Register a food business

Summary

Date of assessment	4 May 2018
Stage	Alpha
Result	Not Met – actions required
Update	27 June 2018
Result	Met

Update June – Assessment update

The team have provided evidence in relation to the key "next steps" below.

On this basis, the panel are happy to confirm that the service meets the standard for an alpha, and can progress to beta.

Report from the original assessment

There is a strong team in place, who have made an excellent start in developing a service which will bring tangible benefits to all three of their core user groups. They have made well-considered decisions on the approach to take on what to build, and the scope of the MVP. They are also embedding practices like agile, security by design, and publishing data.

Next Steps

The team must engage with users, across all three groups, who:
- Have access needs
- Are lower down the digital inclusion scale

This must be done before the beta is built

We would recommend three specific actions:
1. Reaching out to existing stakeholder networks to recruit users with access needs, and those with lower digital confidence / skills. We recognise that not all users will self-declare these, so this may not give a full picture, but it will help to understand what the gap is.
2. Making contact with a specialist recruitment company (or companies) who can find users with potential Assisted Digital needs. Recruiting these users will take longer than recruiting a general pool of users, and it is important to understand what recruitment agencies can achieve.
3. Talking to contacts in GDS – to understand the options on Assisted Digital.

We do want to assure that this is underway before we can say the service meets the alpha standard. However, we do not think it would be proportionate either to hold a full re-assessment or to wait until hard to reach users have participated in research sessions. Instead we would like to see a detailed research plan, which gives evidence that recruitment of relevant users is underway, with realistic plans for when those users will be available for research.

Context

Panel:
RF (lead) Home Office; AK (technology) DWP; JR (user research and design) Rural Payments Agency; PB (analytics) DWP.

About the service

This service is about registering a food business. All food businesses must register with their local council. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) offers a way to register, and collects data on food businesses.
There are around 650,000 registered food businesses in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. There are about 130,000 new applications a year.

Key users

There are three core user groups:
- Food business owners – who must register their business
- Local councils – who must inspect businesses and give them a rating, as well as passing data to the FSA
- The Food Standards Agency (FSA) – which has a legal duty to regulate food businesses

There are also secondary users – like the public and data aggregators – who will get functionality in the full system, after the MVP is extended.

Detail

The service

- The team gave a clear outline of the context of the service, including the EU legislation constraining what they can currently do (although it was great to hear other teams are investigating issues like whether each premises needs to be regulated separately).
- It was great that the team had identified a clear problem statement for what they are trying to achieve, and understood what this means for the different users (including secondary users, like data aggregators, who are not part of the MVP).

- It was good to hear the team talking about the practical impact of the service, not just focussing on the legal requirement: for example, explaining the need to be able to respond to food contamination or outbreaks by using good data.
- The team have also clearly understood the context of the service – which currently has 387 entry points – and the position local councils are in.

User needs

Good Things

- The team had used a variety of techniques to gather user needs. This includes both qualitative and quantative data.
- The team have produced a clear user journey, and is clear that the aim of a business owner is likely to be to set up their business and not to register it.
- The wider team are observing research sessions.
- The team have done work on balancing the user need with the policy input, so the process can be legally correct but users will understand it.
- User needs are prioritised and put in the backlog, and the team are clear what needs will be met by the MVP.
- Where user needs are not met by the service, some of these needs have been passed to other teams.
- There is a clear research plan for the beta, which also includes an external accessibility audit.
- The FSA doesn't have a Minister, but the team are seeing the Chair of their Board, who has been closely involved. She should be asked to try using the system.

Recommendations

- There has been no research so far with users with access needs. The team had acknowledged this area – for example, putting access needs in the personas. However, it's really important to understand the access needs of the specific user group, and build this into the product from the start – it will be much harder to add this in later on. Ideally every 'round of research should include a user with access needs.
- None of the users have been plotted against the digital inclusion scale. All users should be plotted against this scale in research sessions (see understanding users who don't use digital services). This includes users within local councils and the FSA – our experience is that understanding their digital literacy can make a big difference on effective take-up of the service (including internal business change as well as public take-up).
- The team did talk about plans to test with users with Assisted Digital needs in beta. However, recruitment has not yet started, and there was no evidence of what the needs are. Recruiting users with these needs often takes longer than recruiting other users, so it's important to factor in this time (and to be clear that this is separate from access needs, although both can be situational, which would be an interesting area to explore for this service).

- The team have not spoken to food business who don't know they need to register, although they have spoken to local councils who work with these businesses. We would recommend some research with these businesses (recognising that the behavioural insights team is doing wider research in this area, looking at both those who don't know they need to register and those who deliberately don't register).
- The team talked about offering business more tailored information as a benefit of registering. We would recommend some research (potentially by the programme) on whether this is something businesses need – especially as the team had already identified that other organisations also provide guidance.

Design

- The team have looked at other examples of similar services, including internationally and good local councils, as well as other services that the UK Government runs.
- They have designed a clear MVP, which will bring value to all three core user groups and build a good foundation for future iterations.
- It was really good to hear about the iterations the team have tried, and how they have learnt from these to develop the prototype which will be taken through to the beta.
- It was good to hear that the team have challenged the data that is currently captured, to ensure that the new service only captures data where this is needed.
- The team have done the appropriate amount of thinking about future needs – so they can focus on the MVP but be confident that this is designed to support future iteration. The team will be using the MVP to gather data to identify and prioritise future needs.
- There is a clear plan for how the service would be rolled out in beta, based on local councils who want to participate, and scaling up in a managed way to gather and act on feedback. There is a clear plan on how to direct users to the beta or the current system.
- It was good to hear about the efforts the team are making to ensure that the design is consistent with the wider FSA digital presence.
- There were good examples of specific issues the team has considered: such as the iterations on how to define types of businesses, and how they will monitor whether third parties can use the service easily.
- The team have thought about what users will see if the system is down.

Recommendations

- There is no support model for users with Assisted Digital needs. The team referred to the existing support arrangements, such as 'phone lines run by the local councils. As above, there needs to be research to understand what the Assisted Digital user needs are. It might be that these 'phone lines meet those needs, but there is no evidence at the moment.

- On the same lines, there isn't evidence of a clear take-up strategy. There is a communications strategy, and the team have asked local councils why they don't accept the gov.uk form. However, there isn't the evidence from research with users (across all three core groups) to understand what the barriers to take-up may be and address these.

Team

Good points:
- The team are clearly engaged, and want to develop the right product in the right way. This includes having the SRO and other senior stakeholders in the assessment.
- The team are following appropriate agile methodologies, amending these over time as they moved from Discovery to Alpha.
- It was great to hear about the participation in the playback sessions, including ensuring people can engage remotely.
- The team are refining their governance model, to ensure it is appropriate and effective.
- The team had several examples of where they have great engagement across Government – such as with the GDS work on starting a business, and with Paul Maltby
- The team have funding in place

Technology

Good things

- The team had worked to understand the current technical landscape, including a technical survey of local councils.
- They have looked at a range of different options: from applying data standards without a technical solution, to the FSA providing an end-to-end system. They have made a well-considered decision to provide a solution with empowers local councils, enabling them to onboard and achieve benefits quickly, and is flexible to add on additional functionality beyond the MVP.
- The team had a really positive story about prototyping different solutions for data transfer. None of these worked, but the team learnt a lot which has shaped the proposed solution for beta.
- There is a clear technical MVP – generating a reference number, providing a risk engine, and a registration router. They have appropriately considered future needs, such as ensuring the risk engine will be built in a way that can be modularised.
- The team have been engaging with one of the largest suppliers to local councils, and have an end-to-end system that works for them. They are also talking to other suppliers to design something that works for them – and plan to provide APIs that councils can use in future.

- The technology has been chosen for the right reasons – including fulfilling needs, enabling future changes, enabling faster adoption, and driving consistent data standards.
- The team are coding in the open, and are planning to re-use common components and code from elsewhere in Government.
- There is a technical Disaster Recovery plan in place, with appropriate data back-ups and testing of the plan.
- The team have been designing in security and privacy from the start, including ensuring they only collect data they need. The Information Asset Owner is the SRO, and has been fully involved – including attending the assessment.

Recommendations

- We would recommend that care is given to appropriately prioritising the work on API's for councils not using one of the largest suppliers. This is both to ensure that this service is as open as it can be, and to reduce the risk that full implementation becomes delayed because of the potentially wide variety of solutions beyond these four suppliers.
- The developers do have an accessibility checklist, but we would recommend more detailed accessibility support before beta development starts.

Analytics

Good things / notes

- It was good to hear that the team ran a workshop on service performance, including colleagues from policy and other workstreams in the programme.
- This has resulted in the team using the four mandatory KPIs, plus an additional one around data quality – and having considered what they want to measure below this.
- The team are collecting benchmarks, although data is limited from the non-gov.uk routes.
- There is a clear commitment that data should be published by default, and the team plans to do this via the performance platform.
- The team are carrying out the appropriate consideration of which tools to use.
- The FSA are recruiting a performance analyst, and are also getting support from a data scientist.
- There are clear plans for how the analytics will feed into the backlog to improve the service, and to carry out regular reviews of the KPIs.

Recommendations

- The team should ensure they can track how users get to the landing point for their service, including considering cross-domain tracking.
- As the team have decided on Google Analytics as their web analytics solution, the Performance Analyst that they recruit should be proficient in this and related tools. This will ensure that accurate and robust analysis is available at an early stage.

- Should the team decide to implement hard coded tags to capture additional user insight in Google Analytics, this should be done as the MVP is being coded.

Digital Service Standard points

Point	Description	Result
1	Understanding user needs	Met (27th June)
2	Improving the service based on user research and usability testing	Met
3	Having a sustainable, multidisciplinary team in place	Met
4	Building using agile, iterative and user-centred methods	Met
5	Iterating and improving the service on a frequent basis	Met
6	Evaluating tools, systems, and ways of procuring them	Met
7	Managing data, security level, legal responsibilities, privacy issues and risks	Met
8	Making code available as open source	Met
9	Using open standards and common government platforms	Met
10	Testing the end-to-end service, and browser and device testing	Met
11	Planning for the service being taken temporarily offline	Met
12	Creating a simple and intuitive service	Met (27th June)
13	Ensuring consistency with the design and style of GOV.UK	Met
14	Encouraging digital take-up	Met (27th June)
15	Using analytics tools to collect and act on performance data	Met
16	Defining KPIs and establishing performance benchmarks	Met
17	Reporting performance data on the Performance Platform	Met

| 18 | Testing the service with the minister responsible for it | Met |