

Rapid Response Approach

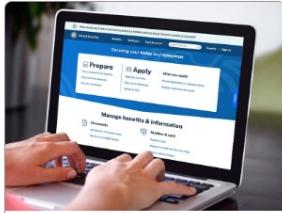
Improving Benefit Program Customer Experience with Data and Design

U.S. Digital Service
January 2025

Background

Who we are

A federal tech team that is rapidly deployed to solve the nation's most pressing challenges.



SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION Continuously improving SSA.gov

The Social Security Administration is building on the momentum from their partnership with the U.S. Digital Service by implementing iterative research, best practices, and a data-informed approach to ensure the website is usable and useful.

[Learn more](#)



HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES Critical code: building COVID-19 vaccine finder tools

With the American public eager for COVID-19 vaccinations, The White House partnered with the U.S. Digital Service, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, the Department of Health & Human Services, and Boston Children's Hospital to launch a fleet of tools connecting people to life-saving vaccines.

[Learn more](#)



CROSS-AGENCY Changing how the government hires technical talent

We helped develop a process that allows HR to leverage subject matter experts to evaluate candidates for specialized roles. The result restores fair and open access for all applicants, shortens the hiring timeline, and ensures applicants are truly qualified.

[Learn more](#)



Who we are

A small, scrappy, collaborative team with decades of experience designing, building, and improving government services.



September 2023
USDS on-site for **Medicaid technical assistance**

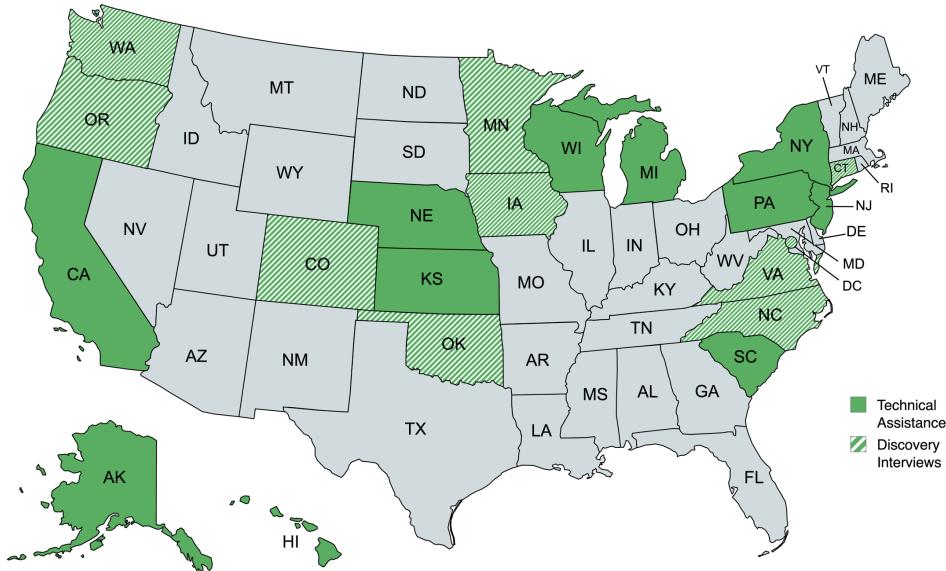


August 2024
USDS on-site for **SNAP technical assistance**



Medicaid

Throughout 2023 and into 2024, USDS worked with CMS to address Medicaid administrative churn during the wind down of pandemic-related flexibilities.



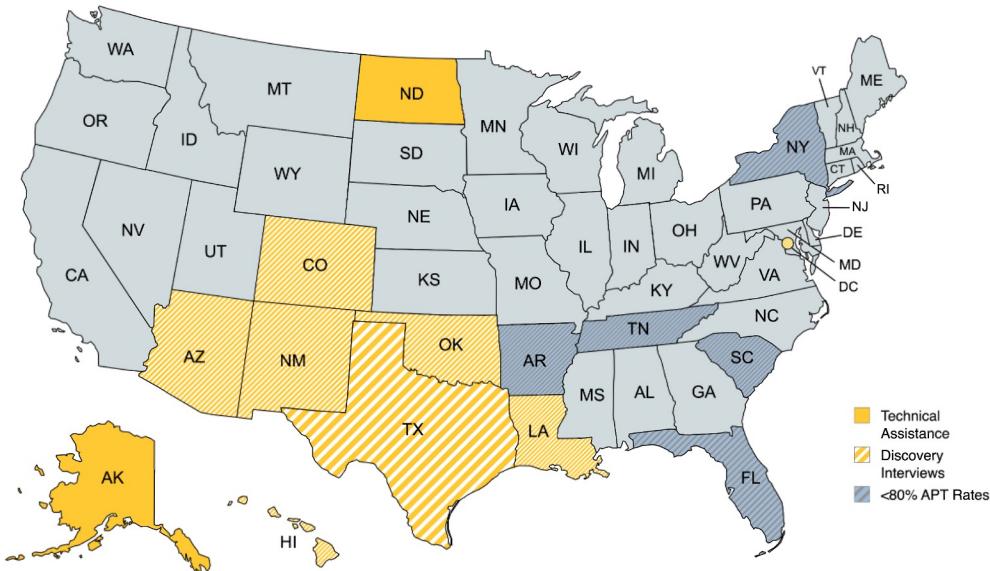
Impact

- Decreased administrative program burden by 2+ million hours each for eligibility workers and the public
- Automatically renewed 1.5+ million people for health care; projected to auto renew over 5 million more



SNAP

In March 2024, USDA requested USDS assistance to address SNAP program administration concerns across the nation.

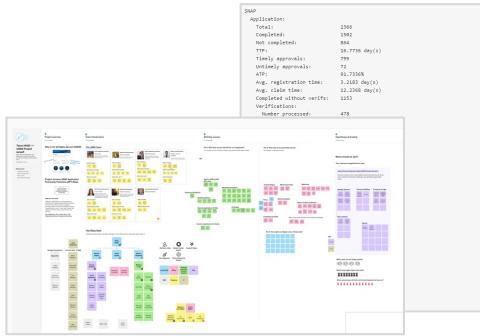


Impact

- Across pilot states, improvements to systems and processes are projected to improve program efficiency and decrease manual administrative work by **over 2.7M hours** and **improve efficiency by 20-30% per state**



Approach



The dashboard shows a list of tasks with columns for 'Workstream', 'Status', and 'State Owner'. A specific task is highlighted with a 'Done' status. The mobile phone screen shows a text message from 'Division of Public Assistance' regarding a SNAP phone interview scheduled for 10/21/24 between 10am and 12pm, with a call-to-action to dial 1-800-478-7778.

Pre-onsite

3-4 weeks

Key Activities

- Kick off
- Data analysis
- Shadowing
- Desk research

Onsite

1 week

Key Activities

- Co-design
- Prioritization
- MVP definition
- Report

Post-onsite

4-8 weeks

Key Activities

- Product sprints
- Technical design
- Leadership check-ins
- Launch planning



Implementation Tactics

Challenges

Across States and Programs

Data and metrics	Manual processing	Quality control
Technical capacity	Vendor management	Expiring waivers
Complex eligibility systems	Interviews	Beneficiary communications
Problem prioritization	Notices	Expedited cases
Call centers	Client verifications	Data connections
EBT theft	Eligibility task management	Document upload
Staffing shortages	Policy changes	HCD capacity
Eligibility experience	Error resolution	Backlogs



Challenges

Example #1

Across States and Programs

Data and metrics

Manual processing

Quality control

Technical capacity

Vendor management

Expiring waivers

Complex eligibility systems

Interviews

Beneficiary communications

Problem prioritization

Notices

Expedited cases

Call centers

Client verifications

Data connections

EBT theft

Eligibility task management

Document upload

Staffing shortages

Policy changes

HCD capacity

Eligibility experience

Error resolution

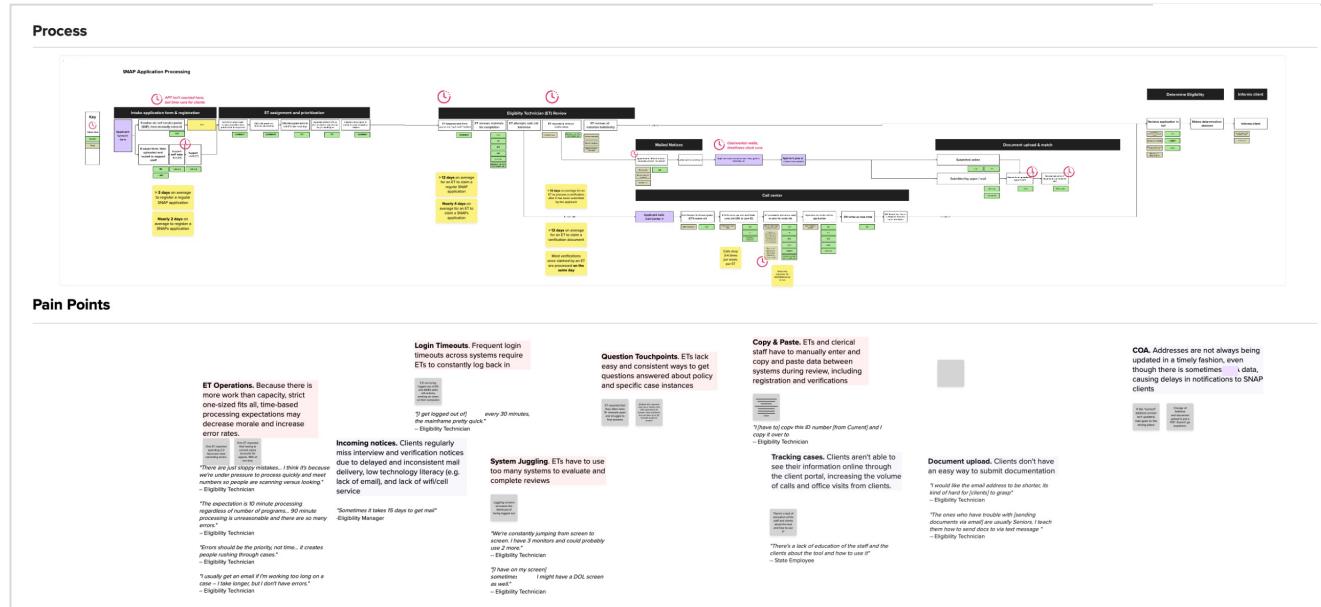
Backlogs



The Challenge

Example #1

Eligibility workers struggle to process cases efficiently across systems which are challenging to understand and use.



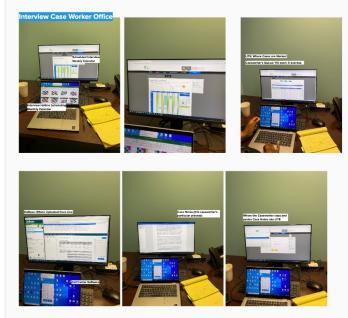
Potential Approach

Example #1

Center the needs and experiences of eligibility workers to identify pain points across current systems and co-design solutions.



Where to start?



Observe newer and more tenured EWs process cases

An easy way to start is by increasing the number of regular demos that staff see of cases being processed front-to-back

Central Usability Study Plan and Discussion Guide

Last updated October 3, 2024

Background

In August 2024, Health First Colorado completed a collaborative grant with the United States Digital Service (USDS) to identify opportunities to increase application processing timeliness (APT), improve customer eligibility/winner experiences, and/or design solutions to address challenges.

An opportunity championed by the eligibility workers and staff was to create a centralized “one-stop shop” resource for the Eligibility technicians noted that currently hours are wasted each week trying to find the right information and resources to answer member and advocate questions up-to-date. This adds unnecessary time and burden to processing.

Estimates shared by eligibility workers note that creating a centralized “one-stop shop” resource for top Elig issues would save approximately 10 hours per month in time spent looking for answers. This, called Central, since May 2024 and incorporating feedback within an advisory board as the go.

Prior to launch, the team will have to conduct a usability study to test the extent to which the current proposed design for Central is helpful and easy to use for eligibility technicians and field staff.

Study goals:

1. Learn which aspects of Central study participants find helpful and/or easy to use.
2. Identify top pain points across Central—areas of confusion or frustration—to address prior to launch.
3. Identify any outstanding content areas, if any, that study participants have identified as top.

Conduct usability testing with EWs when developing new features

When developing new features, run usability testing sessions with 5 participants to gather 85% of usability challenges before making additional improvements

Example #1

Health First COLORADO Colorado's Medicaid Program

Log in to PFAK | En Español | Other Languages

search the site

Apply Now Find a Doctor Benefits & Services

FAQs News & Resources Get Help

Member Experience Advisory Council

Improving Member Experience

Health First Colorado and Child Health Plan Plus members, we need your voice!

At the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, we recognize the Tina's Story: Dreaming for our future Share

Establish an EW Advisory Council

For on-going feedback, consider setting up an advisory council of eligibility staff that meets regularly to share challenges and provide feedback on updates



Challenges

Example #2

Across States and Programs

Data and metrics

Technical capacity

Complex eligibility systems

Problem prioritization

Call centers

EBT theft

Staffing shortages

Eligibility experience

Manual processing

Vendor management

Interviews

Notices

Client verifications

Eligibility task management

Policy changes

Error resolution

Quality control

Expiring waivers

Beneficiary communications

Expedited cases

Data connections

Document upload

HCD capacity

Backlogs



The Challenge

Example #2

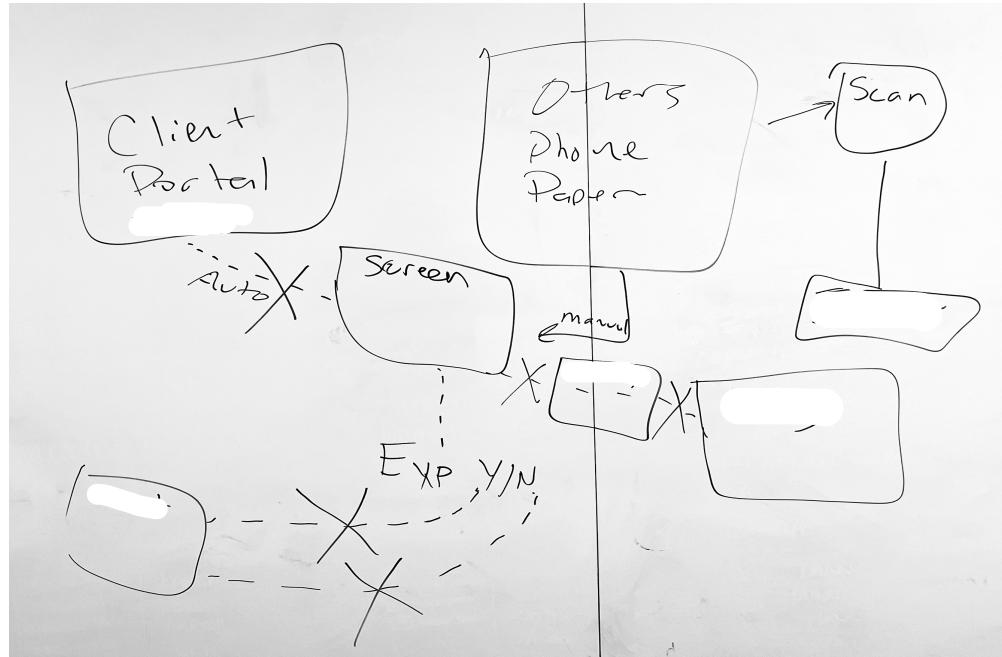
States have plenty of great ideas on how to improve their programs, but it's not always clear where to start.



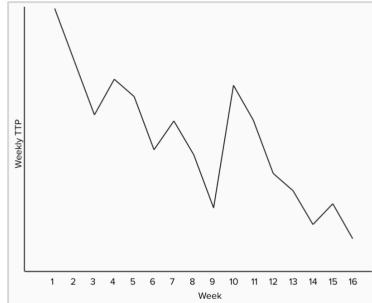
Potential Approach

Example #2

Take a data-driven quantitative lens to prioritize problems based on their potential for highest impact.

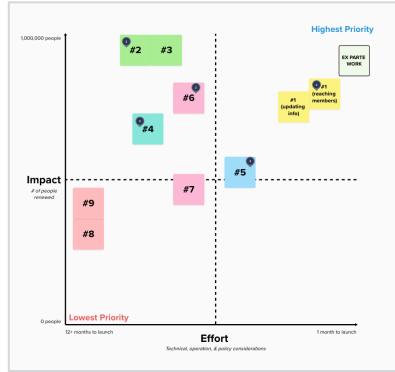


Where to start?



Track Time to Process (TTP)

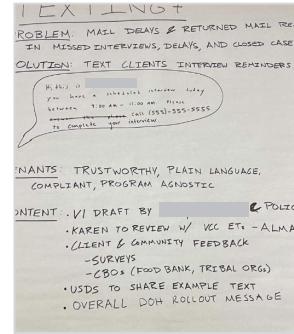
Time to Process (TTP) is the time interval from when an application is received or recertification sent to the time when an eligibility decision is made.



Prioritize improvements by weighing impact vs. effort

Rate each proposed feature by comparing the estimated time saved against the time to implement. Choose high-impact, low-effort improvements to pilot first.

Example #2



Develop an MVP

Start with the smallest version of the feature that still provides benefit and prove that it works. Follow up with multiple quick, iterative improvements and track with A/B testing.



Discussion

Questions

What approaches have you tried?

What has been successful?

Where would implementation support be helpful over the next few months?

Thank you.

phe-snap@usds.gov

U.S. Digital Service
January 2025