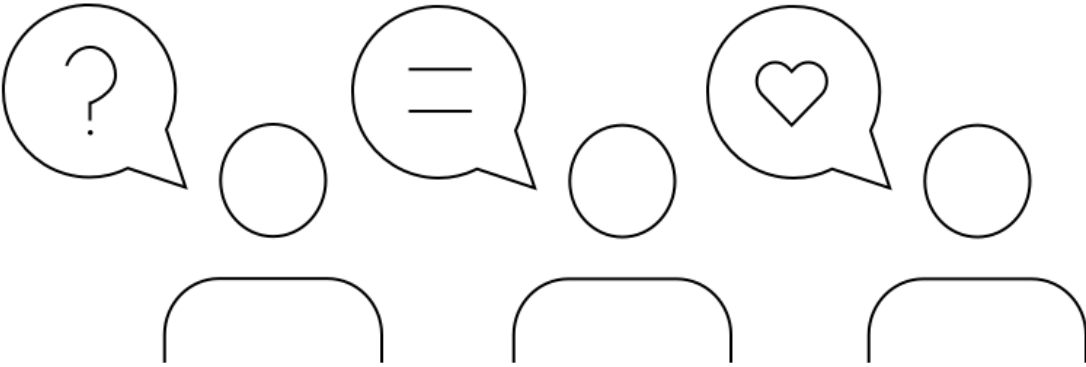




User Experience Design Guide



Research

Design research explores possibilities, tests assumptions, and reduces risk by actively and systematically engaging with the world. It includes:

- Qualitative and quantitative methods
- Investigating tools and systems
- Interacting with members of the public

All 18F teams do design research. Design involves continuous decision making, and those decisions are made better when they're informed by end-user perspectives. As a result, we're committed to continuous research. Rather than seeing designed products or services themselves as the goal, we view the products or services we're designing as the result of our continued effort to identify, understand, and address user needs.

Clarify the basics

Design research can feel overwhelming, even to people who've done it before! Clarify the basics with your team before you dive in.

What it is

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A team activity

Because a collaborative approach increases the team's overall empathy and efficiency, research is best done as a team activity. This means the entire team, including your agency partners, shares responsibility for:

- **Research design** — Formulating a research plan, including research questions and interview guides
- **Screening and recruiting** — Determining who we want to learn from, and inviting them to participate
- **Coordinating and scheduling** — Managing research logistics (times, places, tools, people)
- **Interviewing and moderating** — Facilitating the interview or activity. The person who takes this on

should be able to give their full attention to the participant(s) and should not be responsible for capturing responses

- **Notetaking and recording** — Documenting what happens during the research (for example, during a usability test)
- **Observing** — This is the default role for teammates who are new to research. Observers listen to interviews, observe usability tests, etc.
- **Debriefing** — Discussing individual sessions (usually immediately after each) to reach a shared understanding
- **Synthesis** — Finding patterns and themes across all research activities
- **Reporting** — Capturing and communicating findings from the research to partners and stakeholders.

Research types

On any given project you should only include the research activities that will inform the decisions you plan to make. Broadly speaking, 18F research falls into three categories:

Foundational research

Foundational research is the research you do to identify and clarify the team's objectives, assumptions, and constraints. This includes stakeholder interviews, secondary research, and workshops. Foundational research is primarily (though not exclusively) the domain of [18F Path Analysis](#) engagements and results in, among other things, [a problem statement](#).

Generative research

Generative research helps you better frame the problem(s) you're solving, spark new ideas, and reveal opportunities. Generative research helps you ask:

- What are our users' goals, behaviors, and pain points?
- What is their context?
- How might we address the problems we've identified?
- What does success look like?

Evaluative research

Evaluative research is the research you do to test assumptions, hypotheses, and the ease of use of design solutions, such as prototypes. Evaluative research helps you ask: Am I building the right thing—or if this research is done regularly, am I building the thing right? Does it meet user needs?

The process

The following steps are repeated as necessary throughout each 18F engagement: