



SSI recipients are both savvy and wary. They have solid evidence that you can't trust the government

“I have tried Section 8 but there are too many rules—don't tell me what I can and can't have over”

People have first-hand experience with a variety of different benefits.

The application process for most of these programs is described and recalled as negative.

“Never seen so much paperwork in my entire existence... They want it hard, they want you to give up”

“It took 8 years to approve me.”

“I think it's more than trying to discourage people, cause a lot of people aren't going to go through the process of getting a lawyer and all that. They're in a tough neck of the woods, it's more or less down discouraging, I know they're not going to keep on trying.”

“What I think is going to happen is that there's a lot of people who are at the end of their rope and they're not going to follow through with the process.”

“We are pretty confident that a lot of people will not get through that process because of confusion about what that includes.”

Even after successfully navigating these programs, there is still a lack of understanding when it comes to the rules, regulations, and process in general.

But will I lose any benefits?



Learning from all users

Think big. Start small.

Today's Conversation

- Code for America overview
- Focusing on all users
- Building feedback loops
- Tackling big problems
- Starting small
- Mitigating harm

Delivery-driven government

- **Collaborate:** we work with governments to make our work stronger
- **Start with user needs:** actual user experiences inform our decisions
- **Iterate:** we create tight feedback loops to constantly adapt our approach and improve outcomes
- **Set measurable outcomes:** we develop success metrics with our government partners and assess our impact together
- **Work in the open:** share our challenges and learnings

Principles of a more human-centered safety net



MANY WELCOMING DOORS

Provide an equitable experience however people choose to access services.



EASY TO UNDERSTAND

Enable access to information to understand case status and next steps at any moment.



INFORMED DECISIONS

Inform decision-making by presenting timely context and recommendations.



SIMPLE ACTIONS

Offer guided and actionable workflows that reduce burden and time.



RESPONSIVE TO CHANGING NEEDS

Readily adapt to changes in user needs, technology, policy, and budget.

Where we're working, learning and growing

CALIFORNIA

Improve customer service with a streamlined SNAP application.

COLORADO

Maintain and keep benefits by simplifying change reporting and processing.

ALASKA

Reach everyone especially the most remote communities.

MICHIGAN

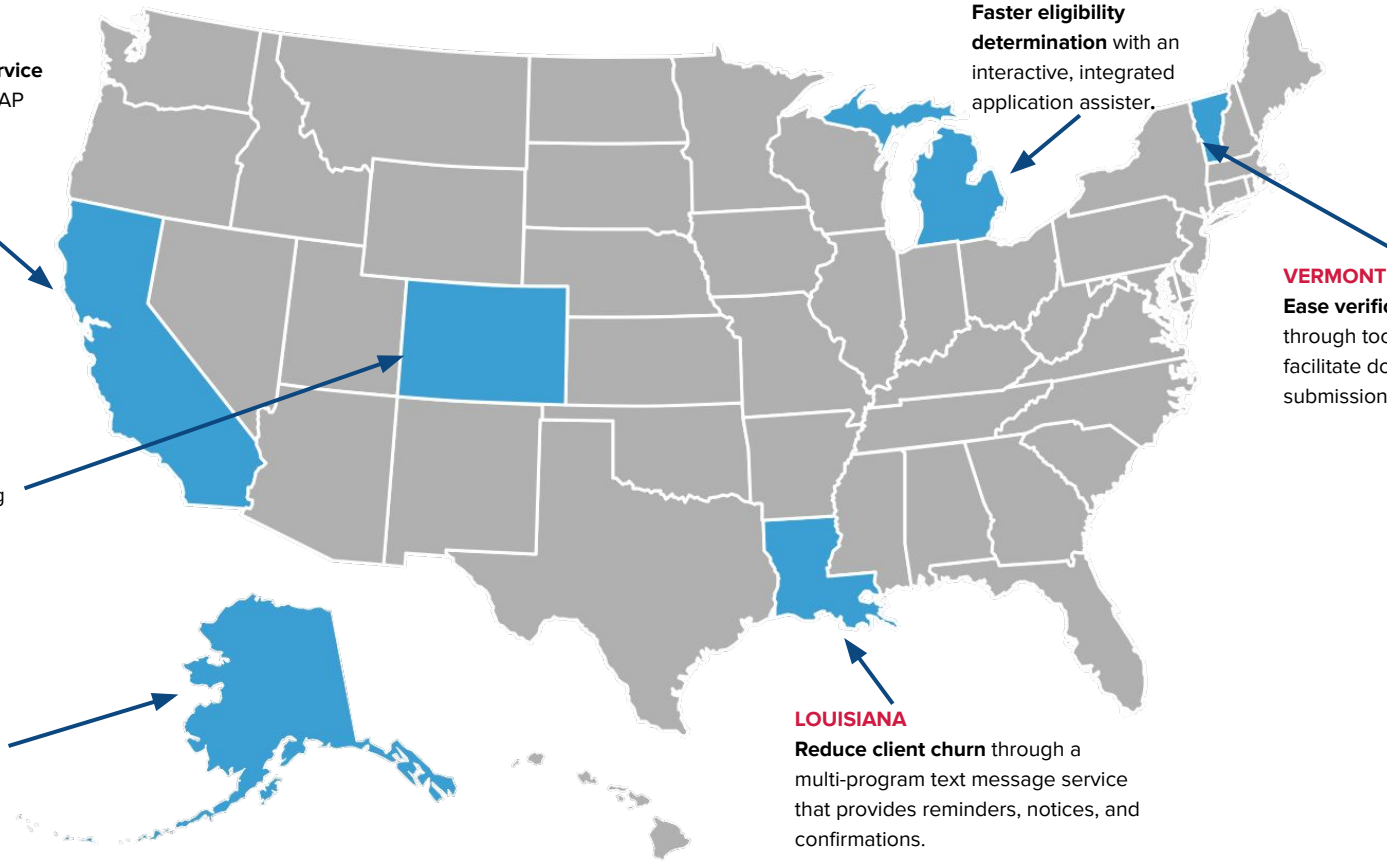
Faster eligibility determination with an interactive, integrated application assister.

VERMONT

Ease verifications through tools that facilitate document submission and intake.

LOUISIANA

Reduce client churn through a multi-program text message service that provides reminders, notices, and confirmations.



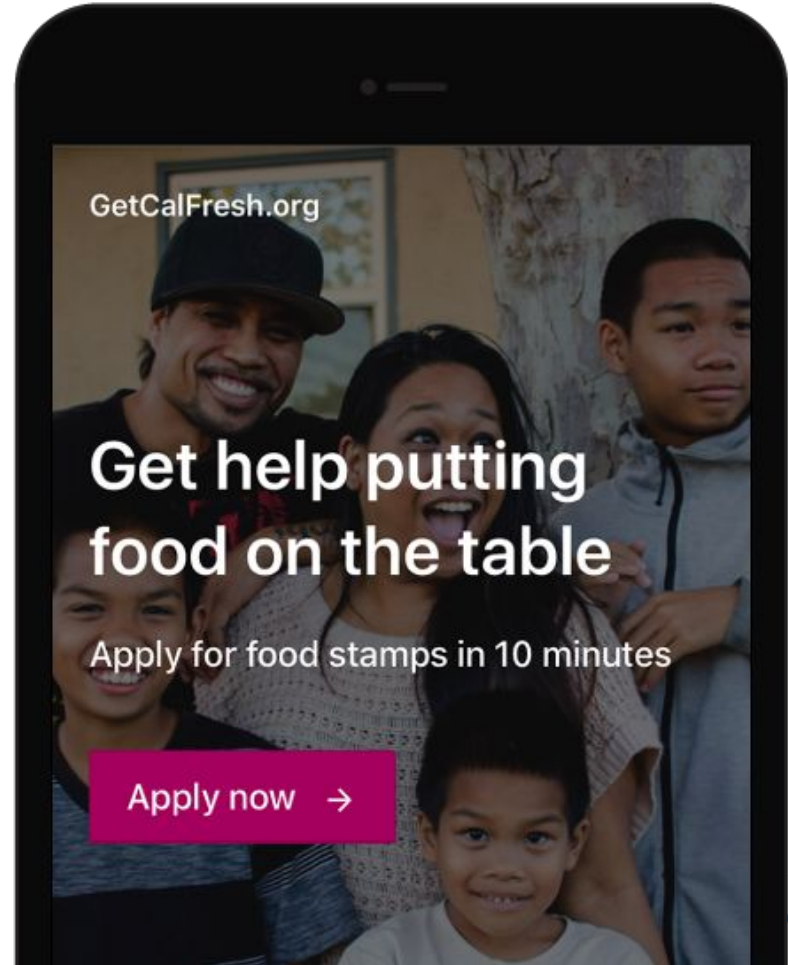
A black and white photograph of a man in a grocery store aisle. He is wearing a cap and a t-shirt, looking down at a display of produce. The aisle is filled with various items, including oranges in the foreground and packaged goods on shelves in the background.

Code for America is a state outreach contractor

that focuses on digital community outreach

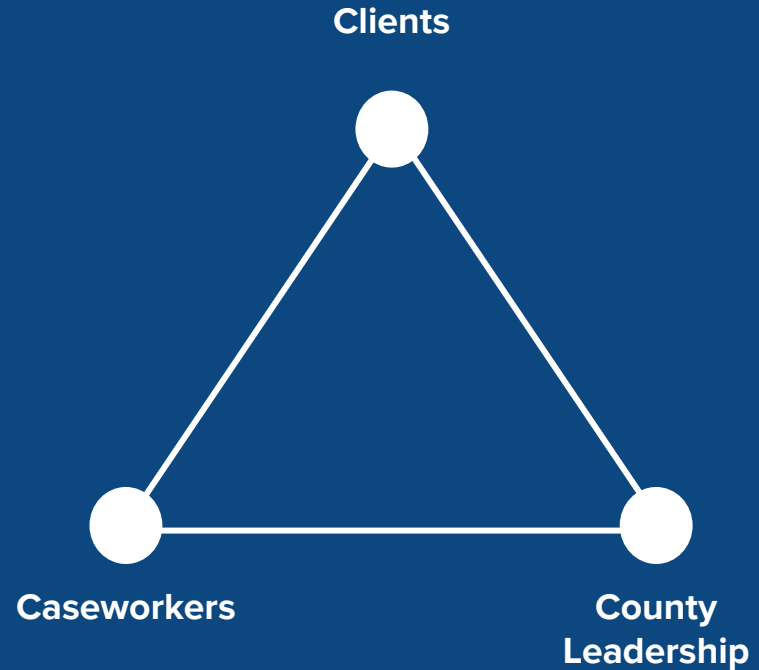
About GetCalFresh

- A service provided by Code for America that acts as a **digital assister**, available at: www.getcalfresh.org ([demo here](#))
- It allows anyone to apply for CalFresh **using a mobile phone**, and guides them through the eligibility process using **email, text, and live chat support**



**Engaging users helps us
focus on the “how.”**

**It informs our continuous
improvement cycle.**





The Client Experience

- Anxiety and ambiguity about what it means to receive benefits
- Complex processes and confusing guidance
- For the most vulnerable, the challenges compound



The Eligibility Worker Experience

- Struggle to keep up with high caseloads
- Don't have consistent access to tools that could ease their workload
- Are navigating incredibly complex eligibility rules



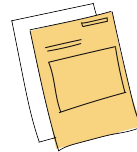
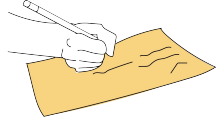
The Leadership Experience

- Carry a tremendously complex system on their shoulders
- Hold all the risk
- Have a vision, see connections, but have myriad constraints

**“I submitted everything and had my interview,
but haven’t heard anything. Am I approved?”**

Build feedback loops.

The Benefits Journey



1
Discovering
Benefits

2
Applying for
Benefits

3
Determining
Eligibility

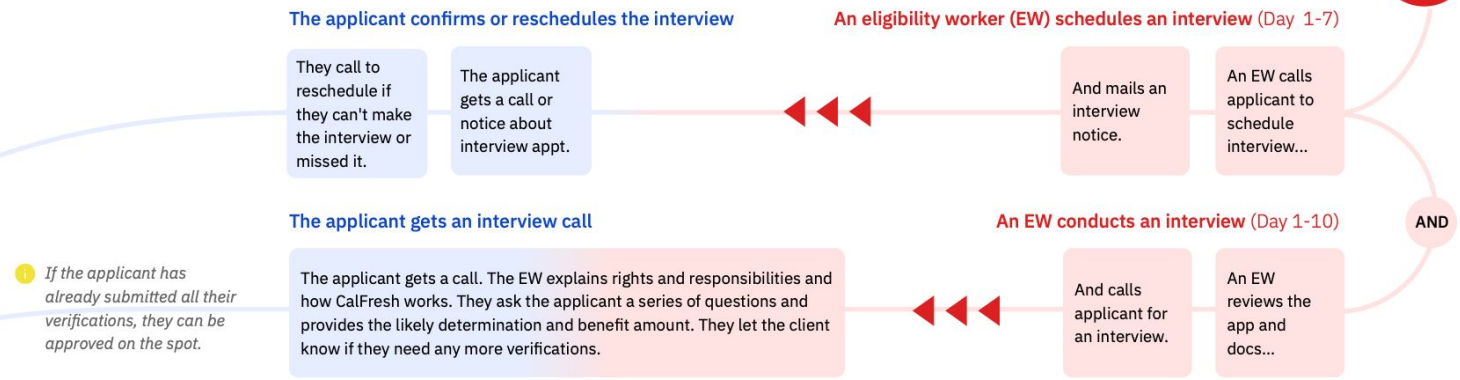
4
Notifying
Clients of
Determination

5
Using Benefits

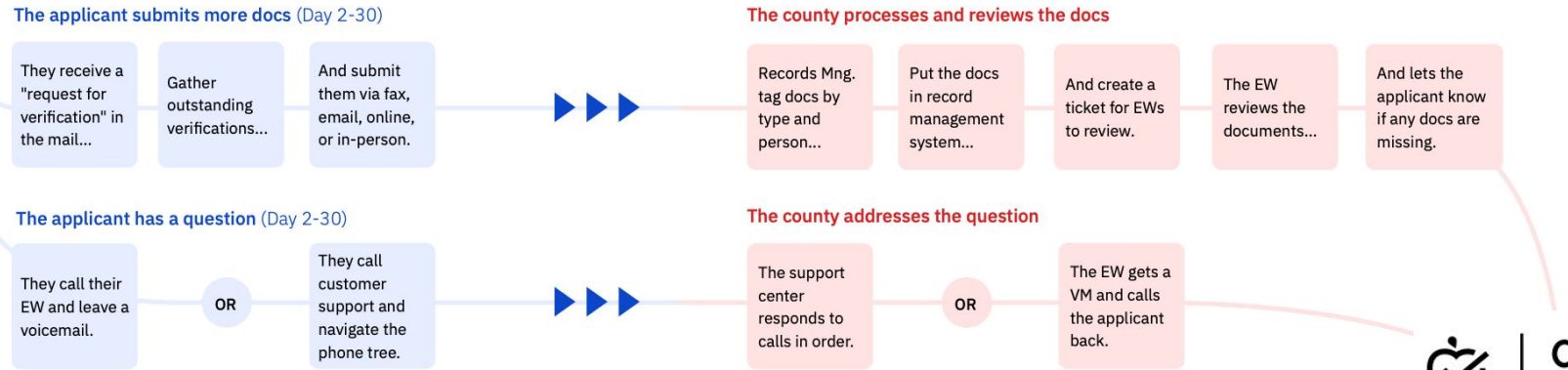
6
Maintaining
Benefits



2. The county schedules and conducts an interview

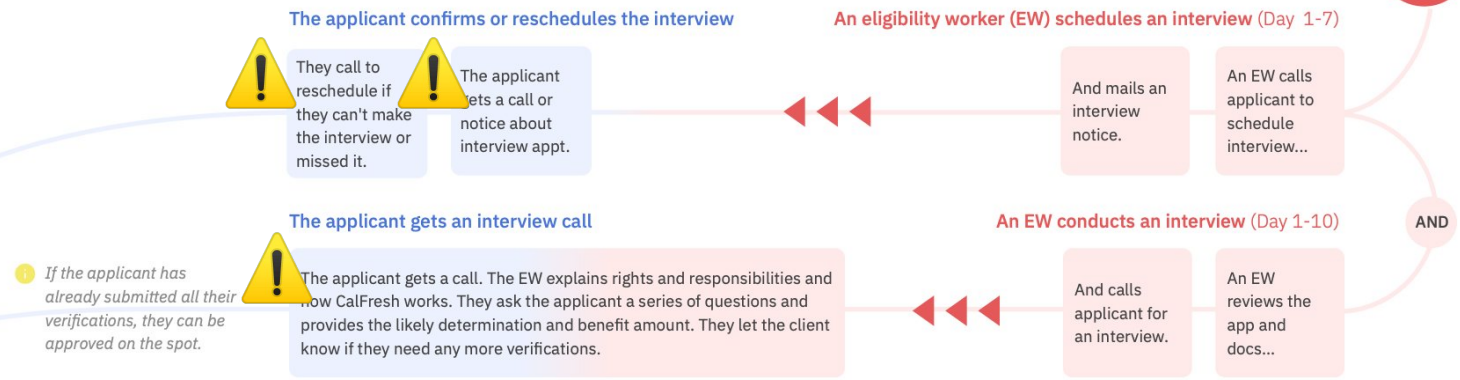


3. The applicant submits outstanding verifications

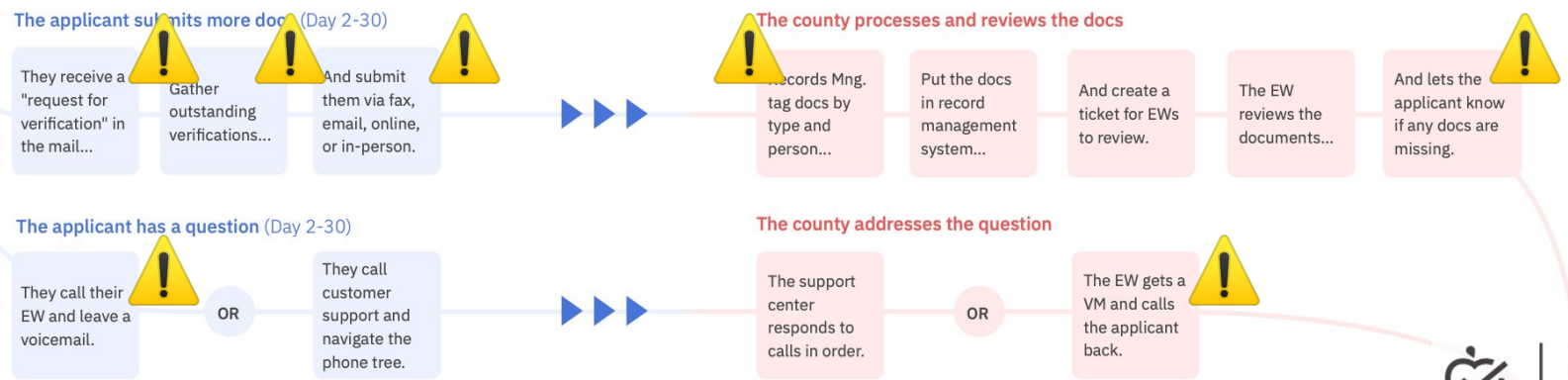


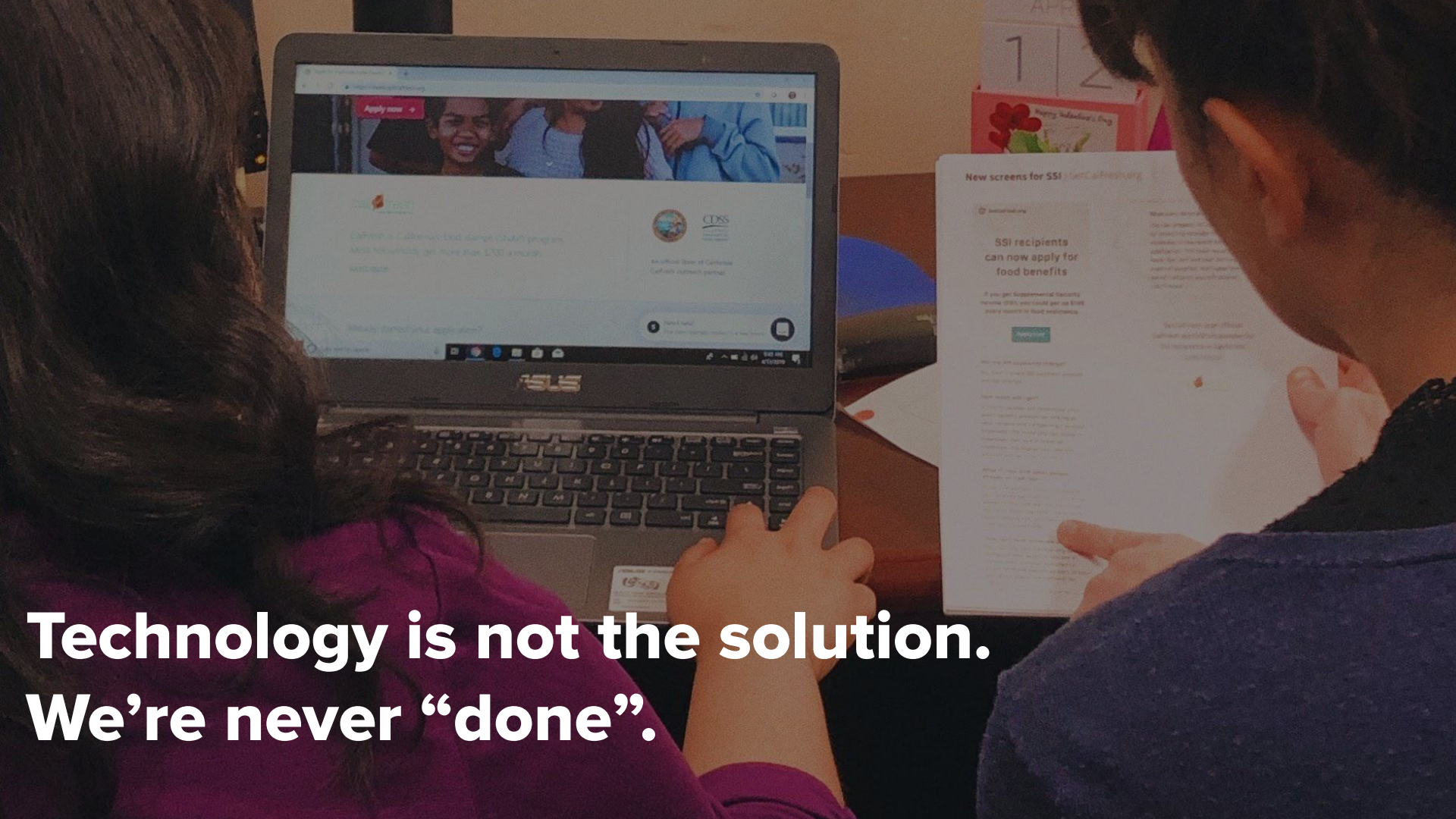


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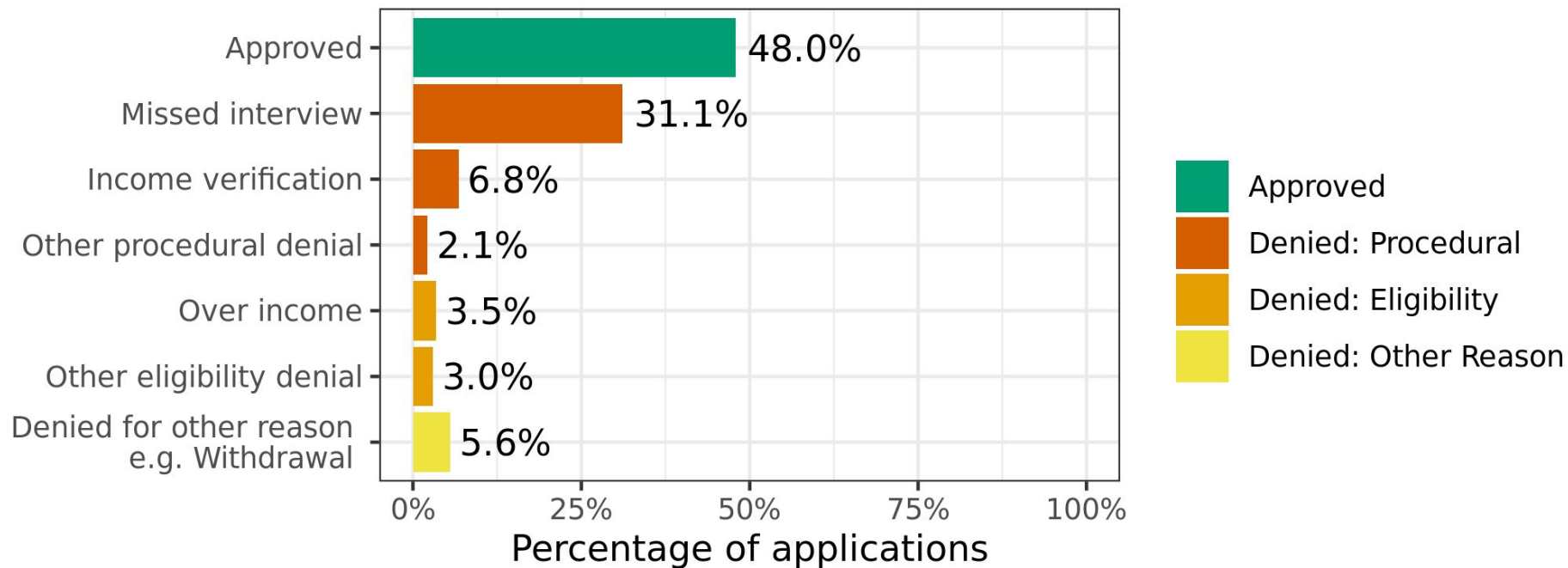


**Technology is not the solution.
We're never "done".**

How we tackle problems

1. Get the big picture from data
2. Collect real time info
3. Listen to client voices
4. Understand the “why”
5. Identify what to test
6. Try something new
7. Repeat

Get the big picture from data



Collect real time info on interview completion

Day 12 Interview

Have you either scheduled or done your CalFresh interview yet?

Please reply '1' for YES or '2' for NO.

If YES

Great! Don't forget you have 10 days after your interview to submit any documents your case worker might have asked for.

The easiest way to submit docs is by using your phone's camera at:
www.getcalfresh.org/docs

If NO

Your county should have contacted you for your interview by now.

You'll need to call (408) 758-3847 to schedule another interview.

Listen to client voices

“

Is there any way to schedule an interview through email? I missed the first setup call and I've been trying to call the number listed in the voicemail I received and it just rings endlessly. I've been on hold with the general CalFresh number for a while and I'm hoping I can schedule a different way.

”

Understand the why

45%

of applicants denied for missed interview tried to reschedule but couldn't

33%

"I talked to the call center, but never heard back from my caseworker."

30%

"I left a voicemail, but never heard back."

21%

"The number was busy."

17%

"I could not leave a voicemail."

16%

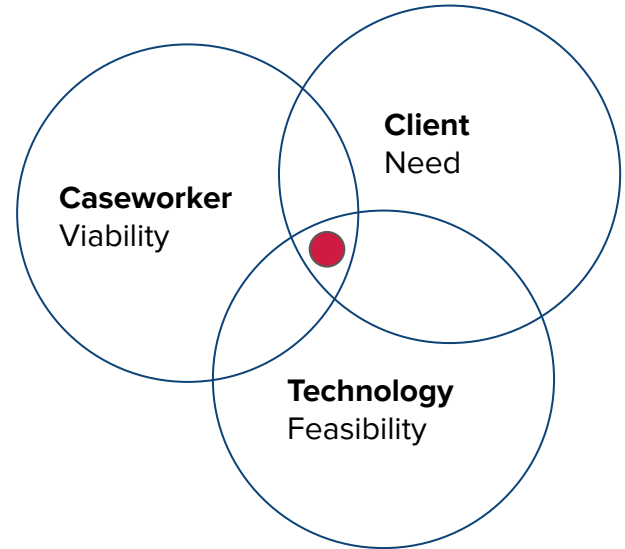
"The wait time was too long."

14%

"The number I called was out of service."

Identify what to test

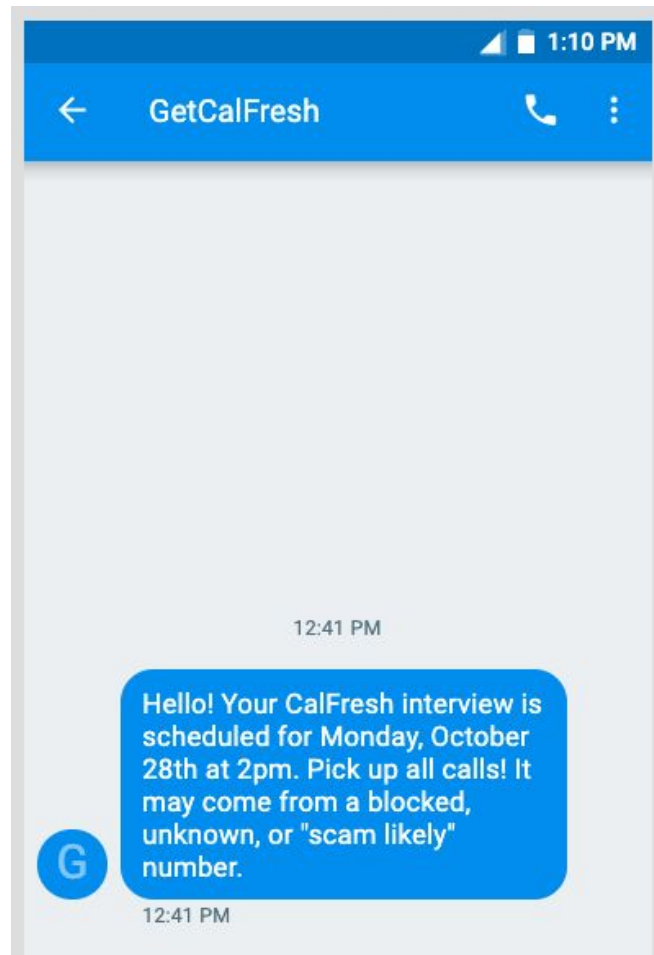
1. **Learn** about the current client experience and identify the barriers to receiving and administering benefits applications.
2. **Define** key outcomes and a measurement strategy so we can track our progress and improve.
3. **Establish parameters** for a solution to pilot and scale.



We look across all of these facets to explore what is possible and to understand what is highest value to pursue.

Trying something new for clients


Clients are 55% more likely to complete their interview if they receive a reminder with a date and time.



Trying something new for workers

Interview Preference: workers can use client's availability when scheduling the initial appointment.

Applicant Summary (page 1 of 2)



ES Recommendation

Interview Time Preferences

BASIC INFORMATION


First name Preferred first name (if any) Last name

DOB SSN Language Phone number Email

Living address


Mailing address (if different)

Rent/own On-campus
 Couchsurf RV/car
 Shelter Outside
 Other



Observe CalFresh
service delivery in
action

Build



Understand if
client needs are
met



**User-Centered
Design**

Learn

Measure



Collect CalFresh
client feedback
and review
outcomes

Moving from process to action.

Mitigating harm.

How might we support clients subject to ABAWD rules to identify and verify exemptions?

Statewide standalone ABAWD screener

Are you caring for your dependent child under age 6?

The child with you.

Yes

Are you caring for a person with a disability?

This person with you.

Yes

Does a child under the age of 18 live in your household?

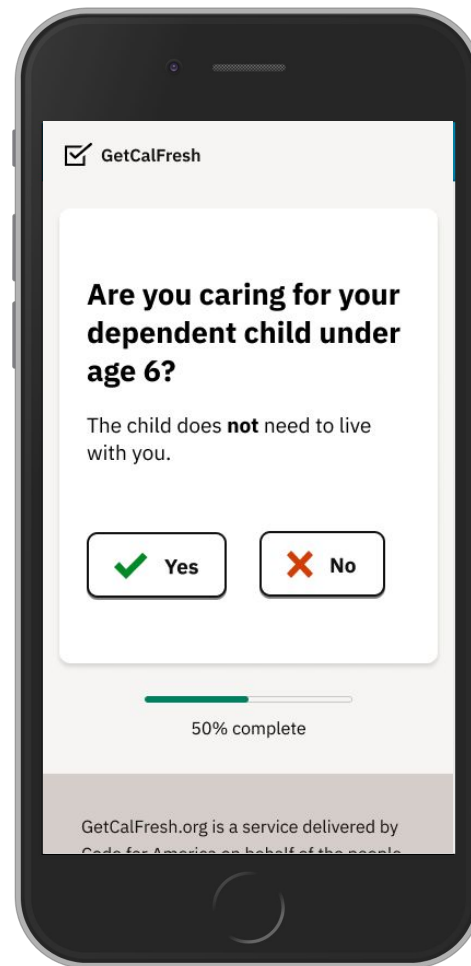
This can be your own child, a sibling, or any other child in your CalFresh household.

Yes No

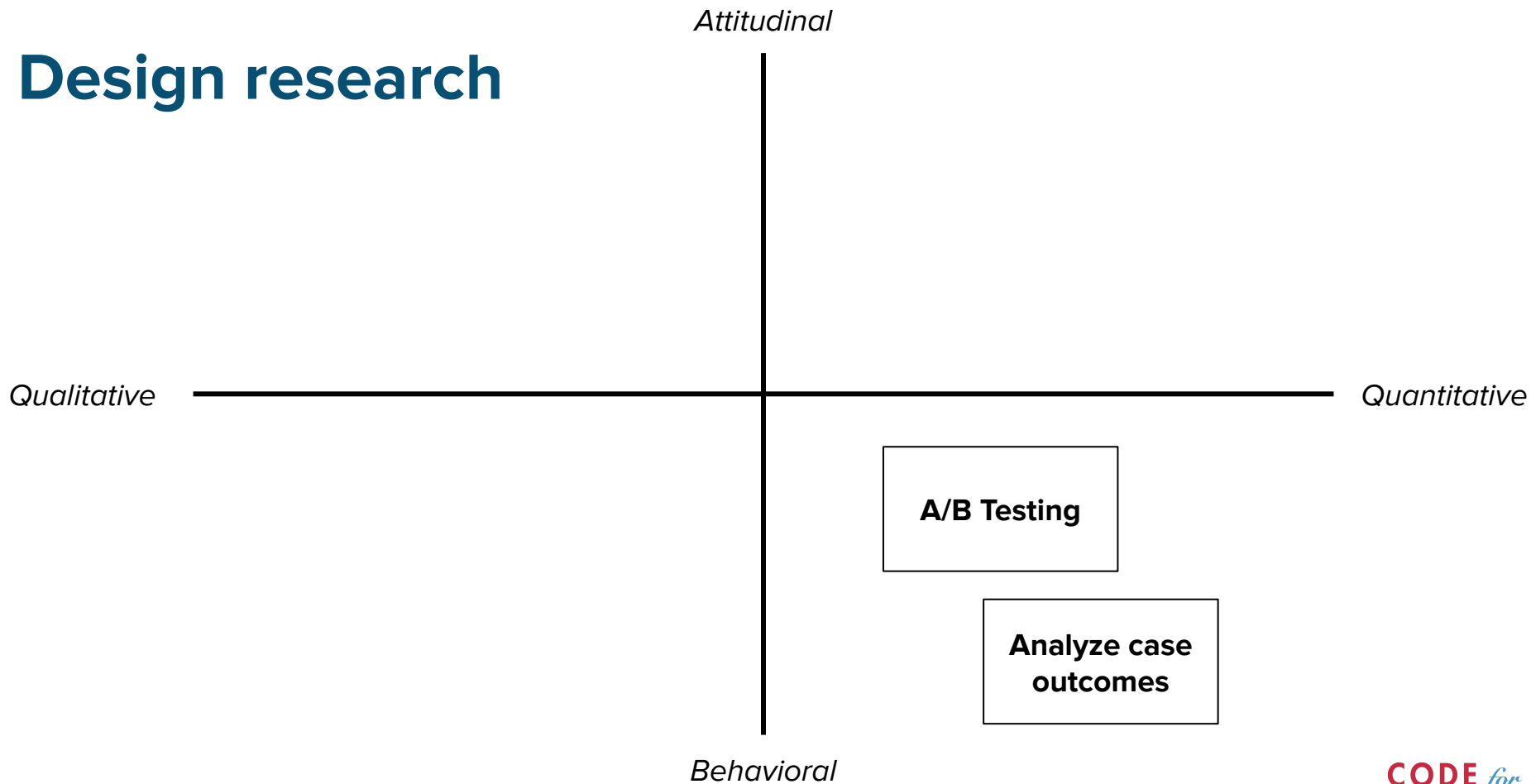
- **Client:** understand how this rule may impact their benefits and take action
- **Worker:** process exemption form and verifications quickly, follow up as needed
- **Leadership:** minimize impact to clients and workers

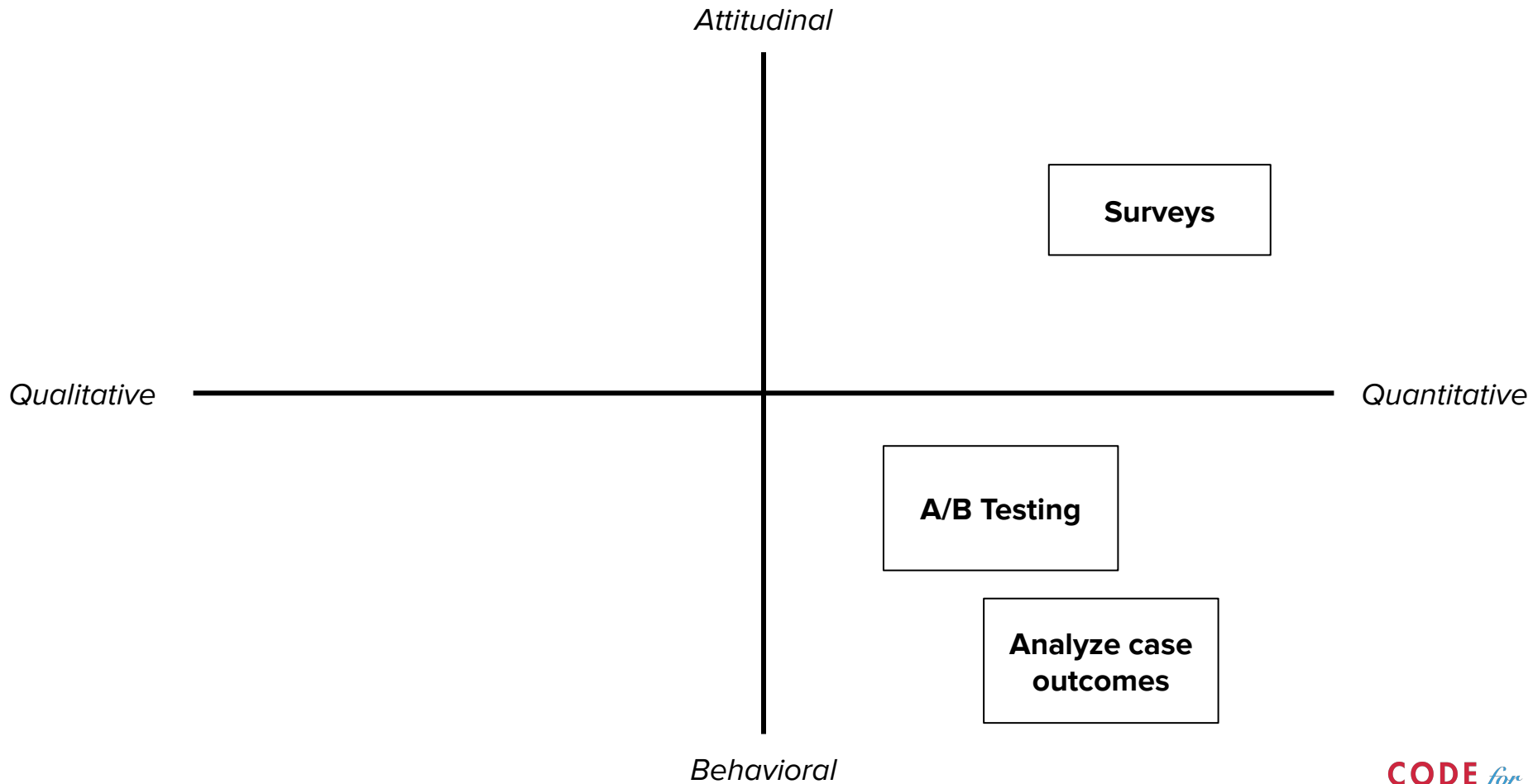
Client experience

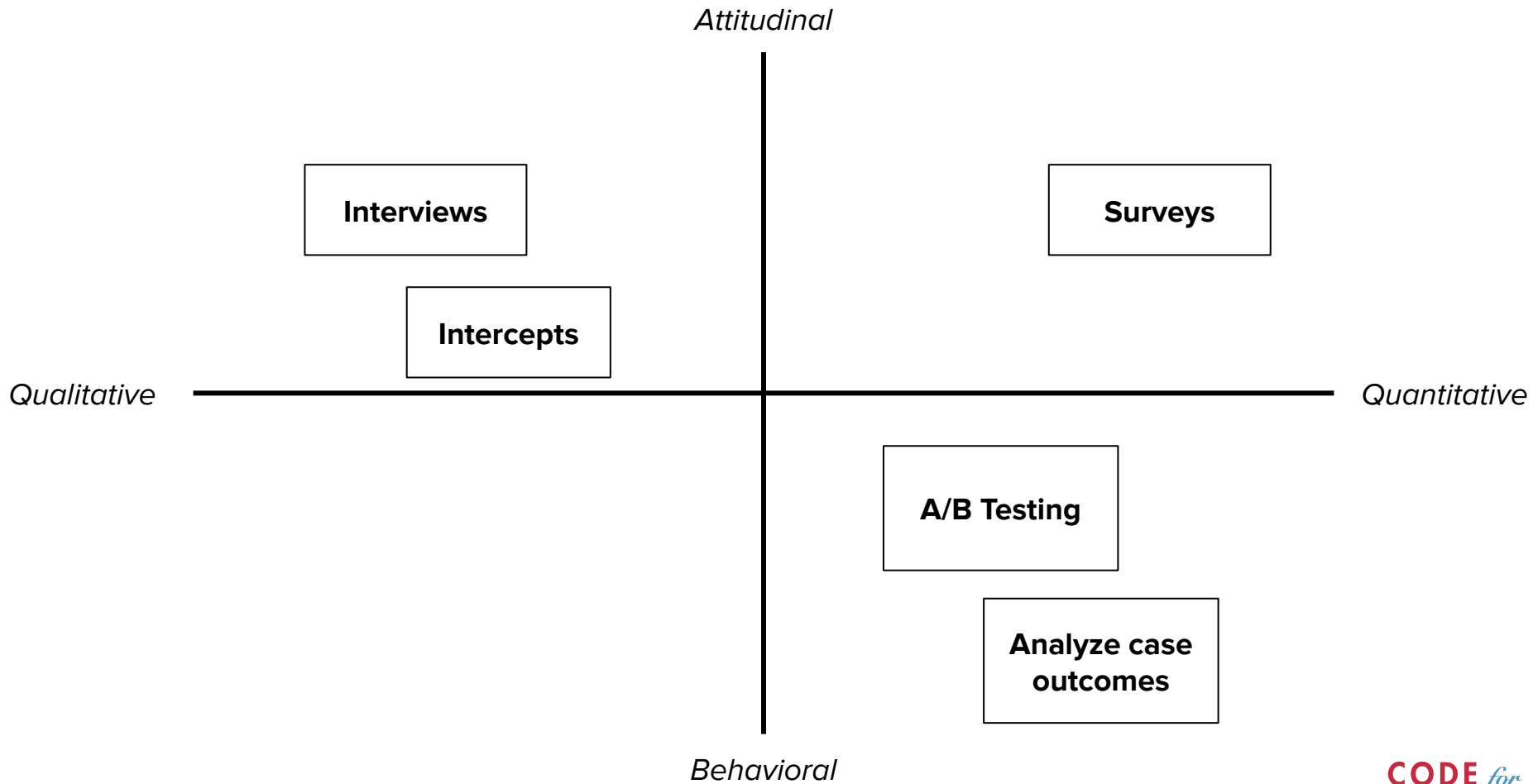
First prototype

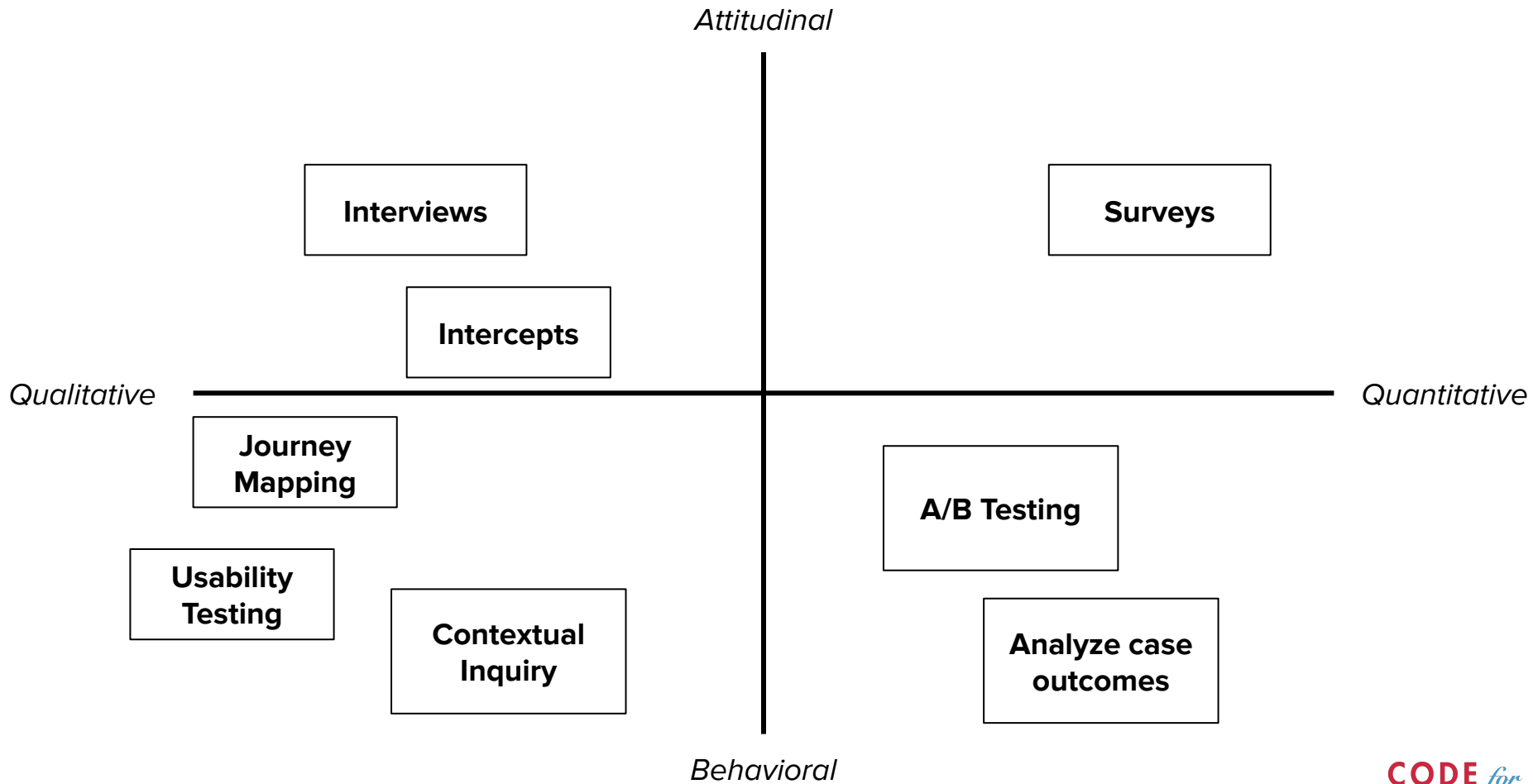


Design research









How the GCF.org standalone screener works

Client receives link to
online **ABAWD** screener



Client identifies
potential exemptions
and gathers docs



GCF.org sends **ABAWD**
form and docs to counties





**Our success is measured by the
success of the people we serve.**

Thank you!

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