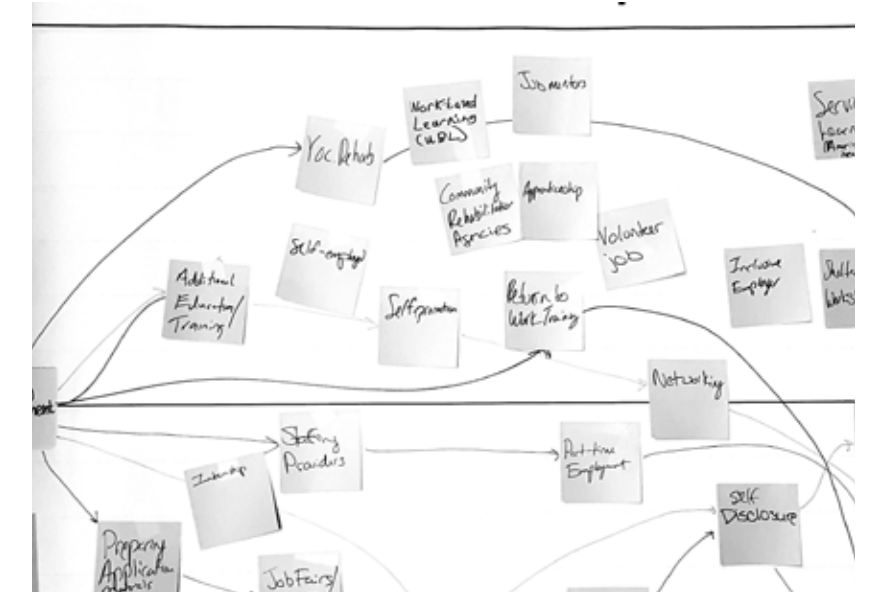
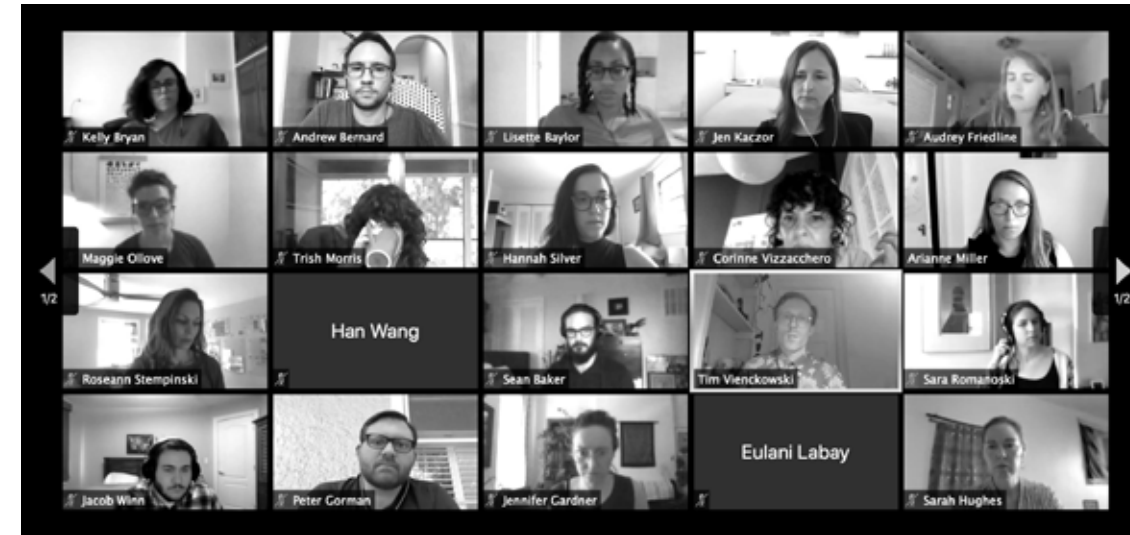


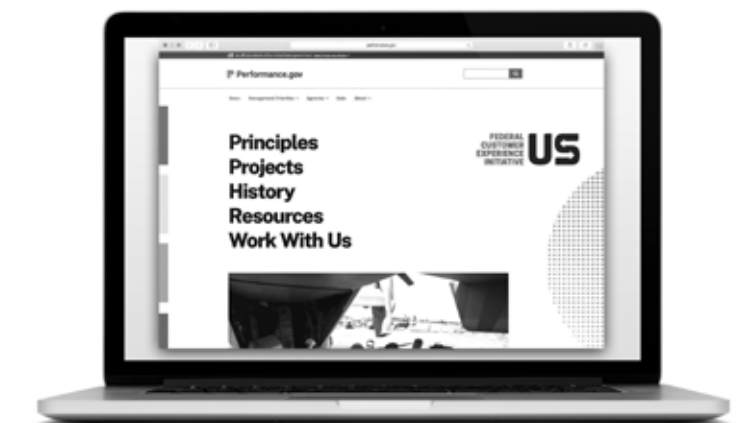
# Designmatters Lab at OPM Fellowship



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# The Lab at OPM

The Lab at OPM is an innovation group situated within the United States Federal Government's Office of Personnel Management. Founded in 2013, the Lab at OPM was created to incorporate human-centered design thinking, research, and strategy practices into the various agencies of the federal government, accomplishing this through methods such as capacity building workshops, inter-agency agreements, and project-based design work. Human-centered design (HCD) is a problem solving approach that emphasizes the human (or user/customer) perspective and their needs in every stage of the research, development, and design process.

The mission of the Lab is to foster a culture of innovation and to help create organizational shifts towards improving the way government works. Based in Washington, D.C., the Lab is comprised of a multidisciplinary team of 20-30 designers, strategists, UX/CX designers, researchers, analysts, and teachers, located across the country. Of course, due to the COVID-19 situation, this fellowship was conducted entirely remotely- I never traveled to D.C. but instead communicated with team members primarily via email, Slack, and Zoom.

LAB'OPM



# Background

As a graphic design graduate student, I was interested to apply my learning to the federal government, an organization that I assumed was in need of design thinking and strategy (not to mention graphic design) as much as, if not more than, many private sector companies. I was previously unaware of the Lab at OPM or the existence of “innovation labs” within federal, state, and local government. I was surprised to find out that my home city of Los Angeles had hired its first ever Chief Design Officer (Chris Hawthorne) just two years earlier. Hawthorne accepted a job with the city after a long career as a journalist, tv director, and critic for the Los Angeles Times architecture section.

My discovery of this new ecosystem of designers, coming from different disciplines and professional experiences, but all working together in pursuit of the same worthy purpose of improving government services in the long-term, made me really enthusiastic about the opportunity to explore this world further during my summer fellowship at the Lab.



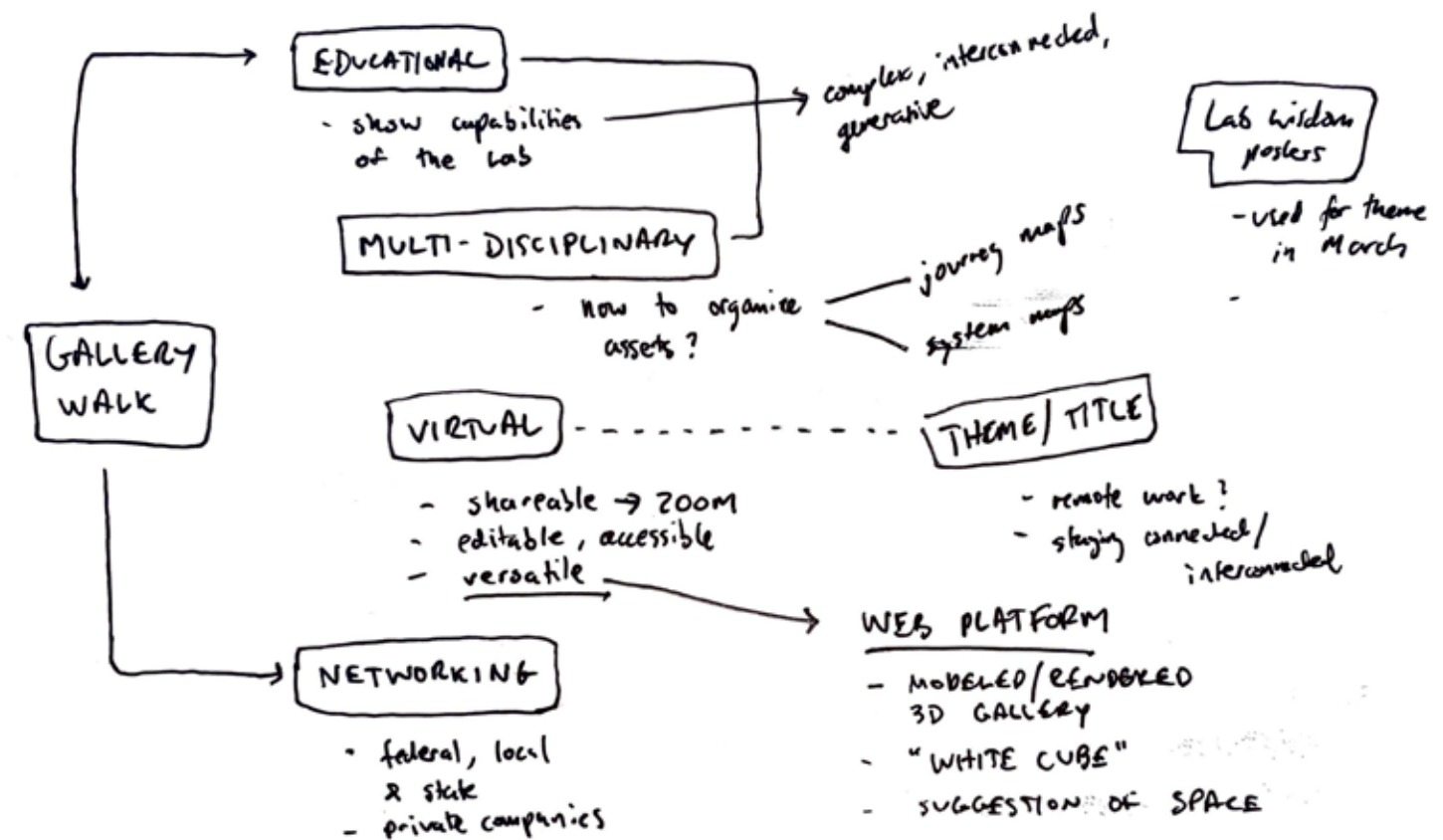
*My illustration from a problem framing exercise: first, draw a vase. Next, draw a way to enjoy flowers in the home. What are some of the differences in the way we think about how to draw the first idea vs. the second?*

# Gallery Walk

The Lab at OPM's work ranges from synchronous learning modules (during this summer, delivered remotely over video conference) to hands-on brand development work. In order to see this wide variety of work in the same place at the same time, the Lab has developed a series of events called Gallery Walks. These events function both as exhibitions of Lab work, and as opportunities for networking and building future partnerships.

Due to COVID-19 eliminating these types of in-person events, our team was tasked with bringing a Gallery Walk event into a virtual space. Who would be invited to this event? What type of work would we want to show them? And how would we be able to virtually show this work in a compelling way? All of these questions presented tough challenges during the development of this concept.

We began by thinking big, imagining a virtual guided tour through a minimal, 3D-rendered gallery space. Eventually, however, limitations in technology (especially technology that is required to effectively transmit sound, video and image over a video conference connection) led us towards more practical platforms and solutions.



Mind map from an early-stage gallery walk meeting.

# Lab Virtual Gallery Walk

Synthesizing what we heard from interviews and the Lab team

## Step 1

Extract meaningful quotes or snippets from the interview notes that relate to any of these three categories: **content, format, and motivations.**

## Step 2

Transcribe them onto sticky notes of the color assigned to you below. **Add the initials** of the interviewee to the quote.

## Step 3

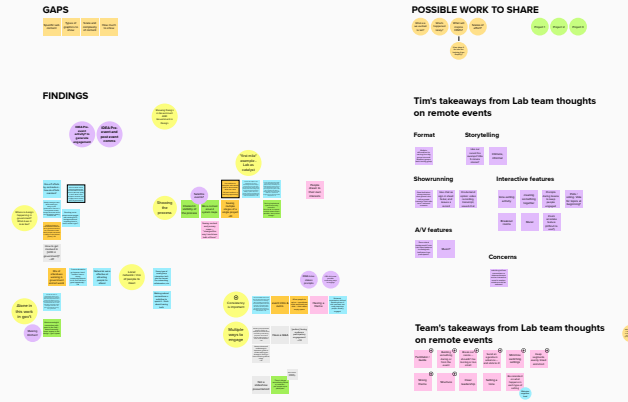
Place the sticky note on the venn diagram according to what the quote or snippet is about.

If it speaks to more than one topic, place it where the circles overlap.

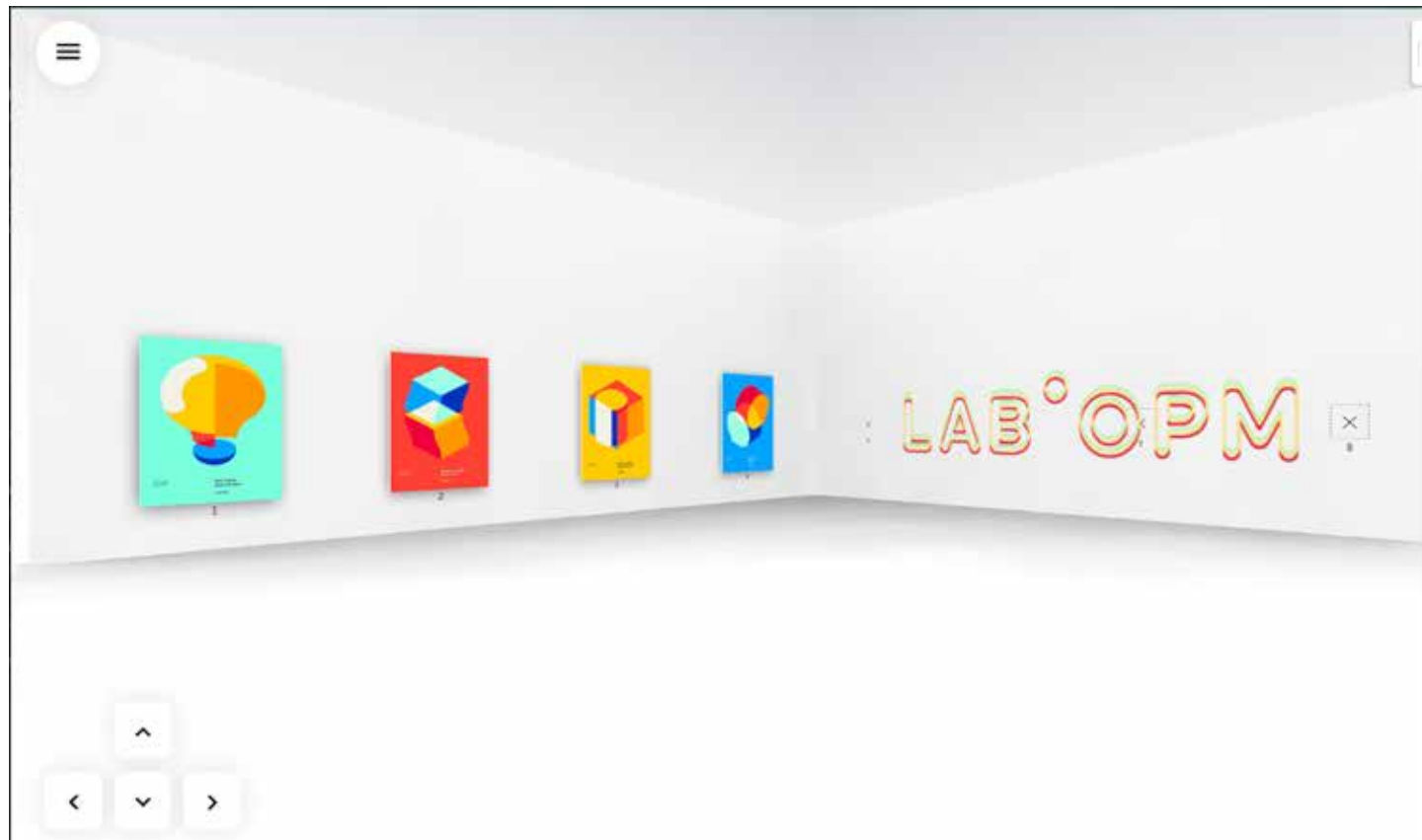
If it's something unrelated but interesting, put it below under "other."

## Sticky note colors by team member

- Sara
- Tim
- Andrew
- Hannah
- Audrey
- Pradeep
- Jacob



Synthesis of feedback from Lab team members



Early visualisation of virtual gallery space

# FCXI Branding

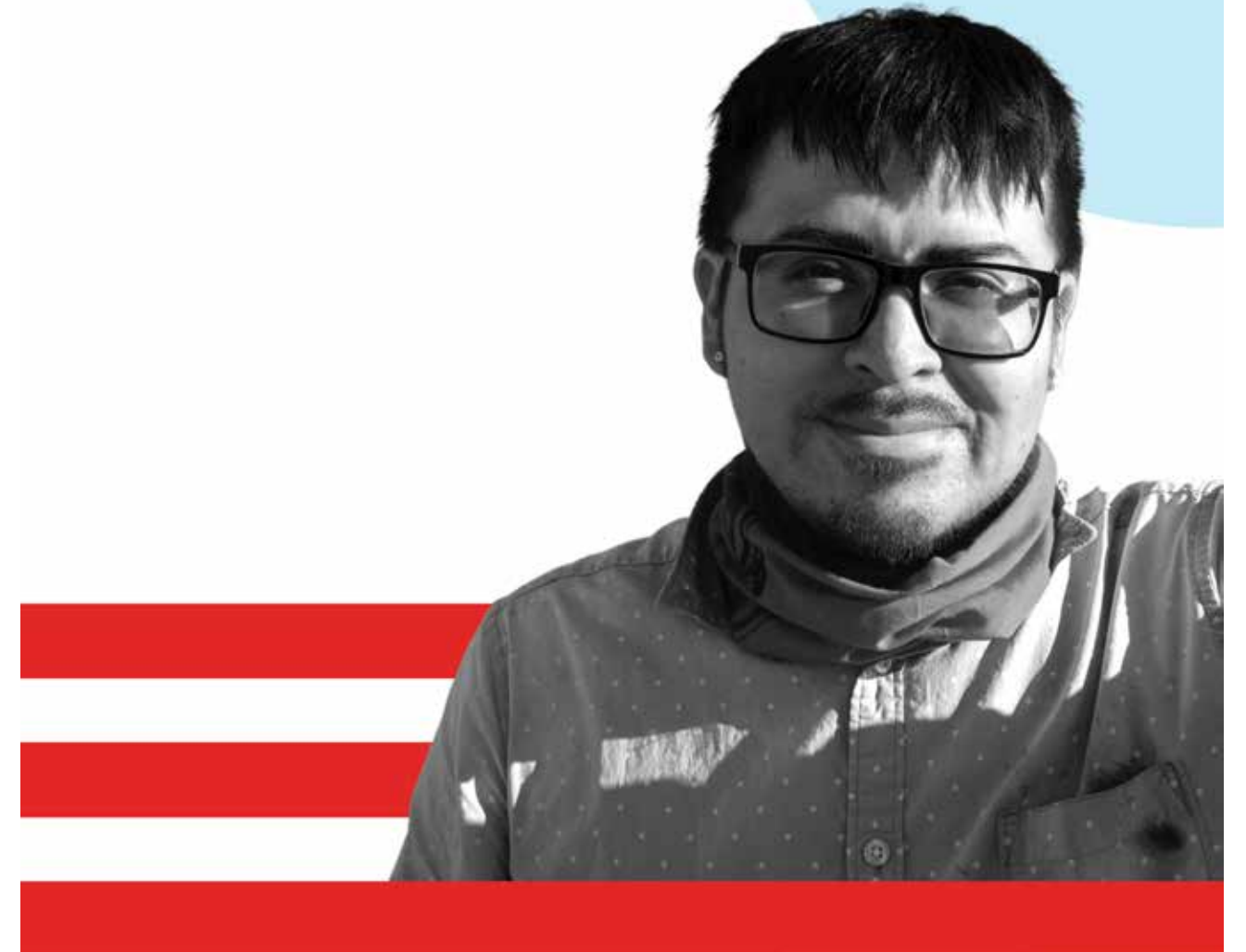
The Federal Customer Experience Initiative (FCXI) was a project that fell within the President's Management Agenda to improve CX across federal government services. The Lab partnered with GSA to revise the FCXI brand strategy (its graphic and photographic elements and language) and build a set of deliverables for the initiative to move forward with.

Because I have some experience in font design, I was asked to refine the US logotype and the arrangement of type for "Federal Customer Experience Initiative" as well as the project's tagline "For the People, By the People, With the People". Additionally, I created a set of patterns and graphic elements that extended throughout the brand identity, including poster series, web design, print applications, social media presence, and more.

Overall, the project was a really interesting exercise in how to develop an interesting brand within relatively strict guidelines. For example, many federal government employees use only Microsoft Office programs, since those are the applications that come pre-installed on government-issued computers. The goal of creating a fresh, well-designed identity that functions on these types of platforms was a fun challenge.

**US** BY THE PEOPLE  
FOR THE PEOPLE  
WITH THE PEOPLE

## Federal Customer Experience Initiative



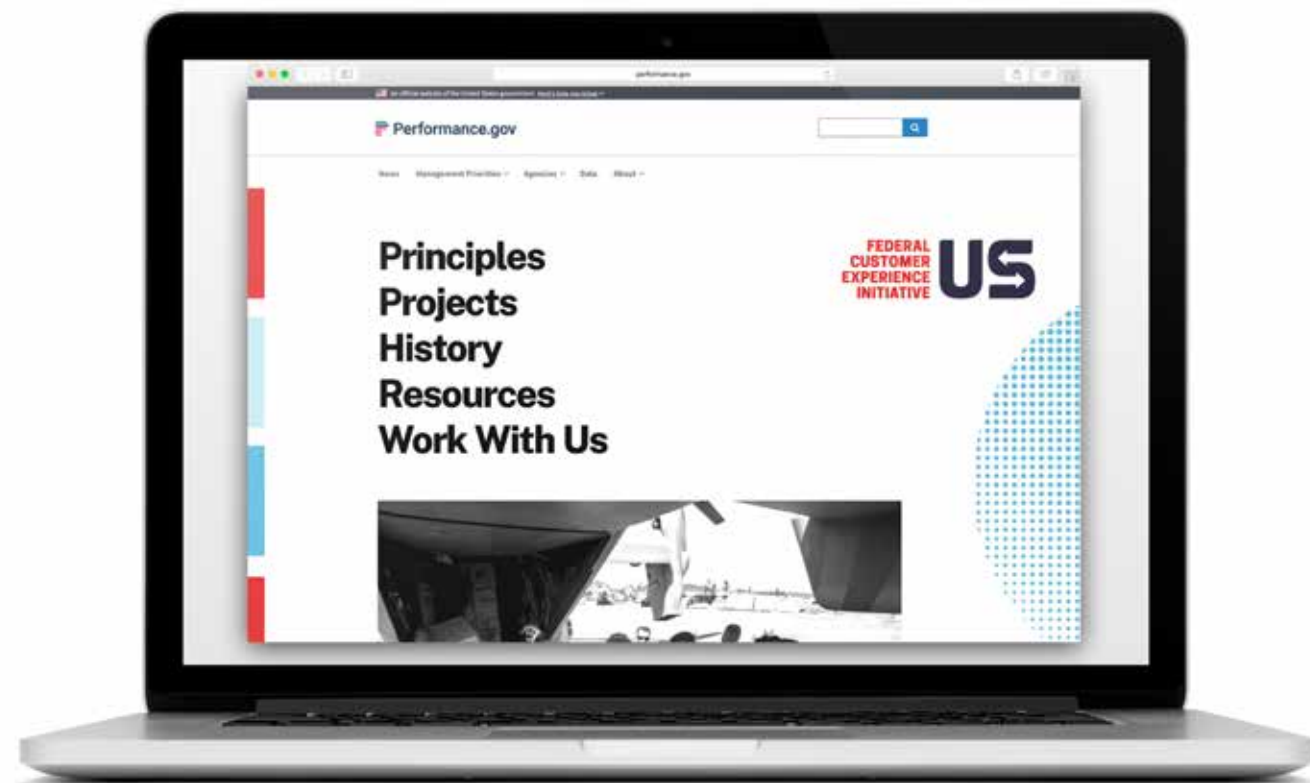
Example from FCXI poster series

**US**

**BY THE PEOPLE  
FOR THE PEOPLE  
WITH THE PEOPLE**

*Revised FCXI logotype*





FCXI brand identity in web and print context

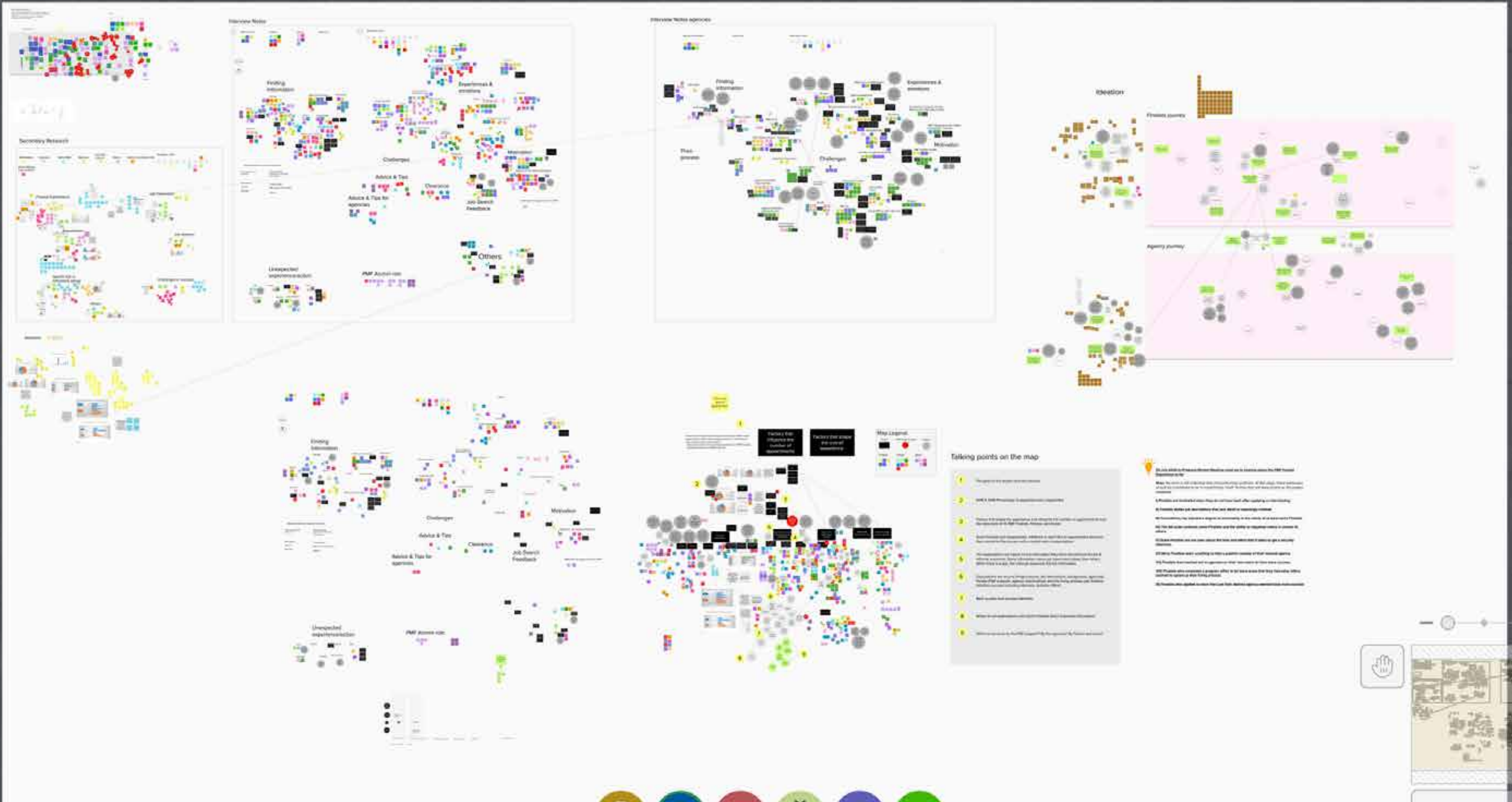
# PMF Program

The Presidential Management Fellowship (PMF) program, run by the Office of Personnel Management, is a leadership development program that gives recent graduate degree recipients the opportunity to build careers in the federal government. In order to qualify, applicants must take an on-line assessment, the results of which determine the finalist pool. Over the course of the next 12 months, PMF finalists have the ability to apply to a wide range of jobs at different agencies across the government. Typically, the percentage of finalists who are able to secure a position within that year is anywhere from 60-70%.

The Lab at OPM partnered with the PMF office to analyze and improve the experience of finalists, with the ultimate goal of increasing the percentage of successfully appointed finalists. This project included a series of interviews with current finalists, alums, and agency coordinators, several research and information mapping and synthesis sessions, and presentations of these findings back to the PMF office.



Overview of PMF Finalist Experience journey for major stakeholders



Zoom settings: 2%, hand icon, zoom in (+), zoom out (-), and a thumbnail preview of the current view.

The PMF Finalist Experience Mural board, representing several research, synthesis, and ideation sessions.

# Conclusions

When a graphic designer hears “design for government”, they might imagine election ballots, the NASA logo, interstate highway signage, or any of the other highly-visible examples of design objects and services produced by our federal government. What might not immediately come to mind is the behind the scenes work involving design process rather than the design product. The Lab at OPM, though it operates as a fee-for-service entity and does occasionally produce design objects and products, acts primarily as both teacher and practitioner of human-centered design. A large part of the Lab’s work is rooted in helping other government agencies build the capacity within their own organizations for design thinking and strategy.

Though I was initially unsure how my skillset would fit in with the Lab’s mission, having an education in traditional graphic design ultimately put me in an advantageous position to be able to contribute meaningfully over the course of my summer fellowship. My experience in the research and ideation phases of design projects enabled me to quickly gain background information about projects and offer suggestions during brainstorming sessions. Artcenter’s focus on typography, composition, and presentation skills in its graphic design curriculum prepared me to share my ideas more clearly and convincingly, even (maybe especially) over video chat.

Special thanks to Jennifer and Kimberly from Designmatters, to Arianne and Sean from the Lab, and to my FSFs (Fellow Summer Fellows) Hannah, Audrey, and Jacob!

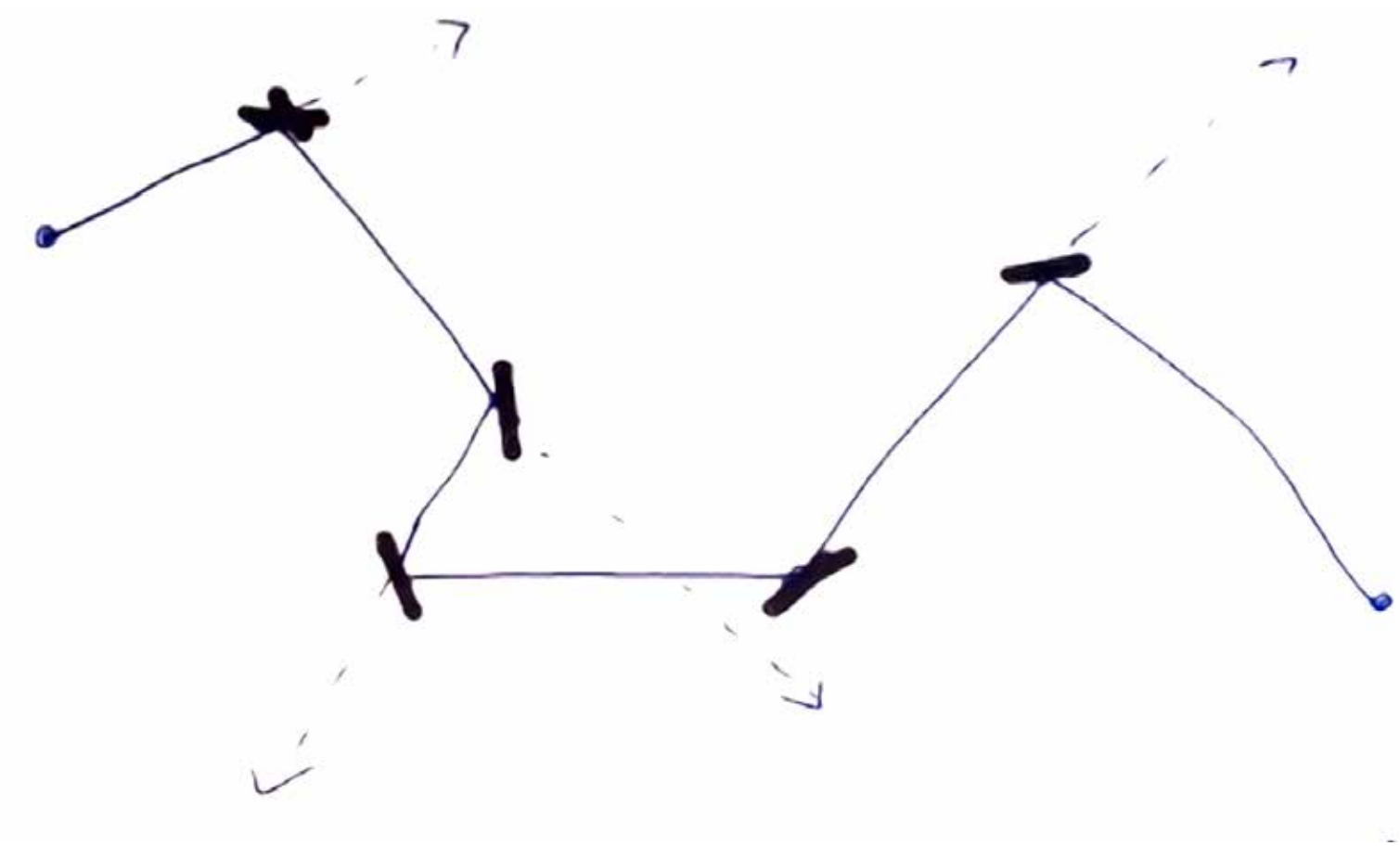


Diagram sketch: the trajectory of a project may change several times before reaching its outcome