Alberta.ca user research program

Alberta.ca UX Team

May 9, 2023

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How we conduct usability testing

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Project process

There are five main parts to usability testing projects:

1. Approvals
2. Discovery
3. Recruitment
4. Interviews
5. Analysis

Discovery
2 weeks

Recruitment
2 weeks

**Interviews**
3-4 weeks

Analysis
2 weeks

1. Approvals

- Projects are usually initiated by the UX Team or the program area.
- We create a research brief that the program area uses to brief up on their end.
  - Project scope
  - Research questions
  - Activities
  - Timelines
  - Deliverables

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2. Discovery

Learn about the program/service:

- Identify key audiences, tasks, services

- Create a service blueprint

- Identify target groups

- Determine scope

Discovery
2 weeks

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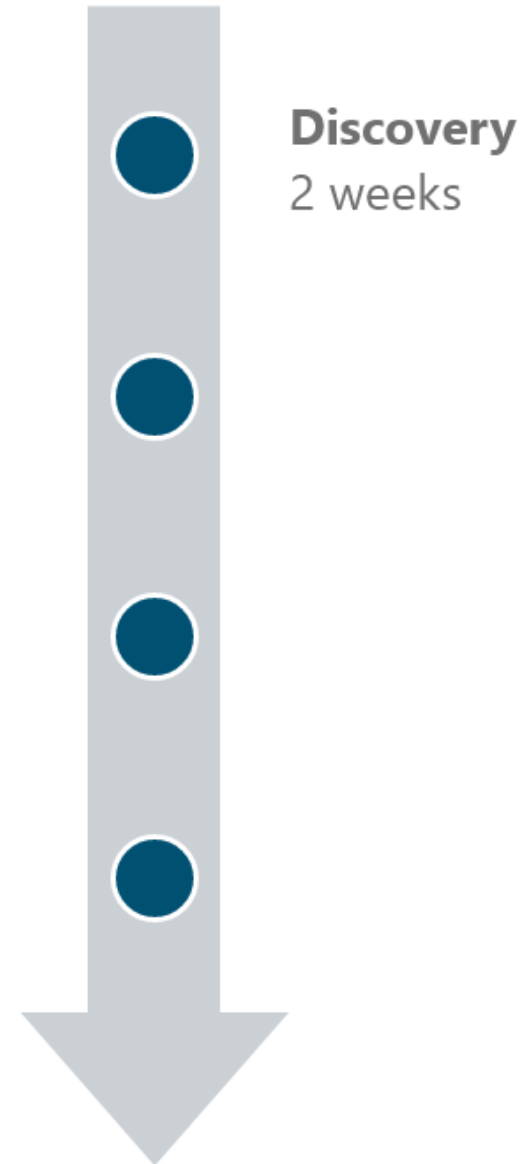
3. Recruitment

The recruitment phase is made up of two parts:

1. Deciding on participants and recruitment goals

2. Communicating the project to potential participants

Recruitment
2 weeks

Recruitment goals

Total #	Age*	Gender	Location	Audiences*	Relationships to the program

24	• 15 – 17
	• 18 – 30
	• 31 – 50
	• 51 – 64
	• 65+
		• Male: 50%
		• Female: 50%
			• Urban: 75%
			• Rural: 25%
				• ELL
				• Temporary foreign workers
				• Indigenous people
				• Low-income employees
				• Hospitality, retail, food services, and construction
					• Employee (7)
					• Employer (10)
					   • Owner/operator (5)
					   • HR professional (5)
					• Canadian payroll association (2)
					• Temporary foreign workers (5)

*Aiming for a balanced representation of these segments

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Recruitment methods

Methods for finding participants:

- Alberta.ca fly-ins
- Newsletter/listserv
- Stakeholder contacts
- Social media
- Pop-up research
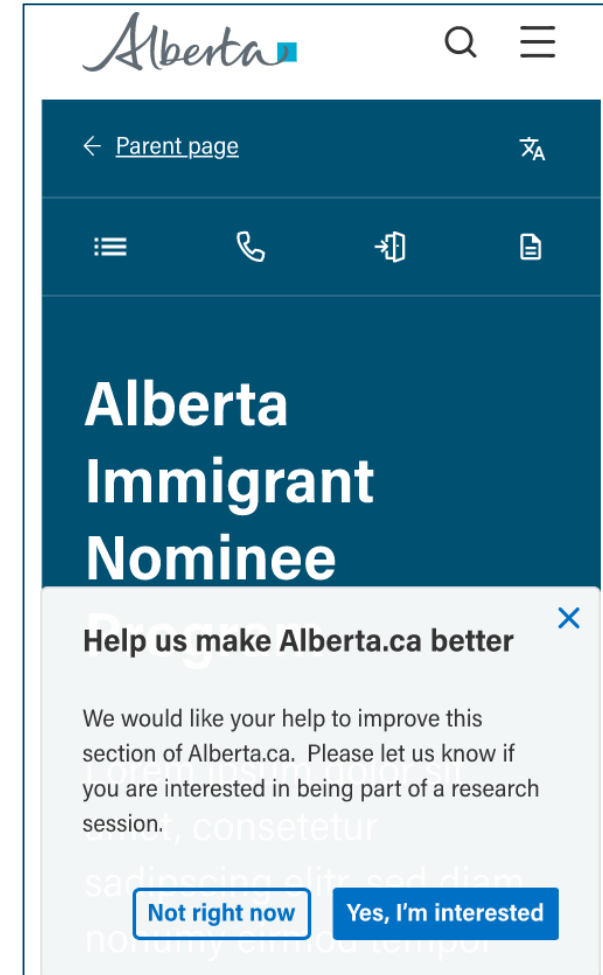
4. Interviews

Sessions are scheduled as responses come in:

- Emails/text messages
    - "You have been selected"
    - "Day before/day of" reminder emails

Track progress towards recruitment goals through a spreadsheet.

* Timelines heavily dependent on participants' availability

Interviews
3-4 weeks *

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Sessions

- Between 45 to 60 minutes

- Facilitated remotely by a member of the UX team using Microsoft Teams.

- Participants share their screen we will record each session for the purposes of note-taking and for reference.

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Usability tests

Observes
Interviews
Gives feedback

Facilitator   Participant

Administers   Performs

Tasks

NNGROUP.COM NN/g

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5. Analysis

Sessions generate a lot of raw data:

- Written and/or digital notes

- Audio/video recordings

In the analysis phase, we filter, organize and interpret this data to produce useful insights and recommendations.

Analysis
2 weeks
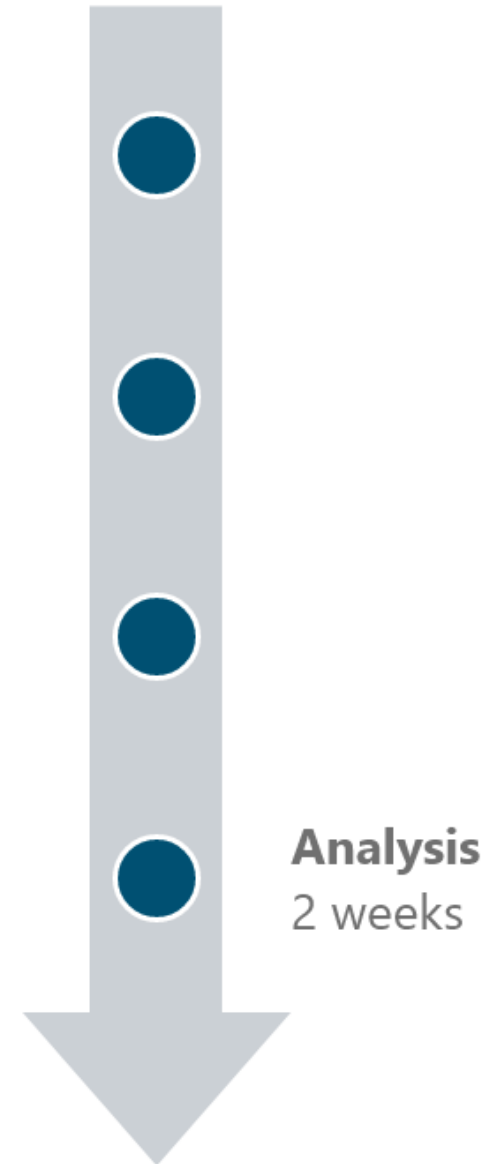
Findings report

- Summarize session findings
  - Who we spoke to
  - What they said
  - Examples in the form of quotes, video clips

- Make recommendations based on our findings
  - For program areas
  - For communications advisors and content strategists
  - For design and development teams

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What we've learned (so far)

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Sessions completed

Over 100 hours of usability testing on Alberta.ca and its prototypes

Areas tested:

- COVID-19
- Residential tenancies
- Employment standards
- Alberta Public Service jobs ecosystem
- General usability tests

1. Wayfinding and sense of place

- People lack a sense of place while navigating the website.

- People look for a starting point or place to reset when they get lost.

- There are not enough options for moving laterally through related content.

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"Where is the 'home' button?"

The collection is not cohesive to the participant. She does not understand how to get between pages in the collection and always defaults to the site search to find what she wants.
– Usability test notes

"You are forever having to click 'back'…But you kind of have to go back to the main page to get anywhere else."

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2. Content

- Content can become overwhelming quite quickly.
- Visual aids that help organize and break up content are appreciated:
  – Headings
  – Accordions
  – Bulleted lists
  – Tables

"Many people don't have time to search the website for an hour. It should be bullets, clear, and then you can click links to go in and find more information."

"It's easier to just ask rather than go through pages of things to read. Sometimes I can't concentrate."

"When I'm juggling a lot of things, I need information as fast as I can get it."

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3. Navigation

- Participants were often confused by the different menu systems.
    - It was unclear whether any given navigation tool would help navigate the page, the collection or the whole website.
- Certain tools for navigating collections go unnoticed and unused.
    - This is a result of being in the blue band.

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"Why do some pages have the links up here [in the blue band] and some have them down on the page?"

Participant thinks that all-services in the header applies to the content on the current page not the website as a whole.
– Usability test notes

The global navigation header "stood out to me much much more than [the utility menu]…this blue band just doesn't seem important."

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4. General insights

- The website is easy to read (visually).

- People do not like having to dig for related content or resources.

- Users want help bridging the gap between what they read on the website and their everyday lives, decision-making.

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What's next?

Navigation redesign

- Results from user research triggered a larger navigation redesign project.

- Design ideas:
  - Removing the blue band
  - Hiding the global navigation menu
  - Previous/next

- Usability testing the new design

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Thank you!

Sarah Dunn

UX Designer, Alberta.ca

sarah.dunn@gov.ab.ca

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