# Break down silos and scale impact with research operations

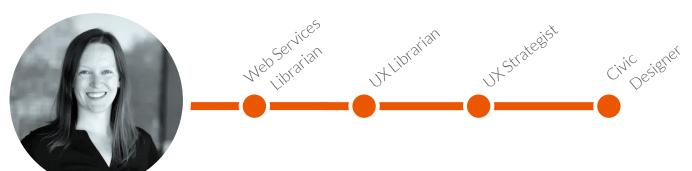
Service Design in Government [Virtual] 07 March 2024

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Rebecca Blakiston Sr Researcher, Ad Hoc



### Let's get interactive



Scan the QR code with your phone or open another browser window at: pollev.com/rebeccab909

You'll be anonymously responding to questions, and we'll see the live results on the screen!



In one word, describe a challenge your organization is facing.

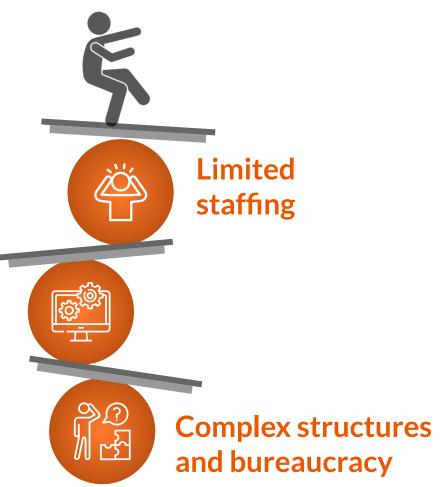
Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.



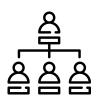
## The realities of designing government services

Common challenges for government agencies



**Outdated** technology

## Information silos in government are the result of...



#### **Organisation structure**

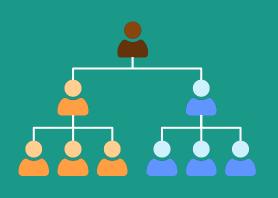


Poor communication policies/practices

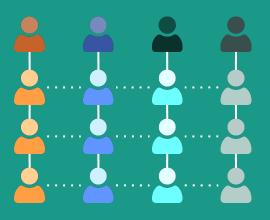


Inconsistent data governance

#### Types of organisational structures



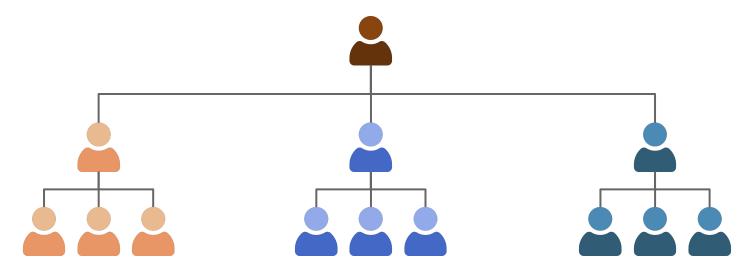




**Division-based** 

**Project-based** 

**Matrixed** 



Unemployment Insurance Division

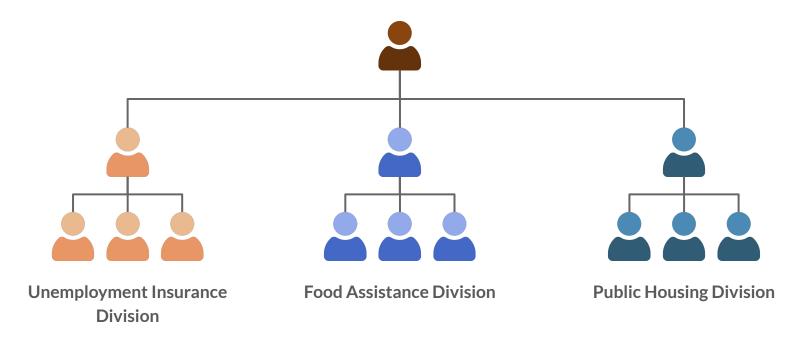
Reviews applications from people who are seeking financial support while looking for work.

**Food Assistance Division** 

Manages a program that provides vouchers for low income families to subsidize food costs.

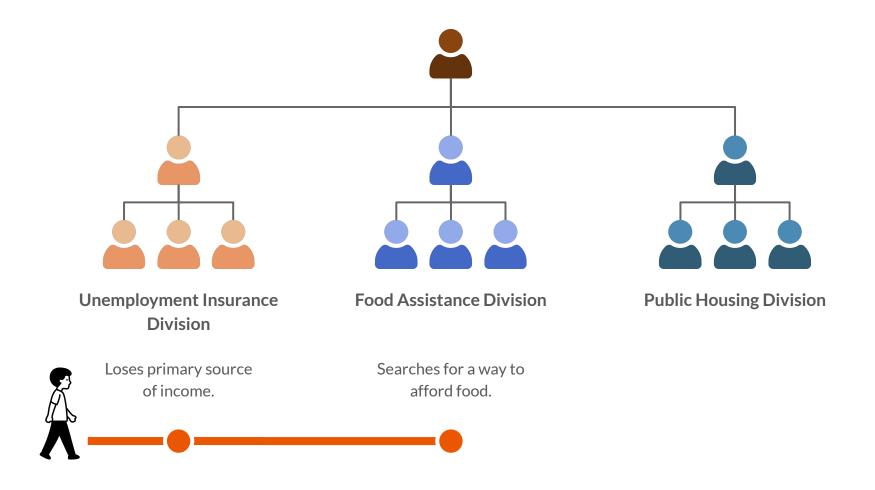
**Public Housing Division** 

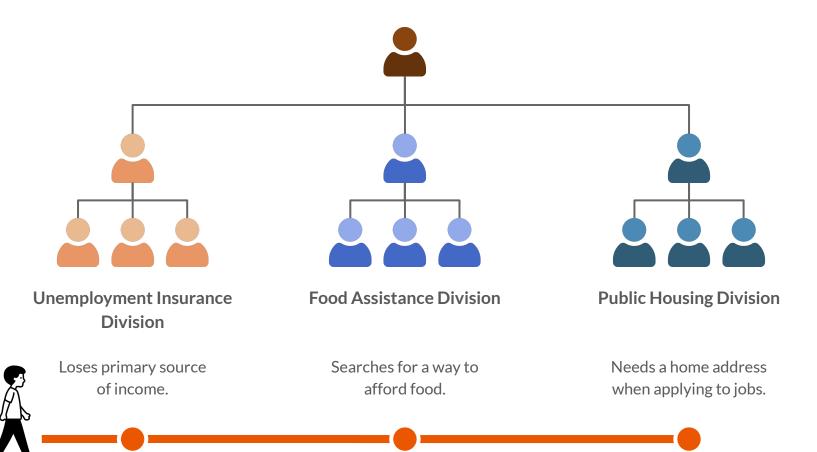
Develops resources for low income individuals seeking stable housing.

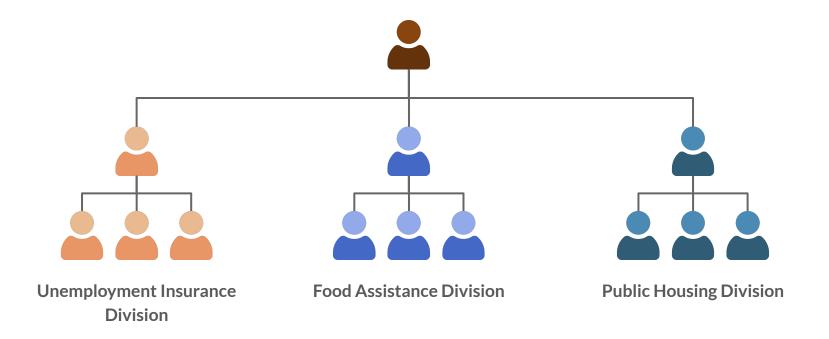




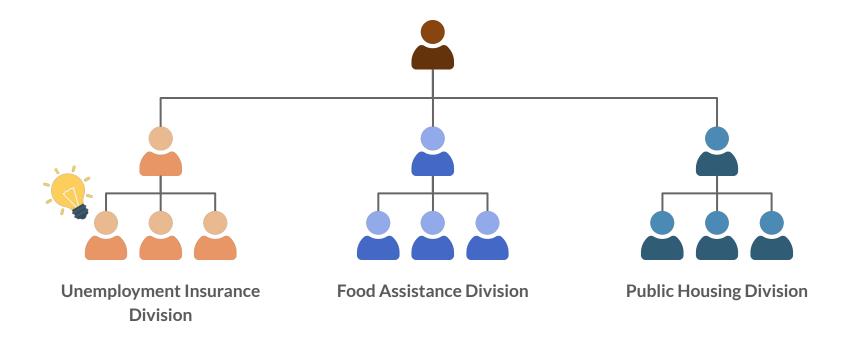
Loses primary source of income.





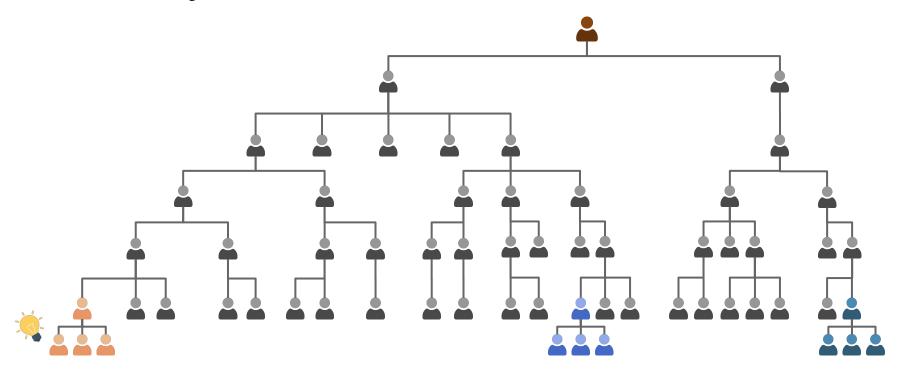


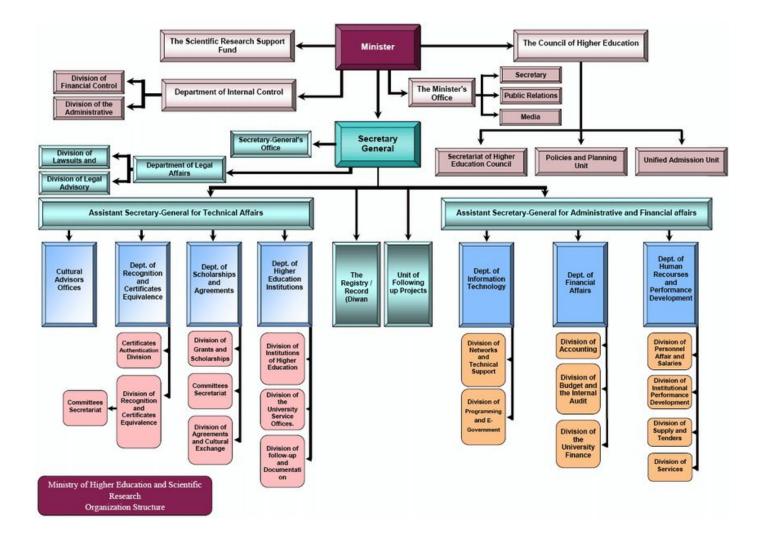
A user's journey is likely to involve public services managed by teams spread out across an agency.



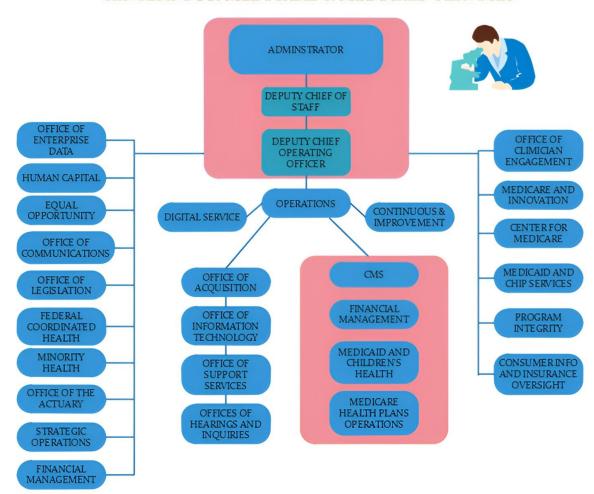
A service designer in the unemployment insurance divisions discovers that there is a significant drop off in applicants from individuals who do not have a permanent mailing address.

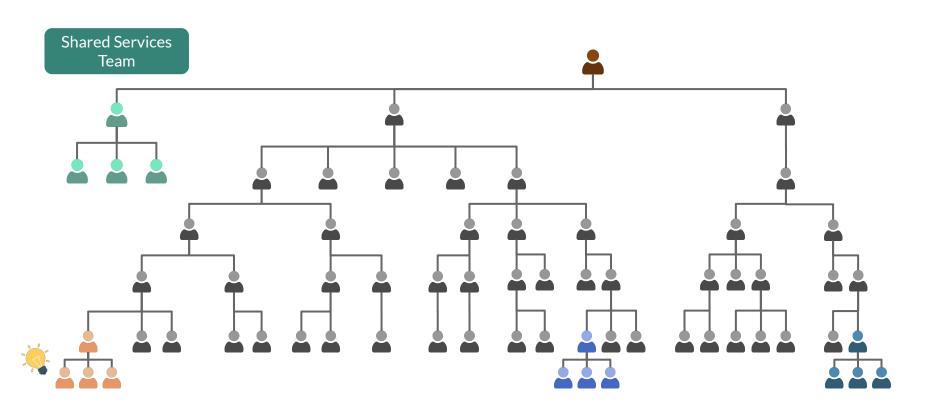
#### The reality is more like this...



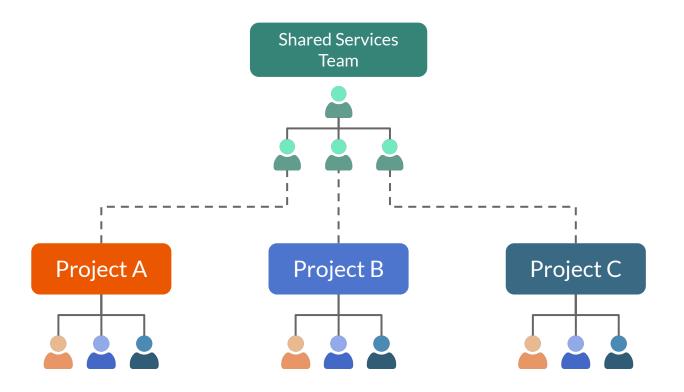


#### **CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES**

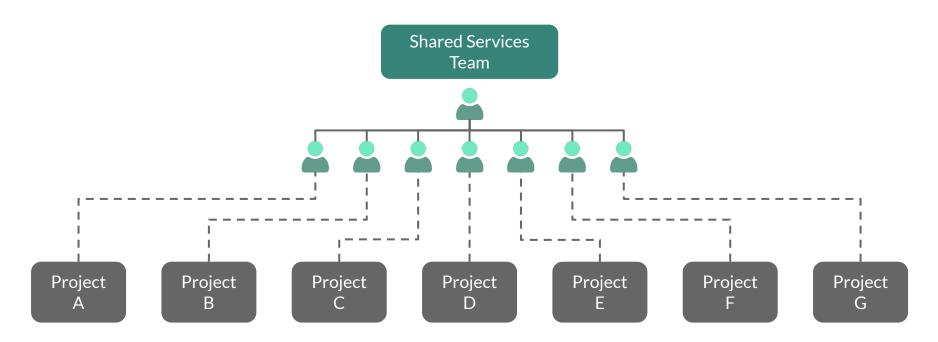


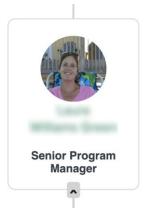


Centralized teams spread out between projects and act as a communication proxy for sharing relevant insights across an organization.



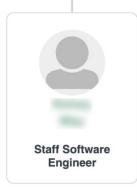
But as the team expands, information silos can persist if knowledge is not properly managed.









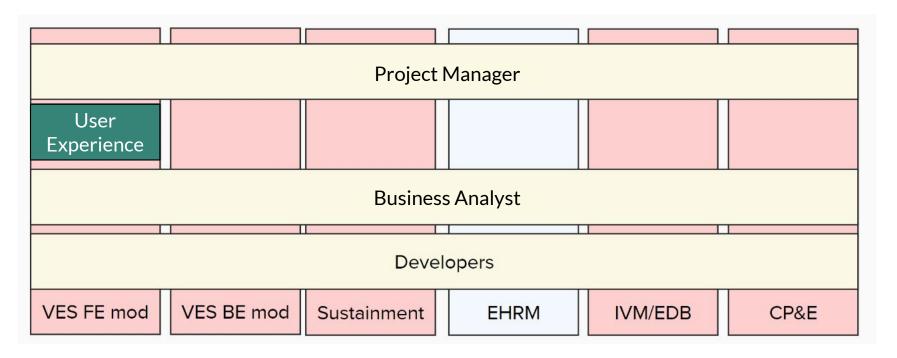








Portfolio of modules owned by **Division A** and **Division B** and maintained by **contractors** embedded across each module.



**User experience team** is part of a separate centralized team and split across multiple portfolios.

#### What kind of structure do you work in?

Division-based 0% Project-based 0% Matrixed 0% A combination 0% Unsure 0%



## Have no fear... Research Ops is here!

#### What is ResOps?

"The practice of Research Operations (ResearchOps) focuses on processes and measures that support researchers in **planning**, **conducting**, and **applying** quality research at scale."

Kate Kaplan, Nielsen Norman Group

nngroup.com/articles/research-ops-101

#### The principles of Research Operations are nothing new...

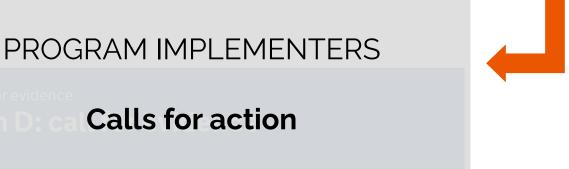
Estimation of the dietary requirement for vitamin D NEWS RELEASE 18-OCT-2016 in adolescents aged 14-18 y: a dose-response, Study reveals high levels of vitamin D double-blind, randomized placebo-controlled trial inadequacy in UK adolescents Peer-Reviewed Publication Taryn J Smith 

M, Laura Tripkovic, Camilla T Damsgaard, Christian Mølgaard, Christian Ritz, Saskia L Wilson-Barnes, Kirsten G Dowling, Aine Hennessy, Kevin D Cashman, Mairead Kiely ... Show more © 26 Oct 2016 Many teens showing vitamin D deficiency The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, Volume 104, Issue 5, November 2016, Pages 1301-1309, https://doi.org/10.3945/ajcn.116.138065 DRUM Drum Digital Published: 21 September 2016 Article history ▼

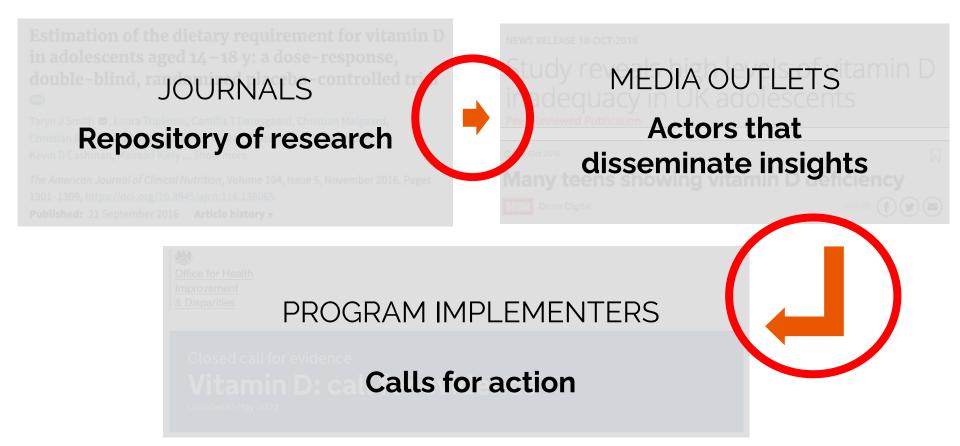


What we end up with are loosely coupled components that make up an ecosystem that's responsible for a public health initiative.





There are mechanisms that move insights across the ecosystem and drive action.



### Mechanisms that drive evidence-based program design

- Conferences
- Communities of practices
- Professional associations
- Advocacy organizations
- Infrastructure to navigate and deliver insights/research
- Formal/informal partnerships between organizations

## ResOps looks different depending on an organisation's size



Small and Lightweight



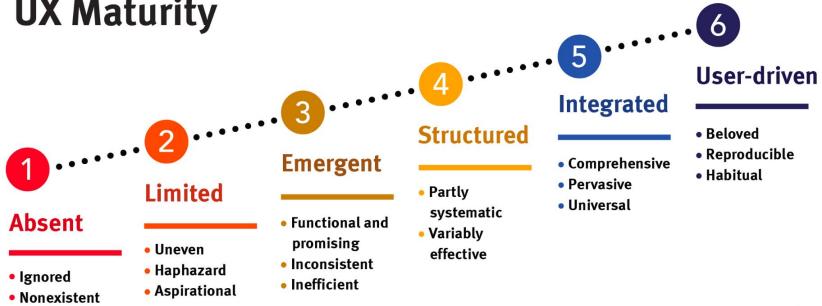
Medium and Structured



Large and Robust

## **Stages** *of* **UX Maturity**

Undiscovered



#### Stages of

#### **ResearchOps** Maturity

Limited **Absent** 

No research is done

Occasional, ad hoc research

**Emergent** 

Some research support structures developing

**Structured** 

**Established** research support structures and/or roles

**Integrated** 

Consistent standards and practices organizationwide

Research-driven

**Culture of** user-centered and evidence-based decisions

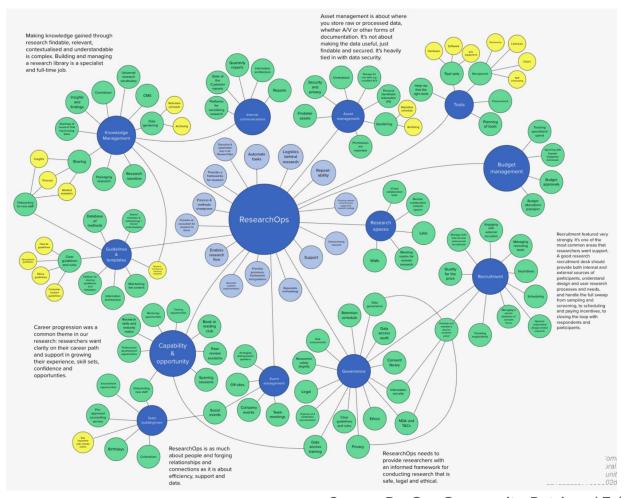
NNGROUP.COM

#### What is your organization's ResOps maturity?

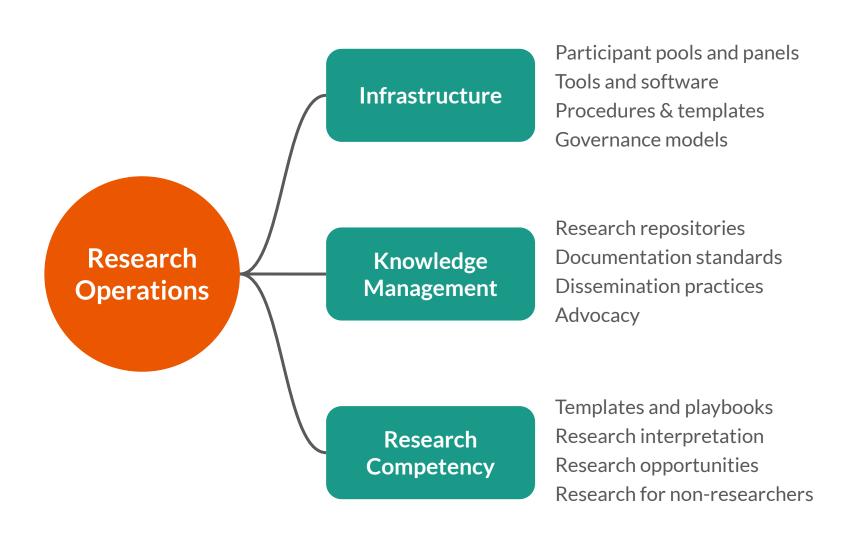
1: Absent	
	0%
2: Limited	
	0%
3: Emergent	
	0%
4: Structured	
	0%
5: Integrated	
	0%
6: Research-driven	
	0%



#### **ResOps in action**



Source: ResOps Community, Retrieved February 19, 2024, from medium.com/researchops-community/a-framework-for-whatisresearchops-e862315ab70d



## Infrastructure

#### THE CHALLENGE

Recruitment logistics and participation

#### WHAT CAN HELP

Participant pools and panels

## **University of Arizona**

Participant pool recruitment form

Tool: Mailchimp / Buttondown <u>lib.arizona.edu/participant-pool</u>

Last name
Last name

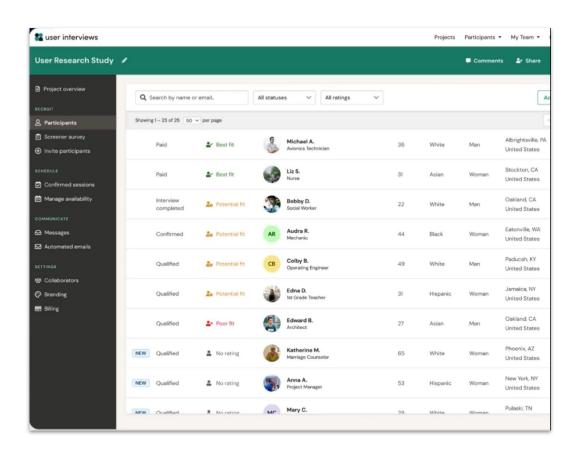
# Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry

Tool: Airtable



## CRM for Hospital User Research

Tool: Research Hub by User Interviews



## Knowledge Management

#### THE CHALLENGE

Losing track of insights and reinventing the wheel

#### WHAT CAN HELP

Research repositories

## University of Arizona

Searchable and filterable database of projects

Tool: Notion lib.arizona.edu/research-repo

A List of projects ... Aa Title of the project Date = Researcher(s) ⊞ Related department 5 Special Collections first-click: Test 02/16/2024 first-click testing Aly Higgins, Bob Special Collections the homepage Liu, Hoa Hoang Migrating Rooms & spaces pages: 01/31/2024 usability testing Hoa Hoang, Megan Access & Info Services Straffon, Linda test LibCal booking tool Lopez, Aly Higgins, Bob Liu Navigating physical library spaces: 01/03/2024 talk-back board Leonardo Echverria Access & Info Services understand what challenges users have Hoa Hoang, Aly Collection Services Higgins General library feedback: learn how 11/01/2023 talk-back board Aly Higgins, students use the library during finals Leonardo Echeverria Migrating Special Collections 10/18/2023 user interviews Leonardo Special Collections website: test sub-site navigation Echeverria, Hoa usability testing Hoang, Aly Higgins General library feedback: learn what 10/11/2023 talk-back board Leonardo Echeverria Marketing Communications students wish they knew about the library Migrating Special Collections 10/04/2023 first-click testing Leonardo Echeverria Special Collections website: validate How to use Special Collections content • Re-thinking Find materials menu: test 09/20/2023 tree testing Aly Higgins, Bob Liu, Collection Services Leonardo menu structure Student Learning & Engagement Echeverria, Megan Research Engagement Straffon Creating menu landing pages: 09/13/2023 usability testing Aly Higgins, Choose language for main menu link Leonardo Q 2 Echeverria, Megan Straffon

## University of Arizona

Template and content guidelines for new projects

Tool: Notion

lib.arizona.edu/research-repo

#### Adding a "Method(s)" tag

The "Method(s)" tags name UX research methods that are commonly used by our team and easy to understand. We use tags to help us organize the types of research repo entries and to make these entries easily findable.



The tag you add to your entry is the primary UX research method you used in your project. If you used additional UX research or design methods, you can name those in the title or body of your repo entry, or create separate repo entries for each method used.

#### How to add a tag

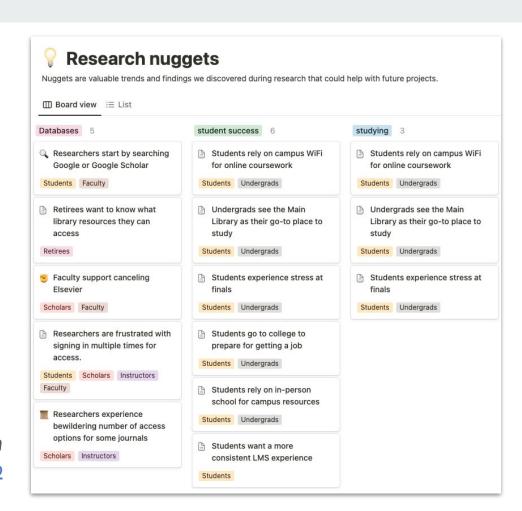
Add one tag per entry from the pre-determined list of tags. If a project uses more than one UX research method, we recommend creating separate entries for each method used.

However, use your best judgment. If you've completed multiple methods at the same time for a project and it makes sense to create a single entry for that project, you can add more than one tag to a repo entry. Try to keep it under 2 tags to prevent clutter.

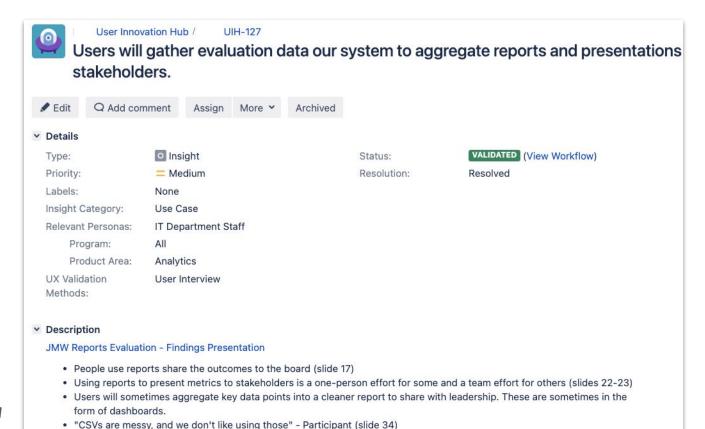
## **University of Arizona**

Insights tagged by audience and category

Tool: Notion <u>lib.arizona.edu/research-repo</u>



## Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services



Tool: Jira

## Veterans Affairs

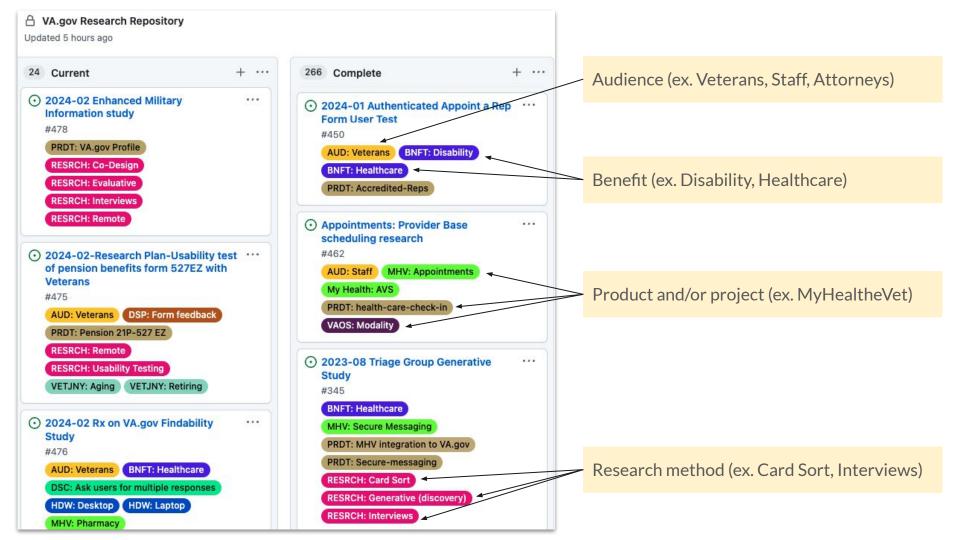
Categorized database of project findings

24 Current + ... 266 Complete 2024-02 Enhanced Military 2024-01 Authenticated Appoint a Rep ... Information study Form User Test #478 #450 PRDT: VA.gov Profile AUD: Veterans BNFT: Disability RESRCH: Co-Design BNFT: Healthcare **RESRCH: Evaluative** PRDT: Accredited-Reps **RESRCH: Interviews RESRCH: Remote**  Appointments: Provider Base scheduling research 2024-02-Research Plan-Usability test \*\*\* #462 of pension benefits form 527EZ with AUD: Staff MHV: Appointments Veterans My Health: AVS #475 PRDT: health-care-check-in AUD: Veterans DSP: Form feedback VAOS: Modality PRDT: Pension 21P-527 EZ RESRCH: Remote 2023-08 Triage Group Generative RESRCH: Usability Testing Study VETJNY: Aging VETJNY: Retiring #345 BNFT: Healthcare 2024-02 Rx on VA.gov Findability MHV: Secure Messaging Study PRDT: MHV integration to VA.gov #476 PRDT: Secure-messaging BNFT: Healthcare AUD: Veterans RESRCH: Card Sort DSC: Ask users for multiple responses RESRCH: Generative (discovery) HDW: Desktop | HDW: Laptop **RESRCH: Interviews** MHV: Pharmacy

A VA.gov Research Repository

Updated 5 hours ago

Tool: GitHub





2024-02 VSO Listening Session

AUD: Attorneys AUD: VSOs

PRDT: Accredited-Reps

RESRCH: Generative (discovery)



#### 2024-02 VSO Listening Session #488



uxrebecca opened this issue 12 minutes ago · 0 comments



#### uxrebecca commented 12 minutes ago

Research Folder

Link to research folder in github and link to findings report.

Recruitment Criteria

Participants were recruited through direct outreach through VBA and included Veterans Service Officers and accredited attorneys.

#### Summary

We wanted to learn:

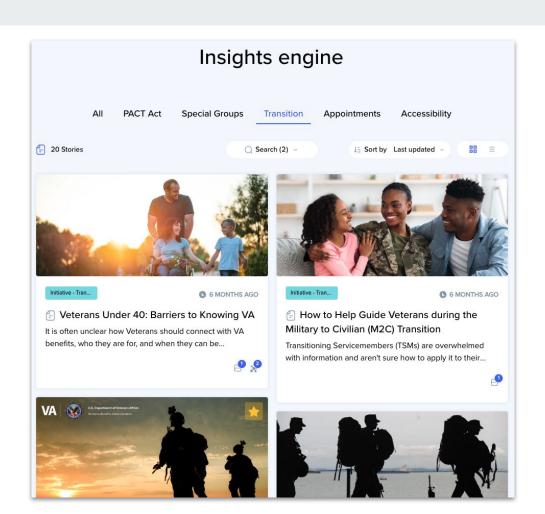
- · How often accredited representatives use different tools, including SEP, VBMS, and third-party claims management systems.
- Pain points around their existing experiences helping Veterans, in particular: establishing power of attorney, filing claims, and tracking claims status.
- What features within a digital tool would help them most in their work supporting Veterans.



## Veterans Affairs

Pilot database of insights connected to raw data and its analysis

Tool: EnjoyHQ



## Knowledge Management

#### THE CHALLENGE

Disseminating research in the right way to the right people at the right time

#### WHAT CAN HELP

Well-timed and plated bites, snacks, and meals

## Veterans Affairs

"Bite"



#### Rebecca Blakiston 8:21 AM

Hey all NARF's findings from our listening session are now in the research repository! ARF is the Accredited Representative Facing team, which is focused on creating digital tools for accredited Veterans Service Organizations, attorneys, and claims agents (more about ARF here).

TL:DR, here are some insights into what VSOs are thinking:

- Immediate access to VBMS, including the Veteran's eFolder and files within it, would make the power of attorney process easier.
- The ability to upload and access documents directly and instantly in VBMS would make filing claims easier.
- More detailed notes from raters would make tracking and monitoring the status of claims easier.
- The "perfect tool" for VSOs would include a similar but upgraded SEP, with updated forms, as well as the ability to submit dependency and education claims.

Be in touch if you have any questions about our findings or see opportunities to collaborate! We're pulling together further findings from user interviews now so will share those as well when they're ready.



## Veterans Affairs

"Snack"

#### **Key Findings**

#### VSOs believe the following would make the power of attorney process easier:

- . Immediate access to VBMS, including the Veteran's eFolder and files within it
- · Ability to check information prior to accepting POA, such as if any claims, Higher-Level Reviews, or appeals are pending
- · Ability for the Veteran to see and request/select a specific person from the Veteran Service Organization

#### VSOs believe the following would make filing claims easier:

- · Ability to upload and access documents directly and instantly in VBMS
- · Better training for VA employees/raters; fewer errors
- · Ability to label, describe, and re-label evidence and have accurate descriptions of evidence in VBMS
- · Access to and responses from raters

#### VSOs believe the following would make tracking and monitoring the status of claims easier:

- · More detailed notes from raters
- · Notification, alert, or email to the individual representative once something is done with claim / status changes
- · Having a point of contact once the claim is in the national work queue

#### The "perfect tool" for VSOs would include:

- · A similar but upgraded SEP, with updated forms
- · Ability to submit dependency claims
- · Ability to submit education claims
- A better way to handle BVA (Board of Veterans Appeals) cases (get rid of Case Flow)
- · An accurate, real-time claims tracking system that the Veteran can access with details

## Veterans Affairs

"Meal"

tinyurl.com/vso-findings

#### **Summary of Open-Ended Responses**

We asked open-ended questions and allowed participants to up-vote or down-vote others' responses. We pulled together similar responses and compiled final numbers to come up with the top responses below.

The numbers in parentheses at the end of each item reflect the number of people who submitted a similar comment plus the number of upvotes, but subtracting any number of downvotes.

#### What would make the power of attorney process easier?

- 1. Immediate access to VBMS, including the Veteran's eFolder and files within it (13)
- 2. An ability to check information prior to accepting POA, such as if any claims, Higher-Level Reviews, or appeals are pending (3)
- 3. Ability for the Veteran to see and request/select a specific person from the Veteran Service Organization (2)

#### Discussion

- There are access issues. The two blocks on the back of the 21-22 [20: Limitation of Consent; 21: Authorization to change claimant's address] give you access to records. If the boxes aren't checked, you don't get access to the eFolder in VBMS. Can require a rep to go to a field office to prove the VSO should have access and get eFolder access initiated.
- POA can get deactivated over time. When the VA comes out with a newer version of the form, the older versions are obsolete and
  they're required to submit a new one. Therefore, a VSO can have clients for many years then lose PoA because the 21-22 was filled out
  (and PoA established) a long time ago. This comes up because there can be long gaps until the Veteran needs assistance again after
  initially establishing PoA.

#### What this means for us

- Our MVP includes the ability for VSOs to get immediate access to VBMS files upon accepting PoA, so this validates that our focus will have a big impact for VSOs.
- Investigate how we might allow representatives to see information about a Veteran prior to accepting PoA, such as pending claims or
  appeals and if they already have representation. Some of this information is in BIRLS (Beneficiary Identification and Records Locator
  (Sub)System) and some is already in SEP.

## Research Competency

#### THE CHALLENGE

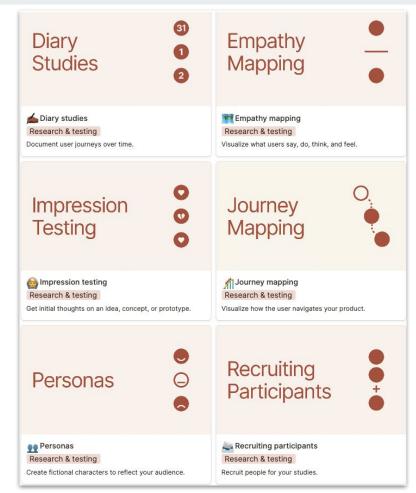
Planning, inconsistency, and onboarding

#### WHAT CAN HELP

Templates and playbooks

## The UX Cookbook

Recipes to get anyone started with a variety of UX methods.



theuxcookbook.com

tinyurl.com/va-resops

## **VA** Platform | Re

Research and design

Research and design

#### Research at VA

Learn how we do Veteran-facing research on VA.gov. Use our templates and guidelines to help you plan, facilitate, and synthesize research.

#### Quick Resources

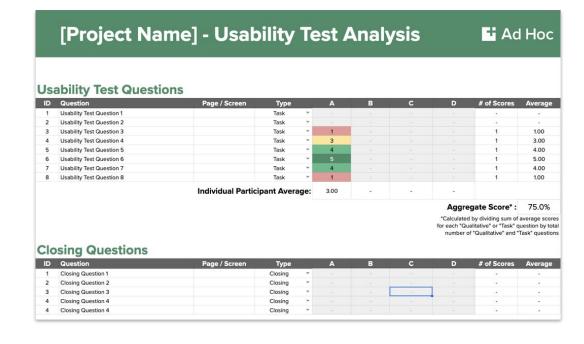
- · Research checklist
- · Research repo
- TEMPLATE: research plan
- · TEMPLATE: conversation guide
- TEMPLATE: research findings

Q



## **Centers for Medicare** & Medicaid Services

5. Conduct the Session  When to use this checklist: When you are ready to start the session.		
☐ Admit		
☐ Onboa		
	Introduce yourself and make friendly small talk to make the participant feel comfortable	
	Provide an overview of the project	
	Share information about what to expect during the session and how long it will take $% \begin{center} \end{center} \begin{center} center$	
	Reassure the participant that there are no right or wrong answers	



#### What technique sounds most useful to your organization?

Research repository 0% Participant panels or pools 0% Communication with bites, snacks, and meals 0% Playbooks and templates 0%



ResOps can help organisations design better services.

## Tools alone won't solve our problems



## Stages of

## **ResearchOps** Maturity

1 Limited

**Absent** 

No research is done

Occasional, ad hoc research Emorgont

**Emergent** 

Some research support structures developing 4

**Structured** 

Established research support structures and/or roles

5

Integrated

Consistent standards and practices organizationwide Research-driven

Culture of user-centered and evidence-based decisions

NNGROUP.COM NN/g

## We need...

- Cooperation
- Coordination
- Collaboration

## Cooperation

Find advocates who already ground themselves in evidence-based decision making.

## Lessons from evidence-based policymaking

Researchers who produce the evidence

**Processes EVIDENCE** Generation Types and characteristics Dissemination **EVIDENCE** USE **Processes** POLICY Agenda-setting Nature of issue Contents Development Implementation

Decision makers who set the agenda and priorities

Onwujekwe, O., Uguru, N., Russo, G. et al. Role and use of evidence in policymaking: an analysis of case studies from the health sector in Nigeria. Health Res Policy Sys 13, 46 (2015). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-015-0049-0

## Lessons from evidence-based policymaking

Researchers who produce the evidence

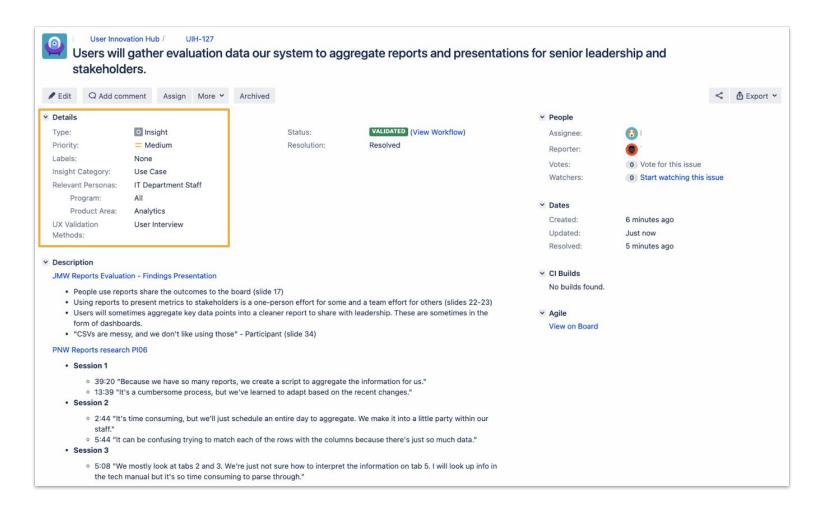
**Processes EVIDENCE** Generation Types and characteristics Dissemination POLICY ACTORS **EVIDENCE** Types and Characteristics Roles and Relationships USE Perceptions of robust evidence Interests and Agendas **Processes** POLICY Agenda-setting Nature of issue Contents Development Implementation

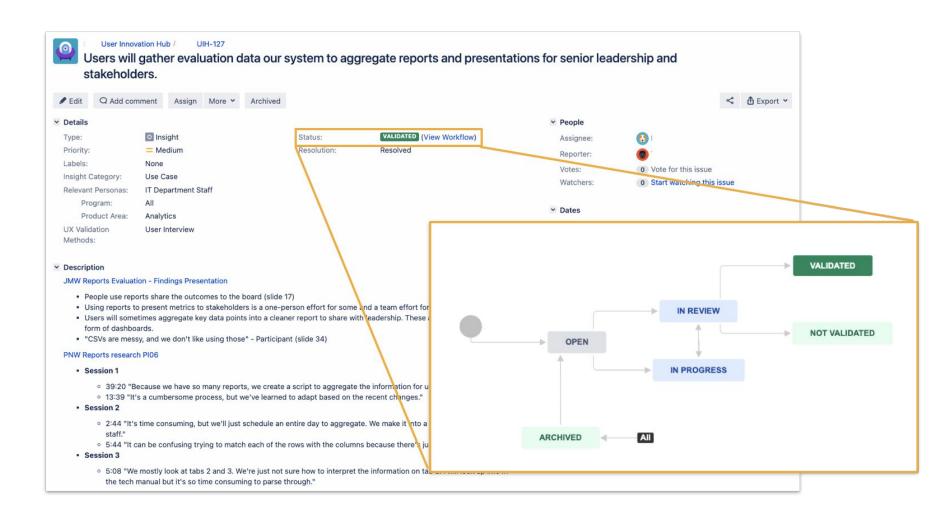
Decision makers who set the agenda and priorities

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## Coordination

Get stakeholders comfortable sharing hypotheses and conclusions.

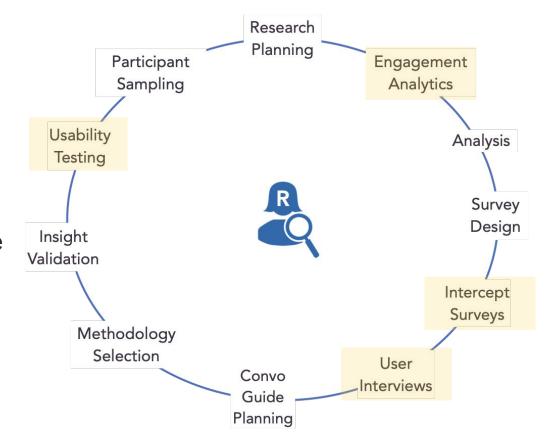




## Collaboration

Get non-researchers involved in conducting research and drawing insights from data.

Kate Towsey, a leader in ResOps, once said that there are "researchers" and "people who do research" (PWDR).



Kate Towsey, a leader in ResOps, once said that there are "researchers" and "people who do research" (PWDR).



#### What's something you want to try to break down silos and scale impact?

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.



## Thank you for listening!

Fan Huang <a href="mailto:linkedin.com/in/fan-huang">linkedin.com/in/fan-huang</a>

Rebecca Blakiston rebeccablakiston.info