Pre-Discovery Findings and Recommendations

Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)

What is the TFWP?

The TFWP is a collection of services to support all temporary foreign workers, including a tip-line for reporting abuses and fraud.

There are **40k-50k temporary foreign workers** in Canada at any moment who are employed by over 20k businesses.

This group is exposed to and reports **abuses**, including **unsafe working conditions** as exposed by the COVID-19 outbreaks in various farms and greenhouses.

The Program is jointly administered by three departments: ESDC, IRCC and CBSA, and involves numerous stakeholders such as RCMP, GAC, HC, AAFC, and Provinces and Territories.

Why now?

A little over a year ago, the Integrity Services Branch (ISB) created a team for Stakeholder Engagement and Innovation.

Because of COVID-19, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program has been experiencing a lot of media attention around how well the program serves temporary foreign workers.

A Cabinet commitment was made to apply "*a worker-centric perspective, with a view to increasing confidence in the use of these mechanisms to identify issues without repercussions for the worker*".

As part of the Cabinet commitment, $17m has been dedicated to improve the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

A key outcome for the TFWP is to deliver an enhanced approach to receiving, assessing and reporting tips and allegations.

What was done

- We spoke with people from IT, Comms, Policy, Legal, Operations and Executive Leadership
- Pre-discovery was conducted within a month

- Pre-discovery enabled diverse perspectives to come together, to understand the conditions in place
- We identified potential opportunities for improvement and we will provide some recommendations on next steps
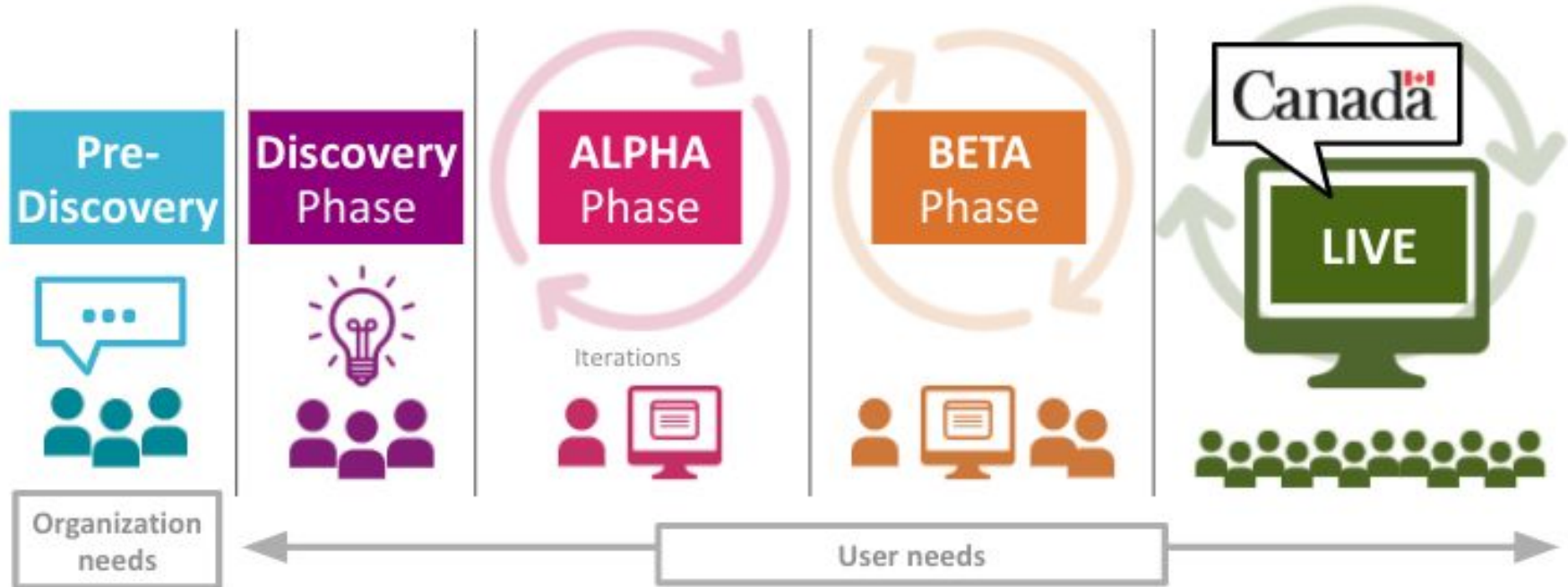
12
people attended kickoff

9
functional groups targeted

7
interviews conducted

How might we enable the conditions to work in this way?

In our experience, services are more likely to meet users' needs when these conditions and practices exist

- Establishing and empowering multidisciplinary teams

- Conducting user research

- Practicing continuous improvement

- Working in the open

Findings and Recommendations

Establishing and empowering multidisciplinary teams

Multidisciplinary teams — combining design researchers, designers, software developers, and a product manager into a single team — are the core unit of digital service delivery.

Traditional IT projects are delivered by isolated IT teams, adding significant overhead, eliminating important feedback loops, and leading to legacy systems and services.

Overcoming this requires changes to departmental processes, funding priorities, and structures.

Establishing and empowering multidisciplinary teams

TFWP Conditions
- Good cooperation between the business lines, comms, ops, policy and legal
- Business and IT teams work in functional silos
- Limited capacity to do new things in new ways
- High degree of governance reflecting cross-cutting policies and variety of internal and external actors

Short-term recommendations
- Determine team composition needed to research, prototype and test, and continuously improve the service
- Identify a service owner who will champion an empowered delivery team, and unblock hurdles before they become bigger issues

Long-term recommendations
- Continue to build delivery capacity within the Innovation team to support ISB teams and partners in continuously improving the TFWP (e.g. product management, design, development)
- Continue to foster the strong relationships between the business lines, comms, ops, policy and legal.

Conducting user research

Design research — direct research and testing with the people who will use a service — is a critical element of designing good services.

Many departments are reluctant to do this, owing to concerns around policy and process, including Public Opinion Research and privacy.

Although important progress has been made, it is still difficult for many departments to quickly and repeatedly conduct design research.

Conducting user research

TFWP Conditions - what we found

- Innovation team mandate and Cabinet commitment provide a great opportunity for worker-centric products and practices
- Data access: aggregate tip line data exists; challenges with data sharing
- User-centred mindset, but talking only to intermediaries rather than directly to TFWs due to privacy concerns
- Pressure to focus on short-term outputs and a "solution"

Short-term recommendations

- Find ways to talk directly to TFWs, then:
  - Conduct user research directly with TFWs
  - Based on the user research, define a Minimum Viable Product (MVP), and prototype and test that MVP with TFWs

Long-term recommendations

- Use user-centric metrics for success
- Create a more robust research plan that includes more inclusive research
- Focus on long-term improvements to the overall service delivery model

Practicing continuous improvement

Making small, steady improvements to a service and quickly deploying them to get feedback from real users – is how leading technology firms build great products.

Traditionally in government, IT projects lock in requirements based on lengthy up-front planning, without the ability to course correct based on feedback from users, and changes to services are deployed very infrequently.

Overcoming this requires changes to how projects are approved and funded, how infrastructure (e.g., cloud) is accessed, and the tools available for software development and web publishing.

Practicing continuous improvement

TFWP Conditions

- Lack of established relationship with IITB or familiarity with how their processes work
- IITB is currently focusing on large programs such as EI and Disability which has much of their attention
- Adobe Experience Manager (AEM) is the standard way to build a form within the department, but due to the system's constraints, this might result in an experience that doesn't match the needs of the TFW

Short-term recommendations

- As part of a discovery, assess the hurdles that could hinder testing and continuous improvement and address them, (e.g. AEM limitations, required funding)
- Once user research is conducted and you have an MVP, establish a pathway to test and continuously improve with TFWs

Long-term recommendations

- Continue to build relationships with IITB, and share best practices and learnings
- Generate shared understanding of Innovation team's role with IITB

Working in the open

"Working in the open" — sharing lessons-learned, successes and failures, performance data, and software code publicly — is an important function of service delivery teams.

This is a significant departure from the current, risk-averse culture of IT and service delivery teams.

Navigating existing government communications processes and culture can discourage teams from working in the open.

Working in the open

TFWP Conditions
- High degree of sensitivity related to TFW conditions and experiences - "this is not a good news story"
- Limited-to-no experience publishing code in the open
- Competing and high profile ESDC priorities
- Web content and publishing delegated to program reps to some degree

Short-term recommendations
- Communicate to internal and external stakeholders why engaging TFWs directly is required to deliver on the mandate commitment

Long-term recommendations
- Publish the code for the next product or service improvement in the open
- Once the first iteration of the service is released, share learnings to help others learn from the experiences

Recommendations for next steps

In summary, our short-term recommendations for a successful service improvement

- **Establish and empower a multidisciplinary team**
  - Determine team composition needed to research, prototype and test, and continuously improve the service
  - Identify a service owner who will champion an empowered delivery team, and unblock hurdles before they become bigger issues
- **Conduct user research**
  - Find ways to talk directly to TFWs, then:
    - Conduct user research directly with TFWs
    - Based on the user research, define a Minimum Viable Product (MVP), and prototype and test that MVP with TFWs
- **Practice continuous improvement**
  - As part of a discovery, assess the hurdles that could hinder testing and continuous improvement and address them, (e.g. AEM limitations, required funding)
  - Once user research is conducted and you have an MVP, establish a pathway to test and continuously improve with TFWs
- **Working in the open**
  - Communicate to internal and external stakeholders why engaging TFWs directly is required to deliver on the mandate commitment

Considerations

- ISB has done work to learn from stakeholders and map service elements
- Engaging temporary foreign workers directly to understand their needs and how modernizing the service would improve their experiences is a gap that can be addressed
- CDS doesn't have the capacity to set up a delivery team to undertake that work; however, could assist in setting up a discovery with an external vendor
- For that option to proceed, the conditions would need to be in place to design, test, and sustain a service improvement

Next steps

1. CDS has a vehicle in place to procure services from a vendor that has experience working with TFWs.
2. If it's of interest to ISB, CDS can facilitate collaboration between ISB and the vendor using existing vehicle.
3. CDS could help manage the relationship with the external vendor and help set up the contract and discovery deliverables.
4. CDS would be looking to have ISB reimburse CDS for the cost of the vendor's work.
5. ISB and CDS would need to draft a Discovery Brief for the vendor to start the engagement.

Let's discuss!

Thank you!

Merci!