INTRODUCTION

Summary

The document describes a project aimed at improving the legal experience for self-represented litigants (SRLs) in Kansas State Courts by creating a more accessible, user-friendly online portal.

Kansas is one of a handful of states that does not provide eFiling for SRLs, though eFiling is available for attorneys. In recent years, Kansas's Office of Judicial Administration (OJA) decided that it was important to provide a portal for self-represented litigants to be able to file cases electronically, and realized that to create an accessible portal it had to be created according to principles of User Experience Design (UX). OJA partnered with Georgetown's Judicial Innovation Fellowship programs to assign a UX designer in-house for a year to co-design and prototype the portal.

The project focused first on a dashboard for SRLN's and a guided interview to file claims in small claims court. Currently, for an SRL to file a small claim in Kansas, where a litigant is barred from having a lawyer in a small claims case, they must identify the correct type of case they wish to file and submit the correct forms correctly in person at a courthouse. Kansas has done tremendous work building "self-help centers" in courthouses to provide staff assistance and computers to SRLS[1], but equal access demands that SRLs also be provided with an eFiling system that they can access and use easily. Further, focusing this project on just small claims gave us a complicated process to explore in depth that could provide page templates for all other types of filings.

The research for the eFiling portal involved a comprehensive approach, including interviews with court staff, self-represented litigants (SRLs), pro bono attorneys from Kansas Legal Services, and members of the judicial tech community to gather diverse insights. We conducted feedback sessions and workshops with Self-Help and SRL working groups to refine concepts and ensure practical relevance. Additionally, testing with SRLs during court visits provided direct observations of

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[1] O'Grady, Keven M. P. "Starting a Help Center in Twelve Easy Steps: One Court's Experience with Trial, Error, and Lots of Help." *Court Review*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2015, pp. 64-72.

user interactions with the system, allowing us to identify areas for improvement and ensure the design effectively met user needs.

The research revealed common barriers for SRLs in accessing justice. Many said that they did not even know where to start when filing their claim. Going to court can be incredibly stressful, especially in cases where there is alleged violence like protection order hearings. Sometimes litigants are in real danger. Often people who are experiencing something like eviction are experiencing other legal issues. Many Kansans, when I told them about this project, told me their own stories of frustration with the civil legal process in their state when they couldn't afford a lawyer.

Thankfully, the Kansas State Courts are aware of these issues and eager to solve them. Our work together in designing this ePortal resulted in a clean, usable, accessible interface that leverages the free resources developed by other groups and organizations. As explained below, the research resulted in the creation of two user "personas" – a person experiencing domestic violence and a helper, that informed the design process. By designing specifically around the needs of someone experiencing domestic violence, we can address many of the needs of most of the other users. By including the people who help and accompany SRLs to court in our design, we can uncover user needs that aren't immediately apparent. Hopefully, the work that we have done here has a long life ahead of it in Kansas and provides a roadmap to create something similar in other jurisdictions.

User Experience Design and its Role in the Courts

User Experience Design (UX)[2] is a process of continuously designing and iterating digital products, like apps and websites, around the needs of users to help them easily achieve a goal, like buying shoes or filing a small claim. A well-designed interface that incorporates and reflects the experiences of intended users can improve the experience of accessing the court system for users while improving the workflow for court staff.

For users, well-designed systems increase their understanding of processes and reduce their cognitive anxiety and stress by incorporating UX Design standards like familiar design patterns, accessibility for all users, and consistency across the

[2] UX Design has a number of other names; while the private sector primarily uses UX, in the US federal government the role is titled Customer Experience Designer (CX) and in European governments the role is often called a Service Designer.

entire product ecosystem. Systems built around these principles tend to result in fewer filing errors, getting litigants to their resolutions faster while using less staff time. While Self-Help Centers will always be needed by a certain percentage of users, many current users we spoke with said that if they could have done their tasks online, they would have. Giving the computer-comfortable the option to file online may free up staff time to help court users who do not have access to technology or who are not computer-comfortable.

Good design also confers [significant advantages to government agencies](). A system that is optimized for the needs of users demands optimization of the workflow of staff. Allowing litigants to do the work of data entry on their cases, in an interface that catches errors and transfers data to the case management system automatically, may result in fewer filings that need to be returned or amended. Well-designed websites are [favored by Google's search engine](), which makes it more likely for users to find the court's accurate source of information before less reputable sources. Further, design quality impacts how users choose [whether to trust]() a digital product and the organization running it.

The Statement of Work

"The Kansas Office of Judicial Administration (OJA) wants to design an electronic filing portal that meets the needs of self-represented litigants (SRLs). The Judicial Innovation Fellow (JIF) will research, design, and prototype different possible solutions to inform a proposal and draft requirements for OJA to use. By the end of the fellowship, OJA will be able to publish an informed request for proposals (RFP) for an SRL-centered efile portal and thoroughly vet proposals."

For more details, you can visit the full [Statement of Work]().

The Judicial Innovation Fellowship

"The Judicial Innovation Fellowship (JIF) is a fellowship for technology industry professionals to transform justice across state, local, territorial, and tribal courts. Partnering with courts to build critical data infrastructure, simplify processes, and improve usability of court services, this competitive fellowship is a unique opportunity to innovate a core democratic institution.

More than just a job with a competitive salary and benefits, this fellowship is the flagship opportunity to change the way people access their rights and are served by courts."

For more details, visit [Georgetown Law's Judicial Innovation Fellowship page](#).

RESEARCH SUMMARY

The Research Process

The research process began with exploring the existing resources available to leverage for the eFiling portal. The most significant of these being the [US Web Design System](#) (See the [section in Research Findings](#)), which "provides principles, guidance, and code to help you design and build accessible, mobile-friendly government websites and digital services." Almost all of the interface elements for this portal come from the US Web Design System.

The research process continued with formal and informal interviews with court staff, self-represented litigants (SRLs), and members of the judicial tech community. We also did feedback sessions and workshops with Self-Help and SRL working groups, as well as testing with SRLs during court visits to gather insights and refine the portal's design.

Below are the [questions](#) we attempted to answer during our research to understand the needs and limitations of the product:

- Technical considerations:
    - What exists that we can leverage for this project?
    - Who else is doing a similar project?
    - What technical requirements does our product need to meet?
- Court goals:
    - What must be included in a minimally viable version of this product (MVP)?
    - What are areas of concern for court staff?
    - Where do staff members experience inefficiencies?
- User needs:
    - What are the barriers to users submitting or responding to a small claims case?
    - What are the priorities and needs of our users when using a product like ours?

Personas

The research was synthesized into "personas" to guide the design process. A persona is a composite representation of user experiences that guides design decisions. The primary persona reflects the user who experiences the most significant pain points and whose needs align with the majority of users. If the primary persona doesn't encompass all the main user needs, a secondary persona may be created to address those additional requirements. Below are personas created to represent the users that have primarily influenced the design decisions of this portal.

Jessica, who is experiencing domestic violence
"We can't find him"

Name	Jessica Shepherd
Age	26
Occupation	Part-time retail worker & student
Location	Douglas County

Background	Since leaving her abusive husband with their 5-year-old child, Jessica has been receiving increasingly violent threats in text messages coming from various phone numbers. This has made her terrified to leave their current home in her friend's living room. Much of her personal property, including her car that she relied on to get to work, is still locked in her husband's house. She would like to file for divorce, get her car and other things back, and get him to stop threatening her, but she is emotionally and cognitively overwhelmed, financially underwater, and doesn't know where to start. She is also afraid that opening up a legal process may end up being more dangerous to her and her child's safety than not, especially if information about her location becomes available to him or if she has to see him in person.
Challenges & Pain Points	- Severe cognitive stress - Afraid of her abuser finding any information he can use against her in the legal process, and whether this is the best route for the safety of her child - Finds legal forms and procedures intimidating and difficult to understand - Limited financial resources to hire legal help, limited time due to work, school, and childcare responsibilities, and lack of dependable transportation. - Needs a secure and straightforward way to file necessary legal documents and attend hearings without facing her abuser in person
Behaviors & Preferences	- Jessica uses her Android smartphone for almost everything she needs to do online - She has a laptop but is unsure if her husband still has remote access to it

Experience	- Jessica has a lot of experience with filling out forms to apply for services from WIC and other agencies - Her experiences with the legal process have been traumatic- her family was almost evicted when she was young and she has relatives who are incarcerated
Goals & Motivations	Desires to regain control of her life and achieve financial and emotional independence
Product Requirements	- Content: Security - Resources - Help Page - Notification preferences - Secure data - Reassurance messages - Feedback mechanisms - Exit button - Web hearings - Profile updating

Chris, who is helping his mom

"I don't think if my mom would be able to do this without me"

Name	Chris Diaz
Age	34
Occupation	Electrician
Location	Wyandotte County

Background	Chris is helping his mom file a small claim to recover what her car insurance would not cover after a minor accident. Chris is fluent in both English and Spanish, while his mom speaks fluent Spanish but is not as proficient or as confident with her English. As his mom's oldest child, he's been serving as her primary English-to-Spanish translator since he was very young. More importantly, he provides the emotional support his mom needs to get through stressful times. Even without the language barrier, Chris is sure that he would still be helping his mom with this claim.
Challenges & Pain Points	- While courthouses provide translators for many services, they cannot cover every translation need of an SRL related to their case, nor would providing that be feasible - Usually has an easy time translating words from English to Spanish for his mom, but legal terms can be tricky to translate accurately and confidently - Needs to know the administrative details of his mom's hearings and documents so that he can keep track of the details for her, but doesn't need to know any PII or non-public details

Behaviors & Preferences	● Chris would prefer to do as much of this work online as possible since he can only help his mom after his 9 am to 5 pm workday is over ● As a millennial, he expects to be able to complete tasks online and be able to retrieve information related to those tasks later on. ● Chris plans to take off work to accompany his mom to any court appearances and would go in her place if that was an option.
Experience	● Has some experience with complicated forms and legal stuff, but is far from confident in his knowledge ● Generally comfortable with technology, though he uses his phone far more during his workday than any other device ● Finds the courthouse and legal system scary and intimidating
Goals & Motivations	● Wants to make sure he does everything correctly for his mom ● Wants to be able to make sure she understands every part of the process and can answer her questions ● Wants to get her money recovered as painlessly as possible ● Doesn't want to break any rules of the court ● Concerned about his mom's physical safety and comfort through the whole process- where are the accessible entrances? Will she have to go through a metal detector? Where are the bathrooms? Are there stairs? Etc.
Product Requirements	● Progressive Disclosure ● Translation: Toggle ● Translation: Continuous Testing ● Plain Language ● Content: Court Information ● Notifications: Public Info

Research Findings

The US Web Design System Should be the Basis for this Design

The Problem

Design systems, which are libraries of components and design decisions, are essential to maintain consistency across a digital product. However, maintaining a design system is time and cost-intensive and is a particularly difficult task in government settings. Thankfully, the US Federal government has designed and maintains a design system that meets most of the needs required to maintain consistency across this portal.

Supporting Research

- US Web Design System
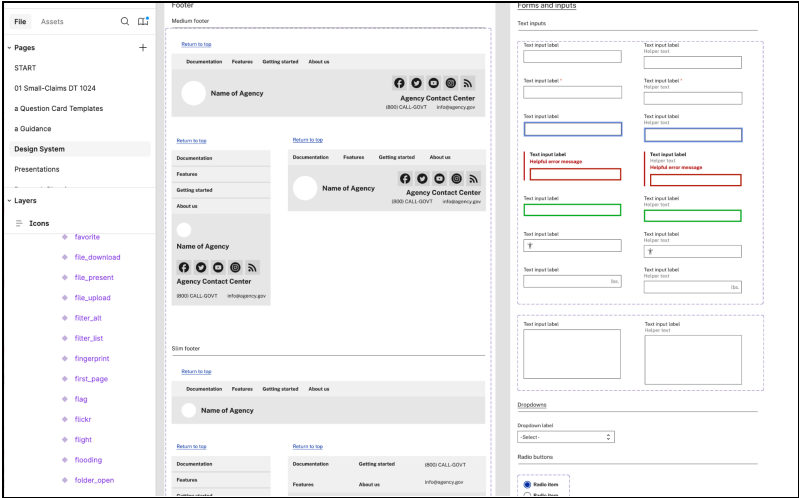- Design Systems 101

Problem Statement

How might we **use resources that already exist** so that **developers and designers** can **maintain consistency across the product over time**?

Related Product Requirements

- US Web Design System: almost all of the interface follows the US Web Design System. Below is an example of the kinds of components and rules the system provides in the Figma File.

Footer

Medium footer

Return to top

Documentation   Features   Getting started   About us

Name of Agency   Agency Contact Center
                                  (800) CALL-GOVT   info@agency.gov

Return to top   Return to top

Documentation   Documentation   Features   Getting started   About us

Features

Getting started   Name of Agency   Agency Contact Center
                                                    (800) CALL-GOVT   info@agency.gov
About us

Name of Agency

Agency Contact Center
(800) CALL-GOVT   info@agency.gov

Slim footer

Return to top

Documentation   Features   Getting started   About us

Name of Agency

Return to top   Return to top

Documentation   Documentation   Getting started   (800) CALL-GOVT
Features
                            Features   About us   info@agency.gov
Getting started

Forms and inputs

Text inputs

Text input label   Text input label
                                Helper text

Text input label *   Text input label *
                                Helper text

Text input label   Text input label
                                Helper text

Text input label   Text input label
Helpful error message   Helper text
                                Helpful error message

Text input label   Text input label
                                Helper text

Text input label   Text input label
                                Helper text
                        lbs.   lbs.

Text input label   Text input label
                                Helper text

Dropdowns

Dropdown label
-Select-

Radio buttons

Radio item
Radio item

Users Don't Know Where to Get Started

"I don't even know where to begin"

The Problem

Self-represented litigants at self-help centers and waiting for KLS frequently complained that they did not know where to begin with the task they needed to accomplish at the court. Many felt that they would be able to accomplish the bulk of their filing without help if only they knew where to go to begin the process.

Currently, this problem is addressed with:
- Information on the Courts' and other websites about how to file claims as a self-represented litigant
- Self-help centers in many courthouses
- Dedicated self-help center time from Kansas Legal Services and other legal aid groups
- Pro bono representation

While these solutions are effective at serving many self-represented litigants, limited time and resources demand efficient use of the self-help center staff and legal aid time. Court and KLS staff often noted how many of their users would not need their time but for the lack of knowing where to begin with their filing.

Supporting Research

- [UserOnboard](#)
- [Mobile-App Onboarding: An Analysis of Components and Techniques](#)
- [How People Read Online: New and Old Findings](#)

Problem Statement

How might we **make it clear how to begin a court filing** so that **computer-comfortable users** can **begin their filings without staff assistance**?

Related Product Requirements

- [Onboarding](#): instructions to users on how to successfully use the product when they first sign on
- [Guided interview](#): The guided interview starts with questions designed to encompass all kinds of filings and narrows down possible case types through a series of questions before starting the form-filling process.

Related Recommendations

- [Update the KSCourts main page](#): test with users where access to the SRL eFiling portal should live on the court's website
- [Information Architecture: Multiple avenues to start](#): users may be coming to the same process with different information and keywords they are scanning the page for.

Users may have more than one "legal event" happening concurrently

"By the time someone is in eviction court, they usually have a lot of other things going on."

The Problem

Some self-represented litigants will have multiple legal issues that require multiple filings. For instance, someone seeking a divorce may also need to file for a protection order or sue for the return of personal property at the same time. At the opposite end of the spectrum, someone like a small business owner may be a party to multiple business-related small claims cases at the same time.

Supporting Research

- [The Institutional Mismatch of State Civil Courts](#)

Problem Statement

How might we **design the guided interview and dashboard** so that **users with multiple cases** can **access information from any case**?

Related Product Requirements

- [Guided Interview: multiple filings](#)
- [Dashboard: Home](#)
- [Profile updating](#)

Related Recommendations

Some Users See Barriers to Access as Intentional

"You know the government makes it hard on purpose"

The Problem

During interviews, several interviewees expressed their frustration with the government due to what they perceived as a deliberate hindrance to their access to the court system. These individuals felt that the government was intentionally making it difficult for them to navigate the legal process, leaving them at a disadvantage compared to those who could afford legal representation.
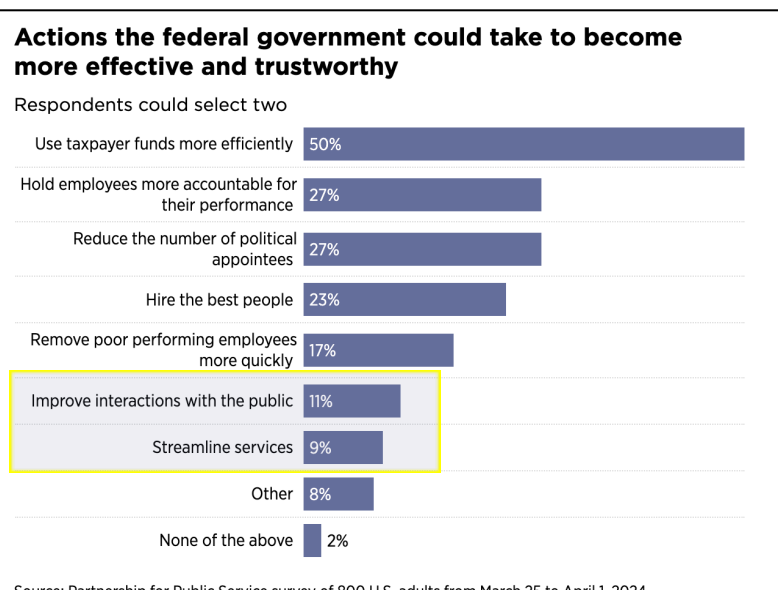
Presently, the court is focusing on several key areas to encourage trust in its users:

- Ethical and data security protocols: The court is working to ensure that SRLs' personal and financial information is protected and that ethical standards are upheld by all court personnel.
- Self-help centers: The court's public self-help centers are where SRLs can access resources and assistance to help them navigate the court system. These centers may provide information on court procedures, forms, and filing deadlines.
- Plain language instructions

The challenge lies in the ongoing difficulty encountered by SRLs in comprehending the intricacies of accessing the court system. The necessary information is often not readily available in locations anticipated by SRLs, and the language used in court documents can be complex and confusing. This can make it difficult for SRLs to understand their rights and responsibilities and to effectively represent themselves in court, and this difficulty can foment anger and mistrust.

Supporting Research

- [The State of Public Trust in Government 2024](#)

Actions the federal government could take to become more effective and trustworthy

Respondents could select two

Use taxpayer funds more efficiently	50%
Hold employees more accountable for their performance	27%
Reduce the number of political appointees	27%
Hire the best people	23%
Remove poor performing employees more quickly	17%
Improve interactions with the public	11%
Streamline services	9%
Other	8%
None of the above	2%

Source: Partnership for Public Service survey of 800 U.S. adults from March 25 to April 1, 2024

- [Technology Myths and Urban Legends](#)

Problem Statement

How might we **allay concerns about access, transparency, and security** so that **government-skeptic users** can **feel comfortable accessing the court**?

Related Product Requirements

- [Content: why information is asked for](#)
- [Content: Security](#)
- [Feedback mechanisms](#)

Related Recommendations

- [Use User feedback mechanisms](#)

The current system is not accessible

"I would totally be doing this online if I could"

The Problem

The current e-filing system for self-represented litigants is not accessible, leading to several challenges and inefficiencies:

- Users often utilize court time and resources that could be saved if a more comprehensive online system were in place. This inefficiency acts as a time tax for all users, particularly impacting those who are indigent.
- The system's inaccessibility extends to individuals with disabilities, those with limited or no transportation options, individuals on house arrest, or those otherwise homebound. Additionally, rural Kansans face significant barriers due to long driving distances to their local courthouses.
- During a pandemic, the necessity of gathering numerous people in a public space poses health risks, despite the availability of video call software.
- It is problematic and potentially dangerous to require someone seeking a protection order to be in the same room as the alleged abuser.

Supporting Research

- The a11y Project
- Web Accessibility Standards (WCAG)
- 5 Visual Treatments that Improve Accessibility
- Low-Literacy Users: Writing for a Broad Consumer Audience
- Usability for Seniors: Challenges and Changes
- Inclusive Design

Problem Statement

How might we make **court processes accessible remotely** so that **users who cannot travel to their courthouse** can **access the full benefits of the court system**?

Related Product Requirements

- Accessibility
- Content: Court Information

Related Recommendations

- Accessibility Audit

# Many users are so stressed by their situation it affects their ability to absorb and process information

"I'm so stressed I can't think straight."

The Problem

Self-represented litigants often enter the legal process under severe emotional stress, which significantly impairs their ability to process information and manage additional emotional strain. While the court currently provides resources such as a protection order online portal, Kansas Legal Services (KLS) and domestic violence services, self-help centers, and privacy laws for filers, there remains a considerable gap. The legal process is still excessively confusing and burdensome for individuals who are cognitively overwhelmed, making it difficult for them to complete their filings.

Supporting Research

- Kansas Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence presentation to the Self-Help Center Roundtable:
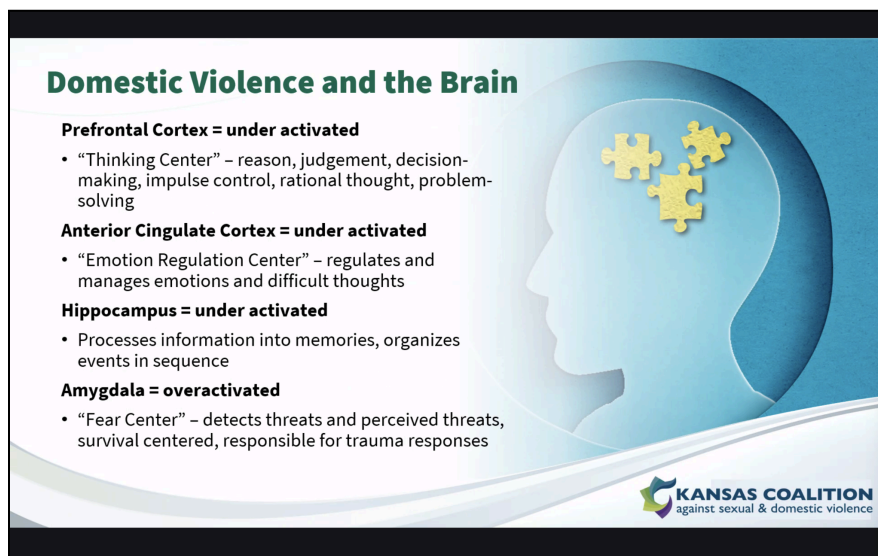
- "Incorporate Stress Cases"
- Working Memory and External Memory
- Interaction Cost

Problem Statement

How might we **simplify the complexity of the civil legal process** so that **an SRL undergoing severe cognitive stress** can **complete their task accurately and completely**?

Related Product Requirements

- [Progressive Disclosure](#)
- [Save Options](#)
- [Guided Interview: "I don't know" options](#)
- [Messaging](#)

Related Recommendations

- [Write policies to guide code](#)
- [Update the KSCourts main page](#)

Some users are facing real or perceived danger

"Our cousin just started sending us threatening texts."

The Problem

Self-represented litigants often enter the legal process in circumstances that are or are perceived as highly perilous. These SRLs may find themselves in situations where they must file legal documents discreetly to safeguard their safety from their partners or family members.

Supporting Research

-       Dv presentation

Problem Statement

How might we **keep data secure and communicate its security** so that **users facing dangerous circumstances** can **safely file their claims**?

Related Product Requirements

- [Content: Security](#)
- [Exit button](#)

Related Recommendations

- [Write policies to guide code](#)

Users need to know what happens next

"What happens after that?"

The Problem

Certain filings initiate straightforward processes that staff members can readily explain. However, more complex cases present a challenge. Comprehensively explaining the entire legal process and possible outcomes to SRLs would require staff members to delve into legal issues and violate [the rule against non-lawyers giving legal advice](). Additionally, even without such a rule, explaining such complicated matters consistently across various courts would be impractical, and potentially discriminatory, without supplementary resources.

The inability of SRLs to locate or comprehend the information regarding potential outcomes and costs undermines their ability to genuinely "knowingly consent" to the process. Without a clear understanding of the legal, financial, and time implications of their actions, SRLs may make decisions that are not in their best interests. Further, in the absence of information provided by the court, SRLs will look for this information elsewhere and may run into misinformation and scams.

Currently, the court takes several steps to assist SRLs. Self-help center staff receive training to help them provide non-legal guidance to SRLs. The court also provides excellent written instructions for commonly filed documents. However, despite these efforts, SRLs still encounter difficulties locating and/or processing this information.

Supporting Research

- [Unbridged Knowledge Gaps Hurt UX]()

- [Dealing with Technical or Professional Jargon]()

- [How Information-Seeking Behavior Has Changed in 22 Years]()

-

- Queuing research

Problem Statement

How might we **provide information about possible case outcomes** so that **users who are unfamiliar with the legal process** can **understand what could happen after filing**?

Related Product Requirements

- [Content: explanation of what's needed to file](#)
- [Content: Plain language explanation of possible avenues/outcomes](#)
- [Post-judgement options](#)

Related Recommendations

Court Staff, Stakeholders, And The Court Users Are A Wealth Of Ideas And Feedback

"This portal could save us so much time."

The Problem

A common pattern emerged when telling court staff about this project: immediate excitement at what this product could allow them to do and the problems it could mitigate. The staff mentioned how things like immediate error feedback, clearer instructions, accessibility features, system integration, and standardized resources could help them serve self-represented litigants more effectively. Many suggested creative solutions to common problems that improved the design of this portal.

While the court already facilitates knowledge sharing and collaboration between county courts, providing some sort of organized ongoing mechanism for them to easily submit ideas and feedback about the portal is a low-cost way to conduct ongoing research for continuous improvement. Further, early widespread ownership of a product's development often makes widespread adoption much easier.

Supporting Research

Problem Statement

How might we **regularly gather feedback** so that **court staff and other experts** can **suggest fixes and improvements**?

Related Product Requirements

- [Feedback mechanisms](#)

Related Recommendations

- [Use User feedback mechanisms](#)

Stakeholder groups have done and are interested in taking on some of the labor

"Please use the work we've already done."

The Problem

Stakeholder groups in Kansas have already invested in building materials, including guided interviews, for self-represented litigants, and many urged leveraging these materials, especially if it meant speeding up the delivery of this product.

Since Kansas is one of the last states to adopt e-filing for SRLs and enthusiastically reaching out to the civic tech community to remedy this, I believe the state is in a unique position to take advantage of the interest in this project among volunteer networks like USDR and the Self-Represnted Litigants Network.

Supporting Research

How might we **leverage the content that already exists** so that **the Kansas State Courts** can **build and maintain this site while saving time and money**?

Related Product Requirements

- [Feedback mechanisms](#)
- [US Web Design System](#)

Related Recommendations

- [Outsource & Crowdsource the Labor](#)

PRODUCT REQUIREMENTS

Wayfinding: The System must guide and provide clues to the user to complete their tasks

Description

Users need directions on where to go to start and continue their tasks. Users come to the portal with different kinds of information and expectations on where to find the entry point to completing their tasks. This legal process is complex and difficult to understand, especially without a lawyer. The portal needs to simplify and present information in ways that make sense to someone with a high school education undergoing cognitive stress.

Related Features

- [Accessibility](#)
- [Error Feedback](#)
- [Feedback mechanisms](#)
- [Guided interview](#)
- [Messaging](#)
- [Onboarding](#)
- [Plain Language](#)
- [Post-judgement options](#)
- [Translation: Toggle](#)

Limitations

The portal cannot give legal advice

Legalese is difficult and labor intensive to parse into plain language

People do not read websites, they scan them.

Related Research

[Explicitly State the Difference Between Options](#)

Living with Complexity

Don't Make Me Think

Reading and the Brain

Related Recommendations

Integration into the Court's Workflow: The system must work with and use what already exists

Integration with the Odyssey Case Management system is a major priority of the court. The success of adopting any new system depends on how well it blends into the "muscle memory" of the current system. The portal needs to function consistently and not cause any additional work for court staff.

The US Federal Government, state governments, public interest groups, and the like are sources of low-cost and user-tested digital resources and these should be used wherever appropriate.

Related Features

- Status updates: Users need to see UTD status of their cases, staff should not be doing extra work to make this happen

- US Web Design System: Design systems are hard to maintain, expensive, need to be continually updated

- Integration with tyler: The portal will need to be able to give and get information from the case management system

Limitations

- Integration with the tyler system may take significant time and resources

Related Research

Related Recommendations

- [Create Redundancies](#)

Trust and Security: The system must be secure, appear secure, and protect the safety of its users

Description

While much of the information provided in court filings is public, there are still many parts of the process where data security is of high importance. Some filings trigger redacting PII in other filings. A filing that has not been filed, like a paper filing, must not be under the ownership of the court system.

Further, the portal must not place users in danger and make it easy for them to protect themselves. In this portal, a safe exit is be available on every page and users can easily change their contact information.

Related Features

- [Exit button](#)
- [Secure data](#)
- [Permission levels](#)

Limitations

Related Research

Related Recommendations

- [Create Redundancies](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Update the KSCourts main page

The Problem

The portal must be seamlessly integrated into the site's navigation and information architecture to ensure easy access for self-represented litigants (SRLs). The launch of this portal is expected to shift the user demographics and their needs. The user research required to redesign the site menu can be conducted at any time before launching the portal publicly.

Additionally, the site's current lack of a .gov domain is a concern that needs addressing.

Problem Statement

How might we **redesign the navigation on the KSCourts website** so that **SRLs** can **find this portal**?

Possible Next Steps

- This may be an apt project for a non-profit group like US Digital Response as it is relatively small and contained in scope.

- KS Courts redesign to integrate links to and information about the portal

Outsource & Crowdsource the Labor

Outsourcing and crowdsourcing labor can address the challenge of creating guided interviews, which are labor-intensive. Many stakeholder groups have already developed content that can be adapted for these interviews, making their involvement valuable. Additionally, this approach presents an opportunity to build redundancies into the system, ensuring a more robust and comprehensive solution.

Problem Statement

How might we **leverage the content that already exists** so that **the Kansas State Courts** can **build and maintain this site while saving time and money**?

Possible Next Steps

- Allow stakeholder groups to build their own guided interviews for use and approval by ks courts.

- Outreach to law schools and clinics

Use User Feedback Mechanisms

Maintaining the system is challenging, and mistakes can occur, but user feedback mechanisms are crucial. They allow users and stakeholders to feel heard and valued, provide insights that can catch costly issues early, and offer valuable ideas for improvement. Implementing robust feedback systems can significantly enhance the portal's effectiveness and prevent minor problems from escalating into major ones.

Problem Statement

How might we **empower users and staff to provide feedback on the portal** so that **the portal team** can **respond quickly to their needs**?

Possible Next Steps

- Special feedback message board for the staff/ stakeholders/ super nerds
- Ongoing focus groups with users and staff regarding the portal
- Find ways to aggregate feedback from the web- google reviews of courthouses, reddit posts that mention key words, responses to social media posts, etc.

Research the needs of Incarcerated Users

The Problem

Researching the needs of incarcerated SRLs is essential because they face unique challenges. Addressing their requirements through the portal could also resolve broader system issues, such as improving the record-keeping of correspondence. Additionally, this research could benefit other users and inform necessary policy decisions, like determining appropriate word limits and the number of filings allowed. Understanding and meeting the needs of SRLs in custody is crucial for creating a more effective and equitable system.

Problem Statement

How might we **iterate on the design of this portal** so that **people who are incarcerated** can **complete their tasks**?

Possible Next Steps

- Conduct user research in prisons and jails regarding appeals filing