

PROJECT UPDATE | EDITION 3

# Investigating farmer needs to support strong farm businesses

December 2017

The Department of Primary Industries and the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner are partnering to identify opportunities to enhance farmer business skills and programs, with the aim to support farmers' financial resilience. This is the Department of Industry's third project applying 'design thinking' principles to policy design and service delivery.

In the [last Update](#) we reported on the outcomes of Phase 3 – Ideate. This Update focuses on the outcomes of Phase 4 – Prototyping and Phase 5 – Testing.

## What is prototyping?

**Prototyping is simply developing a first version of an idea that we can test. Prototypes are used when ideas have been generated that might solve the problems identified and that now need to be tested.**

Prototypes are low cost models designed to test how effective our ideas are at addressing end-users' needs. Prototypes are intended to be a faster and cheaper way to determine whether an idea is good than implementing a full pilot.

The test phase is focused on getting our simple prototype into the hands of the people we are designing for. We need input from the end-user to know if our solution is on target or not and to evolve our design.

It is an **iterative process**:

- The results generated during the testing phase can be used to further develop the design of the prototype and to better inform our understanding of the end-user and the problem.
- The more we are able to iterate, the higher the chances of achieving a good result.

## Prototyping and testing in practice

### Prototyping

We took the ideas generated in the ideation phase and developed rough prototypes that we could take back out to farmers to get their feedback.

We developed a script, idea descriptions and images as well as a series of score cards to help farmers assess the potential services and channels to access them.



FIGURE 1: EXAMPLES OF PROTOTYPES DEVELOPED

## Testing

Once we were satisfied with our prototypes, we took them back to our end-users for feedback. We held in depth interviews with 26 farmers located near Orange, Forbes and the Hunter Valley.

Farmers were asked to rate our two prototypes in terms of perceived usefulness, likelihood to increase profitability, past experience and likelihood to give it a go. We also asked farmers to tell us the channels they would most like to access the services and whether they would like to be involved in any of the programs in the future.

Following the interviews, we will analyse their quantitative and qualitative feedback to inform our final recommendations.



FIGURE 2: A SNAPSHOT FROM A TESTING SESSION

## Next Steps

The next step in the project is to consolidate the feedback from the farmers we interviewed and identify opportunities to assist farmers in NSW to enhance their business skills and manage change.

Outcomes from the investigation will be used to ensure government programs are well targeted and meet farmers' needs.

To make an enquiry about the process, please visit:

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/farm-business-planning>

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