

Activity: Defining Problem Statements

Goals

1. Develop a common understanding of the distinct problems faced by research software support providers
2. Identify overlapping pain points to help define core service offerings
3. Determine working groups needs to attack problem clusters

Prerequisites

- Needs analysis - surveys, focus groups, 1:1 interviews

Who Should Participate?

Everyone in attendance at the service provider convening

Activity Instructions

Phase 1: Review & Empathize (15 minutes)

1. Frame the mindset: **in design thinking, you always start with the problem, never with a solution.**
2. Share synthesized user stories generated from 1:1 conversations. Review the end-user pain points. Open the floor for conversation about additional end user pain points that folks have seen, what did we miss?
3. Review the service provider pain points identified in the proposal (e.g., duplicated services, receiving poorly defined requests from researchers, lack of coordination).

Phase 2: Generate Problem Statements (10 minutes)

1. Divide participants into small groups of 3-5. Ask them to generate 6-10 problem statements – specifically in regards to their work as providers, not the problems of their end users.
2. For each problem, use a single piece of paper and explicitly answer these four foundational questions:
 - a. What is the problem? / Why is it a problem?
 - b. Who has the need?

- c. When and where does the problem occur?
- d. How is it being solved today?

Phase 3: Share, Cluster, and Vote (10 minutes)

1. **Share & Cluster:** Have participants attach their sheets to the wall. Facilitator leads clustering the statements into similar groups.
2. **Dot Voting:** Give each participant a set number of dot stickers (or just use markers) and ask them to vote on the problem clusters that resonate the most or represent the most critical gaps for the RSSN to solve.
3. **Working group assignation:** Discuss which problem clusters might map to which potential working groups – assign obvious working groups where possible or highlight working groups that don't exist yet.
 - a. For example, if a problem is that service providers are getting poorly defined requests from users, the assessment working group can help. If the problem is that no one knows about their services, the outreach/comms working group can help.

Outputs

- A prioritized, voted-upon list of core problems faced by and providers
- Jobs / outputs for working groups
- Inputs for the "Pains" and "Jobs" sections of the upcoming Value Proposition Canvas activity