to keep everyone engaged. Communicating a little and often can be also be more effective than infrequent meetings.

CHECKLIST - DESIGN IS A TEAM SPORT

Inspiring Play

How might we design programs that effectively engage young people, especially out of school youth and get great outcomes?

During the research process, a team in California discovered that the youth population they were developing services for wanted to join the CCD team. Inviting them to the group quickly led to unexpected insights, resulting in the team replacing their initial idea of a large career fair with a series of small resource fairs in different locations. The events featured local resources

Bring your customer in early on so they are engaging in the process, since it is a learning experience for them too.

and services that youth could easily access without a car. The young people became engaged in the process and ended up taking ownership of the event planning, with staff backing them up and providing support. Their work on the project resulted in a successful series of events and new skills for their resumes, including event planning and making flyers. At the end of the process, staff advised "Bring your customer in early on so they are engaging in the process since it is a learning experience for them." They also summed up the success of their project by saying that "The number one thing that one needs in a youth program is kids referring kids, which is what we have now."

1

Ensure that team members include customer facing staff.



4

Keep in mind that diverse teams are more innovative and will generate stronger ideas.



2

Invite customers to participate alongside workforce professionals.



5

Determine team roles and expectations early on. Ensure that everyone understands their responsibilities and the amount of time required.



3

Remember to include members from core partner organizations and community groups.



6

Ensure that everyone on the team can remain engaged by having flexibility in meeting times and time commitments.



“We struggled since our how might we question was too broad. If we could do it over again, we would choose a results driven or tangible project.”

Job Developer from Texas

START BY PICKING A PROBLEM YOU CAN SOLVE

How It Works

Think big, but start small. Don't try to solve all of the problems in your organization with one project. Success comes when you pick an issue that your team has the authority to change and implement. Start by writing a scaleable how might we question and let the impact of your project on your organization grow over time.

Focus on building momentum and support for your ideas.

Wins don't have to be big to be meaningful, especially if the CCD process is new to your team. Take the time to learn each step and be thoughtful about how to use CCD strategies in your work. Teams that completed multiple projects typically started with a project that was short and showed swift impact with a few weeks of effort. Then, after becoming familiar with CCD thinking, they took on a larger project. Stepping away from business as usual and making sweeping changes can be a challenge for some organizations. Focus on building momentum and support for your ideas.

Inspiring Play

How might we improve the customer experience for people under 30?

A team from Wisconsin saw success by taking an incremental approach to improving the entry to their one-stop. When research revealed that customers didn't think they were 'cool', they decided to experiment with changing the atmosphere of the space. They began with small improvements that were affordable and easy to back out of; if they didn't work. "We bought furniture at Goodwill and set it out, put out flavored water and chocolate kisses, painted the break room, and got board games for people to play. We didn't worry if it was right, since it was an experiment."

The changes drew attention from staff outside of the original CCD team who soon started to contribute ideas of their own. This experiment created momentum among center staff, fueling a culture shift in the organization that changed "the culture of innovation to allow for faster, more partial implementation of change."

A case manager put ideas on post its to share with the team.



CHECKLIST - START BY PICKING A PROBLEM YOU CAN SOLVE

- 1** Write a how might we question that you can scale..
- 2** Get permission. Find out what changes are possible getting invested in the work.
- 3** Match project scope to your timeline to ensure you can achieve results in the time you have.
- 4** Ensure you have the right skillsets on your team to tackle the problem you chose.
- 5** Focus on building momentum and support for your ideas.
- 6** Regularly communicate progress and insights to management and decision makers to keep them up to date on the value of your work.

“Talking to people is when it became relevant, because that is when we heard from the people we wanted to serve”

Senior Analyst from California

LISTEN TO CUSTOMERS

How It Works

Make customer feedback routine.

When you are focused on tight deadlines, taking time out to gather feedback from customers can feel like a luxury. But there is no substitute for talking to customers. Gathering their impressions, and understanding what they are trying to do and the problems they encounter are central to understanding their needs. The people who interact with your services are the ones that will have the most valuable insights into where improvements can be made.

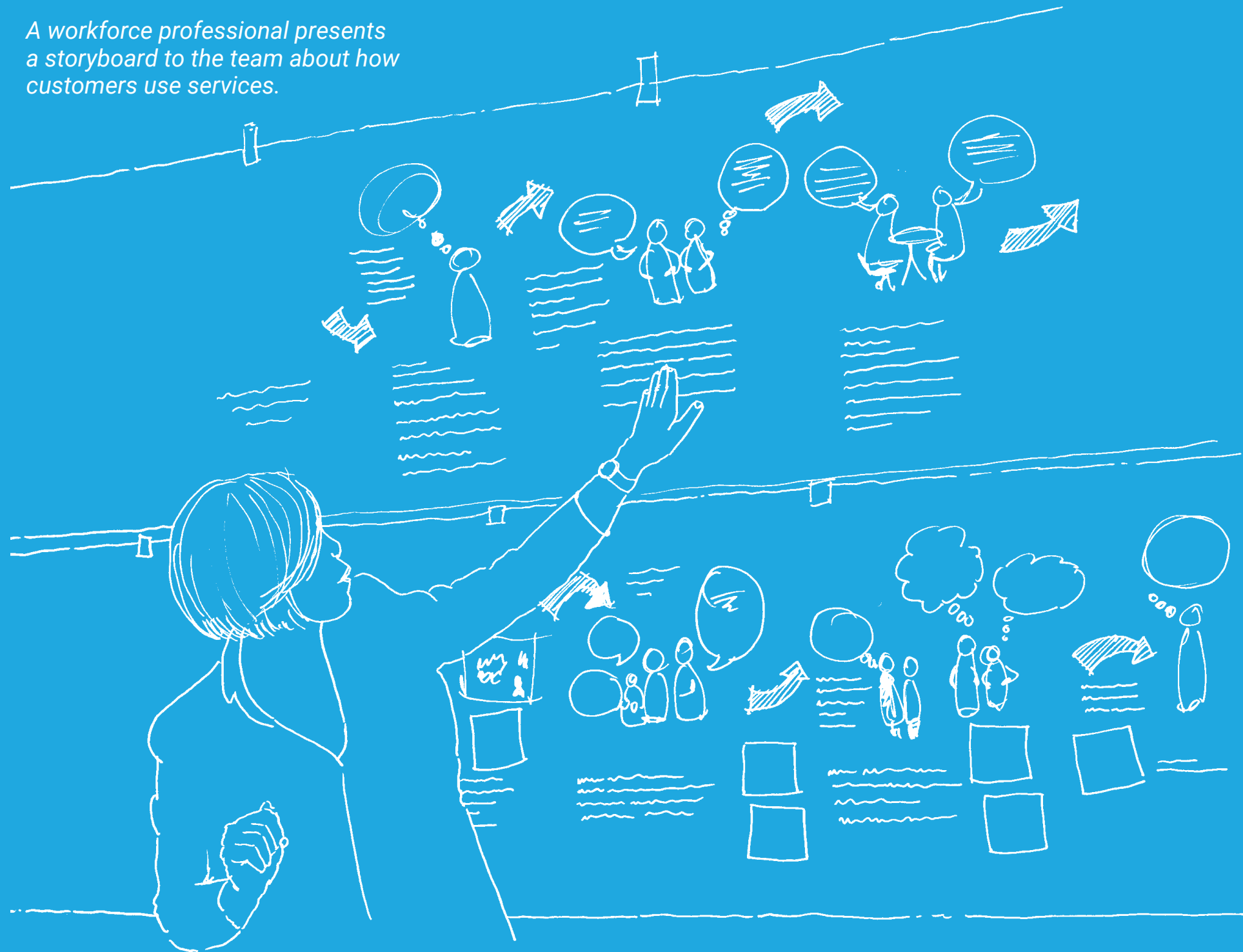
Include staff, employers, and program partners as well as traditional customers in your research since you can't predict where valuable insights will come from. Many had thought that they fully understood the issues only to be surprised by what they discovered when they spoke to customers. It can also be helpful to use more than one research method to gather different types of data. If you are used to creating surveys and conducting interviews, consider adding observation and competitive analysis to your process. You can find more ideas at www.designkit.org.

Inspiring Play

How might we improve outcomes for our reentry customers?

A team from Florida that was exploring ideas for developing a process to help the reentry population rejoin the workforce went to the county jail and spoke to people prior to release to talk about their hopes, fears, and past failures. By connecting with the people they wanted to help, their opinion of the population changed. The team was surprised to learn that people wanted to build a different life, set good examples for their kids, and find stable employment. They used their findings to develop a survey for employers where they discovered that employers didn't know that there were programs and tax credits to support hiring reentry candidates. Their findings led the team to develop a letter that they personalized for each person, which highlights the many programs and gives employers incentives to give people a chance. Early feedback on the letter has been extremely positive. Reentry job seekers indicated that it gave them a confidence boost and made a challenging interview discussion much easier. 16 people out of the first 45 that used the letter in an interviews were hired as of the time of our research.

A workforce professional presents a storyboard to the team about how customers use services.



CHECKLIST - LISTEN TO CUSTOMERS

1

Talk to staff, program partners, employers, and job seekers as you seek to better understand customers.



5

Prioritize the needs of your users above program partners as customer satisfaction is an important indicator of success.



2

Go beyond asking about things you don't know. Make sure to ask questions that test your assumptions.



6

Recognize that needs can be functional (things that customers must do, like fill out a form) or emotional (like needing reassurance with their job search).



3

Use a range of outreach methods to understand customer needs and experiences with services.



7

Involve customers throughout the entire process not just the start. This will help you keep their needs in mind and fuel more discoveries.



4

Observing how customers use your services can provide useful insights into their needs.



8

Make customer feedback routine, not simply a task you perform when you have a question.



“The show don’t tell approach empowered the staff to drive improvements.”

Program Coordinator from Wisconsin

SHOW, DON'T TELL

How It Works

Testing ideas frequently with your customers is a simple and effective way to tell if your ideas have traction. Showing people work in progress, rather than a polished and completed project is a low risk way for customers to provide valuable feedback. Simple prototypes will result in richer conversations as participants can focus on the ideas, instead of the design.

Prototypes are a great way to test ideas without spending a lot of money.

Launching quick experiments and making changes based on customer responses, ensures that the most promising ideas move forward, despite resource constraints, regulations, and procurement processes. Prototypes are a great way to test ideas when budgets are constrained. After completing the CCD class, many of the teams that participated in interviews said that the idea of creating prototypes was difficult because it was a new way of doing things, but it ended up being one of the most valuable skills they picked from the class.

Inspiring Play

How might we improve communication between customers and case managers?

Through focus groups with staff and customers, a team from Massachusetts discovered that customers have a high level of comfort with smartphones and that text messaging was their preferred way to communicate. Instead of building their own tool, the team used an existing off-the-shelf computer based text messaging product to test their ideas about improving communication between customers and staff.

This approach allowed the team to get a working solution in people’s hands swiftly and run experiments to test customer needs and outcomes early on in the CCD process. They were able to use their findings to iterate on solutions and advance their thinking with little risk. After 4 months of usage, case managers were able to make contact with 900 people that had fallen out of communication, 30% of which reestablished their relationship with their case managers.

A case manager interviews a job seeker about their experience with the career center..



CHECKLIST - SHOW, DON'T TELL

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Use language that customers understand. Reserve compliance terminology for staff. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 5 Test prototypes in the field with real customers. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Think about what information you want to find out during your experiments and draft the questions beforehand. <input type="checkbox"/> | 6 Run small tests frequently to assess assumptions, reduce risk and validate design direction. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 Test interview and survey questions with a colleague beforehand to ensure they give you the information you need. Revise as necessary. <input type="checkbox"/> | 7 Document findings about what worked well for people and what was difficult. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 Go beyond the walls of your office to meet your customers if you don't have a lot of contact with them. <input type="checkbox"/> | 8 Bring your insights back to the team to inspire the next round of design ideation. <input type="checkbox"/> |

“The process made you question your initial biases towards solutions. It was very positive to look at what the customer needs, since we all implicitly make assumptions.”

Career Specialist from Illinois

TRUST THE PROCESS. DON'T JUMP AHEAD

How It Works

Customer-centered design is a deliberate process steps that are clearly defined.

Despite its structure, it can still get messy as uncertainty is often an uncomfortable part of the problem solving process. People who work in government services and programs are often experts at optimizing services, minimizing risk, and proposing solutions, but are less acquainted with the ambiguity of design process. This made many teams want to jump ahead in the process to parts of CCD that were more familiar to them. Though it was a struggle to resist looking ahead, teams found that when they stuck with the process and did each step justice, they found success with their project. Slowing things down gave people the chance to try something, potentially fail (an important part of the design process!), and learn from the experience, bringing about better outcomes.

Inspiring Play

How might we communicate the value in the services we provide, resulting in higher customer participation?

After workshop attendance had been low for a long time, an Arizona team thought customers didn't want to attend and wanted to find out more about why. After speaking with customers they learned that they were interested in the workshops, but they didn't know about them. Further research revealed that staff weren't promoting the workshops to the customers since they had lost sight of why they were valuable. This led to the formation of a 'reboot group' which retrained staff about the value of the workshops. Staff started attending the workshops to experience themselves and the team developed desk aids that promoted the workshops. The additional marketing materials and newfound excitement of staff contributed to an increase in workshop attendance from 1-2 people up to 10-12.

A team of staff, program partners generate ideas in a brainstorming session.



CHECKLIST - TRUST THE PROCESS. DON'T JUMP AHEAD

- 1** Uncertainty and ambiguity are common in design thinking. Accept that the next step might not be immediately obvious.
- 2** Follow the process one step at a time. Give each step the time it deserves to do it well before moving forward.
- 3** Write down assumptions and biases. Determine how to validate them as part of the process.
- 4** Seek to better understand the issues before generating solutions.
- 5** Solutions don't have to be physical objects or documents. They can also be changes to the way a service is offered, or take the form of a workshop, or event.
- 6** Understand that it may take multiple iterations to find an idea that works.

“I think that customer-centered design is very powerful because of the opportunity to let data tell you something, even if it is something you don’t expect to be true.”

Workforce Partnership Specialist from Arizona

USE FEEDBACK TO GUIDE DECISIONS

How It Works

For many government organizations and services, the normal problem solving approach involves proposing solutions and then perfecting them before introducing them to people that will use them. This process requires a significant commitment of time and resources without ever consulting a customer. CCD teaches people to avoid this by ensuring that what you make meets the actual needs of your customers.

Customer-centered design considers customer feedback to be the metric with the highest value.

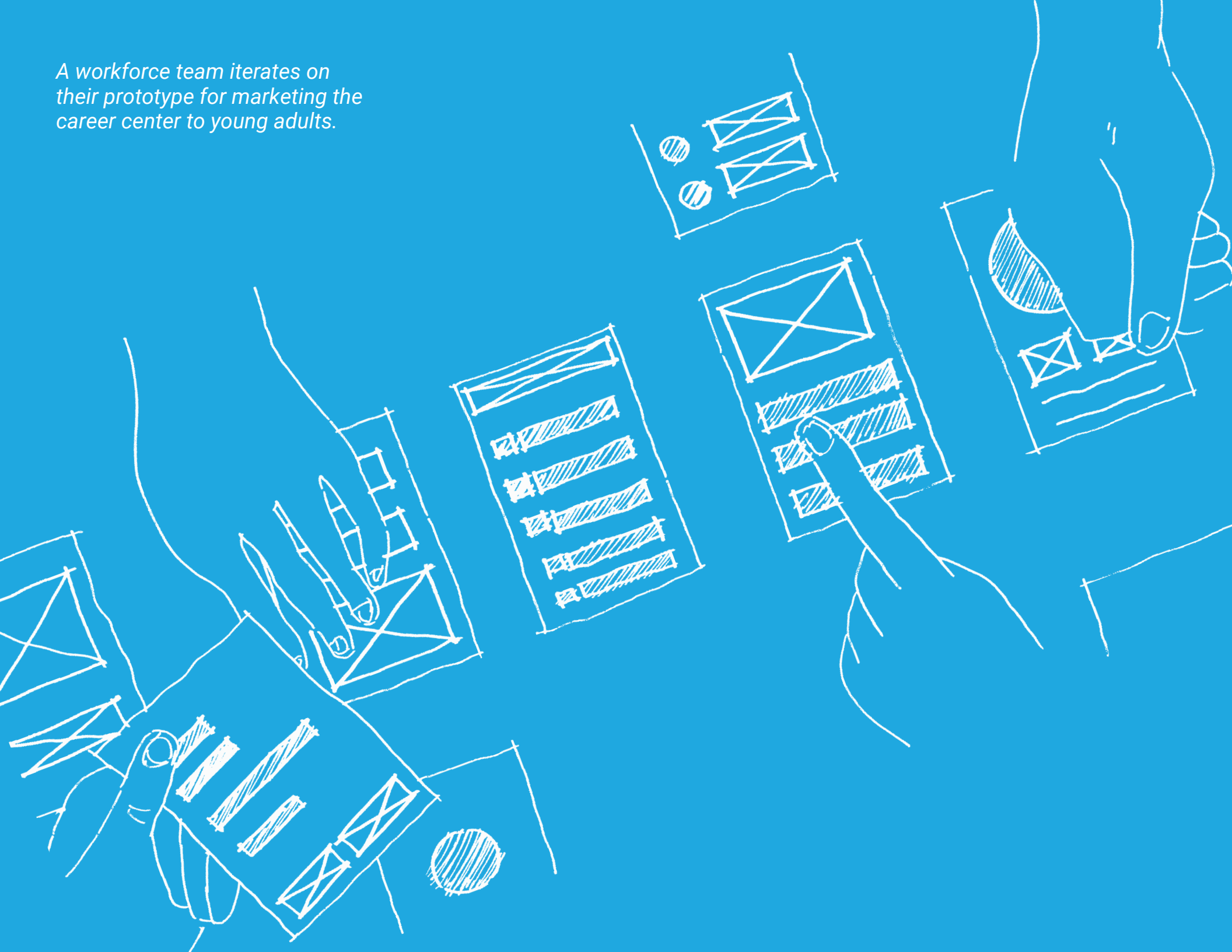
This is a new approach. By asking customers for their thoughts on their experience, decisions can be guided by a different type of information. CCD considers customer feedback to be the metric with the highest value. In CCD, ongoing interaction with the customer and their views on the product is the best data for making design changes and setting a direction.

Inspiring Play

How might we design services which impact youth?

Using insights from research, a team from Georgia changed their project approach multiple times before landing on a successful customer driven solution. With the goal of helping youth with college preparedness, the team launched an online survey that produced a surprisingly low response rate. Speaking with customers revealed that the survey was difficult to complete as it was in English, which was a second language for most of their target group. The team quickly shifted to in person interviews where they discovered that customers were ready for college, but couldn't afford to go. Based on this information, the team developed a series of financial planning workshops to help customers budget for school. Feedback from customers who took the workshops indicated that they were uncomfortable sharing their financial situation in a large group. This led to the team pilot one-on-one financial counseling which, according to customer feedback was a successful solution.

A workforce team iterates on their prototype for marketing the career center to young adults.



CHECKLIST - USE FEEDBACK TO GUIDE DECISIONS

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Seek feedback from staff, program partners, and employers as well as your customers. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 5 | Consider customer feedback as a performance metric. Insights from customers are every bit as valuable as measures of attendance. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | Ensure that the information you are collecting yields actionable insights. <input type="checkbox"/> | 6 | Base design direction and changes on customer feedback findings. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | Use multiple methods to connect with customers. <input type="checkbox"/> | 7 | Know your Audience. Different people may have different needs. Staff might wish to receive the same information as a presentation while job seekers may prefer a handout. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | Collect both qualitative and quantitative data for your project. Some audiences like numbers, while others prefer stories. Ensure your project has both. <input type="checkbox"/> | 8 | Make gathering feedback an ongoing activity that is completed regularly. <input type="checkbox"/> |

“We assumed that others had come across the problem we were working on and solved it. We were surprised there weren’t more solutions.”

Administrator from Nebraska

SHARE YOUR STORY

How It Works

Your experience doesn't have to end with the project you completed.

Now that you have learned how to approach a problem using design thinking, you can look for new ways to use it in your work. Upon learning the process, many teams went on to complete second and even third projects. Some organizations wrote CCD into their request for proposals (RFPs) for program partners and added learning about CCD to staff onboarding procedures.

As more people are trained in the CCD and see it in action, the opportunity to learn from new approaches to shared concerns across the workforce system grows. Visit the DOL's CCD community of practice at www.workforcegps.org to share your experiences and engage with peers that are invested in the CCD process.

Inspiring Play

How might we get teams to work more seamlessly across the agency and break down silos?

To keep the momentum of CCD alive, an organization in Colorado iterated on the CCD class and developed their own approach for teaching design thinking to new staff. Staff onboarding now includes an exercise to answer the question: how might we get teams to work more seamlessly across the agency and break down silos? Staff use CCD to conduct research and report back on what they learned, creating a steady stream of new ideas for improving the organization.

A frontline staff member hangs up posters highlighting the team's work to keep customers and staff informed on new initiatives.



CHECKLIST - SHARE YOUR STORY

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1 Reflect on your performance as a team. Hold a meeting to explore what worked well and what didn't on your project. Use the insights to inform future projects. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> | <p>4 Tell your story to others. Include the successes, the "ah ha" moments, and the struggles. <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p>2 Train new staff and program partners in the CCD process. <input type="checkbox"/></p> | <p>5 Include CCD as part of the onboarding process for new staff. <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p>3 Look for opportunities to integrate CCD thinking into your daily operations and workflow. <input type="checkbox"/></p> | <p>6 Share your project and the process with other workforce professionals. The DOL's workforce GPS website (www.workforcegps.org) is a good place to start. <input type="checkbox"/></p> |

Designers use sticky notes to brainstorm, collaborate, and organize ideas.



INSIGHTS TO ACTION

Embracing change is difficult, but it has worthwhile rewards.

Many of the teams that participated in the CCD class continued to use design thinking in their organization long after the class had ended. The following case studies highlight two of the teams that are doing it best. Over time, they made CCD a part of their approach, using it to redesign programs, their approach to customer service and feedback, and ultimately the culture of their organizations.

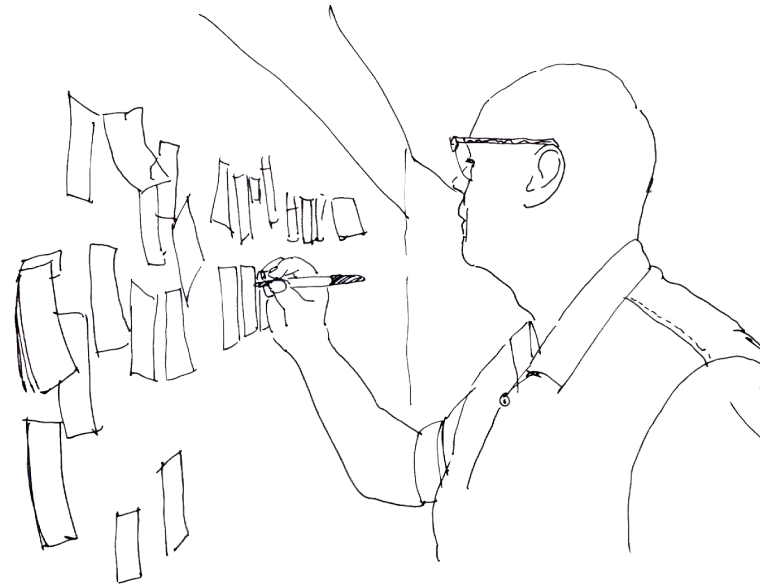
ARAPAHOE/DOUGLAS WORKS! CENNTENTIAL, CO

“HOW CAN WE WORK

TOGETHER TO START

SOMETHING MEANINGFUL?”

- Career Facilitator for the Generations at Work Program



Starting with customer needs as the catalyst for program development, the team at Arapahoe/Douglas Works! regularly seeks feedback from the people they serve, using their findings to inform the evolution of their work.

A unique trait of the organization is that 30% of the staff have been trained in the CCD approach so far with the goal of training 100% of the staff. This widespread knowledge of CCD has created an organization that understands what it means to think in an innovative manner, while keeping the customer at the center of the design process. The team uses their design thinking skills to identify opportunities for new program design and operational improvements. Their approach takes into account the needs of the whole customer as evidenced by the following key projects that were either developed through a CCD process or conceptualized as result of customer feedback.



Many of the meeting rooms at Arapahoe/Douglas Works! are named after CCD concepts.

Quickly prototyping to learn

Everyone's needs are different. Ensuring customers receive the services they need when they arrive at the career center is a challenge, especially when their needs extend beyond the job search. Solving for this problem led to prototyping the development of a digital triage form, which helps streamline the process of identifying customer needs. Rather than have customers complete the form independently, staff use it as a tool to guide customer conversations, allowing them to be comprehensive in their initial evaluations. The team is also able to track customer data from the form and use it to inform future program delivery.

Launching a workshop

Based on feedback from customers and employers, the team is prototyping a new workshop on emotional intelligence (EQ). This workshop helps customers learn how to manage work relationships, so they can do more than find a job. They can keep it. Launching the EQ training was challenging since it is a soft skill and the current menu of workshops at the center focuses on hard skills. Although the team is still iterating on the final

format of the workshop, feedback from customers to date indicate a positive response to this training and a need to develop a part 2 to continue the learning.

Meeting customer needs

After trying out a number of prototypes on how to connect customers to employers, the team came with the Talent Pool. This is a list of job ready customers. To participate, customers need to complete a series of tasks including updating their resume and a mock interview. There must also agree to check their email regularly and be ready to start a new job within 30 days. Once added to the list, they can participate in special networking events and be featured candidates in the employer newsletter. The talent pool helps motivate customers to be proactive in their job search by giving them the choice of participation. Results from this Talent Pool are promising. 75% of customers that participate are getting the jobs they want, even with multiple barriers.

WORKSOURCE SPOKANE, WA



“BY SAYING YES, WE EMPOWER

STAFF, WHO IN TURN

EMPOWER CUSTOMERS.”

- Leadership at WorkSource

By asking how might we make our career center customer friendly, the team at WorkSource embarked on an ambitious journey to rethink their entire organization.

With CCD as a framework for change, the team took on the physical redesign of their center and revised the way they think about programs and service delivery. The result of their effort is a revitalized organization that believes in designing around customer needs, rather than outcomes. Their innovative work has made them a solid example of how to use CCD effectively.

At the start of the process, the team wasn't surprised when customers said they wanted a career center that was easy to navigate and that staff wanted a space they could be proud to work in. What they didn't expect to hear was that customers felt labeled by their programs and that they wanted services delivered in a clearer and more concise way.

With feedback from customers and staff guiding the process, the team began making changes, starting with physical adjustments of the space.



They replaced the fortress of a front desk with one that fits the space, ordered a table with outlets for device charging, and created a single entry to the career center. They also added open workstations for staff and customers to meet. Talking in the new space, which the team refers to as “the hub” is more pleasant than the previous practice of meeting in cubicles. The team also sought input from people with disabilities which was used to redesign the workstations, seating, and flow of the room, ensuring that the new space is accessible. The end result is a warm and welcoming area that doesn't look anything like a typical government office.

Adjusting service delivery was a bigger challenge. At the time of the research, staff were split into program teams with separate budgets, policies, and clear silos between them. From the customer perspective, programs should be opaque. But making this a reality was a difficult. The first step was getting buy-in from the staff. By seeking their input and saying yes to their ideas, leadership was able to demonstrate that they value them and that they were serious about making changes.

With the goal of viewing customers by not program, the team reviewed their funding sources in depth. By understanding what each program covered, they were able to blend them together, leveraging them in the

background to meet customers needs. Now, staff talk to customers about services, instead of programs.

The team is also in the process of enrolling all customers at the WIOA basic level. This allows staff to provide some level of service to everyone, with customers only enrolling in individualized services when it is clear that it is needed. Private funding is used to supplement both the individualized and training level services. Additionally, case managers are not assigned to individuals. This allows them to help all customers.

Now, staff don't talk to customers about services instead of programs.

Providing services in this way led to reorganizing the staff into new teams. There are now teams for training, customer engagement, assessment, and finance, which are set up by theme. To support this new structure, the team hired a one-stop operator who is independent of funding streams, programs, and the staff, allowing them to be impartial in their decision making.

Although the plans are still being implemented, it is clear that it has made a difference in creating positive culture for the organization and the customers.

RESOURCES

IDEO's free classes in Human-centered design

[Human-centered design \(customer-centered design\)](http://www.plusacumen.org/courses/introduction-human-centered-design)

www.plusacumen.org/courses/introduction-human-centered-design

[Prototyping class](http://www.plusacumen.org/courses/prototyping)

www.plusacumen.org/courses/prototyping

[Facilitator's class](http://www.plusacumen.org/courses/facilitator-sr-guide-human-centered-design)

www.plusacumen.org/courses/facilitator-sr-guide-human-centered-design

Design and research methods

[Stanford's 'D' school bootcamp bootleg](http://www.ds.school.stanford.edu/resources/the-bootcamp-bootleg)

www.ds.school.stanford.edu/resources/the-bootcamp-bootleg

[Development impact and you toolkit](http://www.diytoolkit.org)

www.diytoolkit.org

[Usability.gov](http://www.usability.gov)

www.usability.gov

[Adaptive Path's guide to experience mapping](http://www.adaptivepath.org/ideas/our-guide-to-experience-mapping)

www.adaptivepath.org/ideas/our-guide-to-experience-mapping



A staff trainer looks up customer-centered design resources to share with the team.

"WE TRIED SOMETHING SMALL

SO WE COULD PUSH IT ALONG

AND WORK OUR WAY UP."

- Career Center Manager from Florida

Customer-centered design is a powerful process.

As evidenced by the stories woven throughout this playbook, design thinking can incite change in your organization. While the idea of putting customers at the center of a process and building services around them may seem obvious, it is a step that is rarely taken. The teams that took the CCD class learned the value of talking to their customers. Many were surprised by what they discovered in conversation with the people they serve. Others were excited to find new partners in helping them think through ideas. All of the teams, regardless of whether they implemented a project, shared that they plan to expand their customer outreach in the future, continuing the pace of innovation in workforce service delivery.

WHAT'S NEXT

With this playbook, you are now armed with the framework to think about services in a different way. But keep in mind, that CCD is simply a suggestion on how to get started. It is more than a process. It is a set of tools. Use them to experiment, take risks, guide decisions, and navigate through problem solving. Your abilities to apply design thinking to your organization will grow as you practice.

The last lesson that this playbook can teach you is the importance of being brave. Bringing innovation to the challenges faced by the workforce system is a substantial task. Whether you want to change the atmosphere of your one-stop, or to target your efforts on businesses or older adults, applying a new way of thinking takes patience and perseverance. Use the tools and stories in this playbook for inspiration. When you are ready to craft your "how might we" question don't think about the difficulties; think about the possibilities.

