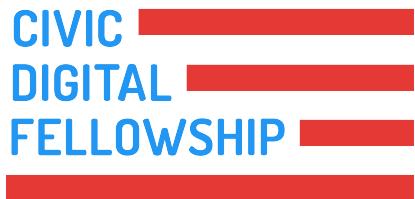


Census for Small Businesses

Communications Directorate

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99.7%

of all business are small businesses

50%

of non-farm GDP is created by
small businesses

**Beauty salons, day
cares, bars, hotels...**

some of the top hard-to-count segments

“How is that information
used? Where does it go?”

SMALL BUSINESS - PITTSBURGH

“If I could get a result back
from one, I would gladly
participate”

SMALL BUSINESS – MIAMI

**Small businesses do not understand the value of Census Bureau data
or how they can use it to build a better business**

The current site is *about* the Census Bureau, not for its audience.

Citizens are expected to figure out what is relevant to them.

The screenshot shows the 'Small Business' section of the Census Bureau's website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Topics, Geography, Library, Data, Surveys/Programs, Newsroom, and About Us. Below the navigation, a breadcrumb trail shows the path: Census.gov > Topics > Business > Small Business. The main title 'Small Business' is in bold blue text. To the left, a sidebar lists links for 'About this Topic', 'Data', 'Library', 'News', 'Related Sites', and 'Surveys/Programs'. The main content area features a paragraph about finding statistics for small businesses, followed by three call-to-action buttons: 'Know Your Customers', 'Start Planning Your Business', and 'Find Your Classification Code'. On the right, there's a large image of a woman opening a door with a sign that says 'OPEN'. Below this, a 'Latest' section includes news items like 'Census Business Builder Now Includes "My Own Data" Upload' and 'Stats for Stories: National Small Business Week'. A 'QuickFacts' sidebar on the far right displays a map of South Dakota with the text 'Population per square mile in Yankton city, South Dakota is 1,760.5'.

This is the **Census Business Builder**, the main tool developed by the Economic Directorate for small businesses.

The data is incredible, but the tool is difficult to access and use.

 **Census Business Builder: Small Business Edition - 2.2** [Privacy Act Statement](#) [FAQs](#) [Send Feedback](#)

Determine the Best Location for Your Business

1. What type of business do you want to research?
Select the type of business you want to research by either selecting it first from the "Most Popular" broad categories and then from the detailed list provided...

2. Where are you considering locating the business?
Select the location you want to research either clicking on the My Location button or by searching for it

My Location or
 State, County, City/Town, or ZIP Code

Click "Go to Map" to browse the information about the potential customers and competitors for the location and surrounding locations you are researching OR...

Go to Map
... Click "Create Report" to go straight to the report for your type of businesses and location

Create Report

or Search for your type of business
 Industry Title, Keyword, or NAICS Code

Powered by the U.S. Census Bureau and Esri. For help using this tool (including tutorial videos and FAQs), see the [CBB Home Page](#)
Learn more about other Census Bureau data that can help grow your business or understand your region by visiting the [Census Home Page](#)
Release: 2.2 (Build: 16)

Our task

To communicate the value of Census Bureau data to small businesses

- I. Design an audience-centered space for small businesses to access and use Census data
- II. Demonstrate a methodological, repeatable process for other audience-centered pages in the future

Our Minimum Viable Product (MVP) went live this week.

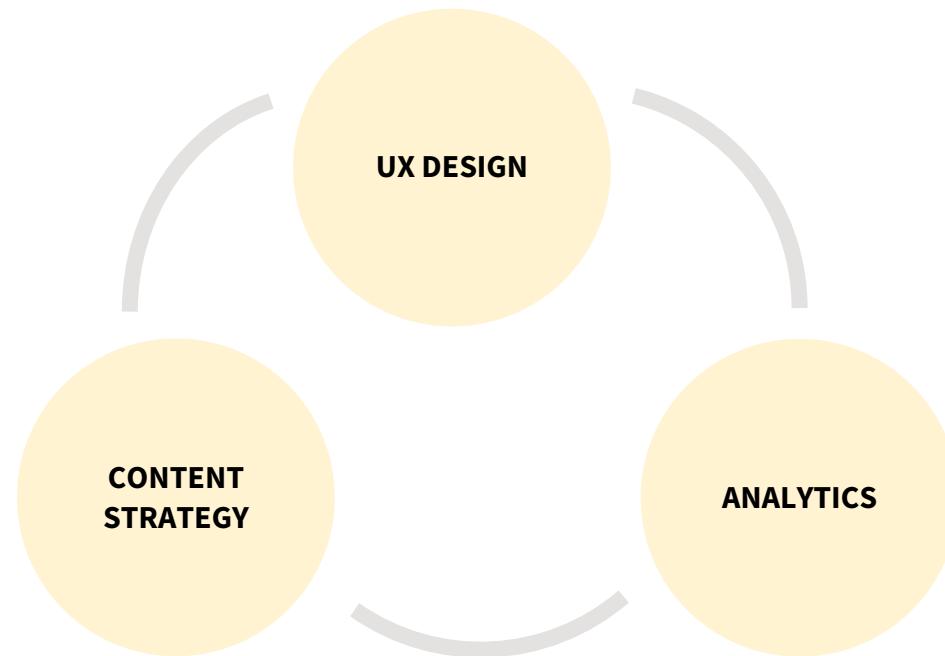
- ✓ **User-centric**
- ✓ **Intuitive**
- ✓ **Accessible**
- ✓ **Friendly**

CHECK IT OUT >>

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying a secure version of the Census Small Business website at <https://uscensusbureau.github.io/census-small-business/>. The page features a dark blue header with the United States Census Bureau logo and navigation links for Home, Start a business, Grow a business, Explore resources, and Get advice. Below the header is a large image of two people working at a desk with a laptop, smiling and looking at papers. Overlaid on this image is a white call-to-action box containing the text "Powerful Data for Your Small Business" in bold, followed by "Start making data-driven decisions, today." and a red "START NOW" button. At the bottom of the page, there is a quote: "Every successful business starts and grows with research. Find the best data about your customers and competitors." A horizontal blue bar is visible at the very bottom of the page.

Approach

We used an interdisciplinary approach in order to develop a holistic solution



User Research

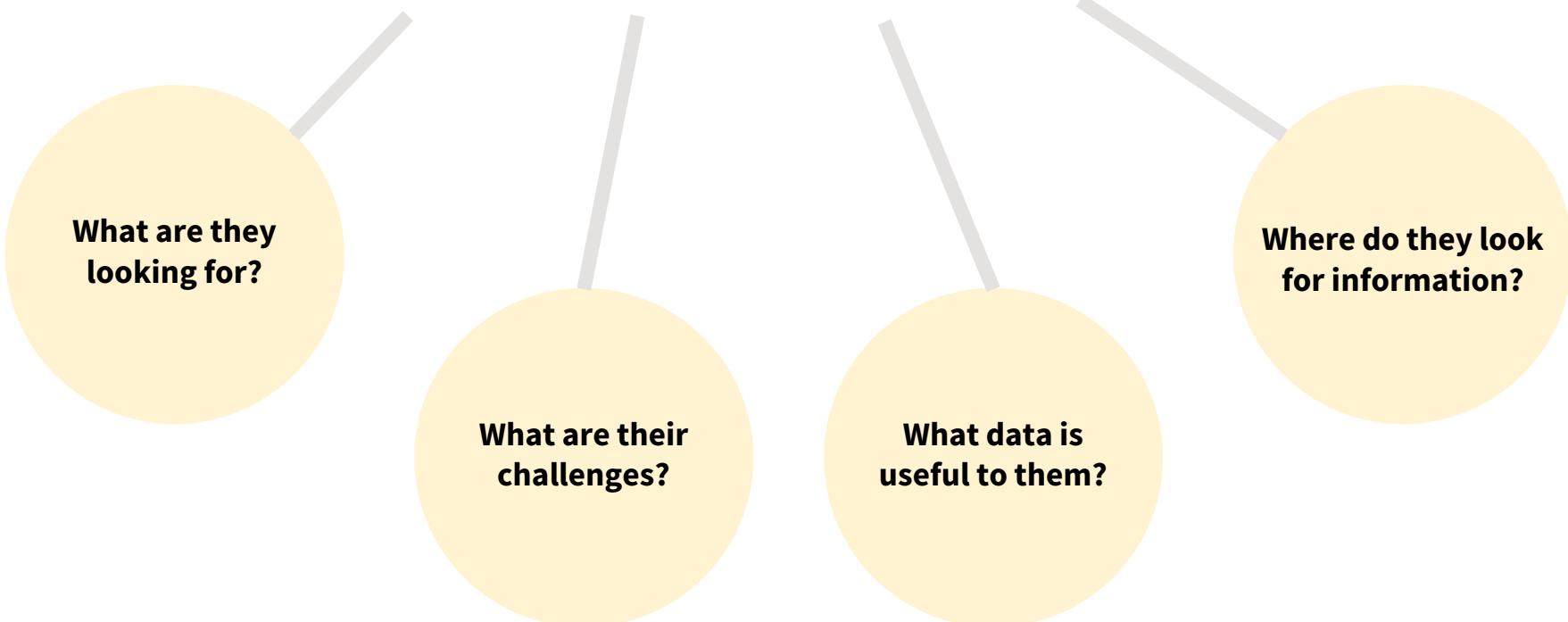
We conducted qualitative user research to better understand our small business users using a repeatable process

THE PROCESS

- 01** Identify goal of research
- 02** Formulate questions
- 03** Interview users strategically
- 04** Create personas
- 05** Inform design decisions

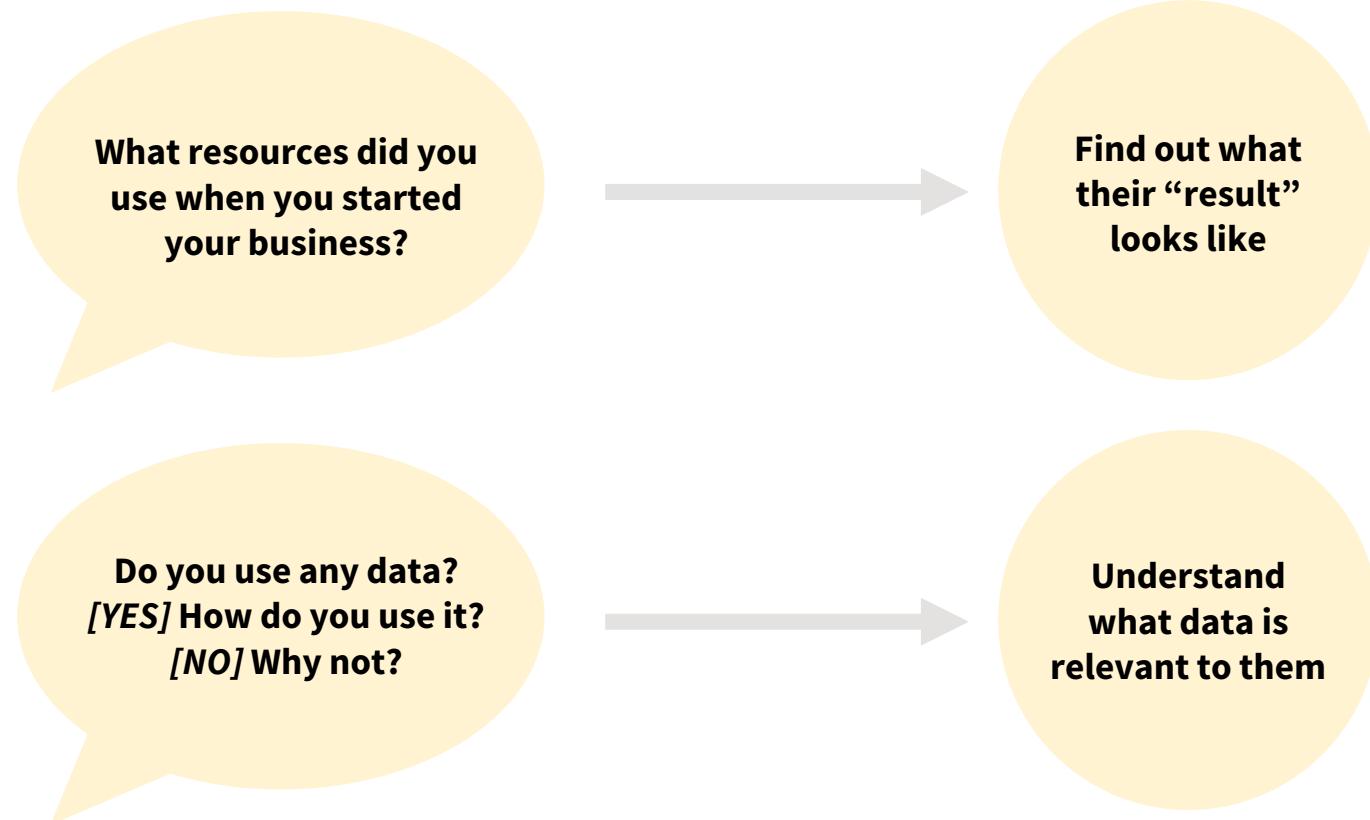
01 Identify goal of research

To better understand our Small Business users



02 Formulate questions

Questions map directly to a specific goal



03 Interview users strategically

We interviewed three different audiences in order to understand the small business needs from all perspectives



04 Create personas

We created personas for three types of small business users based on their stage of business and mapped their needs

DREAMER DAN

	Education HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE
	Product Knowledge BEGINNER
	Experience 0 YEARS
LIKES	
Google Easily accessible information Free information	
DISLIKES	
Complicated site navigation Extensive research Spending money	

Dan is currently employed but wants to start his own restaurant business. He doesn't know a lot about the restaurant industry, and does not know how to get started. Dan searches online for more information about the restaurant industry, how to create a business plan,



STARTUP SALLY

	Education COLLEGE GRADUATE
	Product Knowledge INTERMEDIATE
	Experience 4 MONTHS
LIKES	
Easily accessible information Social Media	
DISLIKES	
Surveys Forms Time-intensive activities	

Startup Sally has just launched her Marketing Agency. Before she launched, Sally needed to know her NAICS code in order to get help from the SBA. Sally has all her business forms filed but doesn't know how to reach her customers. She tries social media outreach and Facebook ads. Sally is thinking about hiring her



ESTABLISHED EDDY

	Education GED, COLLEGE GRADUATE
	Product Knowledge EXPERT
	Experience 3 YEARS
LIKES	

Eddie has owned an auto repair shop for 3 years. He has 5 employees, but is always looking for more help. Eddie knows his customers, but wants to acquire more. Eddie has filled out Census surveys 3 times. He looks at zip code data and demographic data to find his customers. Eddie is now thinking about opening another location.



CHALLENGES

- Finding employees
- Advertising
- Acquiring customers

SKILLS

- Deep industry knowledge

JOURNEY MAPS

	START	LOOKING FOR	DESIRED RESULT	HOW TO CAPTURE
DREAMER DAN		Business Plan How to start a business in x location	Step by step guide Various types of content	Provide localized data "Census data could be helpful"
STARTUP SALLY		NAICS code How to choose location for business	Simple NAICS code search Guidance on factors to consider choosing location	Simplify NAICS search "Census info is user-friendly"
ESTABLISHED EDDY		Target market data Employee salary statistics	Customer data by zip code Industry employee salaries	Quickly present use cases "Census data is relevant to me"
		Industry competitor data Customer data by zip code	Detailed reports	Improve messaging about report feature "Census data is comprehensive and easy to obtain"

05 Inform design decisions

We then used this research to inform our key design decisions,
always putting the user first

CONCLUSION

CBB is a great tool but largely miscommunicated

Small business lack time and care about localized, specific data

Small businesses don't know which data they need

DESIGN DECISION

Use the new site to **quickly communicate the value** of CBB
Key messages to communicate: **use cases, report feature**

Quickly **show the value upfront** without requiring small business to use CBB initially
Reduce high upfront transaction cost

Illustrate **success stories** and provide **walkthrough use cases** to demonstrate how their questions can be answered with census data

Analytics

We conducted an **insights-driven internal audit** through both **quantitative** and **qualitative** approaches to understand how current small business-related pages were performing



I. Quantitative analysis

We used Adobe Analytics to run customized internal reports.

In analyzing data we considered *single-page visits, exit pages, average time spent on page, and more* in order to **understand the way customers are interacting with the site.**

28%

exit NAICS search immediately

46%

immediately leave small business topics page

56%

CBB users left without creating a report

II. Qualitative analysis

Numbers don't tell stories.

We combined insights gained from speaking to the Call Center with ForeSee customer feedback to understand users' pain points.

"I guess it's not your job to explain NAICS to the general public,

but there's no way to search on the site if you don't understand NAICS. Useless."

"The data you guys collect is great but this website is cumbersome and almost impossible to use.

Where is the guide that says, 'ok, if you are trying to do this, here's where you go'"

Strategic takeaways

We used this data to create and validate insights from our user research about the digital experience of our small business users.

- 1. Census Bureau data is not easily accessible to novice users**
- 2. The Census is not providing value to small business owners**
- 3. Census Business Builder navigation is not user-intuitive**
- 4. NAICS page has high traffic but low customer satisfaction**
- 5. Analytics indicate user frustration with small business-related pages**

Content Strategy

We used user-centric language to transform our content and make it accessible for small business owners

THE PROCESS

- 01** Conduct content audit
- 02** Establish voice and tone
- 03** Create site map
- 04** Produce meaningful content
- 05** Implement SEO

01 Conduct content audit

We conducted an audit examining existing Census content, as well as our partner and competitor sites, to understand the current strategy and its successes and pitfalls.



WHO IS THE CONTENT OWNER?

WHAT CONTENT IS AVAILABLE ON CENSUS.GOV?

WHAT ARE OUR CONTENT COMPETITORS DOING?

02 Establish voice and tone

We identified key goals and worked to define the Census Bureau's personality as it adapted to our business audience.

VOICE

Human – but also a government agency

Friendly – yet not too casual

Expert – but not condescending

Objective – yet not emotionless

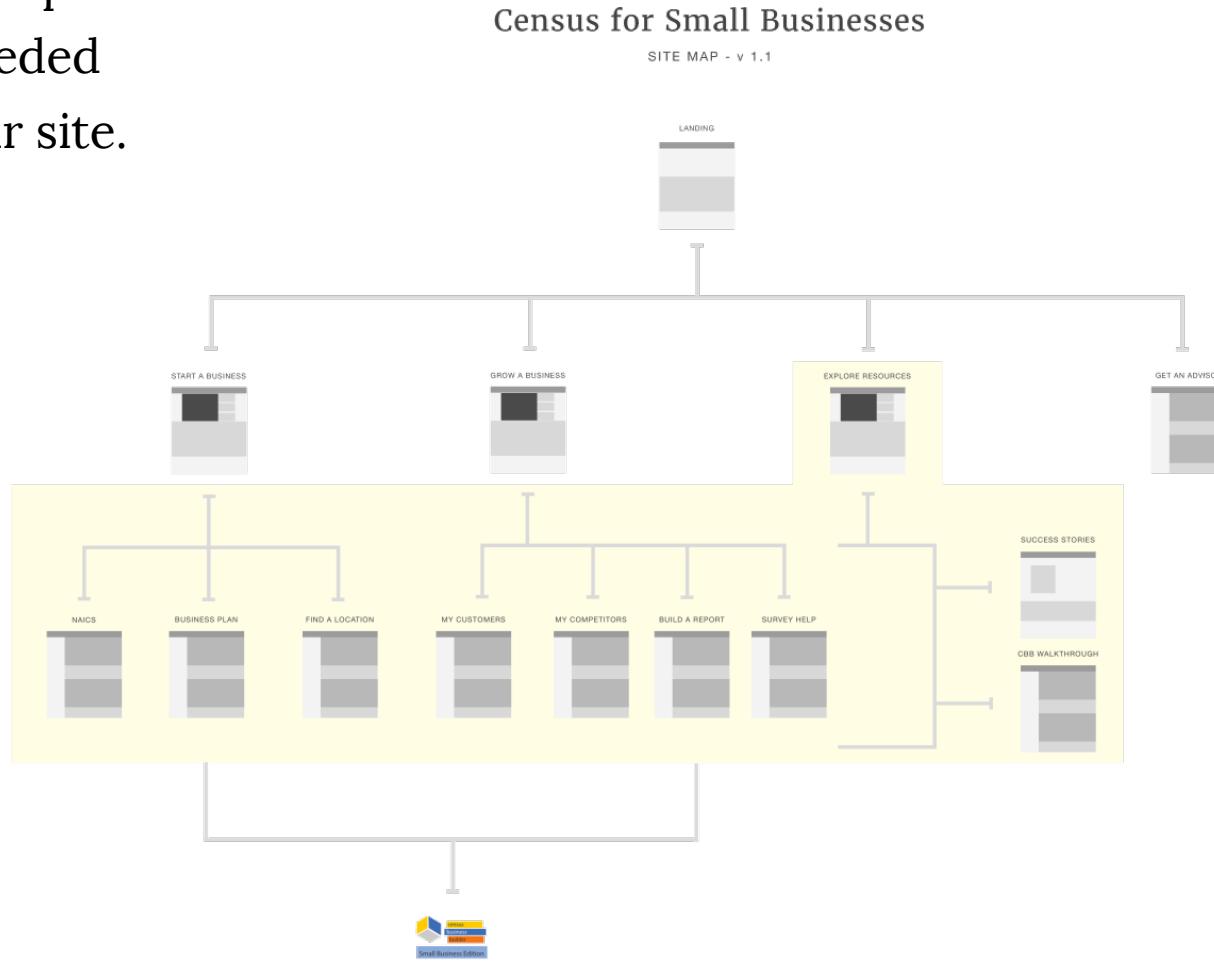
TONE

Goal-oriented

Instructive

03 Create a site map

We worked together to create a site map showing what types of content we needed and how users would interact with our site.



04 Produce meaningful content

We mapped our content needs to our goals to create content that would bring value to our small business users.

TOPIC PAGES

Business Plan, Customers

WALKTHROUGHS & USE CASES

Using CBB, Start a Restaurant

MICROCOPY & GRAPHICS

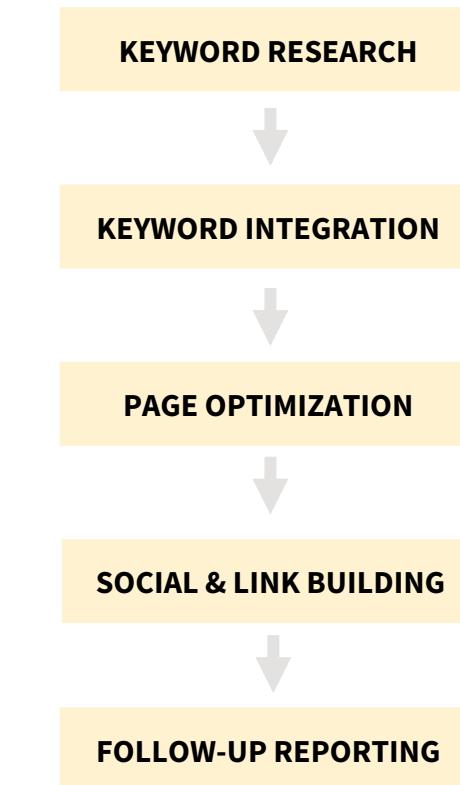
Teaser text, GIFs, Images

05 Implement Search Engine Optimization

We found underrated content, which is characterized by a high number of visits but a low number of search engine referrals.

These pages presented an opportunity to optimize, but there was no **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)** process.

THE PROCESS



Wireframes & Development

Using these design decisions, we made quick low-fidelity mockups to show to potential users

After getting feedback on the designs we developed an MVP following U.S. Web Design Standards and its pattern library

The final design decisions were the result of an interdisciplinary approach to conducting research.

Quickly **show the value of CBB**



56%

CBB users left without making a report



Help users understand how to use Census Bureau tools

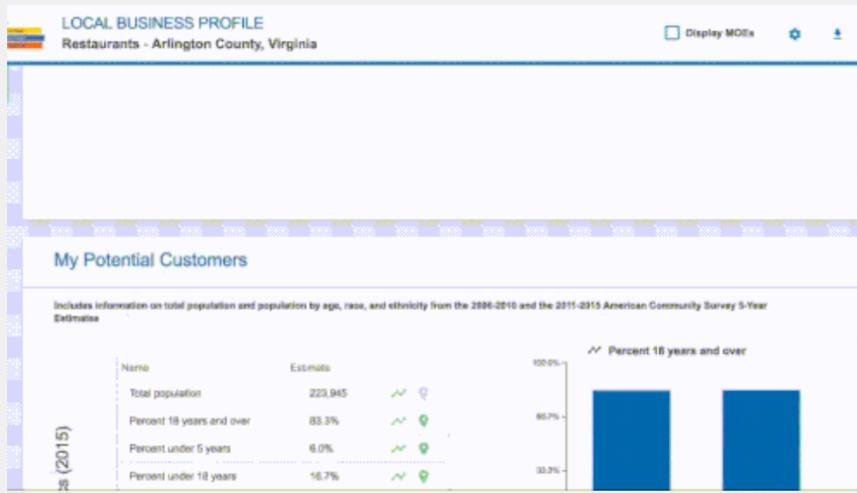
USER RESEARCH

QUANTITATIVE ANALYTICS

CONTENT STRATEGY

Build a report to learn more about your industry and your community.

Census Business Builder reports allow you to find data and interactive charts for your business research.



MY NAICS CODE

Don't know your NAICS code?

MY ZIPCODE

FIND MY DATA

Each page was designed with specific goals in mind.

LANDING PAGE GOALS

Quickly communicate value of CBB with interactive, location-specific data

Give industry-specific use cases of relevant Census Bureau data

For Small Businesses

Powerful Data for Your Small Business

Start making data-driven decisions, today.

ACTION

To be successful you need to learn more about your market.
Quickly find the best data about your customers and competitors.

12345

DEMOGRAPHICS

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Powerful Data for Your Small Business

Start making data-driven decisions, today.

ACTION

12345

ACTION

123456

POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS

\$1,234

AVG. SPENT DINING OUT

1234

CONVENIENCE STORES

ACTION

Finally we developed an MVP using the U.S.
Web Design Standards in a two-week sprint.

HTML/CSS

SASS

JavaScript

JQuery

Gulp

REST API

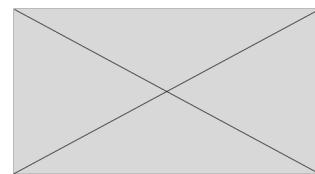
JSON



Powerful Data for Your Small Business

Start making data-driven decisions, today.

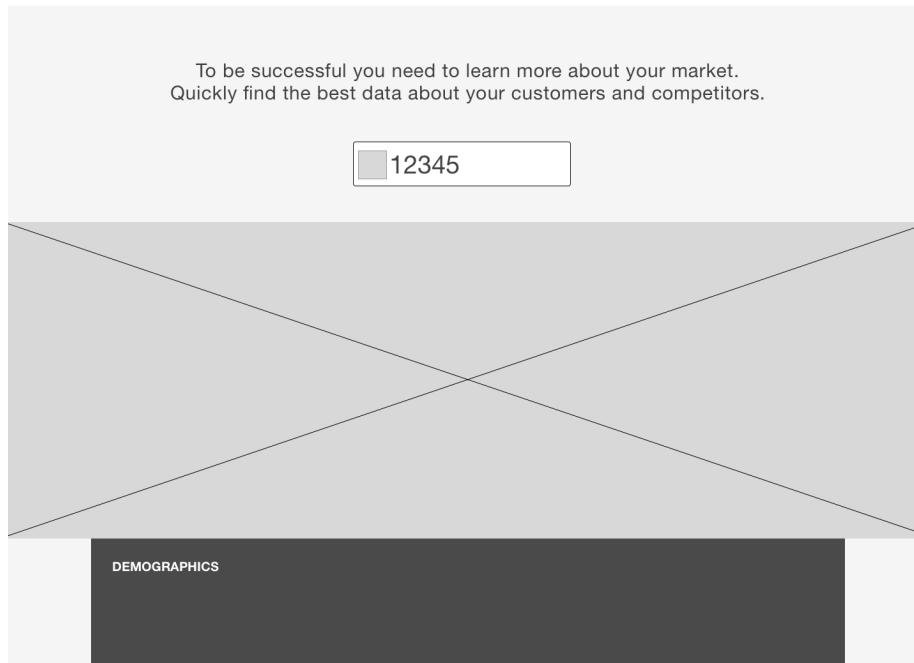
ACTION



To be successful you need to learn more about your market.
Quickly find the best data about your customers and competitors.

12345

DEMOGRAPHICS



The screenshot shows the final version of the website. The header includes the 'United States Census Bureau' logo and navigation links for Home, Start a business, Grow a business, Explore resources, and Get advice. A search bar is also present. The main content features a large image of two people working at a desk, with the text 'Powerful Data for Your Small Business' and a 'START NOW' button. Below this, a sub-section highlights research data with the text 'Every successful business starts and grows with research.' and a call to action 'Find the best data about your customers and competitors.' A large blue button displays the number '77059' and a 'LET'S GO' button. The footer shows 'SHOWING DATA FOR Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX Metro Area' and three data cards: Median Household Income (\$128,406), Median Age (45), and Employed Individuals (14,152).

\$128,406

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Income levels can help you determine what types of goods and services your customers can afford.

45

MEDIAN AGE

This data can help you understand the breakdown of ages in your area.

14,152

EMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

This data can help you determine what types of goods and services your customers may be interested in.

We learned a lot.

-  Things happen. Your deadlines may change, so flexibility is key.
-  Stakeholders ask for a lot. Find their common ground and build your MVP.
-  Your product will never be perfect. Just get it out there, test it, and do it again.

Thank you!

Lisa Wolfisch

Michele Bartram

Jeff Meisel

Andrew Hait

Francine Krasowska

Bryant Turner

Gregory Henle

Mark Tolbert

The CLMSO Contact Center

Data Dissemination Specialists

The Public Information Office

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