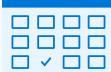


Building shared services, so you don't have to

Introduction to Notify.gov and the TTS Public Benefits Studio at GSA



Agenda

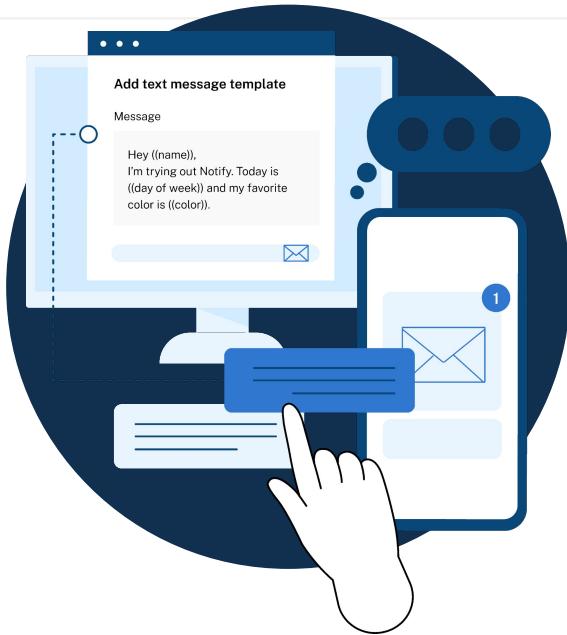


1. Welcome!
2. Who is the Public Benefits Studio?
3. What is Notify.gov?
4. Notify.gov Use Cases
5. The Public Benefits Studio's next bet

Who we are



The Public Benefits Studio



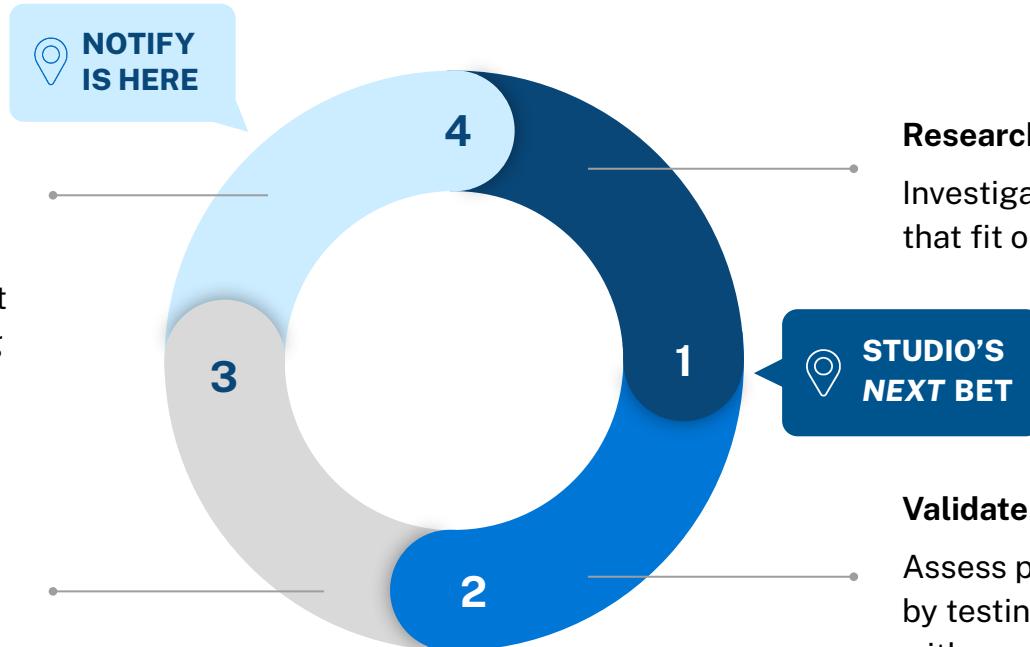
The Public Benefits Studio is a **product accelerator inside the federal government.**

We collaborate with benefits programs to **build and scale shared tools that reduce burden for low-income individuals & families and the program staff** that serve them.

Our approach

Grow and Scale

Secure the funding and buy-in to sustain the product as a long-term TTS offering, supporting agencies to use the product and continuously improving delivery along the way



Build and Pilot

Build an MVP and establish relationships with potential customers for testing and piloting

Research

Investigate opportunities that fit our criteria

**STUDIO'S
NEXT BET**

Validate and Test

Assess product-market fit by testing key hypotheses with users facing the problem

Why texting?



Text message notifications have been **proven to decrease re-enrollment churn** and save money for administering agencies.



Despite texting's efficacy & existence of market tools, **adoption of texting by US government agencies is still surprisingly low.**



We followed the model established by the UK & CA to **offer a lightweight, gov-provided option** to lowers barriers to US agencies adopting texting.

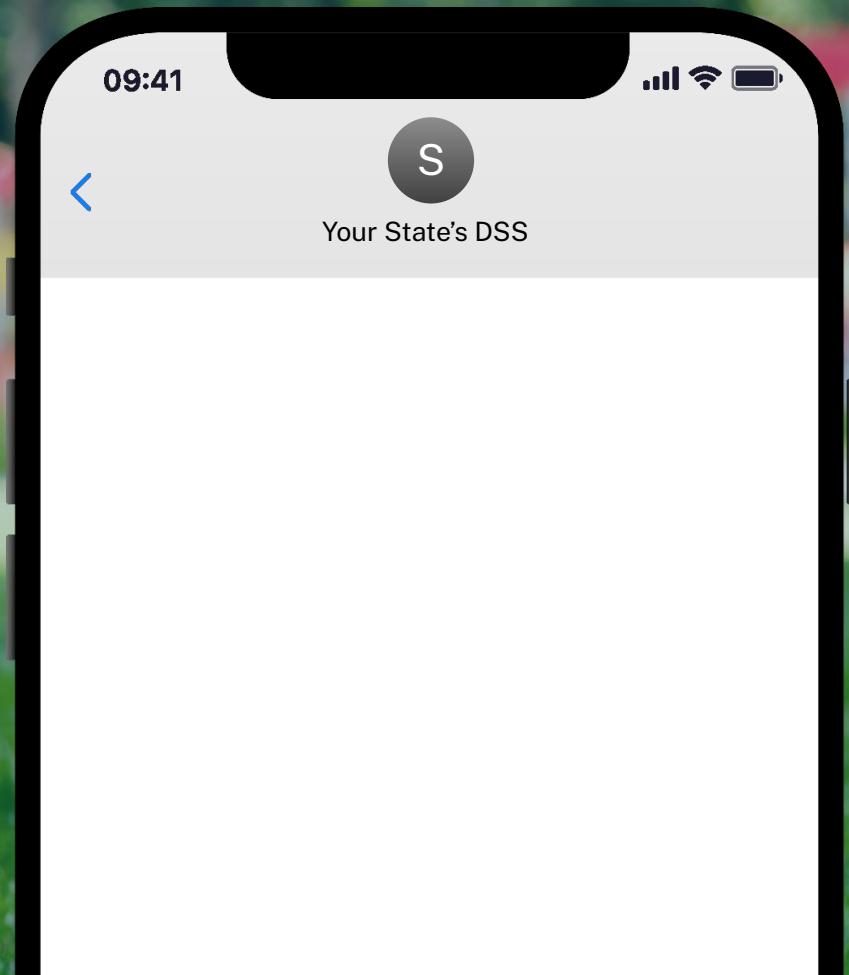
Our first investment: **Notify.gov**

Notify.gov is a text messaging service built by and for government, helping agencies more effectively communicate with the people they serve.

Notify.gov's **trustworthy, easy-to-use platform** enables federal and federally-funded programs to **send customized, bulk text messages to:**

- reach people where they are
- improve program outcomes
- reduce administrative costs

The screenshot shows the Notify.gov web interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for "Using notify", "Features", "Contact us", "Emily Herrick", and "Sign out". The main header says "Colorado WIC program" with a "Switch service" link. On the left, a sidebar has links for "Dashboard", "Send messages" (which is highlighted in blue), "Team members", "Usage", and "Settings". Below the sidebar, it shows "Messages Left / Daily Limit" (50 / 50) and "Messages Left Across Services" (5000). The main content area is titled "Review your message" and shows a template for an "Appointment reminder - 1 week". It includes a placeholder "To: phone number" and a message bubble containing text about a WIC certification appointment. At the bottom right of the message area are "Prepare to send" and "Edit" buttons.



Notify.gov Case Studies





Norfolk, VA
Department of
Human Services



Reminders to renew coverage

As the Covid-19 Public Health Emergency wound down in 2023 and Medicaid renewals began again, the City of Norfolk's Department of Human Services wanted to harness text messaging to reach Medicaid recipients and alert them of the recent reinstating of renewal policy.

They decided to send a 60, 30, and 15 day renewal reminders to Medicaid recipients.



Pilot goals



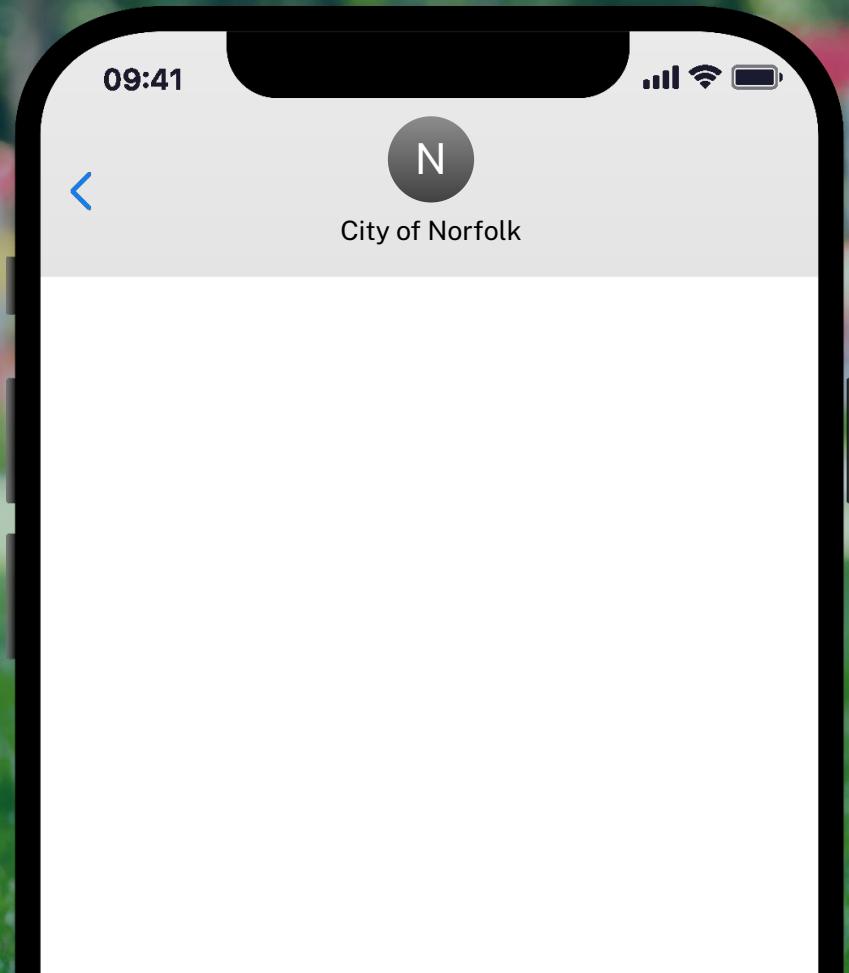
For Medicaid Recipients

- ✓ Increase clients with uninterrupted coverage due to missing renewals
- ✓ More applications and verifications are submitted earlier

For Norfolk

Decrease outreach burden on staff:

- ✓ Less phone calls coming from confused clients
- ✓ Less reminder calls needing to be made
- ✓ Case workers report feeling less overwhelmed



Norfolk outcomes



Norfolk is wrapping up an evaluation with GSA's Office of Evaluation Services.

- To measure whether clients who received texts are more likely to renew their Medicaid coverage by their deadline compared to those who received the standard outreach.
- The evaluation also introduced a message: “expect a call from us tomorrow” to test the impact of pairing texting with proactive phone outreach.

MESSAGES SENT TO DATE:

+40,000



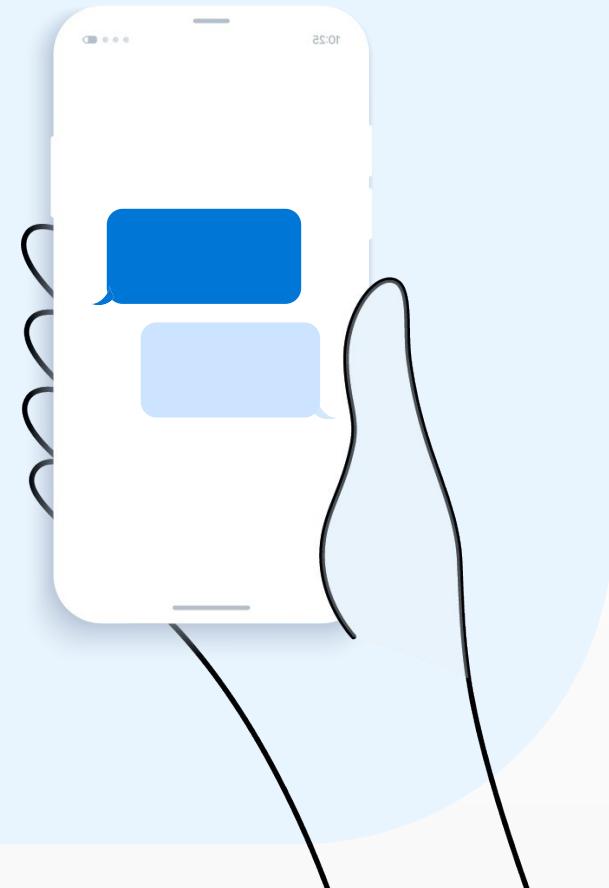
“Because of our successful partnership, we have been busy working to use mass text messaging in other DHS program areas! Notify.gov [is going to help us] in more ways than reaching Medicaid customers.”



— BENEFIT ADMINISTRATOR,
CITY OF NORFOLK



Washington State, Department of Social & Health Services



Preventing benefits theft

In 2022, the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Division of Program Integrity (DPI) increased data analysis for early detection of potential EBT debit card theft.

Washington State wanted to let card holders know they were at risk for theft and quickly alert them to take a safeguard actions, like changing their PIN number or request a new card.



Pilot goals

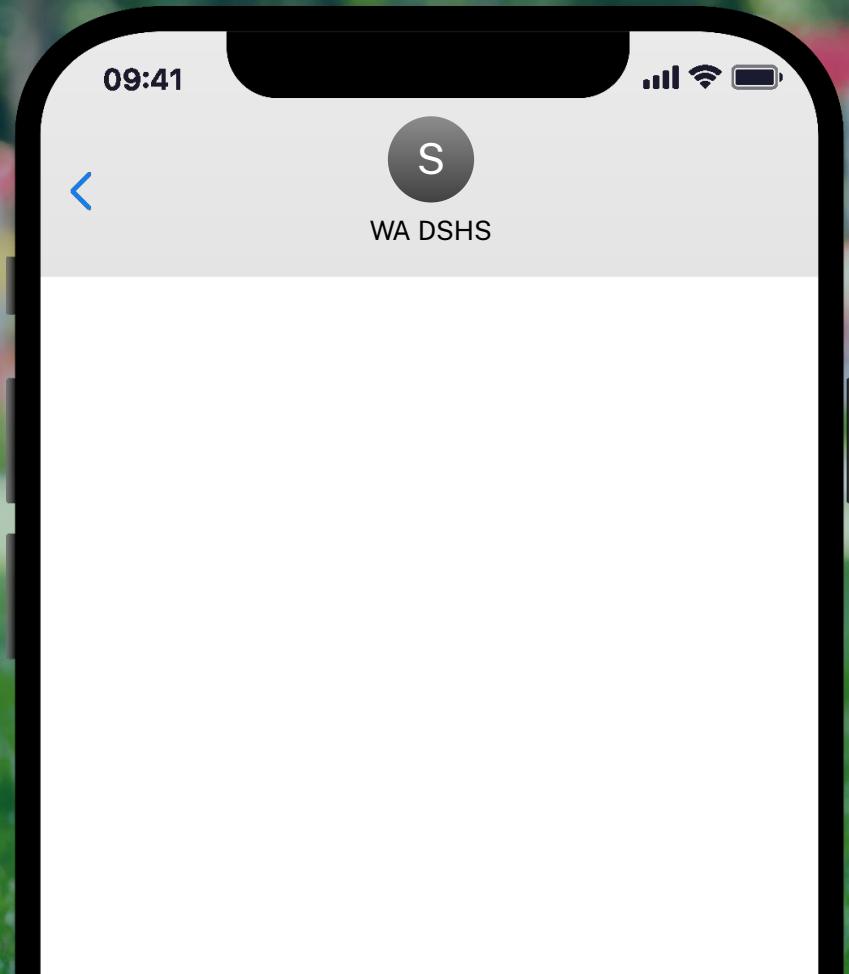


For EBT Cardholders

- ✓ Maintain access to benefits and prevent benefits from being stolen by fraudulent actors.
- ✓ Ensure clients have the funds expected, when they expect them.

For Washington State

- ✓ Leverage texting as a mechanism to more efficiently and effectively contact cardholders when potential theft is surfaced.



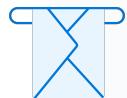
Washington State outcomes



As of Aug of 2024, Over 10,000 EBT cardholders have been texted.



Over 300 people took action to protect their EBT cards based solely on the text message.



Over 9,000 individuals were safeguarded with a comprehensive outreach approach that combined text, phone, mail outreach.

MESSAGES SENT TO DATE:

+13,000

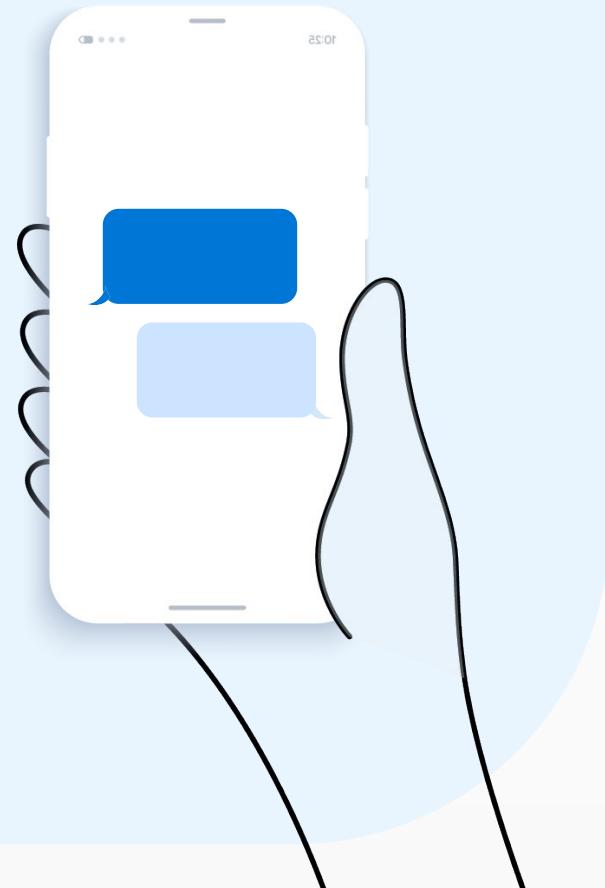


With 300+ people taking action to protect their benefits from being stolen based on texting outreach alone,

*USDA FNS has avoided “**double paying**” for these benefits by needing to reimburse WA for these stolen funds.*



State Department Office of Consular Affairs



Making passport renewal easier

The Office of Consular Affairs at the State Department is conducting several texting experiments to:

- Reduce passport expiration and its impact on travelers
- Request missing application materials
- Inform same-day applicants that their passports are ready (or that they need to provide more information).



Pilot goals

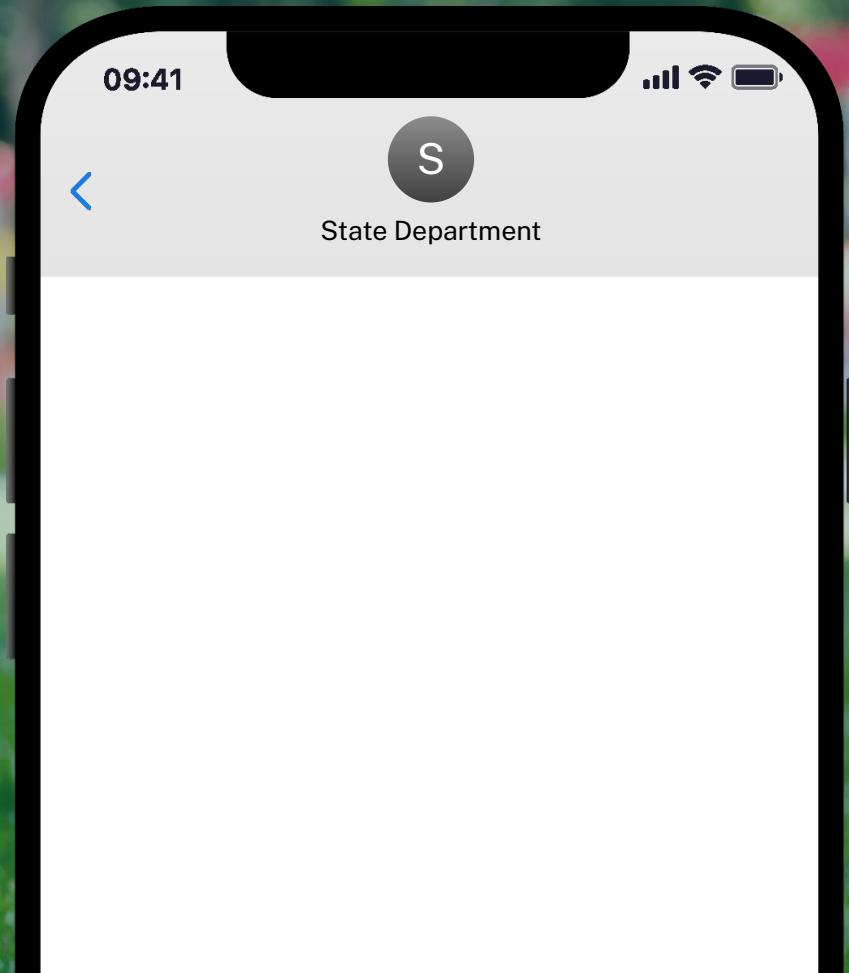


For Passport Holders

- ✓ Improve customer service by reducing wait time of key steps in the passport renewal process

For Consular Affairs

- ✓ Identify most effective uses of text messaging to speed up passport processing and eliminate gaps in passport coverage.



State Department outcomes



In some experiments State Dept is getting responses back within the hour.

- With existing paper notifications, it could take up to 6 weeks to see the same responses

For same-day passport applicants, there's preliminary evidence that texting is **more effective** than calling to inform people they need to return to an office to provide more information

MESSAGES SENT TO DATE:

+32,000



“I love that GSA is taking so much time and effort to build out these programs and products for other agencies. If two or three agencies are using your product, then that’s three less digital products that the [an agency] also needs to build.”

– AGENCY NOTIFY.GOV CHAMPION

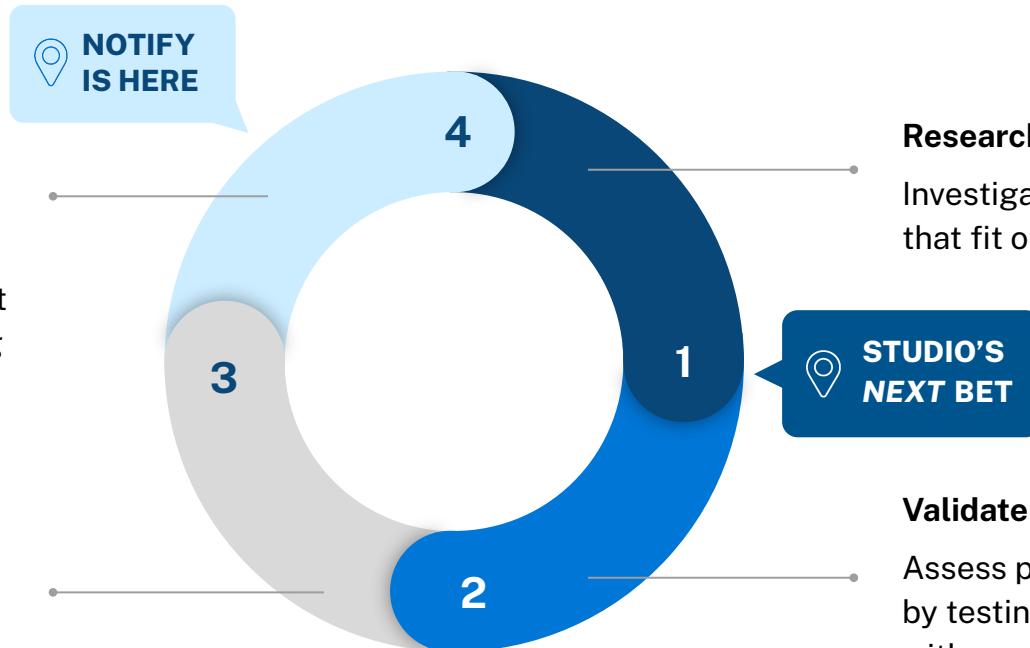
The Studio's Next Bet



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Validating two potential ideas

Better Document Submission

How might we support benefits agencies in enabling **applicants to easily share documents digitally while decreasing manual processing for administrators** during the application process?

Automating Enrollment Proofs

How might we improve **how proof-of-eligibility information is shared across benefit programs**, specifically for programs that are linked through shared enrollment policy?

Answering key questions as we validate opportunities



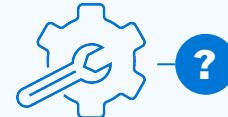
Desirability

Is this a solution that customers will invest effort and resources to implement?



Viability

Is there a demonstrated need for a government solution, and is there a market gap that wouldn't otherwise be filled?
(constraint research)



Feasibility

Is this product prohibitively technically complex to build?

Document Submission and Processing





User needs

FOR APPLICANTS

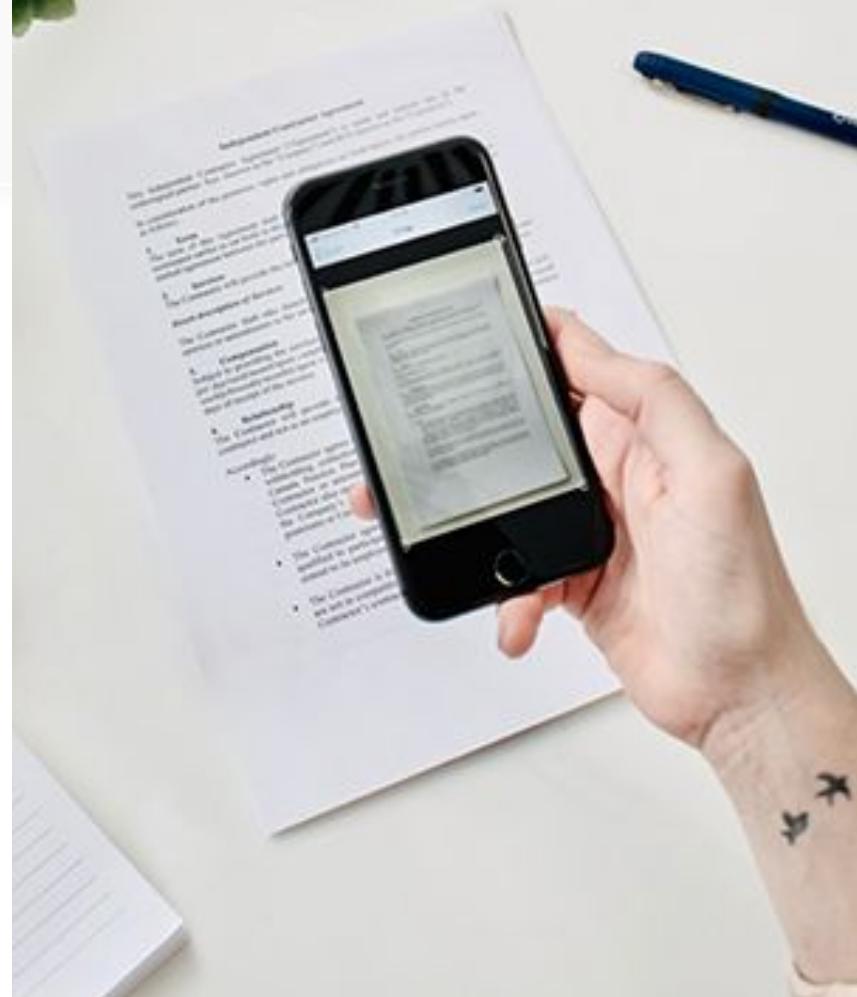
- **Need to submit documents** as part of an application process, often to prove identity, income, citizenship etc.
- **Heavily rely on cell phones** to access the internet and navigate application processes.
- **Taking a photo with a mobile device** is the easiest way to transform an analog document into a digital file.

FOR PROCESSING STAFF

- **Need to access, identify, and review documents** submitted by applicants.
- **Want to transform standard file formats (pdfs, images) into machine readable data** that can be transferred into their existing systems in a way that enables rapid and accurate decision making.

Document Processing

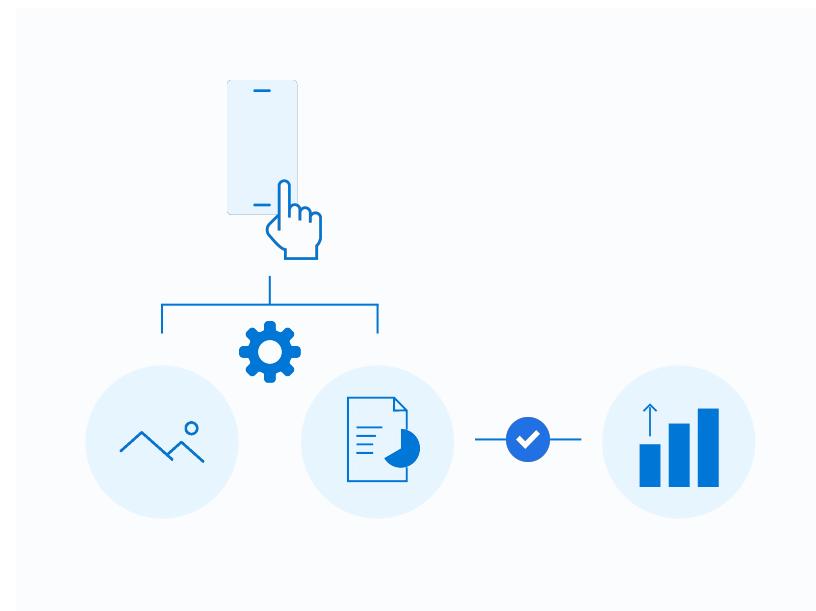
- What are your unmet document processing needs?
- What kind of tools are you using for document processing?





Product Statement

→ The simplest product we could build that provides value is a mobile-first tool that is able to process images of documents into usable data and can be implemented as a component alongside existing workflows.





Discussion Questions

As of yet, have you identified a commercial, custom tool, or adopted some other workaround that would solve your unmet document processing needs? If yes, what is it?

What about commercial tools makes them hard to implement in your organization or within your existing workflows?

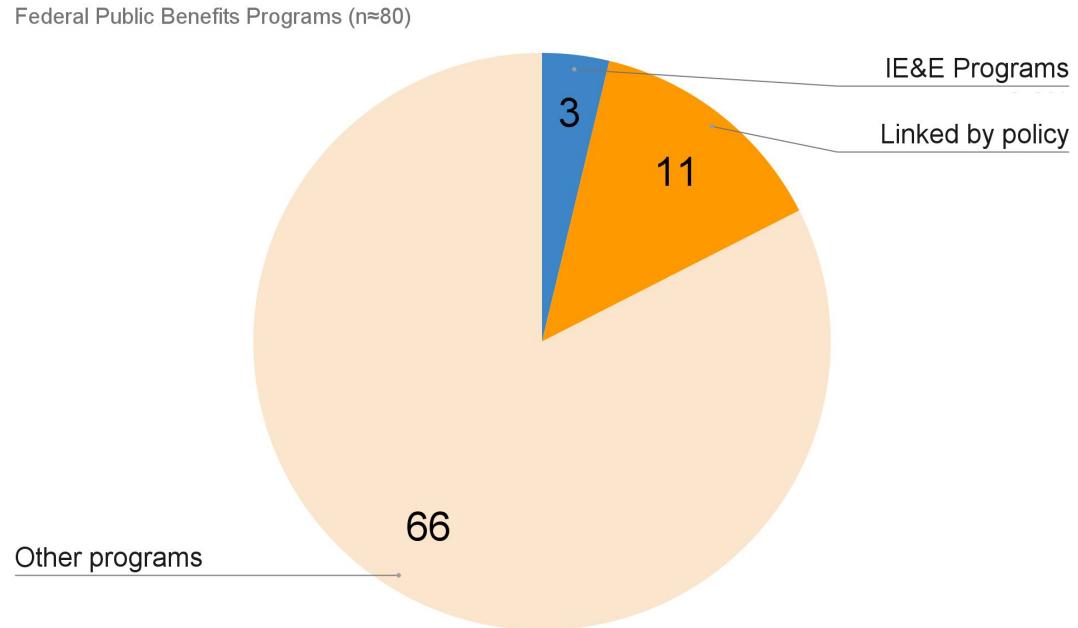
Automating Enrollment Proof





Policy linkages exist to better integrate enrollment

Several programs share enrollment criteria through automated or streamlined **policy linkages**, particularly using categorical or adjunctive eligibility.



Example Categorical Eligibility

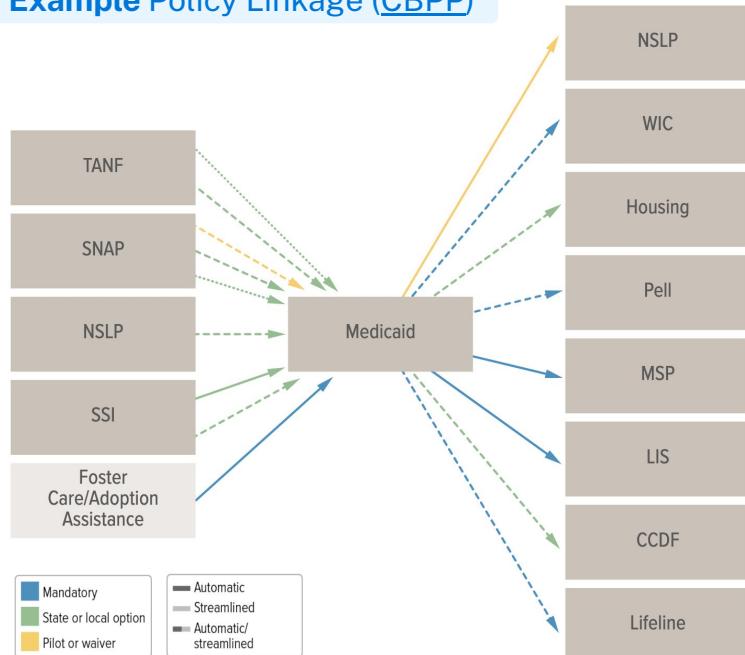
Children in households receiving SNAP qualify for the National School Lunch Program.

*This figure is based on linkages identified by [CBPP](#), but there may be more.



But, operationalizing linkages is often manual in practice

Example Policy Linkage (CBPP)



Despite policies for automating or streamlining enrollment processes, data-sharing challenges result in caseworkers manually checking eligibility by:

- Relying on individuals and families to provide existing case numbers on applications
- Calling agencies
- Or cross-checking spreadsheets and data systems

What we're looking at:



How might we improve
how proof-of-eligibility
information is shared across
benefit programs, specifically
for programs that:

- Are linked to Medicaid and SNAP enrollment by policy
- Sit outside of State integrated eligibility systems
- Lack automation or practical implementation of technology, leading to manual and duplicative processes

Sarah spends hours cross-checking data manually, contributing to administrative delays.

A look-up tool would allow her to process cases faster, reducing the time applicants spend waiting.



*If you have Medicaid, you are automatically income eligible for WIC. But I still need to spend time tracking my client's Medicaid enrollment down. **If we have these data, let's use it.***

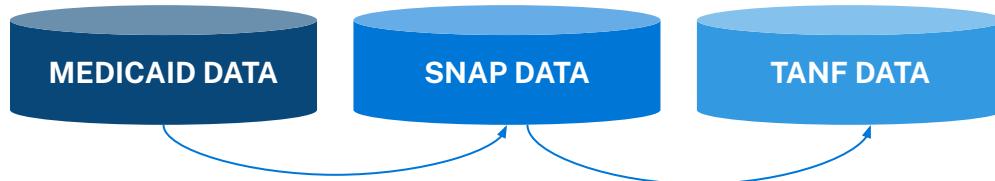
– SARAH, WIC ELIGIBILITY STAFF*

*Inspired by the challenges of data-sharing in cross-program eligibility, not a direct quote from user research



Sarah is looking to enroll a client, Jax, into the WIC program. Sarah knows that if Jax is already enrolled in Medicaid, SNAP, or TANF they can skip parts of the WIC enrollment process. **With our idea she would:**

- Log-in to the look-up tool
- Enter client's information
- Check against existing enrollment information



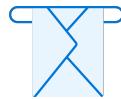
Your client can skip parts of the WIC enrollment process.

Based on their existing program enrollment:

Jax has demonstrated proof of meeting the income, identity, and residency requirements

**Do you have
experience in data
sharing around
enrollment
linkages?**

We want to hear from you!



Email our team at
tts-benefits-studio@gsa.gov



With the subject:
Auto-Enrollment Feedback

Thank you!

