Approaching retirement

How might we improve the retirement experience by addressing barriers to financial resiliency, streamlining the user experience, and better connecting people to trustworthy support?

Many older people in the United States cannot afford to retire. Difficult decisions and overwhelming complexities during retirement make for a stressful transition. Nearly nine out of ten people aged 65 and older receive Social Security retirement benefits, and Medicare covers nearly 64 million people. Yet navigating the process to claim retirement benefits and enroll in Medicare can be time-consuming, confusing, and complex for new enrollees. For example, people may have to share the same information with multiple government agencies. Thresholds of eligibility for senior support programs also differ and can change based on age at this time, resulting in individuals missing out on critical supports for which they are eligible.

US BY THE PEOPLE FOR THE PEOPLE WITH THE PEOPLE

Executive Order 14058 directs the Federal government to identify "life experiences" that require interactions with multiple Federal agencies. Too often, people have to navigate a web of government websites, offices, and phone numbers to access the services they depend on. Government needs to better design and deliver services to meet people's needs in these moments.

Learn more about this work at: https://www.performance.gov/cx/projects/

The team spoke with:
42 seniors
40 Medicare and Social Security experts
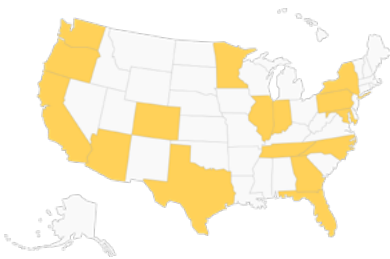
Throughout the three-month discovery, the team collaborated across four agencies to perform primary and secondary research analysis around the approaching retirement experience. Participants represented a variety of life experiences and included 14 couples, 25 women, 18 persons of color, 7 widowed, and 7 high school educated.

To start, we listened to people's stories.

The team spoke with people nationwide about this moment in their lives and where the government process could have been simpler and more helpful. The listening sessions captured honest conversations about people's experiences, candid feedback on what could have worked better, and what really made a difference for them.

We learned about some of the biggest pain points we have the opportunity to address:

PAIN POINT

Barriers to saving

Day-to-day struggles make it difficult for many to save for retirement. Many workers do not have access to employer-sponsored retirement accounts.

PAIN POINT

Disjointed network

People are on their own to make sense of an opaque and fragmented retirement landscape.

PAIN POINT

Lack of knowledge and equitable access

Barriers to accessing benefits information and services hurt people's ability to plan for their financial security and receive the benefits they have earned.

Story Excerpts

These story excerpts are composite representations of the actual people the team spoke with. The quotes and stories come directly from these conversations, but names have been changed.

	Pre-Retirement	Approaching Retirement			Retired
Experience Milestones	Living Adulthood	Exploring Options	Asking for Information	Making Big Decisions	Managing Senior Life

Joan
Age 62
Former retail employee
Divorced

"I met a guy who was a [ride-share] driver. I would ride with him to work and he told me he helped people with their retirement. He gave me his business card. I gave him a call."

Josephina
Age 65
Construction worker
Single

"You can't figure out who to trust, it's too much. I can't imagine people who didn't have professional skills, jobs, education. You've got to do something to alleviate that whole system. How do you find out what's right for you and who to trust?"

Otto
Age 66
Auto mechanic
Married

"I can't really think about tomorrow if I have to concentrate on today. It's so hard day-to-day that I don't get caught up with what will happen next year as far as income."