



Public Service Design Kit

Created for the 2025 NYX Summit



Plan

Align on project scope and prepare to conduct research.

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PLAN

Assumptions Mapping

Great for helping teams see what they are taking for granted, deciding what assumptions need to be tested, and developing targeted questions to guide research.

Start by inviting the team to reflect on their assumptions (things they believe that may or may not be true) and curiosities (questions they have) around a project.

These can be related to both subject matter (e.g., housing policy) and project execution (e.g., activities, goals, risks).

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System Mapping

Great for visualizing the larger landscape, making it easier to see how the service might operate in a broader context, and identifying areas for intervention.

Start by placing the service or organization at the center of the map. Add in any people, organizations, services, and processes that influence the service.

Illustrate relationships, dependencies, and power dynamics between elements by moving them around and connecting them with lines.

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INSTRUCTIONS

How to Get Started

- 1. Sort cards:** Separate the cards into five stacks, one for each phase.
- 2. Identify phase:** Think of a challenge you are working on and identify which phase you are in.
- 3. Browse methods:** Flip over the cards to review the methods. Think about how you might use them in your work. (Explore the other phases, too!)
- 4. Try methods:** Learn more about each of the methods online and try them out.

Scan this code for the digital version.



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PLAN

Public Policy Layer Cake

Great for designing solutions that drive behavior change across an entire system, including interactions that happen between government staff and the public.

Start by mapping four layers of people and power, including frontline staff who deliver services, service managers who manage operations, program leaders who develop programs, and public officials who legislate or implement policies.

Map their interactions with members of the public. Design your interventions across multiple layers of the system.

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PLAN

Informed Consent Process

Great for establishing the terms of a research engagement so that participants can make an informed and voluntary decision to participate, and researchers have confidence that they can collect data ethically.

Start by creating a document that states, in plain language: what the research is about, what participants will do, the benefits and harms of participation (including compensation), and data uses.

Before the engagement, walk participants through the form, making sure they understand what they are consenting to before they do so.

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PLAN

Inquiry Areas

Great for helping come up with a plan for research: deciding whom to talk to, what methods to use, and what questions to ask.

Start by identifying what needs to be learned and generating three to five open-ended questions or topics.

Make sure these inquiry areas are linked to the project goals, researchable with the resources available, and inclusive of the current and future states of the service.

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Research

Capture participants' experiences and generate new concepts.

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Design

Co-create viable prototypes and prepare for pilot.

RESEARCH

Semi-Structured Interview

Great for uncovering people's needs and motivations around a service — and getting good quotes.

Start by drafting a discussion guide with open-ended questions about participants' experiences. Use the guide as a roadmap, not a script! If relevant, bring visual materials for people to interact with.

Be open to unexpected detours, which can yield interesting insights.

Video-record your conversation (with consent) to be able to share participants' stories directly.

RESEARCH

Journey Mapping

Great for creating shared awareness of a person's journey and the people and processes that affect it.

Start by mapping the steps a person using the service takes to complete a goal (e.g., submitting an application).

Note where they interact with staff members, what steps occur in the background, what tools are used, and any pain points or opportunities.

Invite people who use and deliver the service to co-create and validate the map with you.

RESEARCH

Affinity Mapping

Great for collaboratively making sense of scattered data or notes in order to uncover deeper insights.

Start by identifying notable findings, observations, and quotes from research. Parse them into individual data points that can be moved around (e.g., written on sticky notes).

Group and shuffle the data points in different ways to reveal new themes, patterns, and connections.

RESEARCH

Cultural Probe

Great for capturing a more personal, unfiltered, and in-the-moment view of people's experiences and behaviors.

Start by creating open-ended activities and materials that participants can use to independently document their experiences over a period of time.

Invite participants to write responses, take photos, record audio/video, and make maps or diagrams. Have them document daily routines and habits or specific interactions.

RESEARCH

Contextual Observation

Great for witnessing people's real behaviors (as opposed to their reported behaviors) and seeing how context influences how people behave.

Start by observing people where they use services. Watch and take detailed notes on how they navigate spaces, use tools, interact with others, and handle unexpected situations.

Pair observations with interviews and note where there are differences between what people say and do.

DESIGN

Co-Design Workshop

Great for getting people in a room to think through solutions together and generating buy-in across stakeholders.

Start by inviting staff and members of the public to the workshops. Plan co-creative activities like mapping journeys or workflows, brainstorming ideas, and making quick prototypes.

Use tangible artifacts to help ground the conversation. Be attentive to power dynamics in the group and ensure everyone participates.

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Deploy

Pilot prototypes and use learnings to redesign interventions.

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DESIGN

Lo-Fi Prototyping

Great for testing concepts quickly and keeping stakeholders engaged through hands-on problem-solving and co-creation.

Start by creating quick sketches, models, and scripts to make ideas tangible. Use supplies that are already easily available (e.g., paper, pen, tape). Focus on speed and collaboration over perfection. Invite staff and members of the public to co-create the prototypes. Ask people to try out the prototypes and use their feedback to create another one.

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DESIGN

Future Service Blueprint

Great for designing and planning new or re-designed service experiences and getting teams aligned on how they will work.

Start by mapping out how the newly designed service will work across different layers. Consider what steps people take (user actions), what interactions occur between staff and members of the public (frontstage interactions), what happens behind-the-scenes (backstage processes), and what tools and resources support service operations (support systems).

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DESIGN

Futures Scenario Building

Great for imagining potential futures so that organizations can strategically plan and generate innovative ideas.

Start by digging into current trends and forces that influence the area of interest. Write out plausible future scenarios by extrapolating those trends in different directions (e.g., growth, limits, collapse, transformation).

Describe how your organization might operate under each scenario. Include details about daily life, social dynamics, and guiding values to help establish the context of your scenario.

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DESIGN

Prioritization Matrix

Great for helping teams decide where to focus their time and effort when building something new.

Start by creating a 2x2 grid with evaluation criteria — these can be impact and effort, feasibility and desirability, or a similar pair. Plot all potential interventions on the matrix and use the results to help prioritize. For example, focus on high-impact, low-effort items first, before moving on to consider quick wins and longer-term investments.

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DEPLOY

Learning Log

Great for keeping track of feedback, learnings, and iterations during a pilot to help teams make informed decisions during implementation.

Start by setting up a spreadsheet to categorize the pilot feedback you've collected. Organize data points by topic, source (e.g., survey response, interview), priority level, and actions that were taken. Update on a regular basis throughout the pilot to surface patterns and needed revisions.

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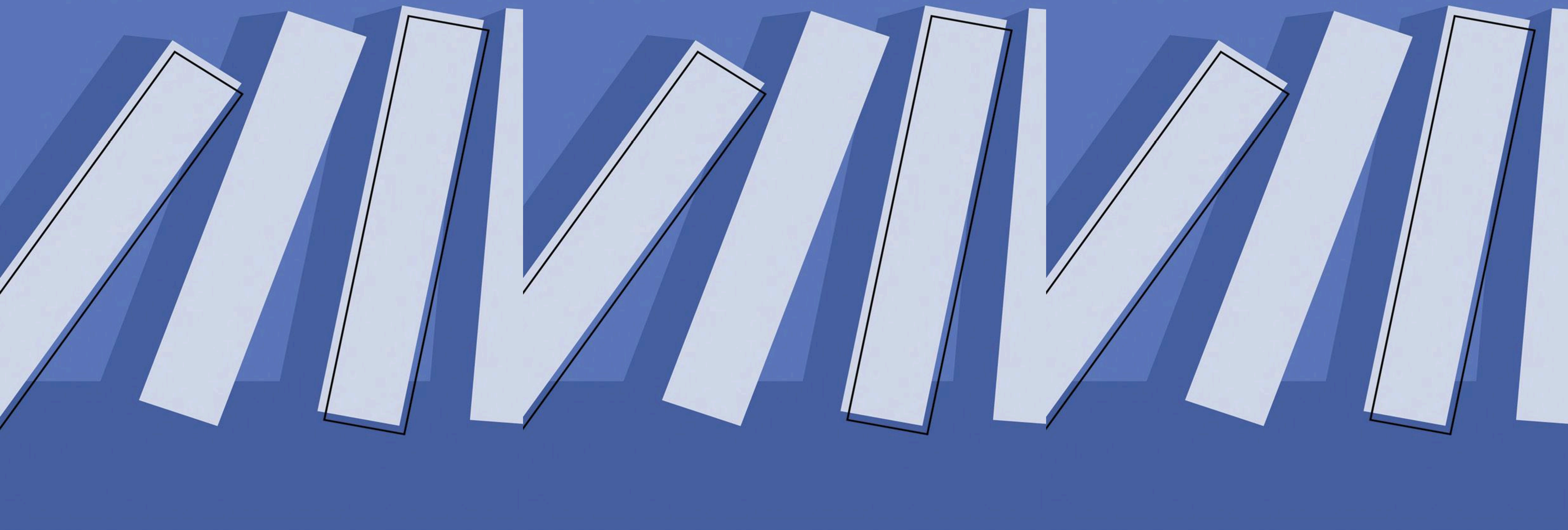
DEPLOY

Usability Testing

Great for finding usability issues and making quick adjustments before (or even after) implementation.

Start by observing how members of the public interact with the intervention. Look for where they get stuck or confused. Ask them why they made a certain choice or action. Use the feedback to make the intervention more clear and easy for people to navigate.

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Deploy

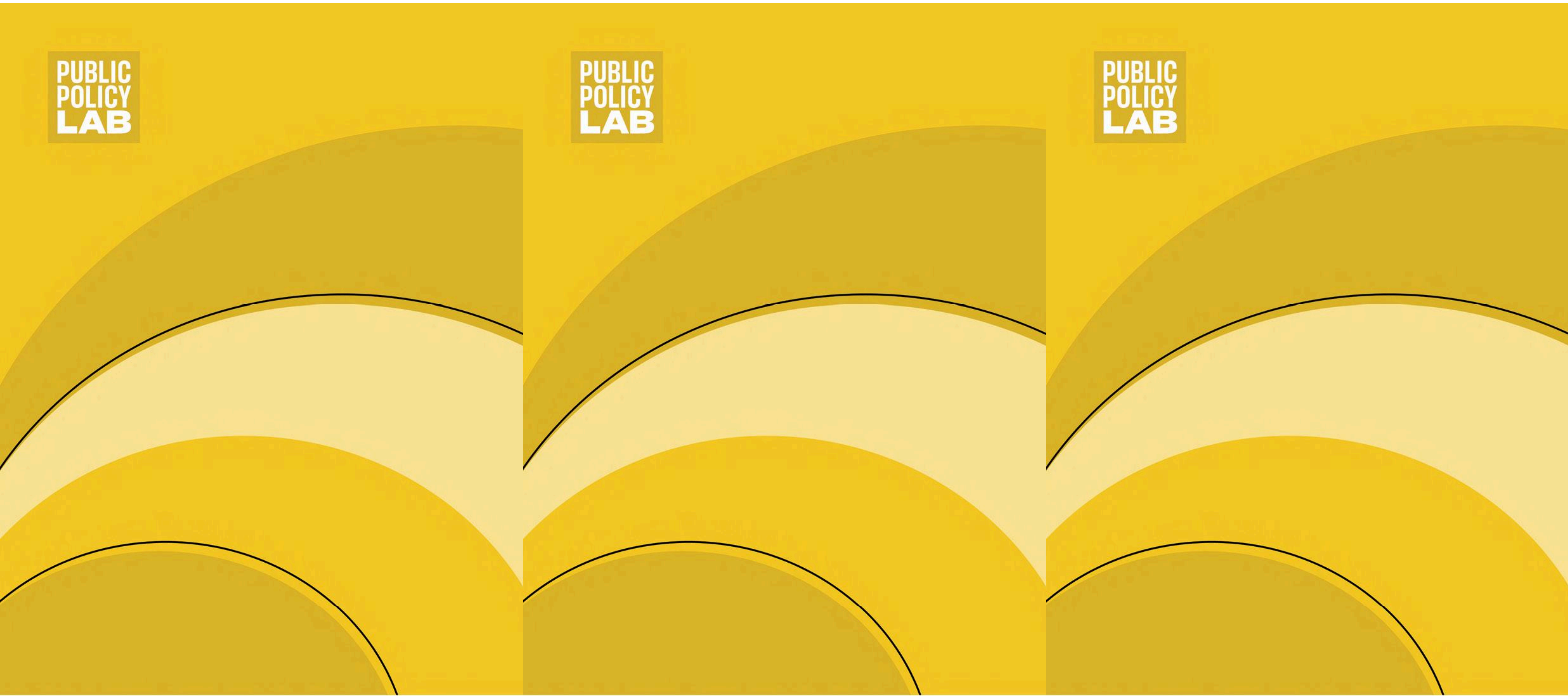
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Scale

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DEPLOY

Iterative Design

Great for reducing the risks of implementing new interventions by testing them with people who are using or providing the service along the way and ensuring that they work.

Start by creating low-fidelity prototypes of ideas, testing them with people who interact with the service, and using the feedback to create additional prototypes.

Continue to repeat this cycle with increasing fidelity and more real-world settings until an implementation-ready final version is designed.

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DEPLOY

Pilot Leader Training

Great for building internal staff champions who can train their teams and sustain implementation throughout the pilot.

Start by inviting staff at various levels to become pilot leaders. During training sessions, go over their roles, introduce materials and tools, and describe evaluation plans.

Frame the pilot as a soft launch that allows for issues to be worked out before implementation.

Set up ongoing check-ins with leaders as piloting begins.

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DEPLOY

Pilot Feedback Surveys

Great for tracking pilot progress and gathering data to complement qualitative feedback from interviews or discussions.

Start by creating surveys to track changes in satisfaction, attitudes, or tool usage over time.

Send out the surveys on a regular cadence throughout the pilot — weekly is best, with timed reminders in between. Keep the surveys short (maximum of five minutes to complete) and mostly multiple choice.

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SCALE

Scaled Implementation Plan

Great for making the transition from pilot to full implementation smoother and avoiding common scaling issues.

Start by creating a roadmap for rolling out the pilot-tested intervention.

Include resource requirements, training schedules, risk mitigation strategies, success metrics, and a timeline. Address any barriers or gaps that came up during the pilot.

Make sure to get input from all relevant operational teams (e.g., legal, IT, HR).

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SCALE

Launch Event

Great for generating momentum and internal/external buy-in for scaling the tested service.

Start by planning a live or online public-facing event to officially launch your new service. Invite staff, funders, policymakers, members of the public, and any other relevant stakeholders.

Showcase the stories of real people who are affected by the service and use the data gathered throughout the pilot to demonstrate impact.

Publish any event recordings or materials afterwards.

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SCALE

Internal Project Retro

Great for creating space for teams to zoom out, reflect on the project, and capture learnings for continuous organizational improvement.

Start by gathering team members at the end of a project or phase to reflect using five prompts:

- shoutouts (celebrating wins),
- bright spots (what worked well),
- pain points (what didn't work),
- changes (what to modify for future projects), and
- takeaways (key learnings to share).

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SCALE

Communications Package

Great for providing digestible highlights about the project to a variety of audiences.

Start by thinking about the audiences to engage, whether that's members of the public, related organizations, policymakers, or funders.

Create communication materials in various formats: one-pagers, press releases, social media posts, informational videos, or policy briefs.

Keep materials pithy and focused on impact. Plan ahead for any necessary communications approvals.

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SCALE

Online Case Study

Great for showcasing the project to internal and external audiences and documenting the process for others to learn from.

Start by drafting a narrative of the key moments and outputs from the project, highlighting successes, challenges, and learnings.

Showcase participants' experiences and show the work through quotes, photos, and videos. Share any templates, tools, or frameworks that were especially useful.

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