

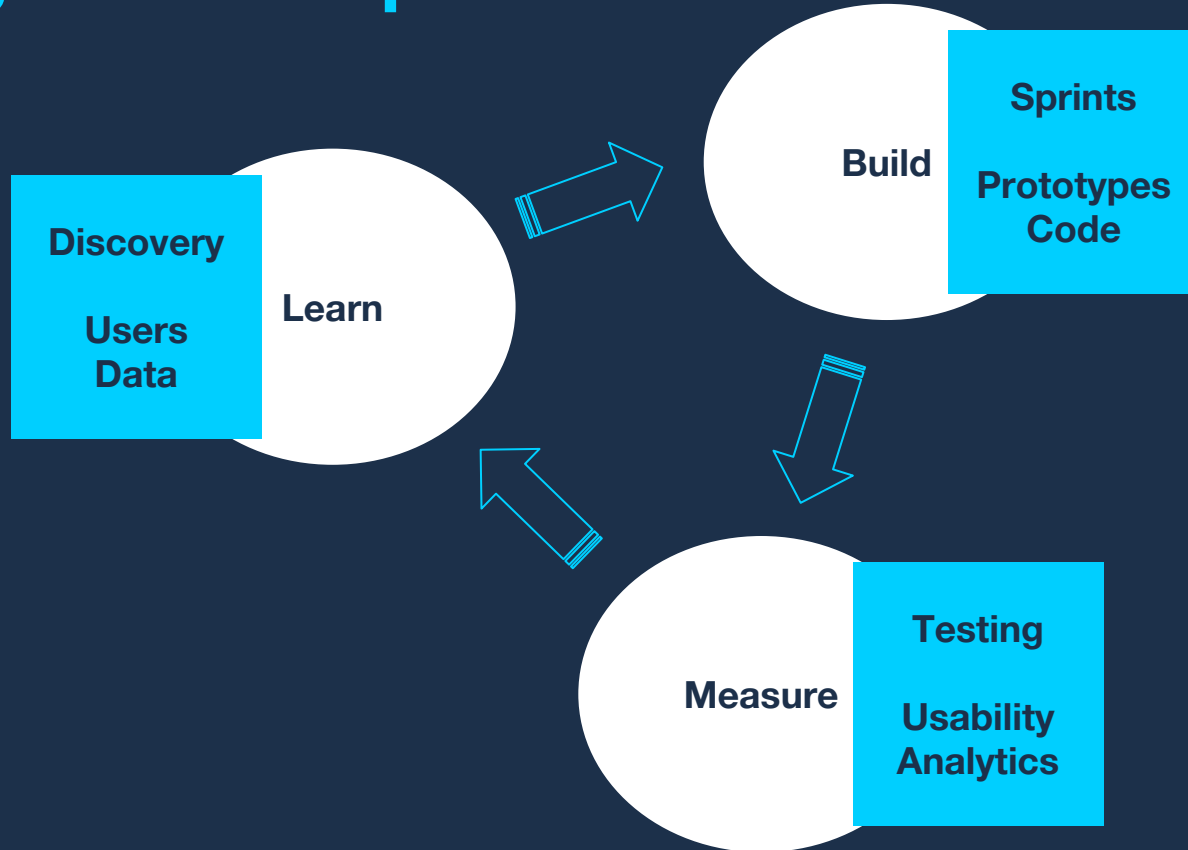
# **FEC Legal Research**

**How do people research FEC  
regulatory materials?**

**Continue to build on the beta's  
momentum...**

**...apply user centric design to  
FEC's legal resources.**

# Agile Development



## GOALS

**Understand: How do people access  
FEC's legal resources?**

## APPROACH

# Who did we talk to?



### Internal staff

- 1 - Congressional Affairs
- 1 - General Counsel

### External users

- 2 - Campaign Treasurers
- 4 - Campaign Staffers
- 5 - Compliance Firm Lawyers

\* - also relied on earlier notes from earlier research and relevant usability comments

## USERS

# Practitioners and Legal Advisors

### Campaign Practitioners

I'm just trying to find an answer to whether or not I can do something and get on with it.

### Legal Advisors

I know the laws and probably know the regulations pretty well. I probably start from the Advisory Opinions or attempt to find a relevant case in the Enforcement Actions.

### Common

broad range of expertise  
  
share information found on FEC.gov  
  
want to stay up to date  
  
often start with search



# Insights

What did we learn?



HIGH LEVEL

**People have a hard time  
finding the things they need**

HIGH-LEVEL

**People have a hard time  
finding the things they need,  
and little confidence the  
things they find are enough.**

***finding things***

**GOV.UK  
FINDING THINGS**

HIGH-LEVEL

# Finding things

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**Searching for  
things**

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**Viewing things**

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**Moving between  
things**

HIGH-LEVEL

# Finding things

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**Searching for  
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HIGH-LEVEL

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HIGH-LEVEL

# Finding things

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Searching for  
things

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Viewing things

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**Moving between  
things**



# User characteristics

**People who use the site range in expertise from highly technical legal pros to novice practitioners.**

- Attorney turned unaffiliated PAC
- Campaign staffer doing fundraising and event planning
- Former campaign treasurer for candidate who's switching to a firm

**People fall across a spectrum from between being scared of being wrong to expertly exploiting loopholes.**

*“We’re all so scared of being wrong and no one wants to make a legal judgement outside of our purview.”*

## **Many of the people take great pride in their work.**

*“Knew the original code numbers, by heart, and still sometimes reference them even after they were recoded.”*

*“Treasurer is a position of trust, in many cases been the same since the candidate first campaigned ‘best friend, someone you’d trust with your money’.”*

**People are usually motivated by a specific activity or question they need answered.**

- *“How much can a client donate to a candidate?”*
- *“Is this an independent activity?”*
- *“Is this coordination?”*
- *“How can a client host a fundraising event for a candidate?”*
- *“Can we accept money from this person?”*
- *“Where do disclosure messages go in a text message?”*
- *“When do I take control of funds?”*

**When people find the right bit of content, they often find it very helpful.**

*“Frankly I was impressed with the legal content that I’ve looked at so far.”*

*“There's so much information. I've learned so much from using this website but it's just not organized.”*

**Small simple plain language content appears to be a common entry point.**

*“I get the newsletter, I find that helpful for updates.”*

*“The quick answers portion of the site is where I’ve been a lot.”*

**Despite its shortcomings, the search is still where some people go first.**



**People who have access to law firms, party committee lawyers, or the FEC rely on and benefit from their support. Those without this access fend for themselves and rely on the site.**

*“The party committee law firm does these finance calls every quarter reporting on being compliant, not letting us spend extra money, and would follow up about what you could and couldn’t do . ‘This is what’s kosher, this is what’s not.’”*

**Campaign practitioners learn the rules through mentoring, classes offered by law firms, and other person-to-person experiences.**

*“Mostly learned from those above, mentors.”*

*“...going to classes. Working with outside counsel, and that definitely helped me find things on the website.”*

## **Perceptions of agency responsiveness and opacity sometimes very negative.**

*“pretty opaque agency. It’s good on disclosing the reports it gets from party committees and stuff. It’s not so good on explaining what it does itself.”*

# Pain-points & Desires

**Some users seek topic clusters that cross guidance formats.  
FEC uses internal resources with topic clusters.**

*‘I might like to find every enforcement action that dealt with a particular regulation, but I have no easy way to do that’*

[paraphrased]

## **People want to stay up-to-date.**

*“You should always put out today’s information. So people don’t confuse it. New rulings aren’t going to be in manuals, so you better have a place to go.”*

**Plain language guidance should provide links to the more technical rules.**

*“It is important, to understand the legal requirements, to be go to the source statute or rule.”*

## **It's difficult to find (and re-find) items.**

*“I do think that the explanation on coordination is pretty good... I’m trying to find it. I can’t find it. I remember reading it.”*



**It's difficult to figure out if they have found everything.**

*“I don't come out feeling like what I've done is sufficient.”*

**Some users do not (or no longer) attempt to find the resources on the website.**

*‘Tried to use FEC materials in 2012 for something that the FEC flagged us on, was unable to get clarity despite doing a deep dive.’*

[paraphrased]

**People find search to be too broad, returning too many results that are hard to filter down, and not encompassing enough, leaving out important resource types.**

*“If the FEC’s mission is to promote compliance, having these search functionalities be really intuitive, almost like a google search, that would be a real service to the regulated community.”*

**People using the site print and save resources they find helpful for later use.**

*“I have tons of printouts. I can print things and attach. I challenge the lawyers all the time.”*

## **People share the resources that they find as evidence of acceptable/unacceptable behavior.**

Person uses content from the website to argue with lawyers; sends portions of bulletins as emails to lawyers: *“If it’s just a one-sheet thing, I attach it and say ‘see here, it’s a rule.’ Always includes reference to page or law.”*

**People look to AOs to show an activity is safe. MURs and EAs are sought to find similar cases.**

*“The beauty of the AO is that it’s a shield. You’re now in a safe harbor.”*

*“There are so many questions that are hard questions that are still hard questions, but the Commission has already been asked and answered.”*

## **Professional attorneys don't frequently reference the regulations directly.**

*“Regs are fairly straightforward: annotating? I actually think...let me look at my regs book. I think they are sufficiently annotated for our purposes. I have a pdf copy of the most copy saved, i open it up it, and search through Adobe PDF.”*

## **People find the Explanations & Justifications tables helpful.**

*“E&J tables are terrific. Parts of that E&J tables and click on subsection that you try to understand. It will link you to the PDF right from the table that gives you paragraphs of narratives to that regulation.”*



# </insights>

**break?**

# Exercise

## Archetypes

**Exercise**

# Archetypes

## **Exercise** Archetypes

**Who are they?**

**What are their goals?**

**What are their behaviors?**

**What motivates them?**

**What do they struggle with?**

**break?**

# Presentations

# Dot voting



# Discussion

# Thanks!