

# SmartStart

Helping parents and babies get off to the best start

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## Lessons learned from the first cross-agency life event project



“ Mamas to be and new mamas - have you seen this? It just landed in my in-box. It looks like a one stop shop for government support for parents. Wish I'd had it with Eddie - I totally messed up getting him an IRD number, great that they have links to subsidies and working for families and everything. Pleased to see links for support for PND and miscarriage too. I hope it helps new and soon to be mamas! ”

- Mummy Blogger



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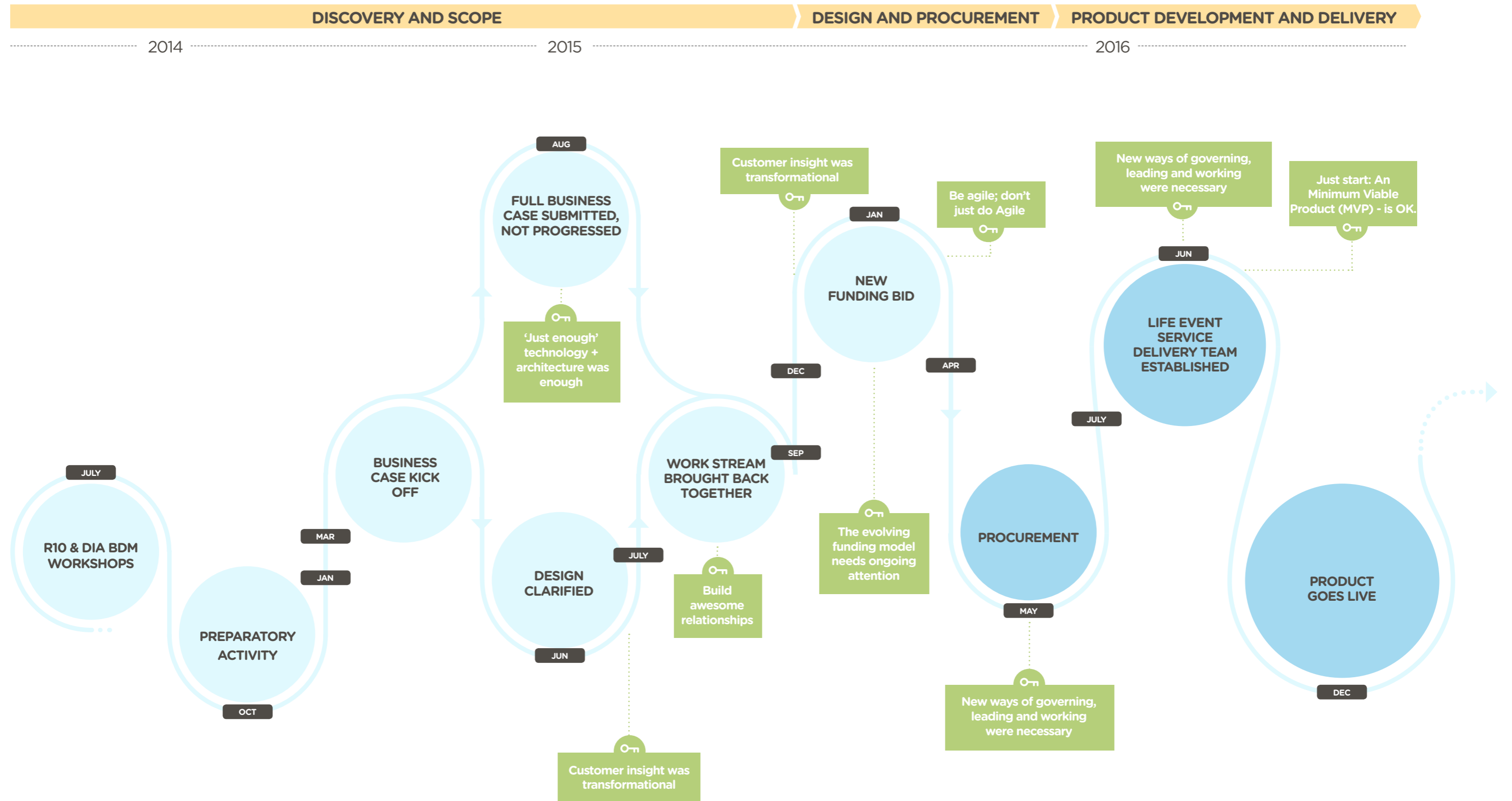
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# Our Journey





**“Thanks for sharing!  
‘Government’ and ‘positive’  
rarely enter into my head in  
the same sentence.”**

**- Facebook User**

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# SmartStart

## Our lessons

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Life is about events, not agencies. When people interact with government they do so in order to have a personal need met.

With SmartStart, parents now have access to an online tool that makes it easy to access services and support during their pregnancy and baby's first years. We have made it easier for parents and caregivers to access relevant information and services for themselves and their babies from conception to early childhood, through the delivery of customer-centric, cross-agency digital tools and processes. The digital identity for a child is established early to use throughout their life.

This was a multi-agency initiative delivered by:

- Department of Internal Affairs
- Inland Revenue
- Ministry of Social Development
- Ministry of Health

with invaluable advice and support from Plunket NZ and the New Zealand College of Midwives.

SmartStart was the first in a series of life event initiatives to deliver a product for customers. It carried a lot on its shoulders including building cornerstone capability and delivering desirable outcomes for customers and government. In addition, new ways of working, governing and delivering were tested. That's a lot for a little project. As you can imagine, we've learned heaps along the way.

At a project level we now know that:

- Your customers know what they need and want. Talk to them about this early, and show them what you're working on often.
- Delivering a working prototype for feedback will have a profoundly positive impact on the scope and quality of the life event service you deliver.

- You'll need to change how you're organised for and lead work. Accept that there will be new roles and teams created within your organisation and across the agencies involved.

At a system level, we now know that:

- A new funding model to meet the needs of an iterative service delivery project delivered by multiple agencies is beginning to emerge. There's significant work to do here for the next life event projects which may change the landscape of service design and delivery.
- Meeting the governance requirements across partner agencies should not be underestimated.

Perhaps the most valuable lesson we came away with is that we could not have done this without bringing together the right group of motivated and committed people. The time and effort we invested in building and maintaining authentic and genuine relationships within and across our Agencies, with our advisors and suppliers, and most significantly with our customers and their advocates, was invaluable.

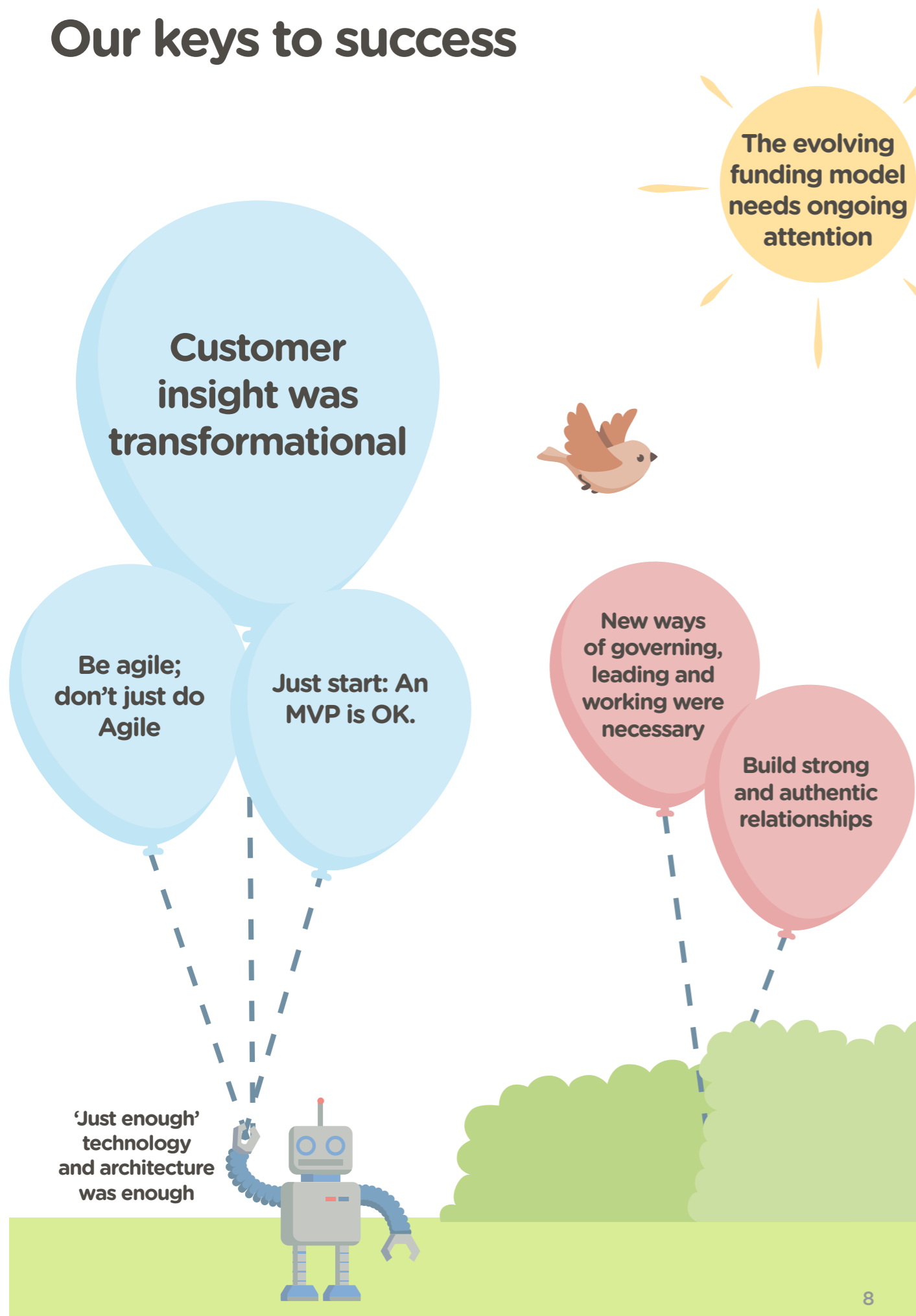
SmartStart went live on 5 December 2016. In the first month, 15,000 people had interacted with this life event service. It makes us proud to know that we've saved them precious time to spend with their families.

We've created this case study so that each life event project can learn from our lessons and build on these to the benefit New Zealand.

We hope you find it useful. If you'd like to get in touch, please contact us: [smartstart@dia.govt.nz](mailto:smartstart@dia.govt.nz).



# Our keys to success



## Customer insight was transformational

We learned quickly that customer experience driven design would be the single most effective tool we had to ensure that our product would address known customer pain points and provide value. Include your customers and their advocates, on the design and delivery journey.

### What happened?

In early 2015, our first and subsequent rounds of customer research to identify pain points and ideate a solution provided a clarity of vision for the programme. When our initial business case was declined mid-2015 (the estimated costs exceeded the perceived benefits), we agreed a market engagement approach was necessary and used our customers, stakeholders and industry to help us rapidly redefine our vision.

We went back to our customers for feedback throughout development, including a demonstration six weeks prior to release, to ensure we had created a product that people needed, wanted and was easy to use.

### Our recommendations

- Showcase your product ideas early and often with advisors, colleagues and customers.
- Host customer experience workshops to connect with real world users and test your product requirements.
- Undertake customer user testing early and throughout product development. Feedback from customers should directly and immediately impact product scope. Refine your backlog and priorities based on what your customers tell you.
- Don't underestimate the time it takes to engage well with your customers. The value is clear in the end, however the investment is significant.
- Commit to putting the customer at the centre and doing the right thing. Be an advocate for your customer.
- Learn from the private sector too. Don't assume the solutions you need will come from what's been done before in government.
- Use the market and other interested people to shape your approach. Make use of face-to-face events, Facebook, Twitter and other social media channels to build connections.
- As an adjunct to customer insight, consult with nominated and well connected experts who have an broad understanding of what customers need and what might offend. The 'don't know what they don't know' customer may not be able to identify what they need until they have hindsight.

#### Alerts and actions

Are agency requirements being given priority over customer requirements?

- Review priorities with the Stewardship Group
- Restate backlog prioritisation criteria

Are estimates for the time spent in customer engagement less than 25% of the estimates for development?

- Look for opportunities to leverage existing networks to involve more customers in the design and delivery journey

"Trusting ourselves to put the customer first."

"People who are testing it are providing overwhelmingly positive feedback."



# Just start: Building an MVP is ok

We saw that you can accelerate product development by delivering a prototype product for your customers to interact with. Their feedback focused our development efforts on delivering what our customers wanted and needed that would be useful and used.

## What happened?

When our original business case was declined, we had to scale back our expectations of what we were delivering. We went back to our customers for advice on our early prototypes, and agreed on a set of 8 key features they'd find valuable. We also actively engaged in conversations with the wider market. In re-framing our product expectations and sharpening our approach, our business case became more palatable and we got approval to proceed.

## Our recommendations



**Deliver first what the majority of your customers most want.** Eliminate their significant pain points in your first release then refine your development over time to provide a more customised experience for additional customer types.



What you build next can be based on how your customers respond to your MVP. **An MVP can help manage tension** between wanting to see a return on investment AND waiting to deliver a product that does everything, for everyone.



**Use an MVP to test out ideas and strategies.** Don't wait to start development until the product roadmap has been fully defined. Feedback on an MVP will contribute to defining your product roadmap.



**Taking an MVP approach, it's possible to start with just enough funding for your first release.** However, funding options should never be far from your mind.



**Keep your MVP as simple as possible and address only one set of problems at a time;** complexity reduces the chances of success.



**Focus on meeting customer needs as a priority.** Don't be overly concerned initially about the re-usability of capabilities and elements. Use subsequent development phases and agency transformation and maintenance programmes over time to reduce the technical debt, improve the interface and simplify services.

“At first, the launch date seemed overly ambitious. In the end, the deadline seems to have created a sense of fiscal responsibility for the tax payer dollar.”

“We should focus on building a product (not running an IT project).”



### Alerts and actions

Are your customers unsure the new product will meet their needs?

- Schedule regular briefings and product walk-throughs with representative groups of customers
- Build and regularly share purposeful reporting with your stakeholder groups



# Be agile, don't just do Agile

We found that being agile meant to be comfortable with uncertainty, responsive to change and always accepting of feedback. Adopting Agile tools and processes supported our teams to work at speed and iterate quickly.

## What happened?

Experiencing the value of customer insight and adopting an MVP approach to product development, it became clear that the 'big detail and design upfront' approach to delivery wasn't necessary. We naturally found ourselves exploring what it meant to be agile and experimenting with Agile practices.

## Our recommendations



**Agree on a shared way of working early.** Your vendors and your agency partners may have different approaches to delivery.



**Create focus for the team.** Use an explicit and visible feature backlog to manage scope, provide clarity on task breakdown and drive meaningful discussions.



**Embrace opportunities to give people autonomy over how they do their work.**



**Plan your delivery timeframes based on your development experience.** Reflect on the value delivered at each iteration and the time it took. Use this to re-forecast.



**Have cross-agency representation when prioritising tasks.** This way, all perspectives are taken into account when deciding what to do next.



**There is a need for IT project management in an Agile process.** Design how you will deliver your technology workstreams in collaboration with your IT specialists, and do this early. They're best placed to tell you what you need and when to deliver the technical components of your service transformation.



**Respect the knowledge that professionals bring to the table.** Allow them delegated decision-making where appropriate.



**Co-location and tools for collaboration will accelerate delivery.** There are real costs associated with this, however the benefits in quality and pace are tangible. Budget for it.



**Have an ambitious deadline and make it publicly known.** Ours was to "have it in the hands of parents by Christmas". We delivered.



**Facilitate the creation of reference groups across agencies.** It's a good way to build assurance that all agency's views will be well represented. Consider Reference Groups for:

- Communications
- Procurement
- Legal
- Technology Services

“Break work into small independent chunks and allow the team to work on small things which grow into a big thing.”

“There's a tipping point when all the feedback you're getting is positive - you know you're done.”



### Alerts and actions

Is the focus shifting to delivering an IT project, rather than a transformational service?

- Revisit the vision
- Invite customers and their advocates to feedback on your development priorities



# Build strong and authentic relationships

We needed to spend significant time engaging with our stakeholders. Plan for this. Don't underestimate the effort this will take, or the confidence and momentum that will be lost if you don't do this.

## What happened?

In the early stages of our work, our traditional ways of working created information silos and barriers. Sometimes there was tension, and it wasn't helpful. The more we talked, shared our progress, and planned together, the easier it was to do our work. Over-communicate, make friends and enjoy each other.

## Our recommendations

- Build in social time to help people connect personally.** A barbeque, a shared lunch or a night out every couple of months is all it takes.
- Celebrate achievements. Thank people.** You'll be working at pace to get things done. You'll need to call in favours and work with people who have a strong relationship within their agencies.
- Ensure Te Tiriti obligations and the ethnic diversity of New Zealand's culture is represented.**
- Make it a priority to share a brief but compelling vision for your product.** This will be of enormous value in rallying your teams, your stakeholders, your customers and their advocates.
- Create a communications pack you can roll out with each new audience.** Your messages will be consistent, and you'll save time!
- Build and publish a 'myth-busting' project dashboard** to communicate progress and keep stakeholders in the loop. This will help you efficiently respond to the high volume of requests for information you'll need to manage.
- Deliver ministerial and stakeholder briefings as a cross-agency team.** Presenting a united update and a unified message sends a powerful signal.
- Openly share information about your work. Over-communicate.** The more readily you share information about your product development, the easier it will be to connect when the time comes for a significant decision, or when you need support.
- Value meetings AND people's time.** There's an art to balancing the need to come together with the cost of doing so. Ensure the right people attend and no more than the right people.
- Communicate and educate staff at all levels, in all collaborating agencies.** People will be less surprised by your requests for support if they're up-to-date with what's happening in the programme.
- Build excitement by showcasing your progress.** These events allow attendees to see the detailed consideration given to the image and psychology behind the branding and product development.
- Keep your agency and delivery partners close.** Remember to include design, technology, architecture, funding and procurement expertise on your team, and in your regular scrums.

**Alerts and actions**

Do you find the team is often repeating the story of your project and its progress to new stakeholder groups?

- Design and implement a standard communications pack and reporting approach

"The power of the humble chocolate fish is incredible."

"I can honestly say that the cross-Agency approach has worked because of the people and their personal commitment to the consumer."



# Be bold; create new ways of working

We found that the establishment of a new team, new roles and new ways of working was necessary. We would have failed had we not done this.

## What happened?

In the early stages, this programme was dependent on the collaboration of three distinct teams. Each team had a unique way of working, different areas of expertise and competing priorities. Navigating this took precious time. Following a recast of the business case and the explicit adoption of Agile practices, a stewardship group and life events services team was established to lead the delivery of our work.

## Our recommendations

- Appoint a lead agency to coordinate the programme and be the central voice for decision making:**
  - It's crucial to have a clear understanding of what's required within your own agency when it comes to governance, reporting, legal compliance and procurement.
  - Engage your Enterprise Programme Management Office (EPMO) at the earliest opportunity to navigate constraints, rules and processes necessary to support your project. Make them good friends of the project and they will be your champions.
- Design and implement a tailored governance approach:**
  - Identify the expected practices, gaps and tensions between each agency's programme management and governance approaches.
  - Adopting elements of a constellation governance model will be useful, but not sufficient.
- Establish a stewardship group of well-connected and motivated people to provide a clear vision and strategic plan to guide the collaboration:**
  - Include representatives from each partnering Agency and customer group
  - Expect your stewards to identify and engage subject-matter experts within their agency to work within your programme and to educate those experts on the programme vision.
- Establish a life event delivery team, led by a product owner, to guide the product design and the operational level change needed to launch and support the life event service:**
  - Base the delivery team within your operational/delivery branch and fill it with emotionally intelligent, pragmatic operational and delivery specialists.
  - The closer to the business they are, the more straightforward operational implementation will be.
  - The life event delivery team are a key resource for enabling customer insight. You have a pool of informed people, passionate about the product, than can recruit customers and support user testing.
  - Delivering the life event project needs to be the one significant programme of work for your product owner. Without that focus and attention, decision-making will suffer and development will slow.
  - Empower your product owner to make day-to-day decisions to move the programme forward.
- Communicate clearly how each agency has prioritised and resourced the delivery of the life event project relative to their existing work programme.** Delivering both without compromise in either will likely be impossible.

"We had a team of champions in the stewards."

**Alerts and actions**

Are you asked to present to programme and governance boards with no remit for decision making around your life event product?

- Each Agency should work with their EPMO to establish tailored governance practices
- Your EPMO will provide valuable support in meeting reporting requirements to Treasury



# The funding model will be ever-evolving, and not perfect

Ideally we would have been able to secure funding for the life of the product from the multiple agencies realising the benefits. Current government approaches were not yet fit-for-purpose when it came to funding multi-agency work.

## What happened?

While the Better Business Case Seed Fund covered the cost of the business case development, funding a multi-agency product development had never been done before. The time, resource, stress and distraction of working this through was immense. Each agency found their own way through in the end and development was funded. The operational costs rests with DIA, which we hadn't planned for. How ongoing development will be funded has not been resolved.

## Our recommendations

- Determine product ownership structures during project initiation** as this will trigger discussion on long-term funding needs.
- Use customer insight to validate your business case** and keep this work-stream tightly coupled with funding and procurement throughout the product development.
- Agile delivery requires iterative funding.** A non-traditional approach will be needed, designed collaboratively, across agencies and supported by Treasury.
- Include funding for life event products in agencies four-year plans.** Plan in advance to fund and resource these projects and the operational support and ongoing development required.
- Work closely with the pan-government group responsible for realising the vision for life events as they can help navigate funding challenges and advocate on your behalf** (for us it was the Service Innovation Working Group).
- Where possible, plan your life event programme to coincide with components of the significant transformation programmes underway across partner Agencies.** You'll get maximum traction, buy-in and leverage. Resourcing, funding and implementation will be easier.

### Alerts and actions

There is no agreed government standard for funding multi-agency product development or to support the funding of development and operation of the services delivered.

- Collaboratively co-design a funding approach with Treasury upfront that meets the procurement needs of your life event project.
- Involve your strategy and planning teams to make sure the life event service is included in strategic planning

“We now have a product in the ecosystem, and we have no resolution for funding maintenance and ongoing development.”

“This project isn't over on 'go-live' day.”



# Get started with 'just enough' technology strategy and architectural understanding

We found it important to keep reminding ourselves and others that this was a service transformation project enabled by technology. This was not an IT project.

**We built a short runway of reference architecture, design patterns and architectural standards and got started. We kept iterating. This guided our decision-making during development and made it easier to understand the technology trade-offs we needed to make.**

## What happened?

We spent too much time early on detailing technical requirements that proved to be either unnecessary or insignificant by the time we found out from our customers what they needed and wanted. We waited too long to understand the complexity of using RealMe and integrating data from multiple agencies. We had to be pragmatic because perfection just isn't possible.

## Our recommendations

- Tackle system and data integration requirements with partners early.** Integrating multi-Agency data sources and legacy systems is the power at the core of delivering life event services efficiently and effectively. This can be complex to implement as often data can not be separated from the context in which it was created.
- Keep a record of technical decisions made and the rationale.** You'll refer to this regularly, and it makes a great resource for the next life event project. When delivery partners join midway or there's a change in team member, this resource will minimise their time to productivity.
- Brand your product as soon as possible.** The product name has huge technical implications. Changing the name means changing the code; it's a costly activity. Engage the full breadth of stakeholders who need to be involved in agreeing the name, logo, domain, look and feel of your product.
- Acknowledge that life event projects can't easily deliver a product and common capabilities at the same time.** The MVP approach, the procurement models and the partnerships needed for each are at odds. Unique, and dependent, projects will likely be necessary to deliver common capabilities.

### Alerts and actions

One of the key tenets of the Government's expectations of a federated service delivery model is that life event projects deliver new common capabilities and/or re-use existing common capabilities.

- Are you finding it challenging to balance this with the need to get something 'out there' to customers?
- Consider building your first proof of concept using common capabilities
  - Work hard early on to understand the technology features, functions and constraints
  - Communicate clearly about any trade-offs being made and the implications of doing so
  - Consider this as a co-requisite project; obtain distinct funding and deliver through a separate project team

“We needed to make a decision, we consulted, we gathered information and then we made the best decision we could with the information we had at the time.”

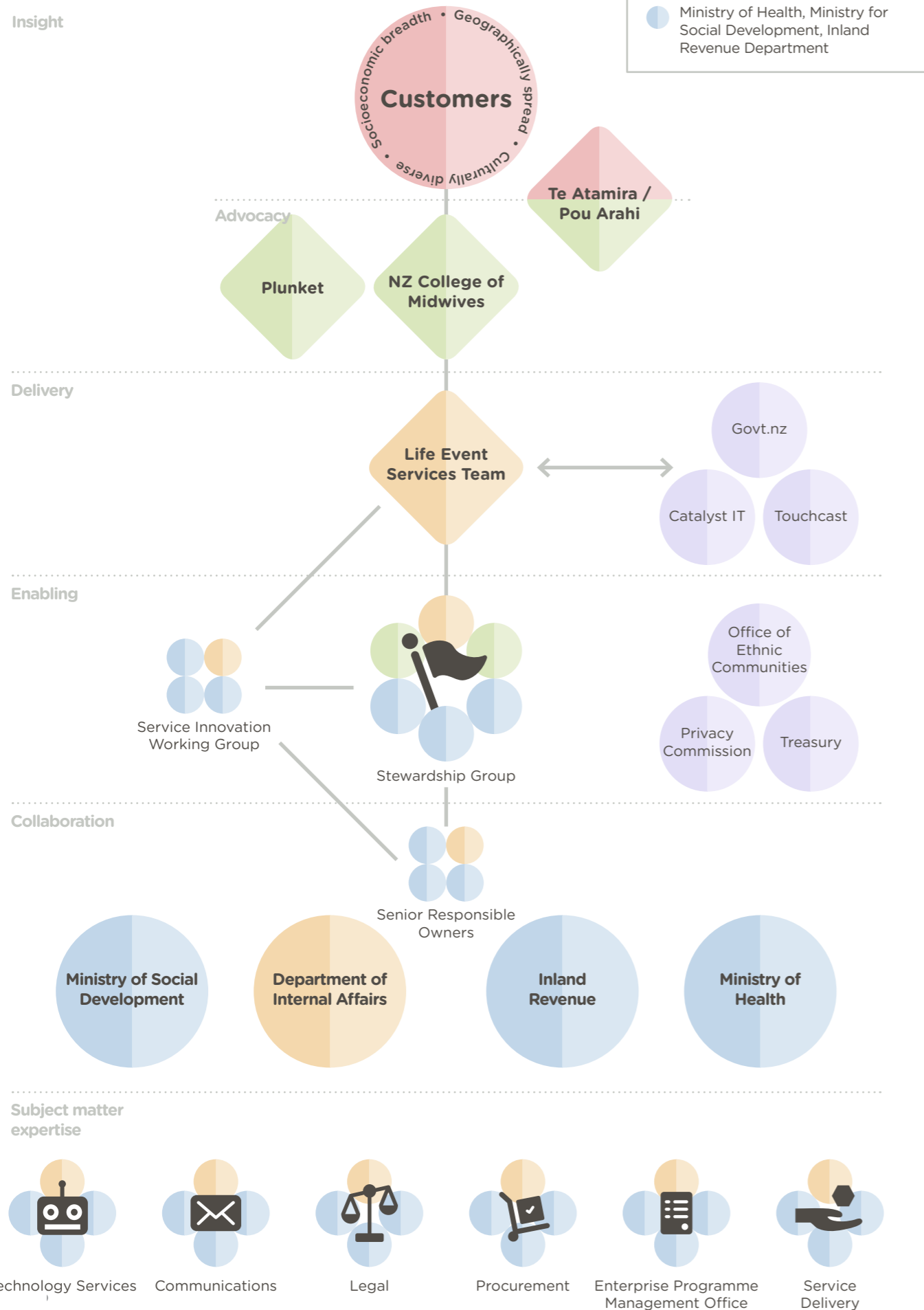


# Our relationships

Insight

**KEY**

- Department of Internal Affairs
- Ministry of Health, Ministry for Social Development, Inland Revenue Department



# Checklist for success

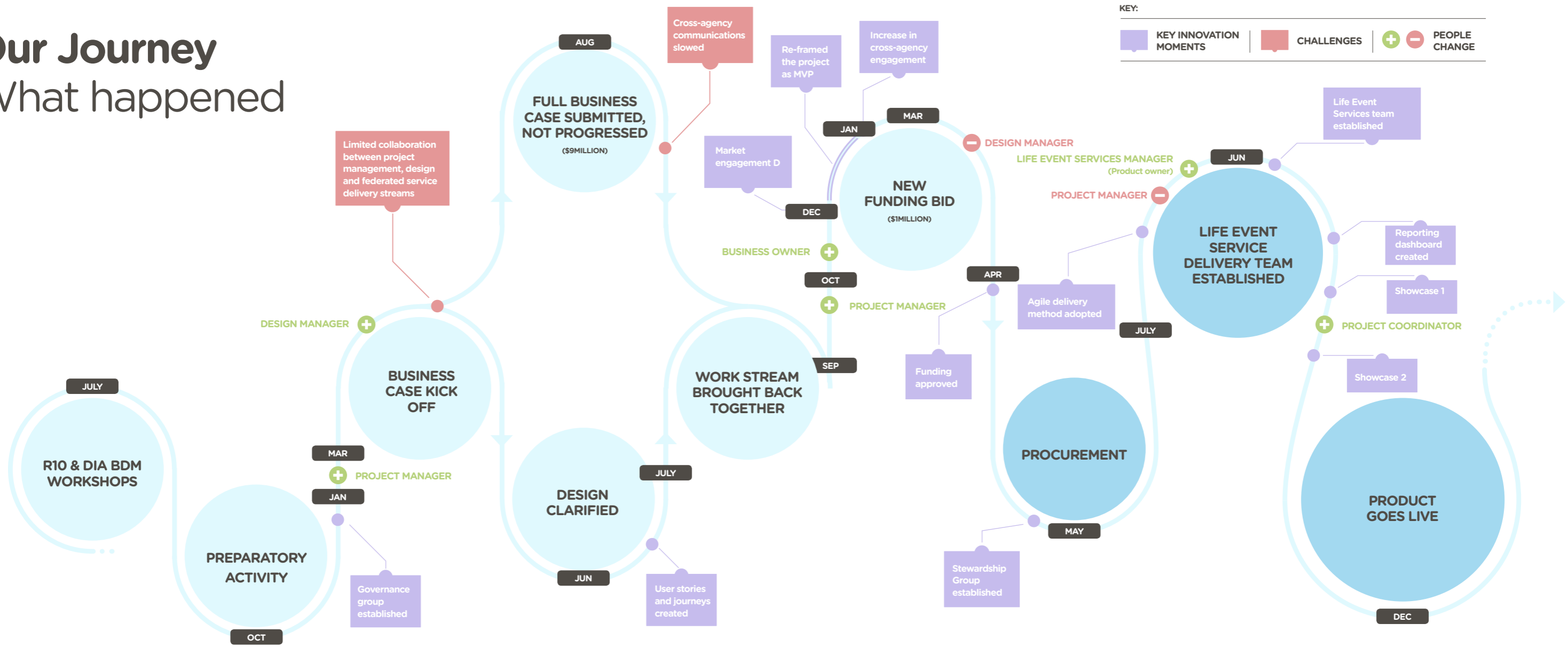
We think this checklist could help with decision-making that will accelerate delivering subsequent life event initiatives.

- ✓ Agree a lead agency and respect the decision-making authority this entails.
- ✓ Schedule time for the people working on the project to get to know each other and establish connections they can call on.
- ✓ Find your customers, go meet them regularly and authentically nurture those relationships throughout the programme.
- ✓ Design and implement an approach to sharing project progress openly, consistently and on-demand.
- ✓ Go to your customers with a working prototype early, and go back often to get their feedback on development.
- ✓ Build a team of stellar storytellers to passionately share the vision and enrol others to participate or support your work.
- ✓ Value your people and recognise their success.
- ✓ Engage widely to gather ideas and generate supporters.
- ✓ Co-design the governance approach with partner agencies EPPO's being careful to incorporate each agency's specific requirements.

*Transformation isn't complete until your customers are using your product*

# Our Journey

## What happened



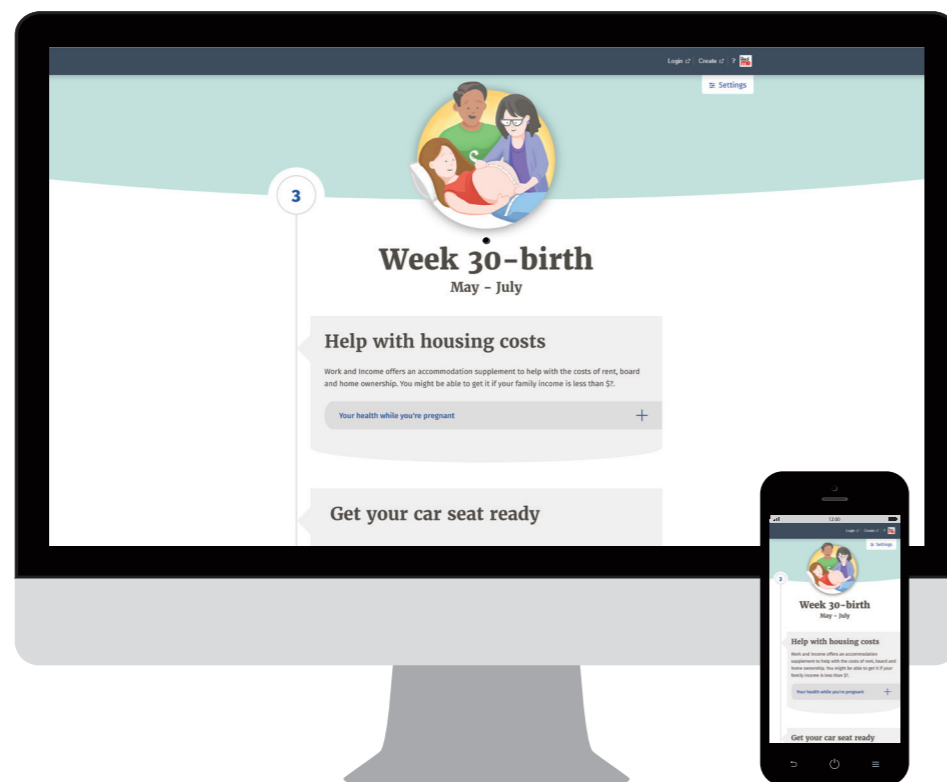
KEY:

- KEY INNOVATION MOMENTS
- CHALLENGES
- PEOPLE CHANGE (+/-)

DISCOVERY AND SCOPE | DESIGN AND PROCUREMENT | PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

2014	2015	2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A team of seconded staff comprising of a senior designer, two designers and senior business analyst start</li> <li>Team established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business case developed. Limited integration of design work in to business case</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agile delivery method adopted</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer research and testing</li> <li>Identified painpoints</li> <li>Ideation of solution</li> <li>Developed 'click through' prototype</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Portraits and journey maps created of three different user types helped us to articulate how this product would enable them to easily and efficiently transact with multiple government agencies</li> <li>Provided clarity of vision and informed the business case</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Closed RFP targeted at AoG Web Services Panel. Vendor selected</li> <li>Dashboard creation to bust myths and report progress</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of clarity within DIA on who is accountable for different aspects of the programme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Momentum was lost while the project was put on hold. This created a lot of rework effort when the project started back up again</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Life Event Services team established. Team size scaled as scope shifted.</li> <li>Centralised delivery responsibility with strong connections to the design work. The team brought together members with delivery and design expertise</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance groups strengthened</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business case was pulled because the budget proposed for the delivery of this project was unrealistic and the benefit in regard to where it fits in on a strategic level wasn't well defined</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance groups strengthened</li> <li>Strengthened cross-agency engagement, shifting responsibility to stewardship Group.</li> <li>Reinforced the collaborative and shared responsibility to deliver on life event</li> </ul>

KEY LEARNINGS	2014	2015	2016
<p>GOVERNANCE APPROACH NOT AGREED</p>	<p>Difficult to work at pace with responsibilities unclear</p>	<p>Business case and product design run in separate workstreams making it a challenge to keep open lines of communication and co-ordination. There was a lack of alignment. The design research wasn't being fed back directly into the business case, and the two workstreams progressed at very different rates</p>	<p>Continuity of staff is extremely important</p>
	<p>People wanted to understand the future vision</p>	<p>The business case was considered too DIA-centric and needed to articulate clear goals and deliveries for the other agencies involved</p>	<p>High turnover in project management capability meant there was a lot of catch-up</p>
		<p>Too grand in scope, not adequately grounded in Agile approach</p>	<p>Ownership of the project was not clear from the start - decision-making took longer</p>
		<p>This forced us to change the way we operated to deliver this piece of work. It put the leadership back into the service delivery side which made the work more customer centered in it's delivery</p>	<p>Run back-end development alongside front-end so that you can update as you go. It was helpful that the developers provided support for both User Experience and User Interface</p>
		<p>The investment perspective changed when we pulled back to an MVP product. It enabled us to re-evaluate our direction to what would deliver the most value to the end user</p>	<p>Teams co-locate</p>
		<p>Seconded staff from MSD/IR</p>	



## This case study was made possible by members of key stakeholder groups contributing their insight

Our thanks go out to the SmartStart Product Team, our Stewardship Group, agency's Architecture Teams, our Govt.nz crew, Catalyst IT, DIA Procurement and the Service Innovation Working Group.

### The following resources were used in the preparation of this case study:

Having skin in the game: A value tension Study of an Inter-Agency IT Project. (2016) Smith, Randall. Research Project in Information Systems, Victoria University of Wellington

Lessons Learned. What we learned on the Discover Journey. DIA (2017). Internal Publication

Digital Babies. Shifting baby related transactions from paper to digital. (2016) Montgomery, Jeff. Government Publication

Birth of a child life event (2016) ICT.govt.nz. Retrieved from <https://www.ict.govt.nz/programmes-and-initiatives/government-service-innovation/easier-access-to-government-services/birth-of-a-child-life-event/>