

PROJECT UPDATE | EDITION 1

Investigating farmer needs to support strong farm businesses

September 2017

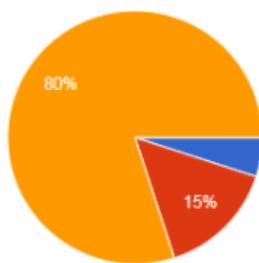
The Department of Primary Industries and the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner are partnering to identify opportunities to enhance farmer business skills and programs, with the aim to support farmers' financial resilience. This is the Department of Industry's third project applying 'design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

Phase 1 and 2: Empathise and Define

Empathise

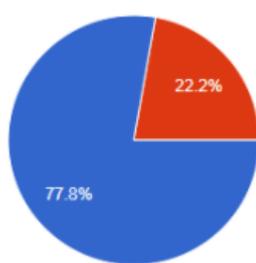
Empathy is key to design thinking, as the process is people-centred. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the emotions and experiences of others. Throughout August the project team interviewed over 20 farmers across the State to understand their experiences, motivations, challenges, and attitudes around business and financial planning.

Years of running a farming business



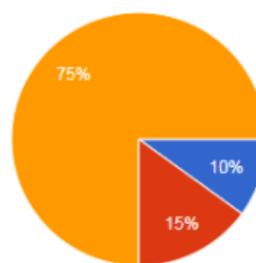
- Less than 10 years
- 11-20yrs
- More than 20 years

Role



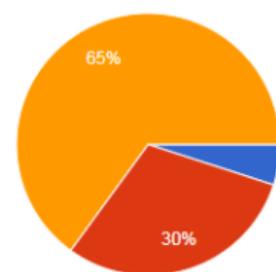
- Farm owner
- Farm Manager

History in farming



- 1st generation
- 2nd generation
- 3rd+ generation

Farm stage



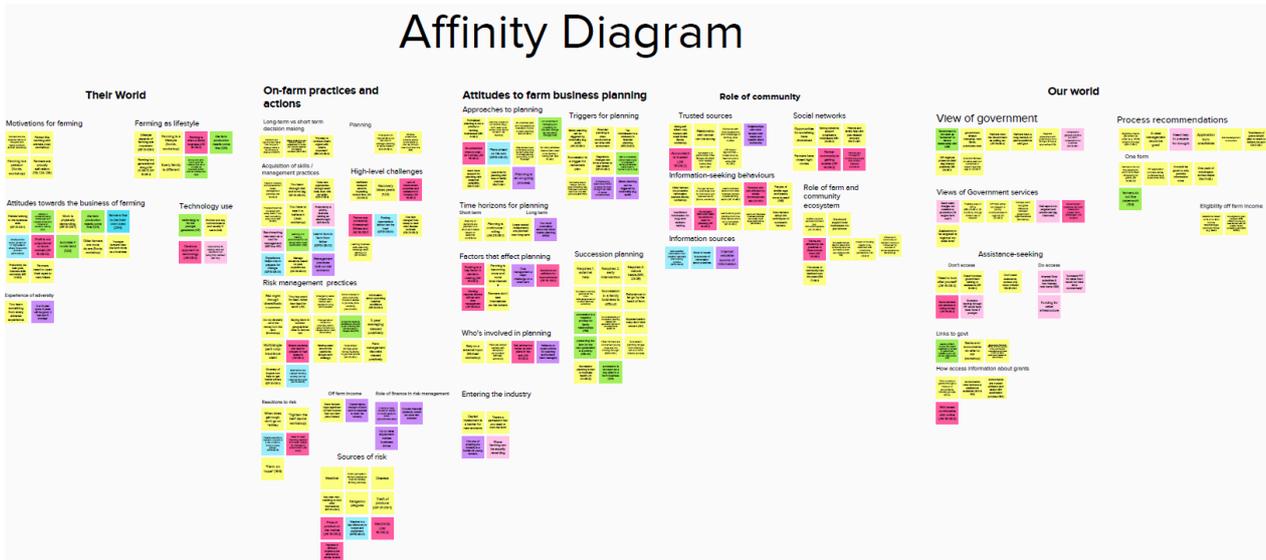
- New entrant
- Mid-career
- End-career / succession

We interviewed the farmers at their place of business and focused the conversation on their own experiences, so that they felt comfortable and open when discussing their story. An empathic style of interviewing helped us to uncover important insights.

Define

The second stage in Design Thinking is 'Define' and it involves processing information gathered through the empathise phase to identify where the problems and opportunities lie.

We started by using Affinity Diagramming to distil the insights from the farmer interviews. This process enabled us to make sense of the information gathered during the interviews. As a group, we discussed the insights to create a shared understanding and then arranged them into meaningful groups based on natural relationships, such as farmer social networks and triggers for planning.



We then used personas to create representations of the farmers from the insights gathered. The representations formed characters which we will use throughout the design process to ensure the perspective of the end-user is front of mind. For example, we created a persona for a typical 'Solo Operator' who is focused on the operations of the farm and who is not as well networked as others in the community. It's important we understand how this type of farmer thinks and behaves so that the solutions we develop are appropriately tailored. We have similar personas for 'Connected' and 'Enterprising' farmers.

Jim – Solo Operator

AGE: 55
OCCUPATION: Farmer
LOCATION: NSW



"I love farming and do it my way"

BIO: Jim has a family connection to farming and grew up in a second generation farming family. He has worked in farming all his life enjoys the outdoors and exposure to the environment. The physical labour is hard but Jim relishes the challenge and enjoys the isolation of farming. Family is at the centre of his interests.

A Day In The life

Jim is a farmer who has been in the business his whole life. Jim has a daily routine on the farm which involves an early start straight on the tools, regimented meal times and long hours. He works seven days a week and rarely takes a holiday, if ever! When faced with seasonal variability, he needs to react quickly in order to manage the farm environment and mitigate impacts. Jim's days "on the tools" are long, hard and physical days. Jim is often too tired to socialise after work and spends his little free time with his family. The pressures of sustaining the farm business creates stress, but at the end of the day, he loves the lifestyle of being a farmer and wouldn't want to do anything else.

Key Goals

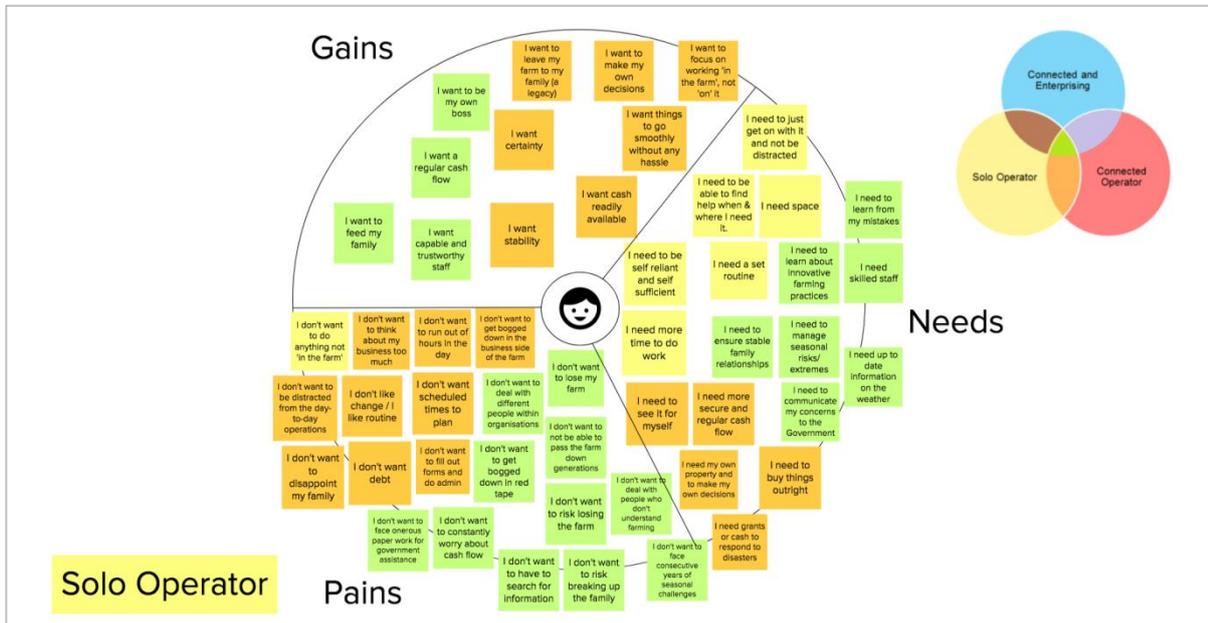
Jim hopes to pass on the farm to his family in the future and expand his land. Jim is motivated by a sense of "being his own boss", being self-reliant and not being told what to do on his own land. From an intrinsic perspective, Jim is motivated by working with nature and the environment. He wouldn't thrive working in an office environment and feels best working the land.

Distinguishing Factors

Jim is not afraid to take risks if it will result in quick wins for his business but he doesn't think long term about how to invest his capital. This is often because the little capital he has, he invests into helping his business recover and "thinking long term" is a lesser priority than keeping the farm afloat. Jim can often act in a reactive manner rather than taking the time to think through decisions and potential consequences. Jim doesn't like other people telling him what to do on his farm – but he trusts his accountant or financial planner to make business decisions. He doesn't like to seek assistance or rely on others unless the situation is dire.

Customer Profiles

We also created customer profiles to draw out each farmer group's core needs and desires. We used the insights gathered in the interviews to identify those needs, as well as the pains and gains encountered when fulfilling them. This information will then be used to develop solutions that meet priority needs while maximising gains and minimising pains.



Next Steps

The next step in the project is to brainstorm potential solutions to the needs, pains and gains that we have identified. This phase is known as 'ideation' (= idea generation). We will be workshoping with a range of key stakeholders as part of this phase and outcomes will then be tested with individual farmers to ensure they are fit-for-purpose.

More information

For more information on the project, or to make an enquiry, please visit: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/farm-business-planning>

© State of New South Wales through the Department of Industry, Skills and Regional Development, 2017. You may copy, distribute and otherwise freely deal with this publication for any purpose, provided that you attribute the NSW Department of Primary Industries as the owner.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (September 2017). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

Published by the Department of Primary Industries.