

18F USFS Special Uses Discovery + Prototyping Closeout

October 3, 2024

18F

in partnership with USFS



Today's agenda

- Hello, again
- Why we're here
- Where we are
- What we've done (aka prototyping)
- Where we're going

Hello, again

The 18F team



Neil Martinsen-Burrell
(he/him)

Project lead / engineer



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Product manager



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Content strategist



Our friends at USFS

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Jennifer Whyte

National Broadband Project Manager

Brian Schwind

Resource Information Manager

Why we're here

This engagement is ending. Another may start in the new year. We want to show you where this is going.



Vision statement

We are developing a user-friendly digital tool to guide proponents through the special uses application process. Our work will help reduce back-and-forth and build trust between proponents and permit administrators.

Vision statement

USFS Special Uses: visioning/framing

What role will the product vision play in our work?

- Align the team on our goals and priorities
- Clarify our vision of success
- Help us decide what's most important for this project and what should wait
- Evaluate project direction and tasks against the product vision to help us prioritize and stay focused

Output and next steps:

- Draft vision statements and share/refine asynchronously
- Vision statement litmus test activity (below)
- Product roadmaping

Forest Service mission: to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

PROBLEM STATEMENT: Applying for a special-use authorization can be complicated, and authorization processes often result in questions from applicants. Addressing these questions is often resource-intensive and unable to provide the level of guidance needed to the land applicant. While it is a first step to growing knowledge of specialized operations, these conditions are characterized by time and resource constraints, and the process is often slow and inconsistent. A successful solution would create a series of user accounts and personalized processes of special-use authorizations that include a user's role, needs, training, and ability with regulatory requirements and business functions, avoiding the burden on administrators, and creating an accessible process to build out Forest Service lands.

Who has the problem/needs our help? Whose needs should we serve first?

Add (5 min)
Vote (2 min)
Discuss (5 min)



What is the problem we're solving? Given who we're hoping to help first, what problems should be our starting focus?

Add (5 min)
Vote (2 min)
Discuss (5 min)



Success scenarios: imagine it's the future. What is possible now that wasn't before? In 6 months? In 5 years?

Add (5 min)
Vote (2 min)
Discuss (5 min)



How do we want people to describe the product? E.g., authoritative, delightful, easy-to-use.

Add (5 min)
Vote (2 min)
Discuss (5 min)

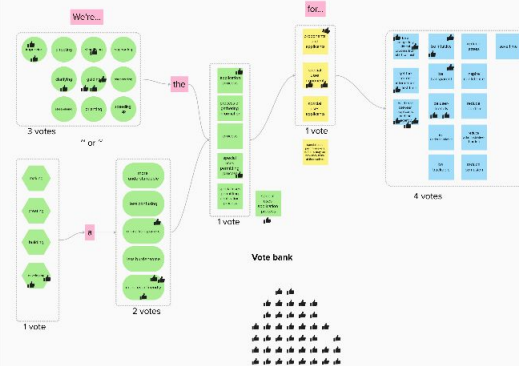


Mural

- pro tips:**
1. To create a sticky, double click in an empty area
 2. To move a sticky, click and drag the sticky
 3. To move a sticky to the page, click and drag it or empty area
 4. Lost? Click on the little circle with the star icon at the bottom center of the screen



Vision Statement Mad Libs



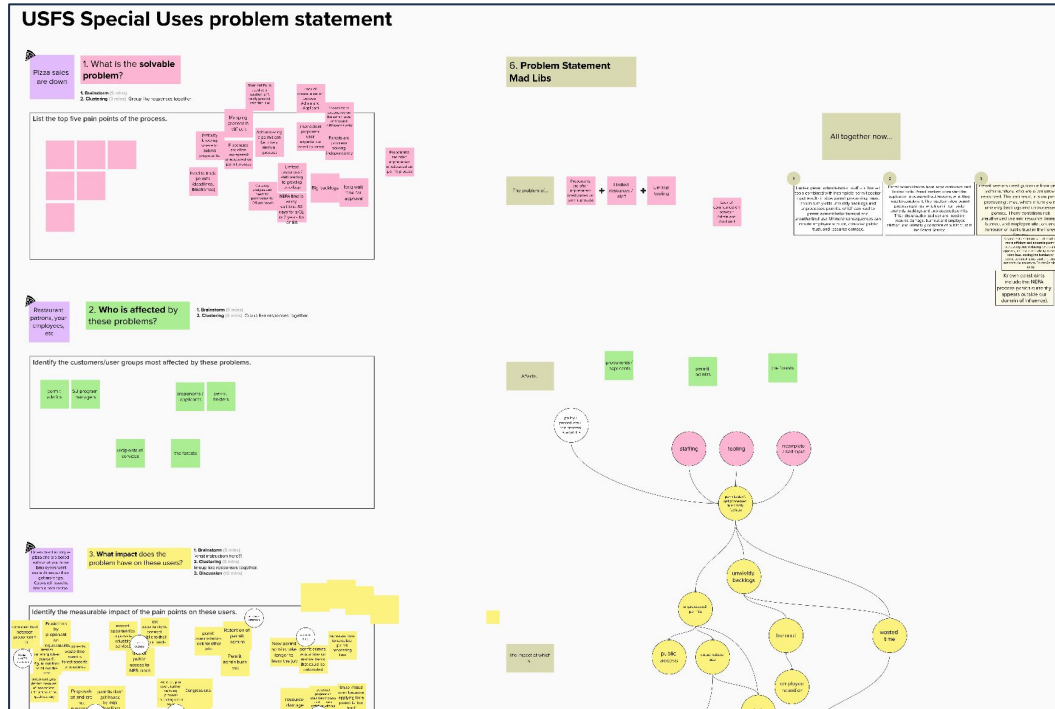


Problem statement

Applying for a special use authorization can be complicated, and authorization proponents often need guidance from administrators. Administrators are often resource-constrained and unable to provide the level of guidance needed in the time required, which in turn leads to growing backlogs of unprocessed applications. These conditions risk unauthorized use (and subsequent resource damage), burnout and employee attrition, and corrosion of public trust in the Forest Service.

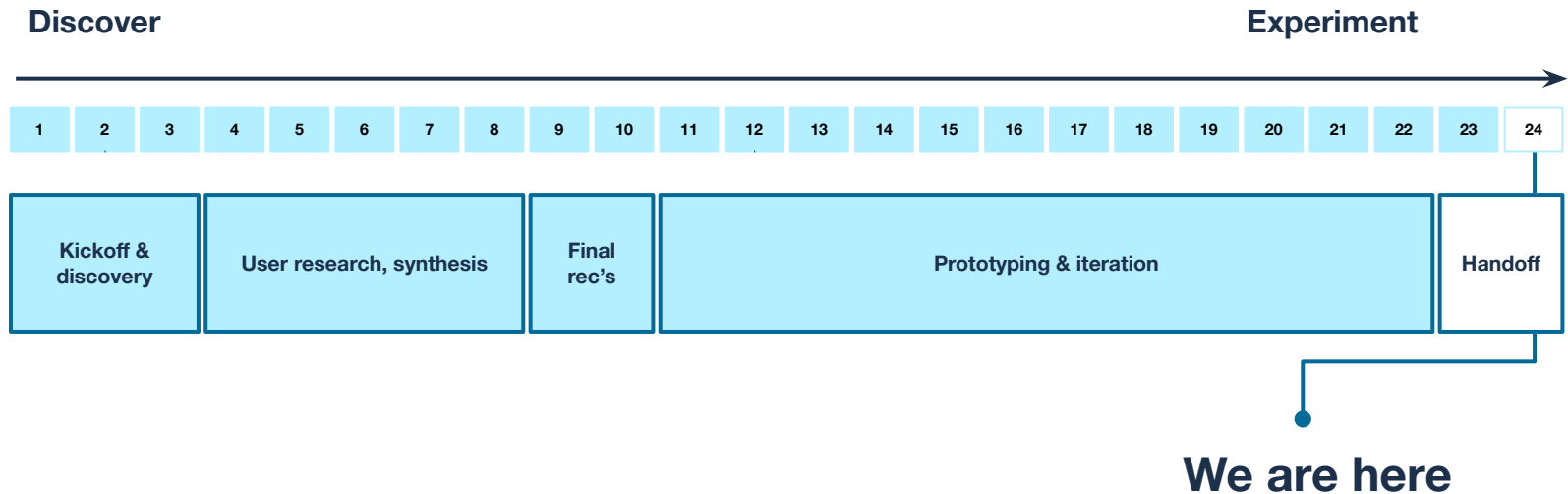
A successful solution would result in more efficient, accurate, and transparent processing of special use authorizations thus reducing errors and appeals, improving compliance with regulatory requirements and business standards, easing the burden on administrators, and enabling responsible access to National Forest Service lands.

1000



Where we are

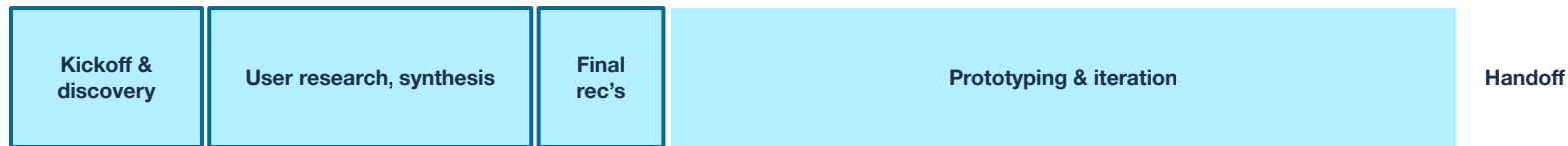
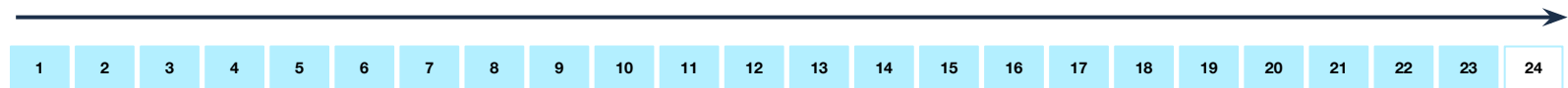
Where we are



Where we are

Discover

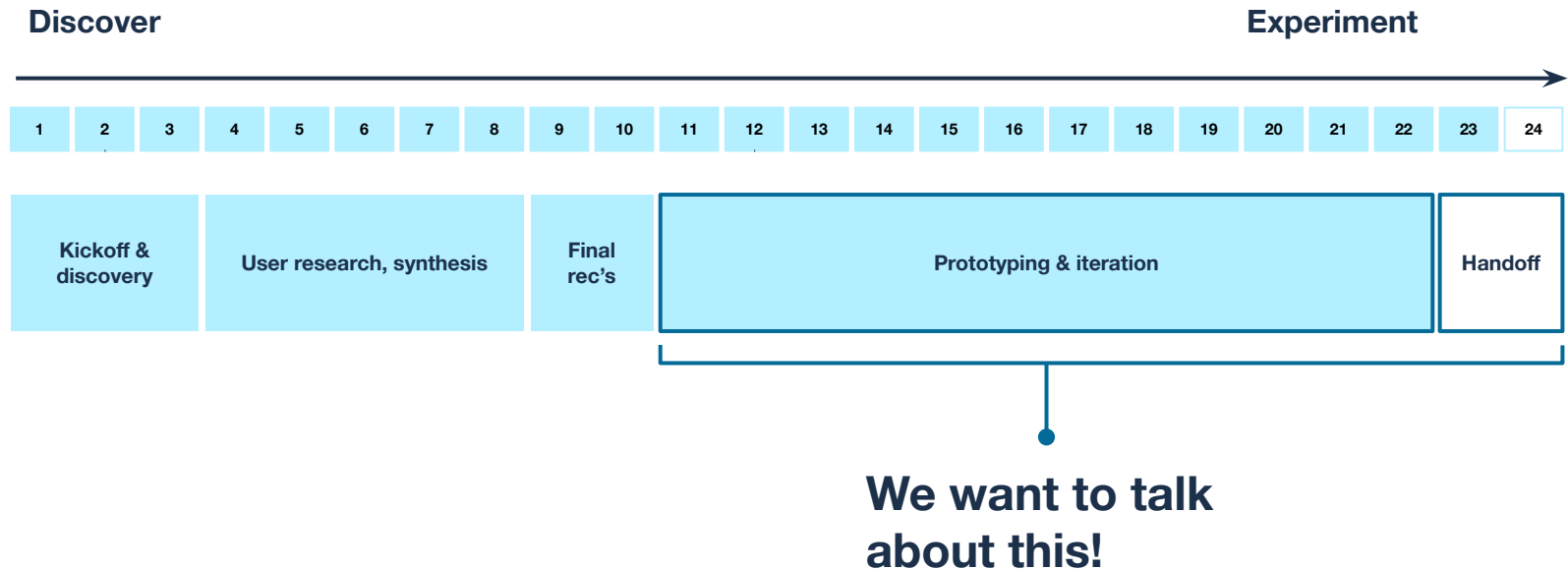
Experiment



Covered in our **midpoint presentation:**

- Desk **research**
- Journey **mapping**
- User **interviews**
- Website **audit**
- Research **readout**
- Our **findings** and **recommendations**

Where we are



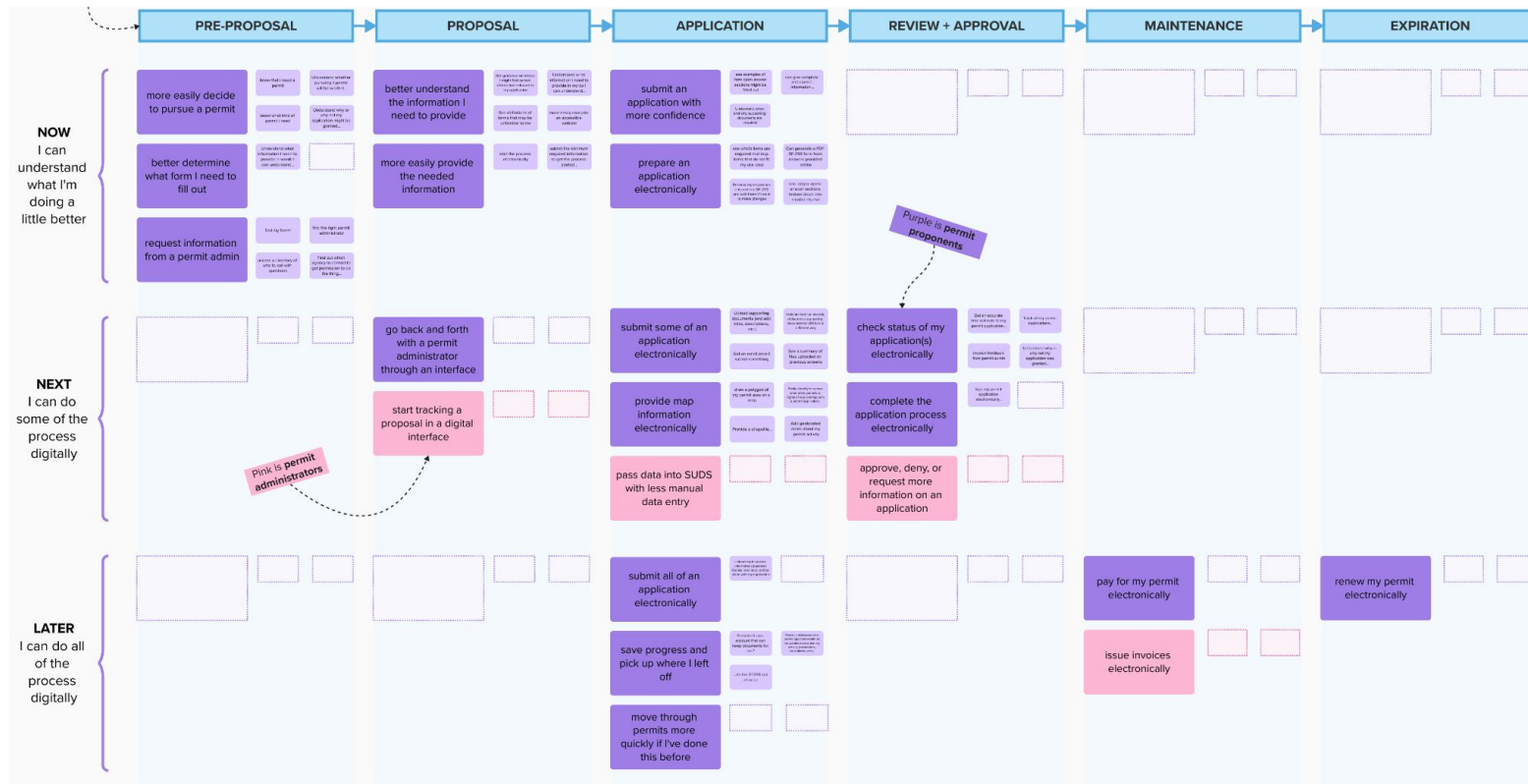


A quick definition of prototyping

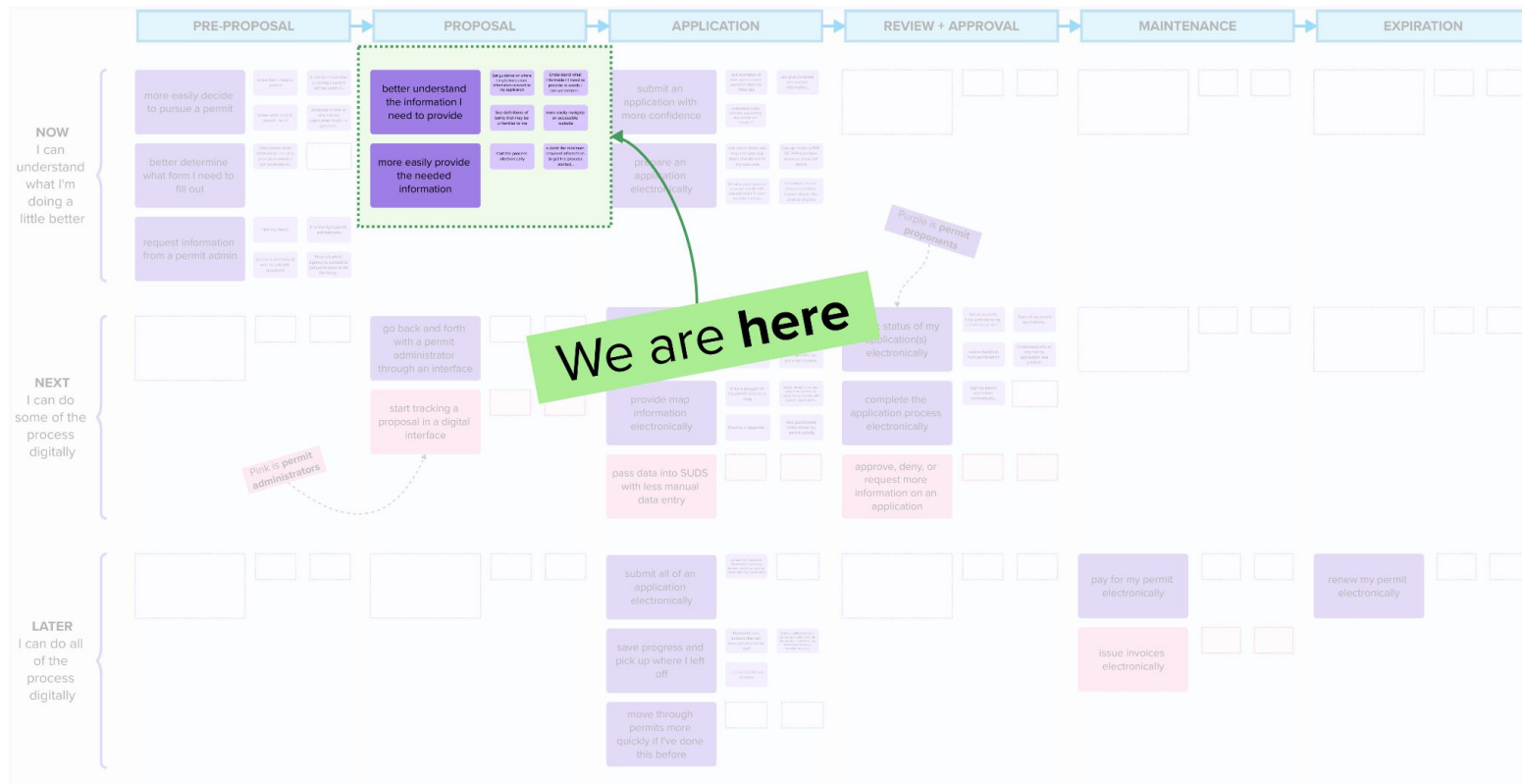
A rudimentary version, either static or functional, of something that exhibits realistic form and function.

– *18F Methods*

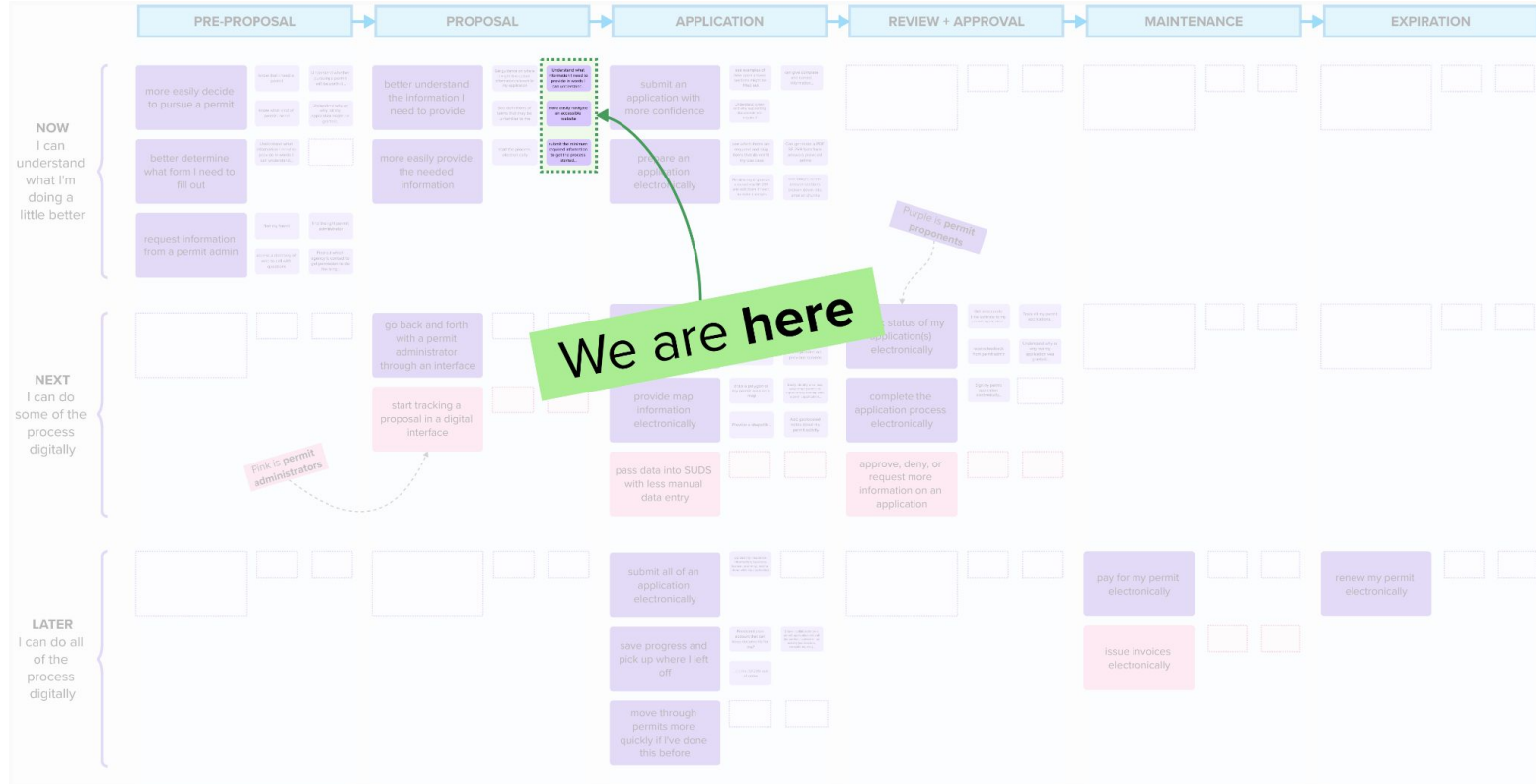
Roadmap



Roadmap

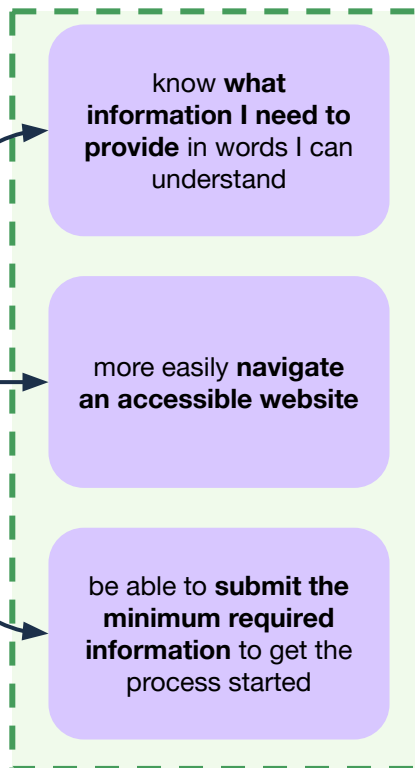


Roadmap



Roadmap

As a permit seeker, I
want to...



Roadmap

As a permit seeker, I
want to...

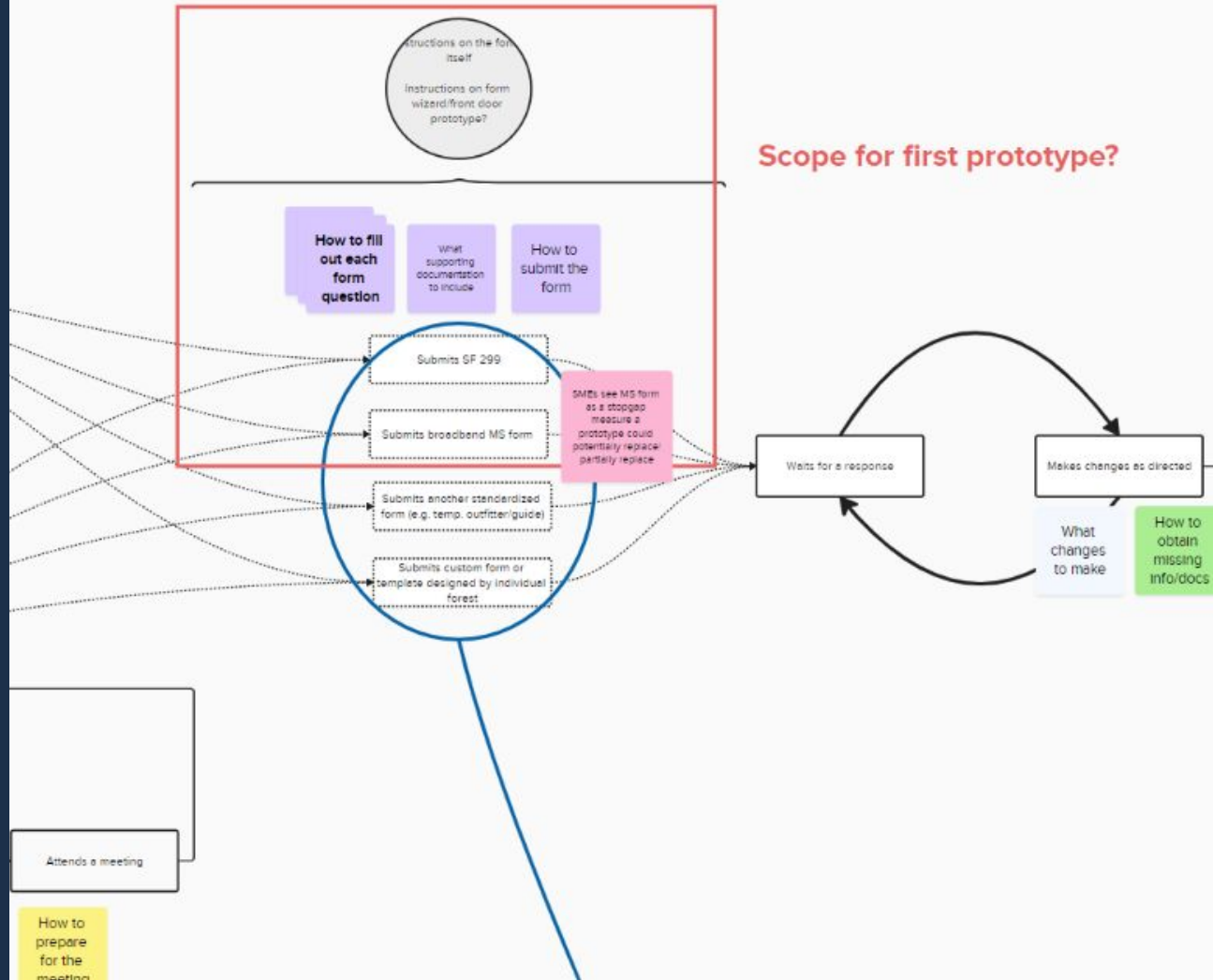


What we've done

aka Prototyping

Focus

Where should we start?



Build a prototype that would improve the experience of ... **filing SF-299 to get a special-use permit from the Forest Service for a broadband/communications use.**

What would a good form experience feel like?

- 1 Clear:** The form asks for information in a way I understand. Unfamiliar terms are explained to me in plain language.
- 2 Logical:** The questions and information on the form are presented in an order that makes sense. I don't have to flip back and forth to find what I need.
- 3 Relevant:** I don't have to sift through questions that don't apply to me. I understand the reason I'm being asked to provide each piece of information.
- 4 Accessible:** Anybody can use this form, including people with disabilities.

**APPLICATION FOR TRANSPORTATION, UTILITY SYSTEMS, TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND FACILITIES
ON FEDERAL LANDS AND PROPERTY**

FORM APPROVED
OMB Control Number: 0596-0249
Expiration Date: 1/31/2027

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY

NOTE: Before completing and filing the application for an authorization (easement, right-of-way, lease, license or permit), the applicant should completely review this package, including instructions, and schedule a pre-application meeting with representatives of the agency responsible for processing the application. Each agency may have specific and unique requirements to be met in preparing and processing the application. Many times, with the help of the agency representative, the application can be completed at the pre-application meeting.

Application Number

Date Filed

1. Name and address of applicant

2. Name and address of authorized agent if different
from item 1

3. Applicant telephone number and
email:

Authorized agent telephone number and
email:

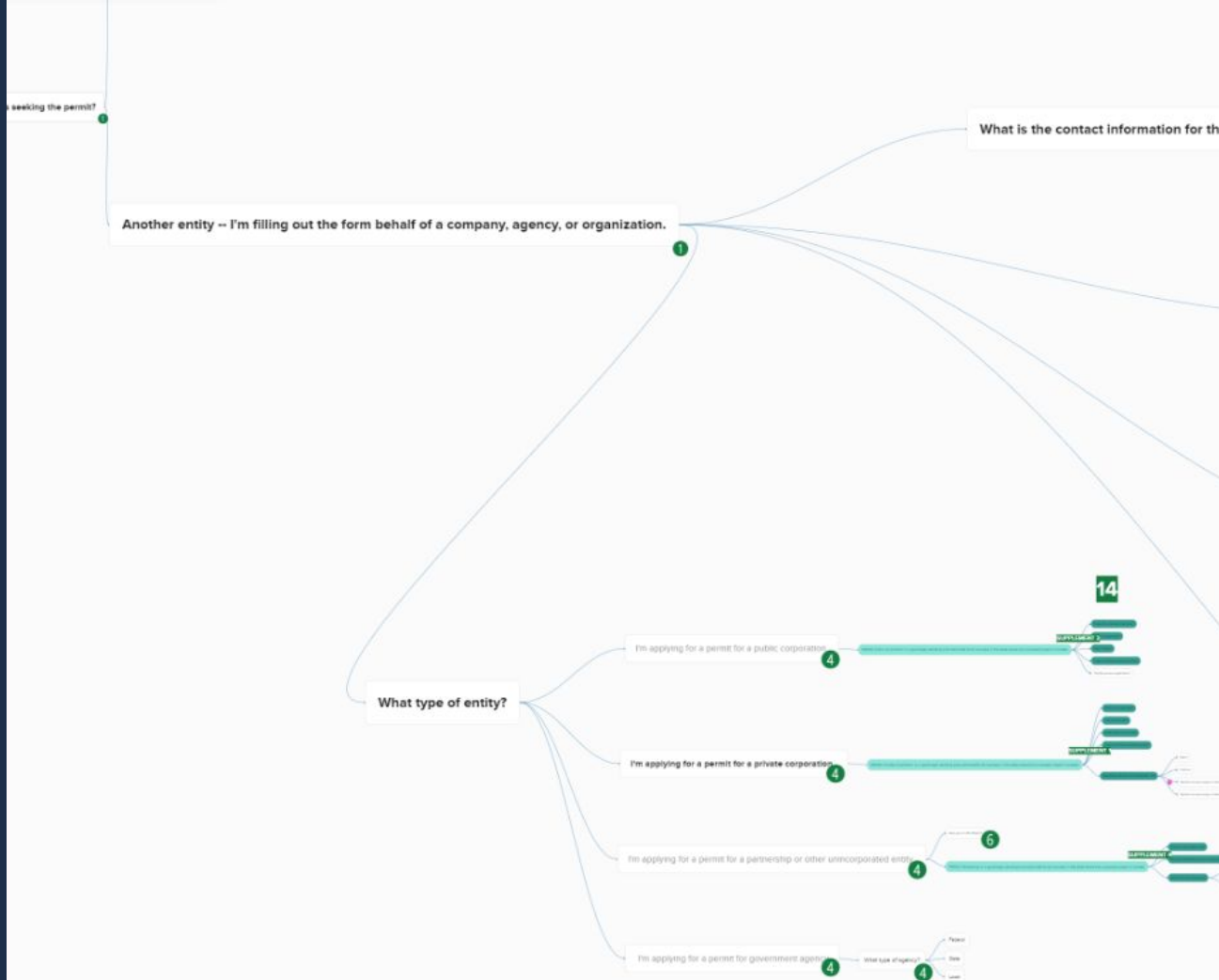
How can we improve this experience?

- Break long or complex questions into smaller chunks
- Simplify language where it's possible; define terms where it's not
- Customize the form to different audiences: use the information provided early in the form to tailor the questions that come later

The name and address of each shareholder owning 3 percent or more of the shares, together with the number and percentage of any class of voting shares of the entity which such shareholder is authorized to vote and the name and address of each affiliate of the entity together with, in the case of an affiliate controlled by the entity, the number of shares and the percentage of any class of voting stock of that affiliate owned, directly or indirectly, by that entity, and in the case of an affiliate which controls that entity, the number of shares and the percentage of any class of voting stock of that entity owned, directly or indirectly, by the affiliate.

Map

What pathway will the user follow through the form? How do these pathways differ between different types of user?



Write

What can we say that will help the user provide the right information the first time?

Version A (corporations)

You told us that you are filling out this form on behalf of a .

Fill in the contact information for that .

Enter the full registered legal name of the that will hold the permit if the proposal and application is successful. Do not enter any other name, such as a DBA ("doing business as" name).

Are you an employee of this ?

Consultants or contractors working on behalf of a client company should answer "no."

☐ Yes

☐ No

Design

How should we present this content on the page? What should the experience look like?

The image displays four sequential wireframe screenshots of a web form titled "Purchase Permit" for the "USDA Forest Service special use permits". The form is divided into four main sections, each with a tabbed header: "Basics", "Who", "Who - Me", and "Who - Someone else".

- Basics:** This section includes a "Purchase Permit" header, a "Who should the Forest Service contact about this application?" question, and a "Who is applying for the permit?" section with radio button options: "I am applying for the permit" (selected), "I am applying for the permit on behalf of someone else", and "I am applying for the permit on behalf of a group".
- Who:** This section contains a "Who should the Forest Service contact about this application?" question, a "Who is applying for the permit?" section with radio button options, and a "Who is applying for the permit?" section with radio button options.
- Who - Me:** This section contains a "Who should the Forest Service contact about this application?" question, a "Who is applying for the permit?" section with radio button options, and a "Who is applying for the permit?" section with radio button options.
- Who - Someone else:** This section contains a "Who should the Forest Service contact about this application?" question, a "Who is applying for the permit?" section with radio button options, and a "Who is applying for the permit?" section with radio button options.

Each section includes various input fields for text, dates, and checkboxes, as well as a "Next" button at the bottom of each section. The form is presented in a clean, modern design with a dark blue header and a light gray background.

Demo

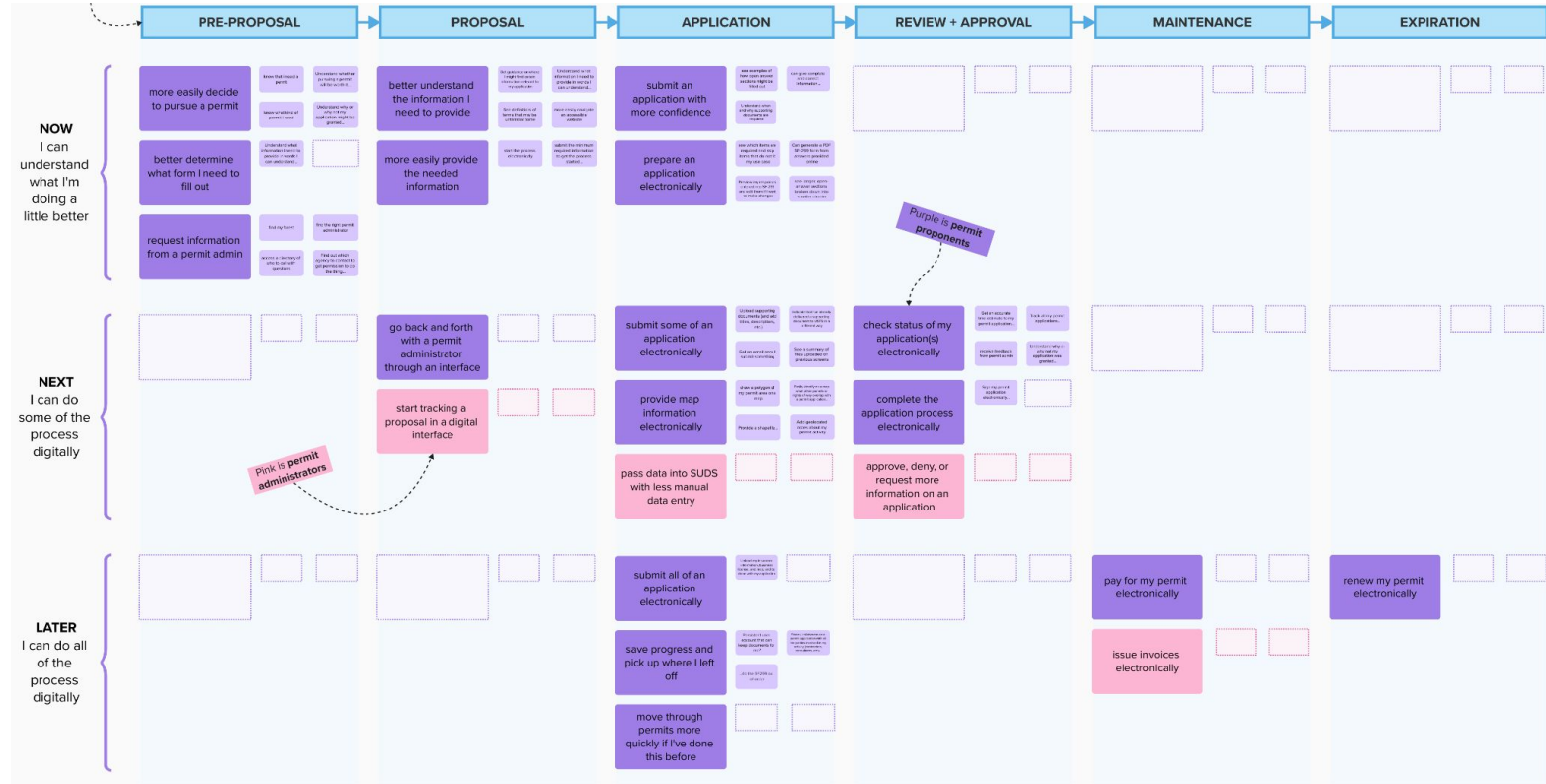


Things to consider

- Small site showing a **landing page**, a few “who are you” **questions**, a **summary**, and **confirmation** page
- It's a **starting point** and a **learning tool**
- Want to show how “**talking to users**” + “**here are our constraints and priorities**” = “**a product**”
- Two types of thing in this demo
 - Technical (how and why we did certain things)
 - Content (why those words and form fields?)

Where we're going

Where we're going





Next steps

- **Put together a product team:** Product owner, content design, user research, experience design, software engineering
- **Onboard the team:** familiarize them with the problem space, existing research, vision statement, roadmap, prototype site, etc.
- **Stay the course:** give them time, support professional development for the product owner, support scaling up incremental launches



Risks

- A **product owner** is an expert from the business area whose full-time attention is **deeply necessary** for success. Forest Service **needs** to be able to support people being effective in this role
- Executive focus on online permitting is also **needed**. Whose job performance will be tied to success here? Will the work done so far here go to waste?



What we need from you

- Hire that **product owner**, support them, and keep funding them
- Put together a cross-disciplinary delivery team to work on this
- Stay the course, release something fast, and keep making it better over time

Thanks!

Contact 18F@gsa.gov

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