

Performance.gov

Status Report (11/15/2017)

18F

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Overview

Last week we focused on conducting interviews with agency staff and external stakeholders, including researchers and academics. You can keep track of the interviews on [this spreadsheet](#). Here's a summary of the numbers so far:

- 22 interviews completed (+6 since last week)
- 2 confirmed / scheduled (-6 since last week)
- 12 waiting for response (-1 since last week)
- 1 agency group is in conversation with us about consent form
- 4 struggling with scheduling a date before the 27th (+3 since last week)
- 8 waiting to be scheduled

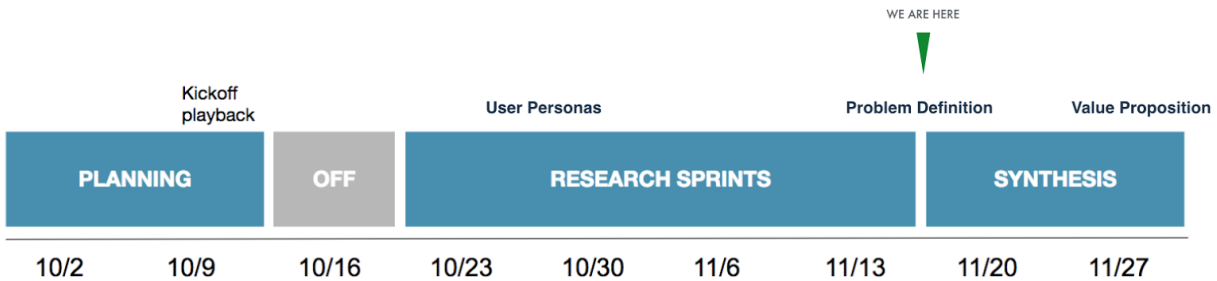
We've also have begun the process of synthesizing our findings and have summarized some initial take-aways, which will be expanded upon in our final recommendation, [below](#).

The following **report will be updated and emailed to the team every Wednesday**. We will also have a recurring a conference call every **Wednesday at 4:30pm ET** to discuss this report in more detail and address any questions or concerns you might have.

Project Approach

Below is a high-level timeline of the project approach and key milestones. **The project approach consists of four phases, each approximately 2 weeks in length**. Since the goal for this

engagement is to reduce uncertainty and recommend next steps, we will prioritize our activities around the highest value learning opportunities given the timeline and budget available.



Note: This proposed timeline is based on our budget and will be revised as needed.

Summary of Activities:

Last week, the 18F team accomplished the following:

- Organized documents, photos, audio recordings, etc. from interviews.
- Requested and gathered consent forms.
- Reviewed interviews and began identifying key takeaways.
- Scheduled remaining interviews with RMO, NGO's, private companies.
- Continued synthesis by updating personas; Began publishing user persona details at mural.ly.
- Planned and coordinated a trip to Washington DC for the final Foundation Engagement presentation.
- Conducted interview with the researchers Shelley Metzenbaum, and Cornell Law School professor, Cynthia Farina.
- Conducted interview with a group of data journalist at Bloomberg and WNYC, respectively.
- Began pushing project details at github.com/18F/performance.gov

This coming week we will:

- Conduct remaining interviews.
- Summarize findings and work on the final presentation.

Key Takeaways

As we come closer to the end of the research phase, we are beginning to synthesize our findings.

We began this engagement with a focus on the challenges and opportunities of PIC/OMB and agency staff. With each round of interviews, we expanded our breadth of understanding at varying levels.



Each level encompasses a larger population and roughly maps to the list of [key users identified](#) at our kick-off meeting.

Although every user in this diagram is a potential *consumer* of the information published on performance.gov, there is a line that clearly distinguishes the users who are *suppliers* of data.

The concerns of the *suppliers* and *consumers* overlap, but our interviews revealed that the severity of the concerns vary significantly depending on where the user lies in this spectrum.

We will expand on this further and provide focus and prioritization of concerns in our final report, but here are some initial thoughts on problem statements from our findings so far.

Consumers (researchers, journalists, academics, congressional staff)

- **Expertise**
 - **Challenge:** Existing and potential users often lack contextual knowledge to comprehend the intricacies of agency performance reports.
 - **Opportunity:** Would performance.gov benefit with an emphasis on educating users on how agencies and performance reports work? Would an emphasis on education improve the ability of users (even experts) to engage with the content?
- **Way Finding**
 - **Challenge:** When existing and potential users have questions about government performance, they often use Google to conduct research.
 - **Opportunity:** Would an emphasis on “searching” or providing the ability to effectively drill down into specific questions be more in line with how users engage with this information than just listing reports?
- **Awareness**
 - **Challenge:** Existing and potential users do not regularly check in on performance.gov to monitor progress, even when agency performance relates directly to their work.

- **Opportunity:** Are there opportunities to build a relationship with our users? What forms of engagement would most effectively bring awareness of the information presented on the site?
- **Trust**
 - **Challenge:** Finding the balance between 1) providing raw data with little context or 2) providing narrative but little data, can be tricky. Both forms can be perceived as a way to hide or obscure the full story.
 - **Opportunity:** Would targeted user research reveal an approach that finds the right balance between data and narrative?

Suppliers (PIOs, agency staff)

- **Redundancy**
 - **Challenge:** Agency staff use a variety of agency-specific systems for tracking priorities and goals and see performance.gov as a duplication of that work.
 - **Opportunity:** Can we reduce menial tasks for agency staff? What opportunities in automation exist within existing business processes?
- **Training**
 - **Challenge:** As administrations change, agency staff are forced to use new and often complex systems.
 - **Opportunity:** Can we rethink training? Would involving staff members early in the development of a new performance.gov provide a built-in support and training? What feedback loops can we create to continue to learn from agencies?
- **Usability**
 - **Challenge:** Basic usability issues (too many clicks to accomplish simple tasks, web pages failing to load, not being able to save work, etc) impact morale and the ability of staff members to use the site effectively.
 - **Opportunity:** These types of problems are a clear sign that very little user testing was done. How much can we improve productivity by ensuring key components of the site work?

Pending Issues:

- **18F:** Determine logistics for trip and final presentation in Washington DC - right now the final presentation is set for 11/30.
- **18F:** It's helpful to know if interviewees are for background historical information rather than learning about a potential consumer of performance data.

Resolved Issues:

✅ **18F/OMB/PIC:** To wrap up the *Foundation Engagement* and kick off the *Discovery* we are looking present our findings at our weekly check-in in person. We need to confirm that Nov 29th 2017 at 1pm works for the team.

✅ **OMB:** Last week OMB team volunteered to make introductions, but are still waiting to hear back from those introductions.

Key Risks

Stakeholder Alignment: 18F is focused on learning the challenges of an agency and identifying a clear problem before we begin solutioning. This process has been effective on other 18F projects, but stakeholders need to be bought into the process to ensure project success. Stable

Managing Expectations: PIC has expressed interest in focusing 18F's work on the presentation of information instead of reviewing the processes for agency staff. In order for 18F's approach to work effectively, we as for autonomy in our investigations and to allow the research to lead the process. Stable

Agency Cooperation: Our initial assessment has revealed a complex interaction between PIC and the agencies they work with. Lack of cooperation by agency staff will put this engagement at risk. Stable

Further Readings

Links the team may find valuable:

- <https://www.blog.google/topics/journalism-news/data-journalism-2017/>
- https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2564100