

Making school enrolments easier

A CASE STUDY



The issue

Parents have to complete a **16-page, handwritten application form** when enrolling their child in a NSW Government school. The form needs to be printed, hand-filled, then handed in to the school, **costing parents significant time and effort.**



Upon receipt of the application, school administration staff must manually enter the information into the Department of Education's system of record, which takes around **35-45 minutes per application.**



What the government did

Education, working in partnership with the Department of Customer Service, designed a new online enrolment form to replace the existing paper-based form and an interface so that school administration staff could process the application digitally.

Education worked with staff and parents to understand the challenges faced during the application process and tested ways it could be improved. Six schools piloted the online enrolment system over 3 months, providing feedback from weekly sessions and school visits. This feedback was used to improve the online enrolment system.

The online enrolment system is now being trialled across 20 schools.

What was achieved



The online form and school interface save parents and school staff considerable time and reduce effort, making enrolments easier.



The parent interface is now personalised so that they are only prompted to answer questions relevant to their child.



School administration staff no longer need to manually enter the data provided by parents into the department's system of record. The information entered by parents is pushed digitally to the system.

Who is the customer?

Parents or guardians who wish to enrol their child in a NSW Government school, and school administration staff.

What customers are saying

I think this form is superbly easy and saves lots of time. It's a very easy form to fill in. I am very happy that I have completed my son's application form in a few minutes.

Parent

The system is user friendly and I expect there will constantly be improvements as it evolves, but I'm sure other schools will embrace this new system and appreciate it as much as we do.

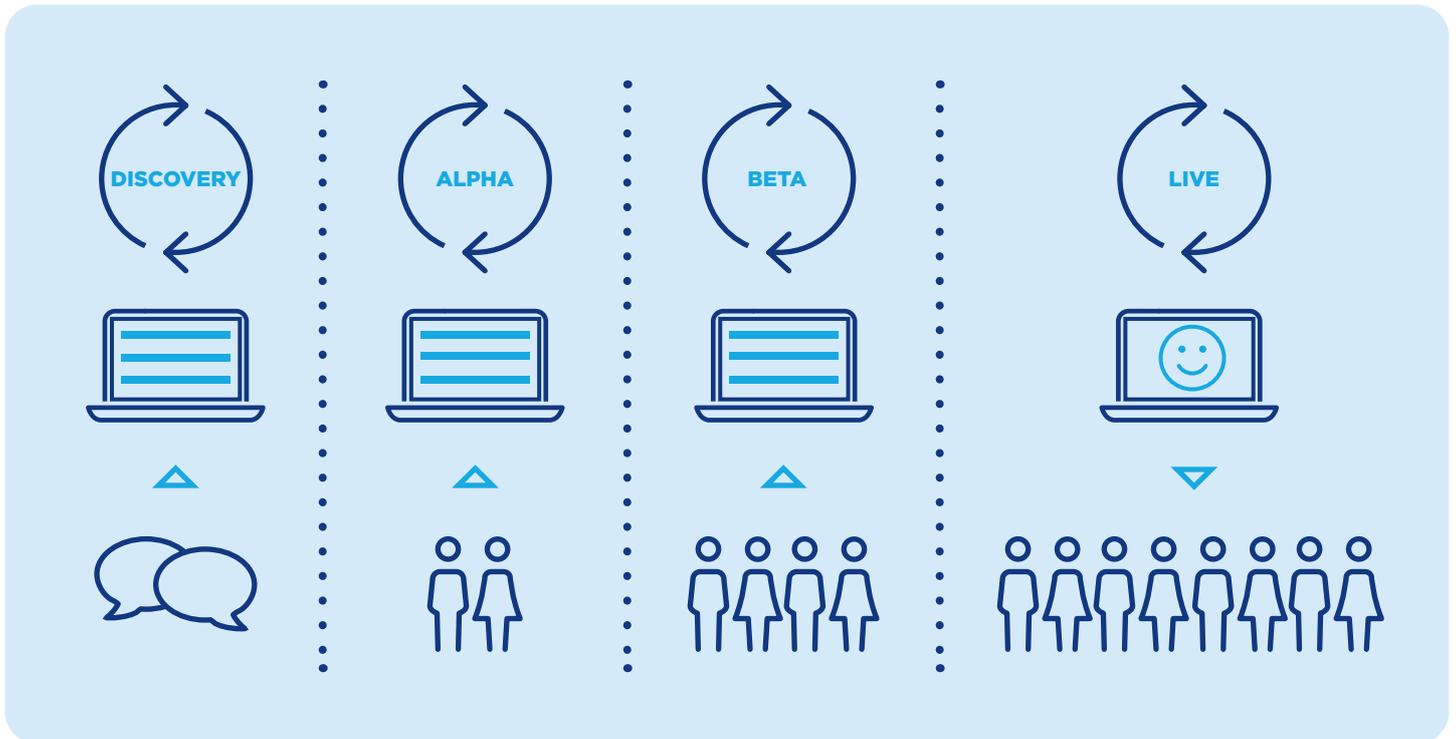
School Administration and Support Staff member

It's been awesome, something that we needed and it can only get better.

School Administration and Support Staff member

INSIGHT

Using a service design method



A 'service design' approach involves placing equal value on the customer experience and the business process, with the aim to deliver a seamless customer experience in the service delivery.¹

Stages of service design:

- 1. Discovery**
- 2. Alpha Prototyping**
- 3. Beta Build**
- 4. Go Live: Pilot**

1. Source: Digital.NSW



1. Discovery

Understand your customers' experience

Start with user needs, not government needs, by understanding the user experience before building a solution.

The team conducted desktop research to understand how other states and territories manage enrolment. They also consulted directly with parents and school staff to gain a clear understanding of the enrolment user experience. The team built journey maps to visualise the experience. This involved a testing phase over 6 weeks conducting:

- face-to-face interviews with nearly 80 participants: school principals and administration staff at 29 schools and 22 parents
- one-hour consultation sessions to properly capture the enrolment experience.

Use ethnographic research to ensure there is a balanced representation of your parent (customer) user base.

The program engaged broadly with schools and parents from across NSW during discovery, to achieve a balanced representation from:

- metro, regional and rural areas
- schools at capacity, near capacity and with capacity to grow
- a combination of primary schools, high schools, central and community schools.

Consult with external providers to support your research, when needed.

Education partnered with a market research company to share the workload of conducting parent interviews.

Tip Ensure you capture consent. Parents completed a standard privacy consent form for interview purposes.



2. Alpha Prototyping

Testing solutions so they meet user needs

Alpha is an experimental phase. It's an opportunity to check if you're building the right thing, before you go ahead and start building a working service. During Alpha, you test the hypothesis you formulated in Discovery.²

During the Alpha phase, Education tested multiple prototypes of the online form with customers. This involved:

- two iterations (testing with new versions) of the prototypes for both parents and school staff
- the feedback from phase one informed the enhancements in phase two of Alpha testing
- Education prioritised parental feedback as the primary user of the enrolment form
- the Alpha phase lasted six weeks.

User feedback should guide improvements.

Parents were unsure why Education was asking for certain information on the enrolment form. From this feedback, Education used simple, clearer language to improve how they asked for information, and used clearer language on how the collected data is used.

Parents were pleased that the personalised application meant they could quickly navigate through the questions, skipping those not relevant to them through the conditional logic feature.



3. Beta build phase

Creating and testing a more polished product

At the Beta phase, you should:

- *define a minimum viable product (MVP) from your successful prototype in Alpha*
- *allow users to trial the Beta alongside the existing service*
- *use their feedback to improve the service.*³

The feedback from customers was incorporated into the building of an MVP (a workable version that early adopters can use).

Education built the MVP of the Online Enrolment System internally. The Change Management and Service Design teams led the testing inside the schools.



12 schools partnered with the project to seek, capture and incorporate customer feedback.



Each school was visited at least twice over the initial 10 week development period to test and refine the school interface.



Suggestions from schools were then tested with other school users and often incorporated into the build.



4. Go live

Pilot

Live is the final phase where you launch your product or service to the public. But it's not the end. You must continually test and improve your product so it continues to meet user needs throughout its lifecycle.⁴

Education piloted the MVP with 6 schools over 3 months.

Tips for training users in face-to-face workshops.

Each pilot school received face-to-face training. The training was delivered by the program's change team, over two hours.

Each session covered:



the background and functions of the online system



the benefits for both school staff and parents, and how their feedback helped create the solution



hands-on activities with support from the analyst to complete



time for questions and feedback



was followed by weekly feedback sessions, for 30 minutes.

You can still improve the product at this stage.

For example, the schools suggested visual enhancements to the school interface, including the ability to filter their information as well as aesthetic improvements.

Put training online to make future rollouts more efficient.

Education is developing online training to scale the roll out of online enrolment across all schools in NSW. This will **save time** and **reduce the cost** of conducting training across **2200 schools**.

4. Source: Digital.NSW

To learn more contact:

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