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## Taking the Culture out of the Lab and Into the Office: A “Non-Lab” Approach to Public Service Transformation

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**Abstract:** Over the years, *innovation labs* have come and gone in public sector organizations. At Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, one low-key, co-design project over-delivered on client insights, service experience improvements and operational efficiencies. This case study shares one department’s success in embedding human-centred design into organizational culture by: competing against graduate design students, co-designing across the organization (from call agents to policy, immigration officers, and communications), creating a design project alumni community, and adhering to rigorous measurement and experimentation. The case study will share opportunities and challenges that emerged from the process of embedding human-centred design (via a “non-innovation lab”) into the department.

**Keywords:** *innovation; service design; culture; organizations*

### 1 Introduction

Public sector organizations engage with citizens through their services and other offerings, and, as a result, have to consider the user in their service design, as well as build on user relationships and innovate to exceed client expectations. Governments, in response to a growing demand for innovation (be it, transformative, engaging, more efficient or responsive services) have begun to engage with human-centred design as part of a structured innovation process to rethink service delivery. Many of these approaches to user-centric design involve design research skills and specialized, multi-disciplinary teams; primarily constituted in the form of *innovation labs* that are heralded as means to help organizations see policy and services in a new light. While we commend this move towards greater involvement of design in helping improve user experiences and government services in general, we argue that these measures may not go far enough; to change organizations one must change the culture of how decisions are made, and policies developed. At Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), one low-key, co-design project over-delivered on client insights, service experience improvements and operational efficiencies, building a case for creating internal capacity which led to the creation of the Client Experience Branch with an embedded design team division



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within it. The following case study will show how this process has unfolded, and why it has proven to be effective in having deeper impacts on organizational culture change.

## 2 Innovation and User-Centricity in Public Sector Organizations

Governments are currently dealing with a growing demand by citizens for services that reflect their needs and put the user<sup>1</sup> at the centre of service delivery, instead of having processes and regulation leading the system. Today we live in a world of services with a growing expectation that public services mirror the ease and individuality of private sector offerings; this pressure on government organizations to deal with growing fiscal austerity while innovating new solutions creates what Rittel and Webber have termed “wicked problems” where the planner cannot risk being wrong, and the problem description suggests one specific solution (1973, p. 166). Public sector organizations have a mandate to serve all of the public while enforcing the legislation that governs their policies and programs. While there is capacity to change programs and policies, the requirement to continue offering programs while working to improve them means public servants must “change the wheels while the vehicle is moving”; sustaining mandated services, procedures and policies adds to the challenge of innovating new approaches (OECD, 2017, p. 15-17).

Governments use policies and programs to effect positive change in the lives of citizens, yet the challenge is to see the impact that those policies ultimately have on the services that citizens encounter on the front lines. Those services are often the measure by which citizens judge their government’s effectiveness, and the challenge for policy makers, then, is to work through how policies might be received through those services (Chambers, 1983; Kershaw, Dahl & Roberts, 2016). Governments are tasked with efficiently delivering programs and services that will compare to private sector offerings, despite three key differences (Bemelmans-Videc, 1998; Kershaw et al., 2016). First, businesses can choose their customers, but government agencies must provide service access to the entire eligible population and ensure none are excluded. The second challenge lies in the fact that while businesses tend to have more centralized authority, government authority is more dispersed and that can impede the implementation of innovative services. Finally, businesses are accountable to their shareholders but public sector agencies must follow legislation and protect the privacy of citizens; public trust is a critical component of service delivery in the public sector which encourages an over-emphasis on security and non-user centred services to ensure that these duties are fulfilled (Carter and Belanger, 2005). All of these responsibilities and intricacies of public sector policy, program development, implementation and delivery make for a wicked problem, because the government, ultimately, is responsible for what it delivers. That responsibility is taken very seriously by the public servants fulfilling these mandates, making them necessarily cautious in what innovations they may put forward over time.

Over the past several years there has been a growing use of design thinking and service design methodologies to help governments with developing new, implementable solutions to policy and program challenges they are facing. These methodologies emphasize, to a greater or lesser extent, elements of co-design, where the users of the product or service work with designers through the process of developing new approaches (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). In the co-design approach, the design researcher becomes more a facilitator and the participants are “users who are experts of their experiences” (Sanders & Stappers, 2008, pp. 12-13). The key ingredient for doing co-design is creative acts of making, from probes and toolkits to help find and understand data to making prototypes to articulate solutions and issues (Sanders & Stappers, 2014). Within public sector co-design, there appear to be two dominant methods that are used: punctuated co-design projects and innovation labs.

Punctuated co-design is marked by a mix of experience-based co-design (EBCD) that often uses intermittent design workshops and toolkits to help users or organizations use design research techniques to develop new solutions.<sup>2</sup> Dispersed approaches like those of EBCD tend to emphasize short-term connection with users and service providers during the pilot phase that gets feedback and then leads to the design teams moving off to design and then meeting up again to share the information. One key impact is that teams will often shorten the cycle to save money and time but having only small-scale changes (Donetto et al., 2014; 2015). This approach to sporadic co-creation also mirrors a standard government policy development consultative process, albeit with more evolved engagement tools.

One challenge to the EBCD approach in government is the lack of design (or innovation) capacity and expertise. A growing number of governments around the world (at the federal-level to municipal) are establishing public service innovation labs as a means to ignite change in policy and service design; examples include Nesta’s guide to innovation

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<sup>1</sup> The user, in this case, is defined broadly to include the client, staff or allied service partners.

<sup>2</sup> Some examples include the King’s Fun free toolkit download for health care services or the IDEO and Nesta kit for public service re-design (Donetto, Pierri, Tsianakis & Robert, 2014; Donetto, Pierri, Tsianakis & Robert, 2015; Kershaw et al., 2016).

labs and the UNDP accounting for innovation lab use in national governments (Bazalgette & Craig, 2017; Kershaw et al., 2016). Gryszkiewicz, Lykourantzou and Toivonen (2016) define an innovation lab as “a semi-autonomous organization that engages diverse participants – on a long-term basis – in open collaboration for the purpose of creating, elaborating and prototyping radical solutions to open-ended systemic challenges” (p. 84). Innovation hubs can be a stand-alone organization that is shared by different ministries (such as MindLab in Copenhagen) or even an independent charity (such as Nesta) that promote the use of collaborative and user-centred design focus in public sector programming (Puttick, 2014; Puttick, Baeck & Colligan, 2014). These hubs typically involve bringing experienced design teams together with users and service providers to work on problem definition and solution. Innovation labs, by virtue of their semi-autonomous nature, are seen as being able to encourage users and providers to work in physical and virtual spaces to break out of homogeneous cultures that inhibit effective problem-solving and unique solution generation (Gryszkiewicz et al., 2016).

Service design problems are wicked ones because they are not just products but the interaction of service providers, users and organizations, making it difficult to anticipate how the service will be received and modified through use. Service designers must be able to scale up and out with their understanding of the broader system that services fall within as they also deepen their working with and within the organizations themselves (Sangiorgi, 2009). Working with the organization or community directly to help with the sub-phases of envisioning, experimentation and strengthening approaches helps improve stakeholder support for and understanding of risks and expectations. One example is the MyNeighbourhood project in Milan that built collaboration between students and elderly residents to develop social media and restaurant partnerships that proved successful; costs were kept low and the ability to make mistakes and recover added to the robustness of the approach (Rizzo, Deserti & Cobanli, 2016).

Bailey and Lloyd (2016) note that the potential to use design thinking to move beyond the hierarchical structure decision making could work, but only if the designers can create good ideas that can be landed in the policy sphere. We argue that this is only the first step, because just as the broader system of the organization cannot be divorced from the services it provides, the means of change for that organization cannot be separated from the core assumptions that underpin its values and behaviours. To move beyond peripheral changes, a service designer must help the organization to challenge fundamental assumptions and build a new vision, and that culture change requires a sustained working within the organization itself – to move from designing for to designing within (Junginger & Sangiorgi, 2009). One such approach has been developed in the Canadian government over the past year and a half, and is the subject case study that will illustrate this different approach of making a framework for cultural change.

### **3 Case Study – Building Service Design into IRCC**

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is responsible for the family sponsorship process which enables Canadians and residents to sponsor family members' immigration to Canada. The spousal sponsorship is a legislated and regulated program that requires the administration of forms and documentation requirements, fees and criminal background checks as part of the application process<sup>3</sup>. While intricate, this application process is necessarily thorough because the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations clearly specify that all family relationships must be defined and documented, that all documents must be available at the time of entry and that the application must contain particular features.<sup>4</sup> This complexity surrounding the definitions and implementation of the forms, coupled with the need to provide consistent service across all forms of application (online or on paper) highlights the challenge to innovate new forms of service.

Early in 2016 IRCC undertook a short-term service design project to examine the family sponsorship experience. This Family Class Design Challenge (FCDC) was supported by designers from the Privy Council Office's Innovation Hub (Hub) to lead the IRCC group in a human-centred design process. To deliver on the project, the department gathered 15 individuals from various touch-points through the organization (from call centre agents, to processing officers, to policy analysts, to communications), at various levels, with the goal to gain insights on the needs of clients navigating the services and organizations involved. All of the participants from IRCC were de-ranked and worked together as a group in order to encourage the free-flow of information and ideas.

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<sup>3</sup> An example of the basic guide and its instruction is listed at <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/guides/5525ETOC.asp>

<sup>4</sup> In particular, Divisions 1 and 2 of the regulations, listed at <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/sor-2002-227/FullText.html>

The Family Class Design Challenge was a four-week (full-time) design project for all the participants; each week devoted to particular stages of problem finding, problem framing, and problem solving. During the problem finding stage, participants worked in the field to interview newcomers, legal clinics, appeals tribunals, front-line staff and immigration community centres in action. They also conducted participant observations at call centres and at an immigration processing centre, observing staff review applications. This exposed the participants to client (e.g. newcomers), partner (e.g. community organizations), staff, and expert (e.g. legal, academic) narratives and broadened their perspectives on the issues surrounding the family sponsorship experience.

Table 1. Design Methods Used

Phase I – Problem Finding	
Method	Description
Trading Cards	Participants introduce themselves to the group using an icebreaker card set.
Assumptions Parking Lot	Design exercise that prompts individuals to write down their preconceived ideas, thoughts and feelings about a subject and then put them aside--or park them--in order to see a topic anew.
Directed Storytelling	Directed storytelling enables a group to gather rich stories of lived experiences from each other, using prompts and framing questions from facilitators.
Document Analysis	Document analysis is a qualitative research method for reviewing and/or evaluating printed and electronic documents, in this case IRCC Family Class Sponsorship materials.
Stakeholder Mapping	Stakeholder maps used to visually consolidate and communicate the key constituents of a complex system--in this case the spousal sponsorship application process--setting the stage for human-centred design.
ATONE Observation Technique	An ethnographic research technique, ATONE stands for Actors, Touch-points, Offering, Needs, Experience.
Intercept Interviews	Intercept interviews are opportunistic short interviews conducted in selected areas specific to the design brief. The aim is to intercept individuals before, during and after their interaction with the product, or service, in question.
Expert Interviews	Interviews with key information holders--in this case academics, immigration consultants and lawyers--to quickly gain key insights into content and context.
Extreme User Interviews	Extreme users are those on the extremes of the user spectrum. Speaking to extreme users sparks creativity by exposing researchers to outlier and emergent cases, issues and opportunities.
K.J Technique	A facilitated exercise in which a group lists their observations onto Post-It notes, collects them as a group, organizes them by relationship, and establishes group priorities through individual voting.
Phase II – Problem Framing	
User Profiles	User archetypes developed from intercept interviews with clients.
User Position Map	Generating a map by plotting of individual clients against a 2X2 matrix with axes derived from the qualitative research.
ERAF Systems Map	Entities, Relationships, Attributes, Flow (ERAF): A map to clarify relationships between elements within the system.
Affinity Map	Thematic clustering of the Post-It notes generated from the KJ Technique.
Phase III – Problem Solving	
Reverse Brainstorming	Reverse brainstorming prompts questions that first generate increased problems or criticisms (reversal techniques) rather than solutions. These problems are then further reversed to brainstorm solutions for the new problems, and in this way draw out even more creative ideas.
Design by analogy	Reasoning by analogy is to revisit a problem with the goal of looking for similarities between it and other already solved problems.
Design Criteria	Design criteria are the explicit goals that a project must achieve in order to be successful.
Design Principles	Written statements, generally in the form of imperatives, that serve as guidance during decision-making in the ideation phase.
Concept development	The purpose is not to judge the feasibility of solutions but instead to generate ideas regardless of their practicality.
Concept Matrix	A tool to facilitate the concept evaluation and selection process.
Prototyping and Iteration	Rapid prototyping of concept ideas to quickly test them with the advantage of immediate stakeholder feedback, and the ability to adapt and re-test ideas on the fly.
Storyboard	The visual sequence of the specific use case, or scenario, coupled with a narrative.
Scenario Development	Stories and context focused on identifying the what, who, how, and why behind the behaviour of the given user, or client, in a scenario, for example a spousal immigration sponsorship applicant.
Role Playing	The participants themselves perform a hypothetical experience of the service, program or product solution.
Live prototyping with users	To test the feasibility and viability of an idea, participants stress test prototype solutions with real users.
References for Methods	Kawakita (1991), Kumar (2013), Martin & Hanington (2012)

During the problem framing stage, the Hub design team worked directly with the FCDC participants to take those fieldwork experiences and analyse them to frame the problems; four major methods/visualizations were used to make sense of the data gathered: User profiles and User Position Mapping (Figure 1); Entities, Relationships, Attributes and

Flow Systems Map (Figure 2); Affinity Maps (Figure 3); and a tabulation and count of various “Client Pain Points”(Figure 4). For the problem-solving stage, the Hub designers introduced a variety of methods to elicit abductive thinking and prototyping. Over 100 ideas were generated during the ideation phase; selected ideas were prototyped and shared with current and former clients and organizations to help test their applicability and ensuring that the ideas were developed into practical concepts that could be applied. In total, during the four-week project, 25 different design methods were used (Table 1).

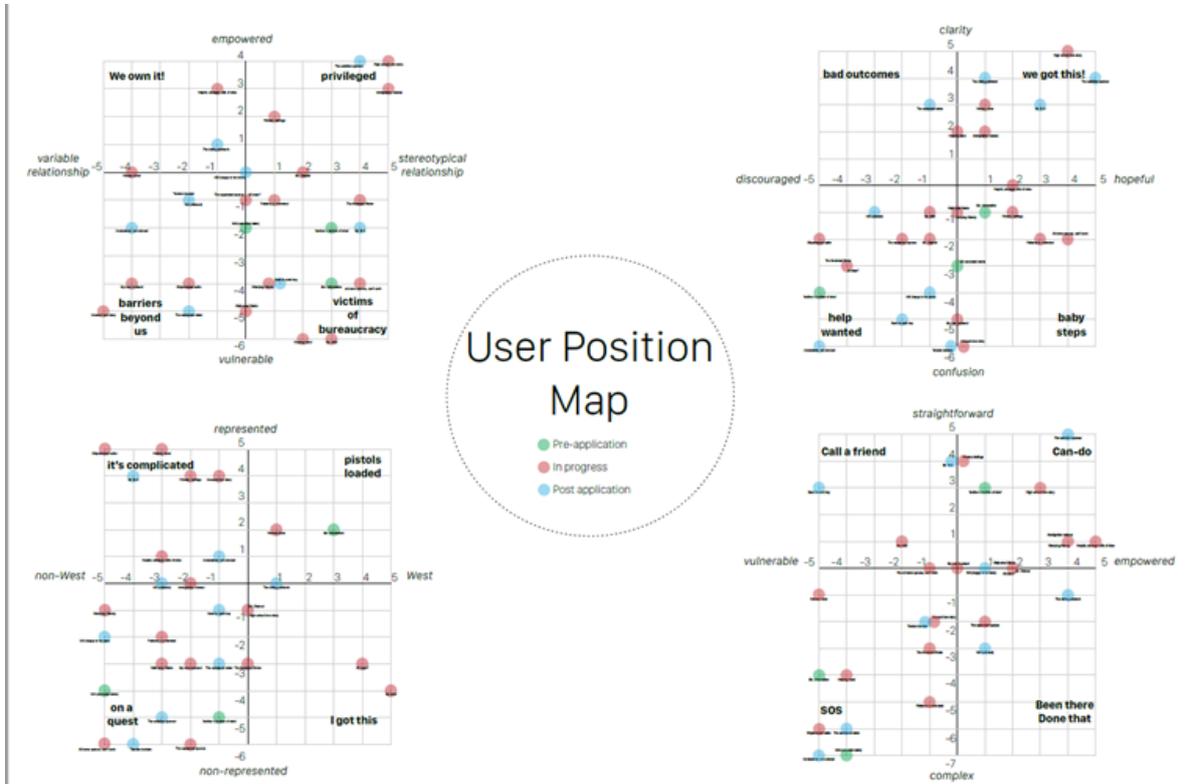


Figure 1. User profiles and User Position Mapping

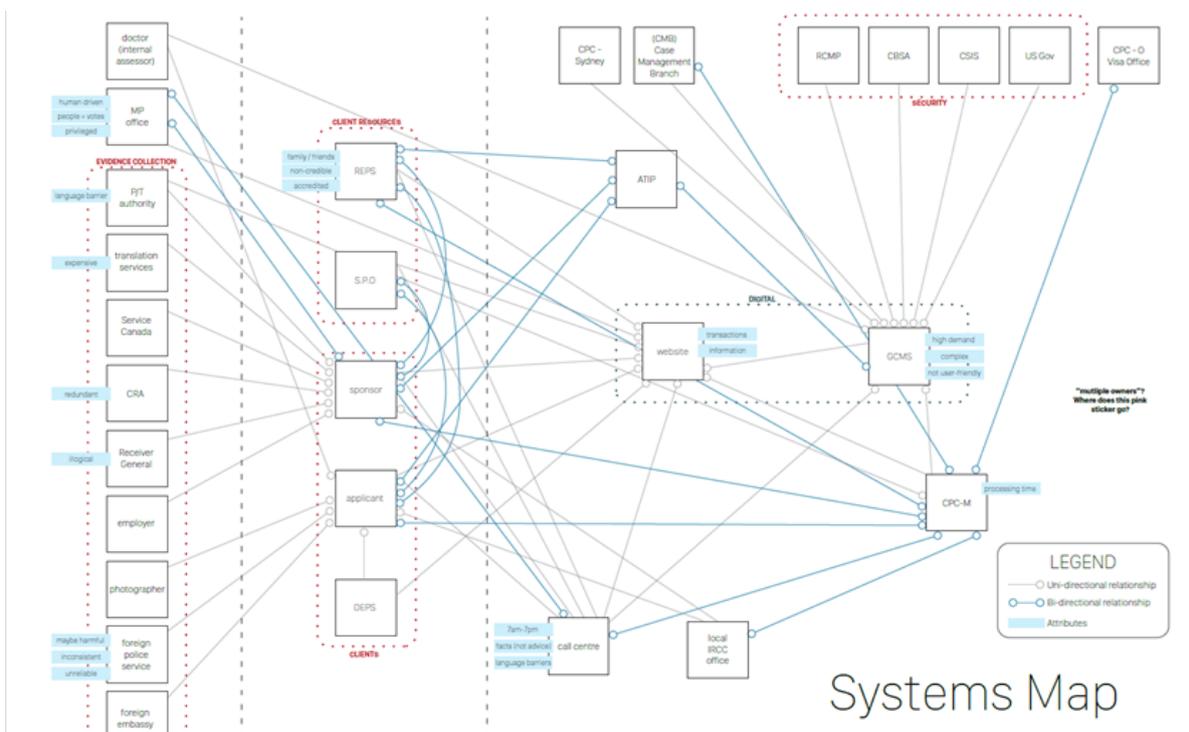


Figure 2. Entities, Relationships, Attributes and Flow Systems Map

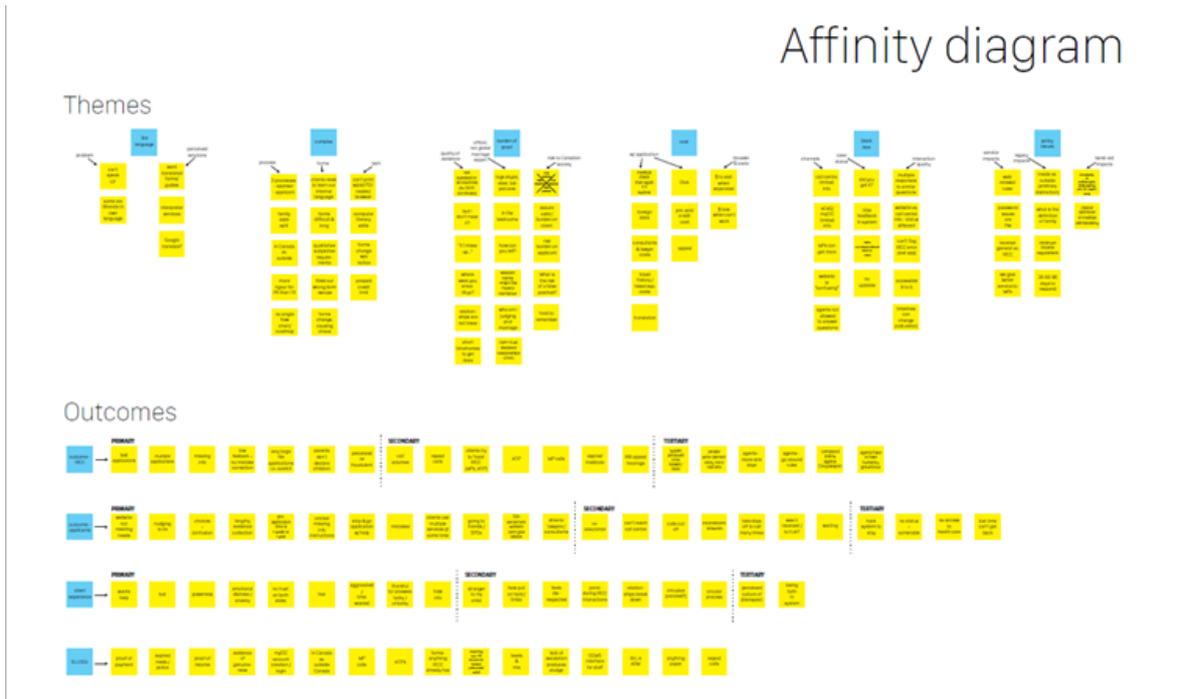


Figure 3. Affinity Map

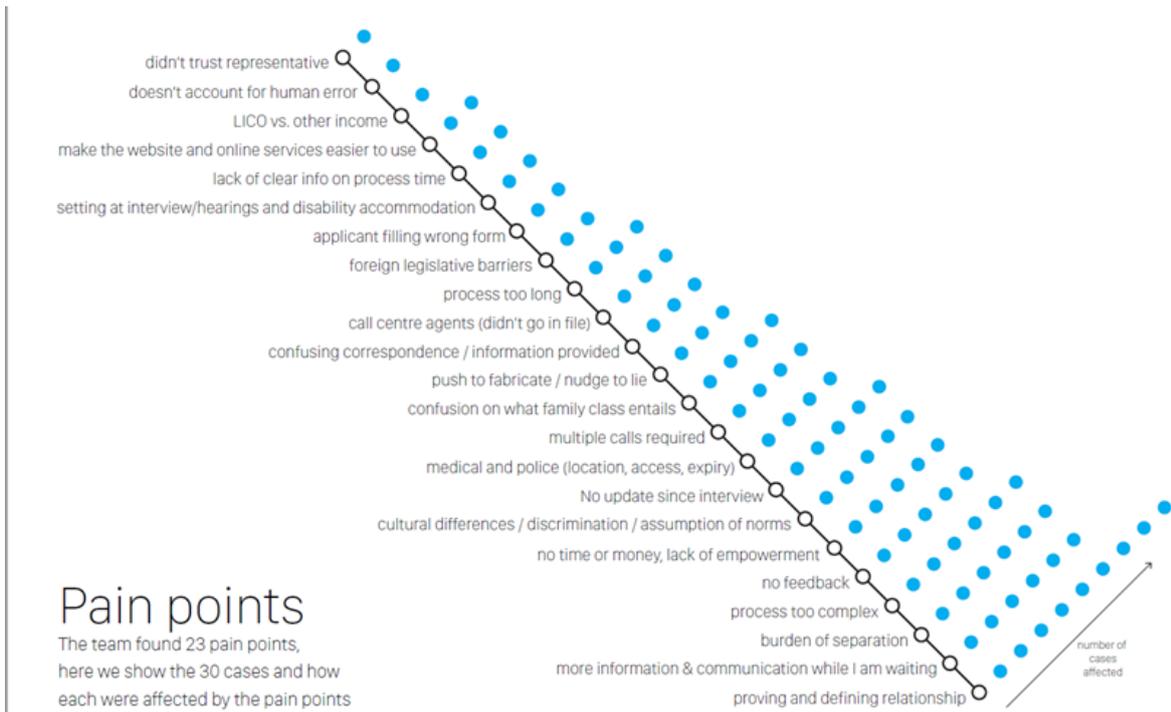


Figure 4. Data Visualization of User Pain Points

In addition to the Innovation Hub led (internal) team, the lead designer of the Privy Council Office’s Innovation Hub was also teaching a Masters of Design course at OCAD University and used the family class re-design as the student’s term project. The result of the FCDC was the presentation of five solutions directly to senior management; the fact that the IRCC team was competing against OCAD students who were looking at the same issue added weight to observations of similar issues, as well as encouraging the creation of the best ideas. The first “Dragon’s Den” was very successful, as all of the ideas were well-received by senior management.

Prior to the design process, a common IRCC misconception was that the length of processing time would be the biggest irritant for the client; yet it ranked as the 15<sup>th</sup> most important pain point. More important was the anxiety evoked by the process and the burden of being separated from one’s spouse. Interviews suggested that clients understood that the process could be long but appreciated communication that indicated that things were proceeding forward; this was a focus for the FCDC team during the ideation phase.

All five solutions (and more<sup>5</sup>) were implemented to some degree at IRCC, however two notable solutions bear mentioning; the first involved creating a text messaging service that would generate a barcode that an applicant could attach to their application – this barcode could be scanned when the package was received, sending a text letting the applicant know IRCC had received it. The second solution, the “Phone Hug” changed the reception message on the phone to a more friendly tone and empowered service agents to answer case status inquiries for all spousal applications. The piloting of these two solutions provided measurable impacts on client experience and operational efficiency. The text from the mailroom solution, though it had a small rate of uptake by clients, had a very high (near 100%) client satisfaction rate. The “Phone Hug” had an operational impact within a few months of implementation, with same day call rates falling by 30%, as well as an improved client satisfaction rate, as shown by the rise in positive unsolicited messages (from 25% of all messages to over 60% of all messages).

After the FCDC there was a strong boost in morale among the participants who were now *design alumni* and were champions for their ideas and this fresh approach to developing solutions for public sector services; developing a strict experimentation protocol to test piloted solutions further supported the mandate of IRCC to improve client services and efficiencies. IRCC launched the “Blueprint Employee Innovation Fund” that would put aside money for the development of any employee’s suggestions for improving service; the judges for any suggestions would not be senior management but drawn from the design alumni to make this a bottom-up approach to improving program delivery. The success of the FCDC led to the next design challenge to examine the Citizenship Grant program (CGDC); the goal was now to do the same kind of user-centred design as before, but with two new design hires (a human-centred design researcher, a graphic designer) and one contract employee (a design facilitator), constituting emerging in-house capacity within the organization. Again, the design project was four weeks in duration, drew participants from across the organization, and utilized a similar set of design methods.

Driven by rigorous measurement protocols, IRCC was able to show demonstrable outcomes in client satisfaction, operational efficiency and staff engagement towards client-centricity, and build a case for the creation of internal capacity. In January of 2017, IRCC used these results to develop in-house capacity and launch a new Client Experience Branch (CEB), providing the senior management leadership and coverage that would show that this was to be at the core of the organization’s operations. By establishing a new in-house Service Insights & Experimentation (Pier SIX<sup>6</sup>) Division as part of CEB, IRCC provided both the dedicated staff with expertise in qualitative, quantitative and design research skills. Having dedicated staff to support the policy and program support of the organization, with outreach services that would be accessible to all within IRCC, shows both the organization’s commitment to co-design principles and the capacity to experiment and measure to quantify values of changes made. In addition to the design capacity and service policy responsibility, the CEB also houses responsibility for the Client Support Centre (e.g. the call centre), a major client channel for service delivery. Being embedded in the organization means that Pier Six can feed service policy and, in turn, have a real influence on the Government of Canada’s service policy; this firm commitment by IRCC shows that this is meant to be a real framework for culture change and innovation.

IRCC could have chosen to set up an innovation lab structure to service its organization directly; this is the approach that has been used quite successfully by organizations like MindLab in Denmark, or the Alberta Co-Lab that assists provincial departments in developing better policies.<sup>7</sup> This IRCC Lab could have had its own separate space, separate rules of operation that allow it to maintain the separate/integrated nature that labs require to maintain design innovation and push change and innovation. It could have reported directly to the Deputy Minister<sup>8</sup> and had broad powers to change policies and procedures in consultation with departments at IRCC that were experiencing trouble. Being able to bring in the design team to every challenge and carry out much of the work in-house would have sped up much of the solution generation and fostered perhaps more radical innovations. The challenge, however, would be

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5 Regular (non-design challenge) employees took it upon themselves to trial ideas that address client pain points that were surfaced in the presentations.

6 “Pier” is a reference to “Pier 21” a major immigration landing port for over one million Canadians over the decades, while “SIX” is the abbreviation for “Service Insights and eXperimentation”.

7 This issues are raised by Alberta CoLab here: <https://medium.com/the-overlap/the-alberta-colab-story-2d409ecf747c>

8 The most senior bureaucrat in the department.

how to ensure the deep culture change in the organizations beyond depending on the lab for a space to design, and take that mind set back into the everyday work of the office.

Despite the dominant trend of innovation labs in public and private sector organizations, IRCC chose to value culture change over ideas by investing in creating a dedicated unit for human-centred design and experimentation, staff it with experts in social work, anthropology, design, data science and behavioural science, and embed it within the CEB to provide the senior management leadership and coverage. IRCC established the Deputy Minister led Client Experience Committee within the Ministry to ensure that the insights gained through Pier Six and CEB's client-centred research are continually communicated to the highest levels of the organization and can be embedded into new service policies. So, the emphasis is on culture change from the bottom up (with engaging IRCC departments and individuals directly) as well as top down with senior management briefings and discussions.

Because the Service Insights & Experimentation's mandate is to design with employees and not merely conduct its own design research, the employees become the champions of the client and the ambassadors of the process throughout the department. In only one year, there are almost 50 design alumni and approximately ten human-centred design or experimentation experts within the organization – up from an original zero when the family class design challenge was launched. Furthermore, each design challenge project culminated in video presentations shared across the organization, and viewed by over a thousand employees.

While still in its infancy, the move towards a culture of client-centricity is gaining momentum. This is immediately noticeable by the establishment of a new Deputy Minister chaired client experience committee, and that design project "Dragon's Dens" have become popular events at the department for staff to attend. Furthermore, design projects have adopted new layers of complexity, such as two inclusive design projects with vulnerable and at-risk newcomers, and a policy (not service) design project; this signifies a tacit approval to use human-centred design to tackle a broader range of problems within the department.

## 4 Discussion

The field of service design has emerged over the past two decades to address the function and form of services from the user's perspective and better understand how people perceive and receive those services (Buchanan, 1992, p. 12-14). Service design has done a very good job of understanding how people navigate service offerings, through the use of a variety of methods from ethnographic observation and interviewing to creating journey maps and *servicescapes* to map out how services interconnect and where touch-points and pain points can be located (Clatworthy, 2011; Lee, 2011). The elements of service design typically touch upon the shifting of perceptions and aesthetics, touch points and sequencing of services and the relationship to the customer, often with the goal of ensuring that clients have a better experience (e.g. Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml, 1991; Lo, 2011).

The strength of design is its emphasis on practice and the use of iterative approaches to developing solutions; when applied to public service design through co-creation, the designer frequently works as a catalyst and facilitator to help public servants develop ideas (Camacho, 2016). By forcing word-oriented policy makers to use visualization techniques and drawing out journey maps and generating narratives of client experiences, designers can help facilitate a reframing of problems (Boer, Donovan & Burr, 2013). Co-designing can help improve the collaboration between different stakeholders and help better targeted solutions while fostering mutual understanding of challenges and approaches to problems in an organization (Siodmok, 2014). As Kershaw et al. (2016) note, most civil servants want to make a positive difference in the lives of citizens, and engaging directly with them can help them feel more connected with their roles in government as well as the people they serve.

This case study highlights the realization of these benefits of co-design – through all of the design challenges the use of methods like journey mapping and creating personas to highlight newcomer experiences served to help IRCC participants better understanding and share their insights on the deeper problems at work in some service offerings. Bringing together of experienced IRCC staff with design researchers also ensured that ideas generated were made with the deep tacit knowledge of program officers, policy makers and operations specialists who understand intimately the challenges and possibilities within IRCC; this made their solutions ones that "they can land" (Bailey & Lloyd, 2016, p. 8). By testing ideas with service providers and front-line staff, design challenge participants gained valuable feedback but also built further goodwill with those organizations that could see how seriously IRCC took their comments.

Punctuated co-design approaches do a good job of spreading the methods of design and getting people in an organization to talk more with one another; the problem is in the full execution of the methods without the sustained contact with designers and compressed time windows. As Donetto et al. (2015) saw in their review of EBCD approaches, nearly half of those who used the methods on their own omitted steps and tended to use small-scale approaches with short time windows to address immediate problems. The lack of consistent support by designers and restrictions for scope meant that many of the EBCD participants struggled to understand what co-design really meant and were hesitant to push too hard for radical changes in their organization (Donetto et al., 2014).

Innovation labs, by contrast, have the strong design researcher ability built into their teams that can work together with users to work in physical and/or virtual spaces to push problem-solving and unique solutions (Gryszkiewicz et al., 2016). The challenge for innovation labs is two-fold: first, to fully impart that design research capacity/culture shift into the organization they are assisting with, and, second, to ensure that the changes are then fully implemented and tested once the project is over. Innovation labs tend to be focused, like punctuated co-design, on developing solutions to problems; so while innovation labs can help with generating new ideas, and dispersed methods of design research can help with getting people within an organization talking more often, they can fall short of being able to change how an organization looks at, and deals with, fundamental issues underlying how they work. This does not mean, however, that all innovation labs fail to impact the culture of the organizations that they work with, for there are different forms of innovation labs with varying degrees of influence. One notable example is the Policy Lab that works closely with different departments of the UK government to help build ethnographic research and visual thinking capacity with the organizations through close co-design workshops and on-going relationships (Kimbell, 2015).

In addition to building new skills, there is also a need to support the emotional changes that are associated with organizational transformation. Engaging users in the process of change can help them both understand and accept those changes as necessary, as Gover and Duxbury (2017) found in their study of a hospital restructuring, as well as facilitate the sharing of critical fears and doubts about the process of change (Kearney & Siegman, 2013). Organizational change, then, must have both the cultural change that creates conditions that permit failure, open discussion about feelings and concerns, as well as the ability to challenge the status quo. These principles of allowing for failure, acknowledging emotions and providing tools to challenge the existing solutions are at the heart of the IRCC design challenge approach. By mixing up teams by skill sets, de-ranking the participants and pushing fieldwork with users and service providers, followed by visual research techniques and building solutions that can be tested, Service Insights & Experimentation helps civil servants to break down internal barriers and believe in change. Prototyping, in particular, serves to push a more active approach to meaning making and engaging with ideas, a safe place to play with possibilities (Sanders, 2013; Schrage, 2013). Competing against graduate students helps to push the development of new ideas but also serves as a litmus test that conceptions of the problem do have a common framing. Finally, being part of the IRCC organization means the design team must follow the same restrictions and understand the specific needs of the department, making it easier to encourage the building of not just fanciful solutions, but ones that the challenge team can land.

Because the design challenge approach requires a strong commitment by the departments and personnel involved by releasing participants from their regular duties for a full month while they engage in the design research process in constant contact with the in-house Service Insights & Experimentation design team, there is the time to really dive into the work of designing. The participants have many opportunities to try and fail at their ideas, while being supported and encouraged by their peers as well as the design team. This immersive environment allows for the freeing of participants from their old conceptions, like an innovation hub, but with a sustained engagement and true co-design of the solutions to participant and end-user identified issues. This approach, we believe, provides the start of the cultural change to the organization; the first change is in the participants themselves. At the start of a challenge, we ask that people share their thoughts and assumptions about the process: many indicate at the start that they worry that the process might be “just another make work project” that “won’t go anywhere”. Those same individuals, by the end of the challenge, end up often being the greatest champions of the process, having seen that they can identify new client pain points not previously considered by IRCC and that they can generate concrete solutions to those problems. In presenting directly to the most senior management, thus by-passing one or two levels of approvals, the participants are able to show those with the power to authorize change what change would work and why. We have also seen how senior management responds to the concepts, in sharing their observations of broader mandates that they are entrusted to fulfil – this sharing back with the design teams has fostered a new respect for the challenges being faced and the commitment of the organization to change its culture. This decouples risk aversion and allows for radical, client-centric ideation that is experienced not just by the design alumni, but by those senior executives who take part. It also serves to humanize the institution that the participants and judges serve, by sharing an understanding of challenges and fostering communal spirit of change (Douglas, 1986).

There is the further fact that the relationship between the design alumni, Service Insights & Experimentation and the rest of IRCC does not end with that presentation; it is only the start of an on-going process of sharing, testing and implementation of pilot projects. The unit has taken great pains to serve as facilitators of the work of the design alumni, insisting that the solutions are stepping stones to new ideas by the members of the organization. By providing the background knowledge, material understanding and methods for visualizing and conceptualizing information, Service Insights & Experimentation helps participants to realize their ideas. By teaching these methods and reinforcing the ability of other members of IRCC to use and conduct design research projects of their own, while being available for support (through avenues like weekly "Ask Me Anything" visitations to the unit, among others) sustains the interest and ability in using human-centred design to inform new programs and procedures.

This case study highlights many of these strengths, by developing a human-centred design process that brings participants from across the organization from different branches and different levels in the hierarchy. Indeed, the original FCDC was supported by an innovation lab, however, the creation of Pier SIX, embedded within the Client Experience Branch with its clear mandate for change, and the explicit continuation of the immersive four-week co-design approach indicate a marked break from the typical *innovation lab* model. The co-design approach, in particular, emphasized a building of shared culture of innovation and change, presentation of ideas to the highest authority and a commitment to on-going testing and development of solutions beyond the design challenge. By using employees within the department as the main *designers* within the project (with Pier SIX staff being *facilitators*), the co-design approach put equal weight on idea generation and culture change. Finally, having senior management leadership and coverage to engage with the broader policy and operations implications of these innovations helps to drive culture change forward through the organization.

The use of innovation and design research methods in the public sector is a growing trend, but not all interventions are created equal. Despite the dominant trend of innovation labs in public and private sector organizations, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has chosen to value culture change over ideas. The investment of funding by IRCC to create a dedicated unit for human-centred design and experimentation allowed for the embedding of experts in social work, anthropology, design, data science and behavioural science directly within the client experience branch, with the mandate to foster ties and build an on-going co-design methodology that works with departmental employees to help them with their challenges and have them be part of the design research. While it may be tempting to see Pier SIX as the sole catalyst for change, the reality is that it is part of the vision of IRCC to build its capacity to change its organization for the better, and it is because of that organization, and the dedicated people within it, that this change has happened and continues to happen.

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