

Background

- This project aims to simplify how City customers get answers, access services, report issues, provide feedback and connect with City staff.
- It will be available on phone and web initially and may expand to other channels later.
- The project focuses on the needs of users, and promotes diversity, equity and inclusion.

Why we need it/current state

- There are 72 entries in the contact directory on kelowna.ca, including phone numbers, email addresses and webpages. People must search through many phone numbers to find the right contact.
- There are more than 100 categories to scan through before submitting a service request.
- The City's main website, kelowna.ca, contains thousands of webpages, documents and links to other online services.

What it is

- The City Services Hub will be an easy-to-use interface.
- It will help customers quickly find what they need.
- Imagine calling one City phone number or visiting a simple web page for answers or service requests.
- The Hub uses technology, like a digital assistant, but makes sure to support and never create barriers to human connection.

What's been done & what's next

Since October 2024, a project team of cross-functional City staff have been attending service design workshops and conducting internal interviews to gain a deep understanding of the current state and uncovering user needs. Now that we have completed this discovery phase, we are about to begin user research with actual people (like you) to challenge our assumptions and test hypotheses. This user research will inform what we design, making sure it meets our diverse users' needs and helps them achieve their goals.

About user research

Why we do user research

1. **Solve real problems**
 - Imagine you built a new tool, but people can't figure out how to use it.
 - Usability testing uncovers those hidden roadblocks so we can fix them before we spend time and money on something nobody likes/can't use.
2. **Save time and money**
 - It's far cheaper to make changes early than to rewrite an entire product after launch.
 - Finding a small issue now avoids a big customer complaint later.
3. **Make things enjoyable**

- A smooth, intuitive experience delights users - they'll keep coming back.
- If something's confusing, they'll abandon it and maybe tell others not to waste their time.
- 4. **Understand the people we're building for**
 - We're not designing for ourselves or for "some imaginary expert."
 - We talk to real users - people with different backgrounds, different comfort levels with technology - to learn what they need.

The user research process

1. **Plan**
2. **Define goals** (i.e. What do we need to learn?)
3. **Recruit participants** (we find real people)
4. **Observe & record test sessions** (60 minutes - asking questions and completing tasks)
 - We note where people hesitate, get stuck, or express confusion.
- ▶ Sessions can be in person or remote; we record audio, video, or screen captures (with permission, of course).
5. **Report & recommend**
 - We create a concise summary: key problems, severity levels, and suggestions.
 - Use simple visuals—before/after screenshots, short video clips of users struggling.

We need your help

1. Giving feedback
2. Finding participants for user research sessions
3. Working with us to ensure we have the correct tools and logistics set up to successfully work with people with cognitive and/or physical disabilities

If you have any questions, please contact Summer Effray, Acting Intelligent Cities Manager at seffray@kelowna.ca.