



# Service Design for SSC Compensation Services

Oct. 2019 - Mar. 2020

## scenario

For decades, Canadian public servants had access to compensation advisors within the department or agency they worked for. In 2012 the government decided to centralize compensation services for its 290,00 plus employees across its 101 departments and agencies in an effort to lower costs to taxpayers.

By 2016, the migration of these services to the new, leaner, and centralized PSPC Pay Centre in New Brunswick was completed, and hundreds of pay advisor positions formerly assigned to individual departments and agencies were eliminated.

However, this change was rolled out simultaneously with the Phoenix Pay System implementation. For huge swaths of government employees, thousands of pay issues (underpayments, over-payments, or in many cases, missing pay) were instantly triggered, causing pain and frustration for workers. The smaller team of compensation advisors in New Brunswick was quickly overwhelmed, creating a months-long backlog of cases that still persisted.

In 2018, Shared Services Canada (SSC) created a Pay Stabilization unit with a mission to improve both operational efficiency of compensation services and overall customer experience for its employees and managers. In fall 2019, the unit's director formed a working group with members from the Human Resources and Workplace team that would be led by Design Thinking experts from PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). PwC hired me to co-lead the team.

## project details

My role: Service Design Co-Lead

Deliverable: Service Blueprints

## design activities

User Research

Task Analysis

User Interviews

Journey Mapping

Problem Definition

Ideation

Interaction Design

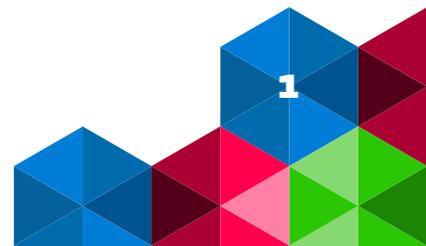
Workshop Facilitation

Prototyping

Service Design

Usability Testing

Design Strategy



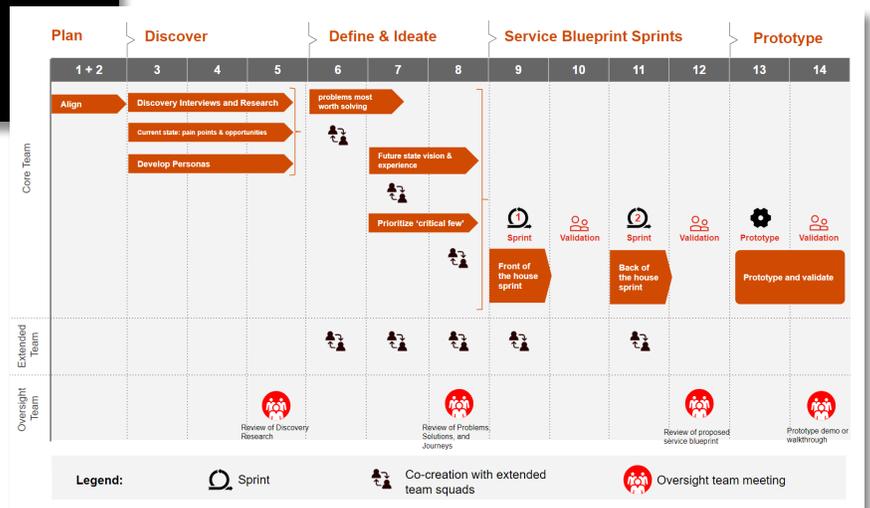
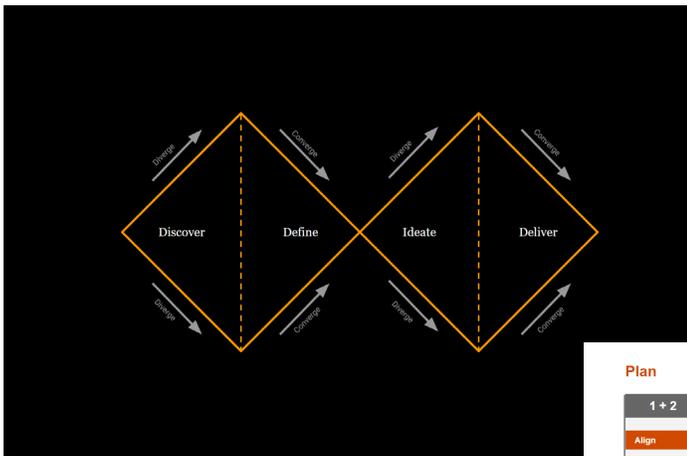
## action

### 1. Governance

The PwC design team I co-led worked with SSC stakeholders to set up a project governance structure consisting of a Core Team (that I was a member of) that would be working on daily activities, an Extended Team of subject matter experts and leaders that would provide input when required (usually on a week-to-week basis), and an Oversight Team of executives and decision-makers that would be updated weekly and solicited as needed for key approvals and decisions.

I sent weekly PowerPoint newsletters to the Core, Extended, and Oversight teams to keep everyone updated on progress.

Our design team also quickly drew up a high-level work plan for the duration of the project that followed a variant of the classic British Design Council's [Double Diamond framework](#)<sup>1</sup> consisting mainly of four stages: Discover, Define, Ideate, and Deliver.

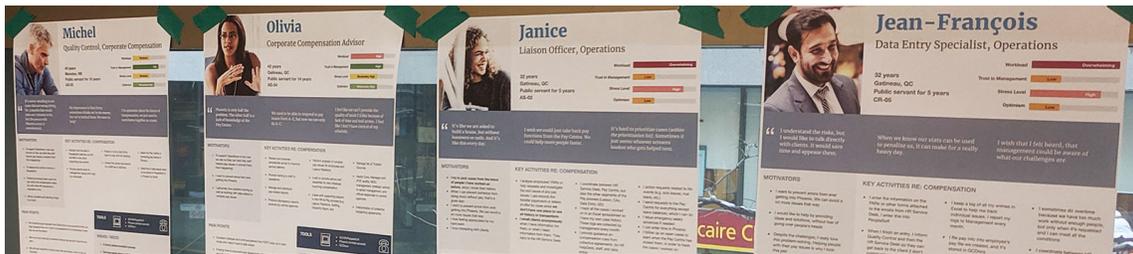


2. Discover

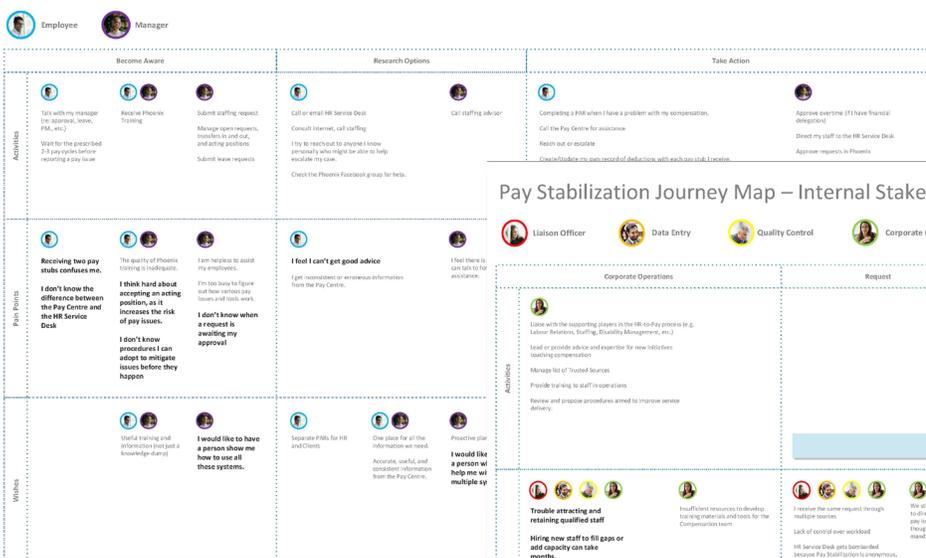
In the Discover phase, we interviewed upwards of 30 different SSC staff, many of which delivered compensation services.

We also interviewed some of the Pay Stabilization team's clients (employees and hiring managers) to hear about their own experiences, how they feel about compensation experience currently, and how they interact with Pay Stabilization.

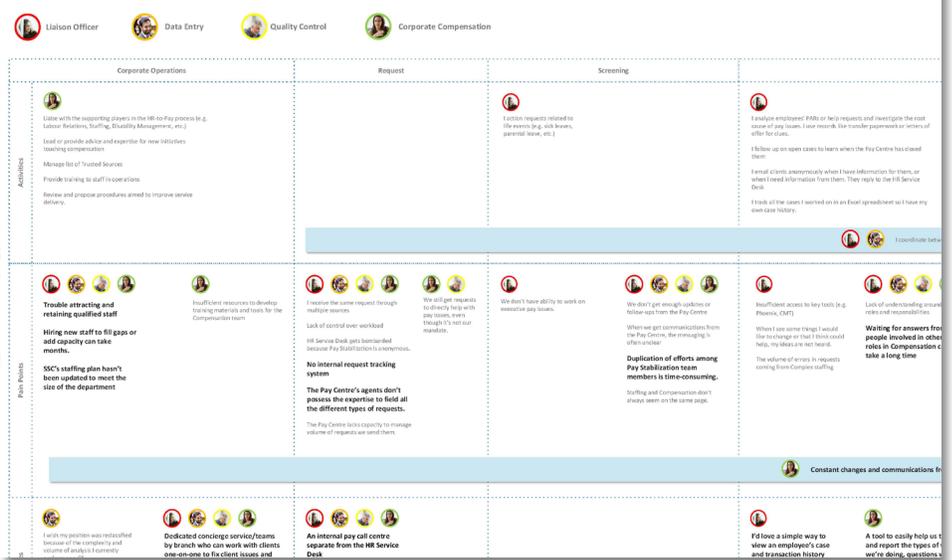
Then, based on our learnings, we developed personas and journey maps that we felt represented the key players and journeys that make up the compensation services experience.



Pay Stabilization Journey Map – External Stakeholders – Current State



Pay Stabilization Journey Map – Internal Stakeholders – Current State

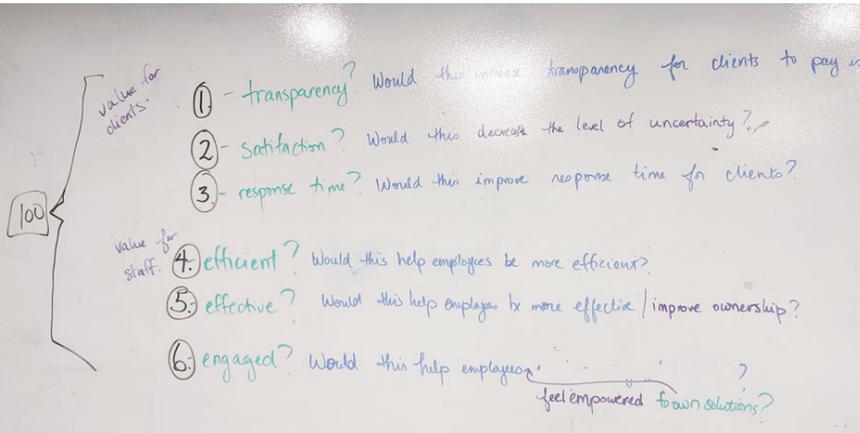


3. Define

In this phase, we facilitated a full week of workshops with the Core and Extended teams where we explored the numerous pain points brought forward by interviewees in Discovery in our Define stage (outlined in personas and journey maps).

We created our 6 design principles - 3 for internal roles (service delivery agents), and 3 for clients/users that would be our guiding light for the remainder of the project.

With these principles in mind, workshop participants scored pain points brought forward against the design principles. Items that scored highly were then given priority as "Problems Most Worth Solving".



PROBLEM STATEMENTS - TOP 20

ID	STATEMENT	TOTAL SCORE	EXTERNAL SCORE	INTERNAL SCORE
46	As an employee, it is challenging for me to get pay issues resolved in a timely fashion, because there aren't enough available knowledgeable, enabled, and empowered resources to address pay issues as they occur in a timely and accurate manner.	85.0%	86.44%	83.88%
20	As a Liaison Officer it is challenging to determine what case to escalate because lack of clarity/criteria for escalation process to help resolve employees' pay issues because I cannot talk to staff directly, but have to coordinate with HR and other Pay colleagues anonymously through a generic mailbox	82.0%	78.01%	85.00%
64	As a Manager it is challenging for me to Seek advice/help because there is no assurance they empowered to make the change	81.0%	79.33%	82.76%
13	As a Liaison Officer, I find it difficult to get answers about complex pay issues from the Pay Centre because their advisors lack the expertise to address them.	80.0%	78.61%	80.30%
35	As a Compensation Advisor it is challenging for me to resolve all pay issues given the complexity/aging of cases and interdependencies resulting from the backlog	80.0%	76.88%	83.71%
63	As a Manager it is challenging for me to Seek advice/help because there is no one easily accessible source of truth and help	80.0%	83.80%	76.94%
6	The Pay Stabilization team faces challenges to easily locate specific cases because a centralized and searchable tool for managing cases is not in place	79.0%	75.97%	82.24%
9	As a Data Entry Officer it is challenging for me to turnover requests in a reasonable time frame because waiting for answers from people involved in other HR roles can take a long time	78.0%	75.18%	81.12%
47	As an employee, it is challenging for me to get reassurance on my pay issues because I don't get the information I need, and I get told no or be patient; agents lack power to help employees and give employees access to the people who can help.	77.0%	87.47%	66.94%
60	As a Manager it is challenging for me to know how to properly handle transfers in/out, leave w/o pay, and overtime approval because I don't	77.0%	81.20%	72.41%



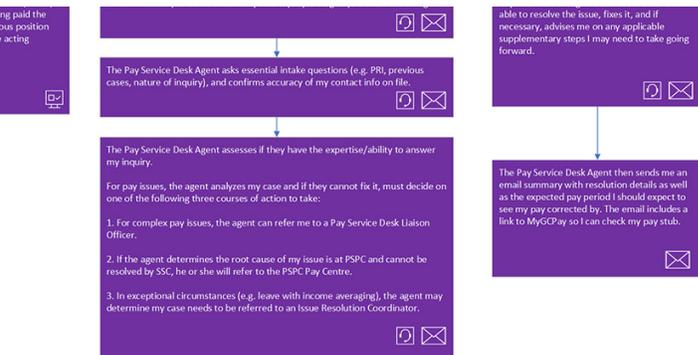
# case studies

Service Design for SSC Compensation Services

## 4. Ideate

Having determined our problems most worth solving, we then facilitated another week of workshops with our Core and Extended teams to explore the solution space. In these workshops we brainstormed potential ideas to solve problems.

We came up with upwards of 70 different ideas which working group members scored against our design principles. The 31 ideas that best addressed our problems with respect to the design principles were selected as our Solutions Most Worth Building.



Solutions Most Worth Building - SSC HR to Pay  
Solutions recommended to be built based on SSC team discussion and agreement  
(Total solutions = 31)

Solution Statement ID	Solution Statement	Raw Score	Normalized External	Normalized Internal	Applicable Themes			
					Give me the tools to do my job (G)	Putting Humans First (H)	Let me do my job (L)	Help me understand (U)
1	As a Compensation Advisor I need direct contact and relationship with client so that I can resolve and prevent issues, as well as provide the right services.	77%	84%	72%		X		
2	As an employee I need concierge service so that I can have a resolution to the issues which are unique to me and my situation.	70%	72%	57%		X		
3	As an employee I need concierge service so that I can obtain the information I need and resolve my issues without dealing with multiple people.	72%	84%	57%		X		
6	As a Compensation Advisor I need access to an information management system resources so that I can provide correct and accurate information to clients	77%	87%	69%	X			
7	As a Compensation Advisor I need access to on-demand training and support on an as-needed basis so that I can resolve cases and feel more confident.	82%	66%	100%			X	
11	As a Compensation Advisor I need a dedicated resource centre to triage pay requests so that I can provide answers to my client quickly	69%	60%	60%	X			
13	En tant qu'employé j'ai besoin obtenir des avis de qualité pour que je puisse comprendre les enjeux et prendre une décision éclairée	69%	76%	53%				X
14	En tant qu'employé j'ai besoin d'une mise à jour électronique pour l'approbation ou information pour que je puisse voir l'évolution de mon statut de paye	65%	82%	35%		X		X
16	En tant qu'employé j'ai besoin de ressources expliquant le processus pour que je puisse diriger mes questions touchant la rémunération au bon endroit	76%	81%	69%				X
17	En tant que gestionnaire j'ai besoin de ressources expliquant le processus pour que je puisse diriger mes questions touchant la rémunération au bon endroit	79%	88%	63%				X
20	As an employee I need a centralized area where I can find suggested approaches to resolve pay issues so that I can be efficient in finding the correct path to resolve my issue.	69%	71%	57%				X

## 5. Prioritization, Alignment & Sprint Planning

As an extension to the Ideate phase, we facilitated an additional week of workshops to take our Solutions Most Worth Building to align and prioritize them into four initiatives canvases.

To do this, we collectively mapped each initiative to the solutions we're solving, stated our value proposition, assessed risks, desired outcomes from both customer and business perspectives, assumptions, issues, and dependencies. This would help us set the stage for presenting our options to our Oversight team, who would use our canvases to make a decision on which proposed initiative(s) were best aligned with SSC's goals for compensation services.



Initiative D  
**Putting Humans First**

Empower SSC employees to resolve and prevent pay issues by giving them and their managers greater access to the tools and personal assistance. Help SSC employees feel more supported.

<p><b>Benefits &amp; Value</b></p> <p><b>For Pay Stabilization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employees feel more engaged</li> <li>Employees feel heard</li> <li>Improved efficiency &amp; effectiveness</li> <li>Increased trust in advisors</li> <li>Increased trust in process</li> </ul> <p><b>For SSC employees and managers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>End-to-end customer experience</li> <li>Increased clarity/understanding</li> <li>Increased trust in pay processes and advisors</li> <li>Self-sufficiency &amp; increased transparency</li> <li>Improved case turnaround time</li> </ul>	<p><b>KPIs &amp; Metrics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timeliness</li> <li>Decreased wait times</li> <li>Improved client satisfaction (decrease in level of stress for clients)</li> <li>Decrease in ratio of rejections to submissions</li> <li>Percentage decrease in interactions, by type</li> <li>Increase in quality and timeliness of submissions</li> <li>Add a question about pay processes/service to exit interviews</li> </ul>	<p><b>Risks &amp; Barriers</b></p> <p><b>Risks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of targeted training</li> <li>Attrition of trained employees</li> <li>Inconsistent processes</li> <li>Will clients become overly reliant on Compensation Advisors to help them resolve issues?</li> </ul> <p><b>Barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pay team's capacity to implement changes given its current workload</li> <li>Lack of resources</li> <li>Limited work access in Phoenix</li> </ul>
<p><b>Inspiration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DND</li> </ul>	<p><b>Groups involved</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Triage</li> <li>Comms</li> <li>Snr. managers</li> <li>Comp. Advisors</li> <li>Employees</li> <li>Unions</li> <li>Learning &amp; Development</li> </ul>	<p><b>Current Tech</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complex case management system standard</li> <li>QA</li> </ul>



Solution Initiatives for Compensation  
PwC

**one challenge we ran into...**

Oftentimes, designers present a variety of options to stakeholders and decision-makers, providing them the pros, cons, and risks with each option. This is often helpful for both parties as decision-makers and stakeholders typically have more knowledge of strategic direction, political climate, appetite for risk, etc than external consultants would.

However after a few months working with our clients, we learned that our group didn't respond well when presented with a variety of options to choose from. They quickly got overwhelmed, spending days discussing internally before getting back to us on a path forward.

We were on a tight schedule, so we learned to adjust our approach to suggesting options to our clients. We would still draw up plans for different approaches, but instead presenting all possible options, we'd propose what we thought would be the one our stakeholders would respond to the best while providing the most value to users, including our rationale for our proposed solution.

If we got resistance to an idea, then we could present our other options and discuss the pros, cons, and risks of each.

Initiative D - Putting Humans First

**Solution 1: End-to-end concierge service by portfolio**

Dedicated end-to-end concierge service for managers and employees (two streams)



**Value Proposition**

- End-to-end human contact to prevent, advise, and resolve issues
- Collaboration
- Feeling cared for
- Client confidence

**Stakeholders**

- Employees
- Hiring Managers

Solution Initiatives for Compensation  
PwC

**Minimum Viable Product**

**Concierge for backlogs (most complex cases)**

- High-touch human-to-human crisis intervention



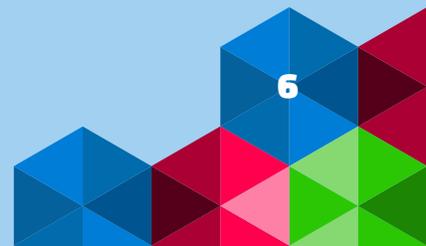
**Stakeholders**

- Employees with oldest, most complex cases

Dec., 10, 2019

Representatives from our Core Team, including myself, presented the initiatives to the Oversight team.

After internal deliberations, the SSC Oversight team selected the initiative and solution the Core team should prepare to work on in design sprints: a Pay Service Desk. This service would create a quick-response team that SSC employees and managers can call or email to get support and assistance on compensation inquiries and issues.



## case studies

Service Design for SSC Compensation Services

**matt simpson**  
experience design

### 6. Deliver

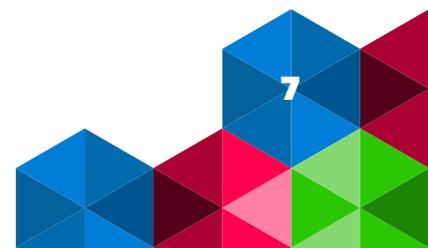
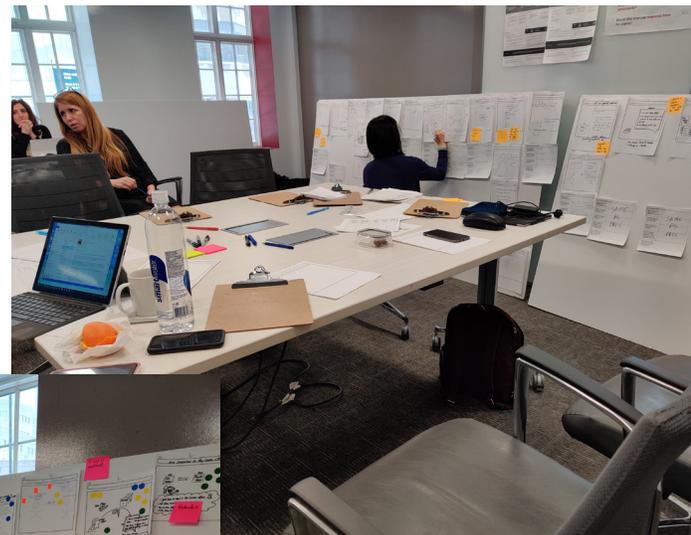
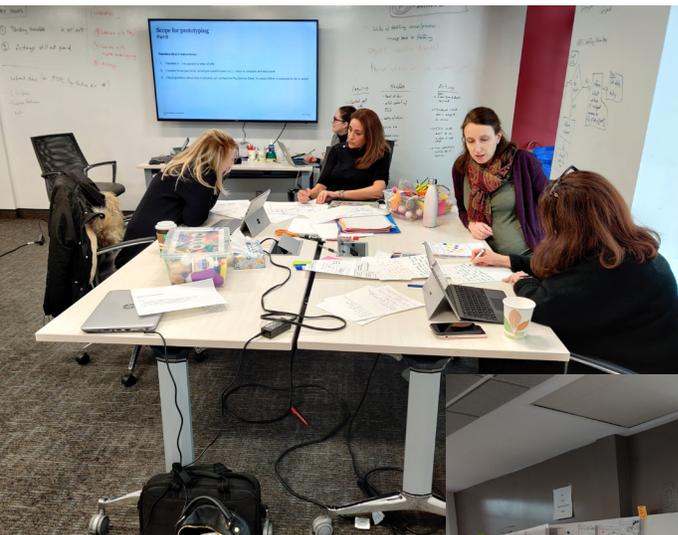
With our core team's immediate mandate now clear (to design a Pay Service Desk service), we quickly got back to work on our "Deliver" phase, which for our group would proceed as 3 weeks of design sprint workshops with a sprint team of 8-9 members chosen from our Core and Extended teams, led by me.

Week 1 focused on the front stage where together we ideated on the customer-facing experience for the Pay Service Desk in the ideal state.

Week 2 focused on the backstage, or the behind-the-scenes elements of the service that customers don't see, but that the service delivery team needs to have in place in order to provide the front stage experience.

Then in week 3, our sprint team set about creating three desktop walk-through prototypes that we would put in front of clients for testing based on the front stage and back stage elements we designed together in the two previous weeks of workshops. Together, these prototypes would constitute a minimum viable service (MVS), a scaled-down version of the ideal state service, so that we could test the value proposition of the Pay Service Desk with a minimum amount of effort on our part.

Each of our three prototypes covered high-volume, high-impact scenarios employees and stakeholders discussed in Discovery: pay issues related to acting pay, transfers in (from other government departments/agencies), and general pay inquiries.

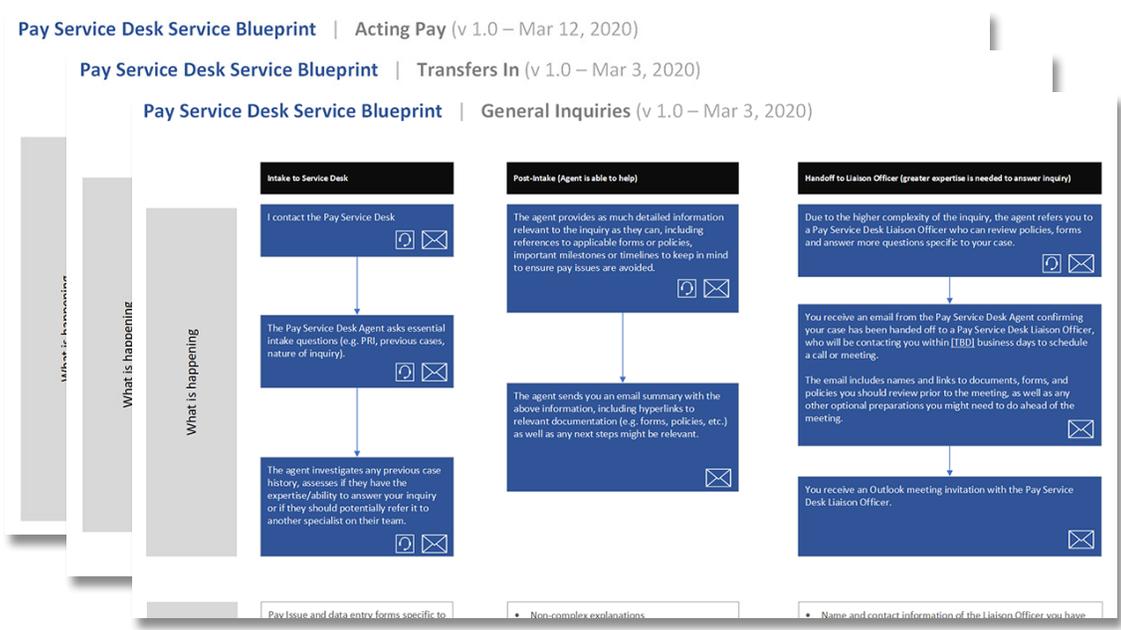


7. Test

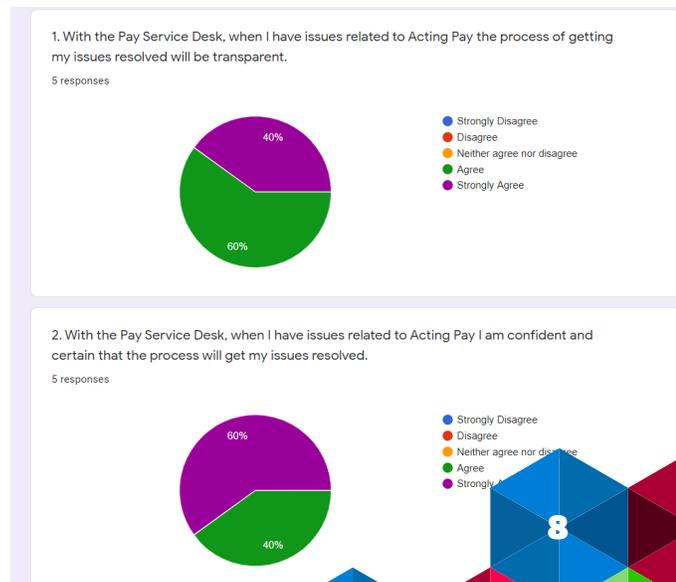
As part of our Deliver phase, we then held two weeks of usability testing sessions where we walked over a dozen SSC employees and managers through our Minimum Viable Service prototypes and scenarios, and solicited them for feedback on the customer experience with carefully curated questions.

We also asked test participants to evaluate and score our service against our project design principles, so that we could assess how much our proposed service, even if conceptual, was on the path of achieving our objectives.

Once testing was complete, I summarized key test findings and recommendations for improvement in a detailed report for SSC stakeholders.



		Current State	Pay Service Desk	Improvement (Delta)
<b>INQUIRIES</b>	Process is Transparent	2.3	4.3	2.0
	Confidence and certainty the process will answer my question/issue	1.6	4.1	2.6
	Timely resolution	1.6	4.0	2.4
<b>TRANSFERS IN</b>	Process is Transparent	1.5	4.3	2.8
	Confidence and certainty the process will answer my question/issue	1.5	4.1	2.6
	Timely resolution	1.2	3.6	2.4
<b>ACTING PAY</b>	Process is Transparent	2.1	4.6	2.4
	Confidence and certainty the process will answer my question/issue	1.9	4.4	2.6
	Timely resolution	1.7	4.4	2.7



## 8. Service Blueprinting

Based on the recommendations, we prepared draft, low-fidelity versions of 3 service blueprints (one for each of three minimum viable services we designed collaboratively) with the aim of getting Core team stakeholders to agree to the content of the blueprints before producing higher-fidelity versions of the artifacts intended for all SSC staff.

GENERAL INQUIRIES			REFERRAL TO SERVICE DESK LIAISON
LIFECYCLE STAGE	(1) INTAKE TO PAY SERVICE DESK	(2) Pay Service Desk Agent answers the client inquiry (no referral)	(3) HANDOFF TO SERVICE DESK LIAISON OFFICER
WHAT IS HAPPENING	Employee contacts the Pay Service Desk  Pay Service Desk Agent asks essential intake questions to employee in order to be able to respond to and triage case (eg PRL, previous cases)  Pay Service Desk Agent investigates previous case history and assesses if they have the expertise/ability to answer the inquiry and does so, or triages the request referring it to a Pay Service Desk Liaison Officer (if the inquiry is in scope of what the Pay Service Desk Liaison Officer can respond to) or other channels for resolution	1. Pay Service Desk Agent confirms receipt of inquiry, provides information the employee needs, including references to applicable forms or policies, previous cases, important milestones, timelines and level of service standards the employee needs to keep in mind to make sure pay issues are avoided. (phone)  2. The Pay Service Desk Agent then sends an email summary to the employee with the above information, links to relevant documentation (e.g. forms, policies, etc.) as well as next steps for the employee. (phone and email)  If the employee asks to meet a Pay Service Desk Liaison Officer for an inquiry that's out of scope to the Pay Service Desk, the agent informs the client of the current policy, and still follows up with the client with the above information.	1. Pay Service Desk Agent tells the employee that the best option for answering their inquiry is to be referred to review policies and forms with the employee and answer the questions specific to their case.  2. Employee receives an email from Pay Service Desk Agent (or is transferred in the case of calls) with GC handed off to a Pay Service Desk Liaison Officer who will help them from here on out. In the email, the Pay Service Desk Agent includes names and intranet links of documents, forms or policies the employee should review prior to meeting the Pay Service Desk Liaison Officer. (Pay Service Desk Liaison Officer is CC'd on the email so that the employee has their contact information)  3. Pay Service Desk Liaison Officer follows up and sends an Outlook meeting invitation with the Pay Service Desk Liaison Officer, as well as any additional preparations the employee should review prior to meeting the Pay Service Desk Liaison Officer, as well as any additional preparations the employee should review prior to meeting the Pay Service Desk Liaison Officer.
OTHER ACTORS INVOLVED	Pay Service Desk Agent	Pay Service Desk Agent	Pay Service Desk Agent Pay Service Desk Liaison Officer
BENEFIT VALUE BEING PROVIDED TO EMPLOYEE	Clear instruction on what is required and steps that need to be taken and when.	Foresight, ability to plan ahead based on what is needed, clarity for employees regarding services that will be provided	Transparency, clarity about what the Service Desk can do for clients
WHAT INFORMATION AND ARTIFACTS ARE BEING EXCHANGED?	Clients PRL, details on client's inquiry, any previous case information, confirmation of client's contact information  Optional: Data entry forms specific to the employees inquiry	- Non-complex explanations  - links to forms and checklists (if applicable)	appointment date, location, and applicable forms the employee should read and/or prepare for the meeting
CHANNELS	Email, data entry form, phone	Email, phone	Outlook Calendar, phone, email correspondence
Things that are different for managers			
	Service Desk prepares scripts for Agents to follow: Triage criteria	Service Desk Agent updates inquiry ticket in GCCase with details on the problem, proposed resolution, information exchanged.	Service Desk Agent Assigns GCCase ticket to Pay Service Desk Liaison Officer based on branch/group
	Service Desk Agent opens 'inquiry ticket' in GCCase OR looks up previous history and updates information in case	Service Desk Agent closes inquiry ticket in GCCase	GC case populates new entry in Pay Service Desk Liaison Officer's queue (tagged by heading title), Pay Service Desk Liaison Officer schedules meeting  GC case populates new entry in Pay Service Desk Liaison Officer's queue (tagged by heading title). The Pay Service Desk Liaison Officer schedules meeting
	Pay Stabilization/Stakeholder Engagement drafts content to post to the intranet (to be approved by Comms)		
	Pay Stabilization/Stakeholder Engagement prepares checklists and protocols for Service Desk agents		QA/Service Desk Managers prepare tools ('tools' should be more specific) for responding to inquiries and checklists, protocols, answers for Liaison Officers etc)

## result

Shared Services Canada rolled out the Pay Service Desk in Oct 2020 as a pilot, expanding in 2021 with immediate impact. As of spring 2021, it was receiving 250 requests per week, resolving 70% of pay issue requests without assistance from extra-departmental compensation services teams. Average resolution time of pay issues dropped from weeks (and in some cases months) to 5 business days. Pay issue requests previously directed to SSC's HR Service Desk dropped by 70%, allowing it to focus on staffing actions instead of compensation requests.

Most importantly, SSC employees reported lower stress levels related to resolving their pay issues.

Our team's amazing work was [nominated for an international award in service design by the Service Design Network<sup>2</sup>](#)

## REFERENCES

1. Design Council Double Diamond - <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/what-framework-innovation-design-councils-evolved-double-diamond>

2. Service Design Award 2020/21 Finalist Project (Service Design Network) - <https://www.service-design-network.org/community-knowledge/design-in-a-crisis-rescuing-the-pay-experience-for-federal-government-employees>





**design with heart.  
empower people.**

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experience design

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