

El Service Delivery Concept Testing

Final Report
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Submitted to:

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Table of Contents

Introduction 1

General Findings..... 5

Specific Feedback 6

Issues with the French language application 10

Introduction

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) continues to look for ways to streamline the way in which it delivers services to citizens in line with their evolving expectations. The way in which the Department delivers the Employment Insurance (EI) program is one example of this ongoing work. Much of the service delivery improvements have involved moving towards self-service modes where individuals are able to do many of the related activities on their own. Within this context, there is an ongoing need to ensure that citizens both fully understand what is required of them as well as being able to easily do what they need to do.

This research project involves the Interactive Fact Finding System (IFFS) which is designed to provide the EI program with a generic framework for the collection and storage of information as both a stand-alone application and in conjunction with other electronic initiatives such as Appli-web and the Internet Reporting Service (IRS). Initially the IFFS will be used in conjunction with the IRS to allow the claimant to provide additional information when declaring a change in their status while on claim. By gathering this information in a standardized manner it should prevent/reduces follow up contact with the claimant and allows for more accurate and more expeditious processing of decisions regarding the claimants continuing eligibility for benefits.

Currently when claimants declare a change in status on the online report, they are advised to contact the call centre where more information will be gathered by the service representative who may then make a decision on the claim or who may refer the case on to the processing office for further action. The use of IFFS within the online reporting system will allow the claimant to provide the relevant information without human intervention and expedite the appropriate processing of the claim.

The research involved testing both the substance of the changes that are being introduced (i.e., the clarity of language and the extent to which individuals understand what they are being asked for) as well as a demonstration model of the IFFS. The use of a scenario exposed the participants to a sample of the types of questionnaires contained within IFFS.

The results are designed to contribute to enhancements or revisions being made to the line of questioning as well as the application itself to further improve the client interface prior to the pilot and national roll-out.

In broad terms, the specific objectives of the research included the following:

- Determine if clients are able to fully understand the questions (i.e., the clarity of the language), and complete the relevant questions presented to them;
- Determine if the language around the help features are appropriate and beneficial to ensure accurate information is provided, and easily identified;
- Obtain relevant feedback from participants that will assist with enhancements and modifications for subsequent phases of this service; and
- Determine reaction to the application itself.

Methodology

The research involved a total of seven focus group discussions. The focus groups were conducted the week of May 9th, 2005 in Winnipeg and Belleville and the week of May 16th, 2005 in Moncton and Montreal. The location, dates and specific composition of the focus groups are summarized in the following table.

Table 1: Focus Group Specifications

LOCATION	DATE	GROUP 1	GROUP 2	LANGUAGE
Winnipeg	May 9, 2005	EI Recipients	EI Recipients	English
Belleville	May 11, 2005	EI Recipients	EI Recipients	English
Moncton	May 16, 2005	EI Recipients		English
Montreal	May 17, 2005	EI Recipients	EI Recipients	French

With the exception of the Montreal groups, which were conducted in French, all focus groups were conducted in English. They lasted one and a half hours and were held in HRSDC facilities. Each participant was offered a \$50 honorarium. Montreal participants were offered an additional \$25 honorarium following a change in the schedule for the groups.

The focus group participants were recruited according to lists provided by HRSDC. All participants were recruited according to the following criteria:

- All were claimants in receipt of regular EI benefits and not disentitled/disqualified;
- All currently used or had used the Internet reporting service to file their bi-weekly reports; and
- Participants were not currently employed in the media, the federal government, involved in web design or work for an information technology company, a market research company or an advertising company.

To the extent possible, it was ensured that the groups included a reasonable cross section of people, based on gender, ethnicity, family composition and age. For the focus groups conducted in French, EKOS ensured that participants were comfortable participating in a focus group in French.

The purpose of these focus groups was to have participants evaluate two different approaches to the Interactive Fact Finding System (IFFS). In order to compare the two models, participants were asked to complete a scenario which asked them to answer questions relating to additional information asked for when using the Internet Reporting Services (IRS). Given that the participants were required to complete the same scenario using the two models, the order in which the models were tested was randomized across the groups.

It should be borne in mind when reading this report that these findings are drawn exclusively from qualitative research. While every effort is made to balance various demographic characteristics when recruiting participants, these groups (and therefore the findings drawn from them) may not be said to be representative of the larger population as a whole. While groups generally indicate appropriate directionality, they do not serve as a proxy for a fully representative quantitative methodology. For the reader's ease, these findings are depicted to some extent as definitive and "projectible". This is, however, true only for the universe represented by these participants.

General Findings

While the primary focus of the testing was to provide feedback on the IFFS, during the course of this testing, participants also expressed their views on the IRS itself. For the most part, feedback on the IRS was overwhelmingly positive. Participants, all of which were currently using the IRS, appreciated the convenience the online application offered. They added that, for the most part, the IRS was very easy to complete and user-friendly. If there was one resounding criticism across all groups, it was that the IRS application was difficult to locate on the Employment Insurance webpage.

With regards to the IFFS, in general terms, participants found the process of completing the questions straightforward. For the most part, participants had little trouble understanding the specific questions, entering the required information and reviewing and confirming their answers.

This ease of use was true for both approaches to the application. As such, the main finding is that both options could work well, and, within this context, other factors, such as internal considerations, will be equally important to take into account when designing the final application.

The differences between the two options were not noticeable for the majority of participants. In fact, only a handful of participants fully understood the concept of “basic” versus “additional” information without any prompting. When explained the structure of the two different approaches, participants had no clear preference. Some voiced the opinion that approach 1 was better given that all the questions concerning employment were grouped together and all the questions concerning training were grouped together. Others preferred that approach 2 dealt with all the basic questions first, then went on to ask about additional information.

Specific Feedback

While participants responded positively to both approaches, they did identify specific areas where the application could be refined to make the process of answering the questions faster and easier. The following are the main areas of user feedback:

1. As few participants comprehended that the IRS and the IFFS were separate applications, most participants saw little need for the text pages that instructed the user that they were transferring between the two. For the most part, participants essentially skipped over these pages without reading them carefully. Given that these pages simply slow down the process, without achieving their intended purpose, consideration should be given to removing them. If this is not feasible, consideration should be given to how the pages can be refined to achieve the intended purpose (Figure 1).
2. While participants did not express a consistent preference for the approach used, they did, on balance, show a preference for the “Confirmation Statement” section to come at the very end of the process. While some participants did not express concern, others saw clicking “accept” after completing only the “basic” information section akin to signing a legal document after being only allowed to read it halfway. Also, one participant in particular, while working through the second scenario page believed that she was completely finished filling out the information when she got to the Confirmation Statement (Figure 2).
3. The text should be carefully reviewed for ease of understanding and visibility. In some areas, participants often missed important information. For example, the very last message page indicated that claimants were asked to call a 1-800 number to clarify their information. Many participants read the first sentence (“This confirms that your report...”) and assumed this proved their report was complete and subsequently did not read the text about calling the 1-800 number (Figure 3).

4. When they did read the message text, many participants were disappointed to find that after completing a rather lengthy battery of questions, they still needed to call into an office. At the same time, the text is very bureaucratic and not particularly “service oriented”. It is recognized that there are numerous reasons why this statement could arise and, as such, it is difficult to have text for any of the scenarios. That being said, this message text should be revised as to clearly and specifically outline why they need to make the additional telephone call and what they will be asked.
5. During the process of completing the IFFS, some participants had questions concerning exactly how to accurately answer the questions. For example, in the training section, they were unsure if the hours spent on research or assignments should be included in the total number of hours spent on training. While the answer to this specific question appears in the Help text, few participants thought to look there. Some felt that the help button should be made slightly more prominent (Figure 4).
6. Modify answer – most participants liked the idea of being able to modify their answers, but were a little confused about whether or not they would lose the information entered so far. As well, many participants did not understand that a change may alter the path (i.e., subsequent questions based on skip logic related to a specific question). Consideration should be given to reviewing the text to clarify what can happen when this feature is used. At the same time, the “modify answer” label was confusing for some participants. In fact, some thought it meant modify the possible answers, not what they answered. “Change answers” is a possible wording alternative.
7. While the process of completing the IFFS was quite straightforward, it was quite time consuming for participants. This should be kept in mind when planning any future additions to the application.

8. Also with a mind to keeping the time necessary to fill out all the required questions to a minimum, participants noted some simple possible changes to the webpages:

First, ensuring consistency in the way that certain types of information are entered would help speed up the process of answering questions. For example, two different formats are used to capture telephone numbers (see Figure 5). This also means ensuring consistency between the IRS and the IFFS on similar types of questions.

Also, after filling in the three digits of the area code, the cursor should automatically shift to the next text-entry box.

On the Employer Information page, the number of fields for entering Employer telephone numbers could be reduced or expanded automatically to match the number of employers selected above (see Figure 6).

9. Participants noted that while they are asked to indicate the province in the addresses they give, the province does not appear in the summary information. Rather, Canada appears in the summary.
10. Some participants believed that the way in which the model showed which week an individual was filling out was not always visible enough. One suggestion was to move the marker arrow down to make it line-up with the second week marker (Figure 7).

11. While few participants struggled with the section where they must complete the dates of the training course, some participants suggested replacing the drop down menus with an actual online calendar (similar to the calendar used in the initial application process on EI Appli-web). Given the fact that few struggled with this section, it may not be necessary to do this. That said, there should be consistency within the full online process, i.e., similar approach for IRS or IFFS.
12. Some participants noted that the HRSDC banner that appears at the top of every page in the application is quite large, taking up valuable space on the screen. Some suggested that diminishing its size or removing it altogether may reduce the amount of scrolling required on each page.
13. The need for confirmation numbers was also stressed — many participants articulated a desire to receive a confirmation number for their records, similar to the confirmation numbers given following online banking transactions.

Issues with the French language application

When testing the French language versions of the application, participants expressed confusion at the following sections:

Participants were unclear as to the exact meaning of the word “disposé” the following sentence:

*« Étiez-vous prêt et **disposé** à travailler, et capable de le faire chaque jour, du lundi au vendredi, pendant chaque semaine de la période visée par cette déclaration ? »*

Some participants noted that when the following question appears, they have not yet entered the amount of money earned in their employment, making it unclear as to what are the “other” amounts.

« Avez-vous reçu ou recevrez-vous d'autres sommes d'argent que celles déjà mentionnées pour la période visée par cette déclaration ? »

A few mentioned that the fact that “à votre compte” appears twice in this sentence makes it difficult to understand.

*« Avez-vous travaillé ou touché un salaire pendant la première semaine visée par cette déclaration? Ceci inclut un travail **à votre compte** ou un travail pour lequel vous ne serez pas payé ou serez payé plus tard ou un travail **à votre compte**. »*

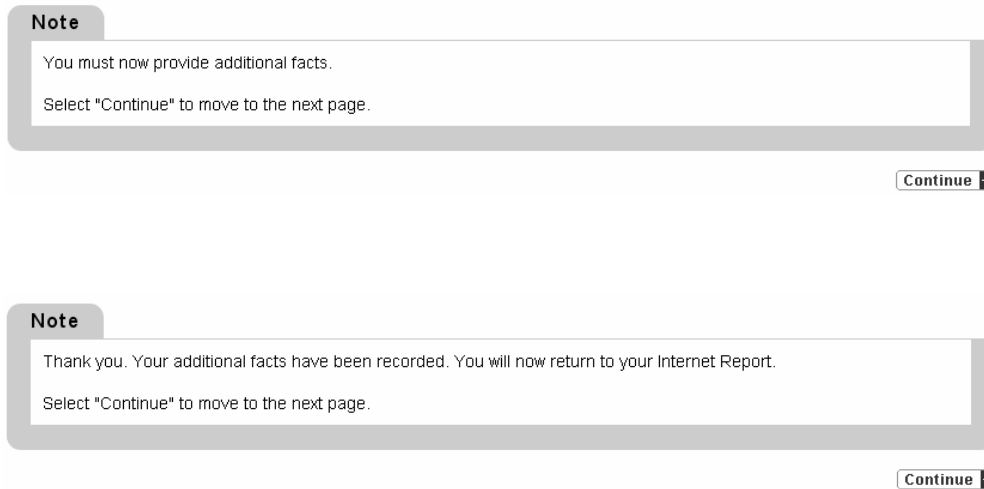
Many had difficulty discerning the correct meaning of this sentence.

« Travaillez-vous toujours, que ce soit à plein temps ou à temps partiel? »

Some Montreal participants were unfamiliar with the abbreviation “a-e” for assurance-emploi as it appears in the following sentence:

« Remplir vos déclarations d'a.-e. en direct. »

Figure 1: "Notes" pages



To claimants, the fact that they are moving between two different applications is unimportant.

While, participants did not particularly mind these pages, as they do not achieve their purpose, they could be omitted.

Figure 2: Report Summary

Report Summary

This report covers the period from April 24, 2005 to May 07, 2005.

	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
Week 1	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Week 2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The following is a summary of the questions and the answers that you provided.

Address and Direct Deposit - Summary

Questions	Answers
Have you moved, changed your mailing address or changed the banking information you provided for Direct Deposit purposes?	No

Work and Wages - Summary

Questions	Answers
Are you self-employed?	No
Did you work or receive any earnings during the period of this report? This includes work for which you will be paid later, unpaid work or self-employment.	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Did you start a full time job during the period of this report?	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Are you still working either full time or part time?	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Have you stopped working due to a shortage of work?	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Are you on-call with your employer?	No

Work and Wages for Week 1

- Did you work or receive any earnings during which you will be paid later, unpaid work or self-employment?
- How many hours did you work during the first week of this report? (do not enter part hours).
- Provide the total amount of earnings before tax for the first week of this report (do not enter cents) and do not use commas.

Work and Wages for Week 2

- Did you work or receive any earnings during which you will be paid later, unpaid work or self-employment?

Employer Information

- How many employers did you work for during this report?
- Employer 1:

Training - Summary

Questions	Answers
Did you attend school or a training course during the period of this report?	Yes
Training for Week 1	
<input type="checkbox"/> How many hours did you attend school or a training course during the first week of this report? Enter 0 hours if you did not attend school or training this week.	12
<input type="checkbox"/> Did you or will you receive a training allowance from any source for the first week of this report?	No
Training for Week 2	
<input type="checkbox"/> How many hours did you attend school or a training course during the second week of this report? Enter 0 hours if you did not attend school or training this week.	12
<input type="checkbox"/> Did you or will you receive a training allowance from any source for the second week of this report?	No

Availability - Summary

Questions	Answers
Were you ready, willing and capable of working each day, Monday through Friday during each week of this report?	Yes

Other Money - Summary

Questions	Answers
Is there any other money that you have not previously told us about, that you received or will receive for the period of this report?	No

Confirmation Statement

I declare that the answers provided to the questions on the Employment Insurance on-line report are true to the best of my knowledge.

I understand this information will be used to determine my eligibility for unemployment benefits.

I understand that the information that I have provided is subject to verification, that false statements made on the on-line report constitute fraud and that there are penalties for knowingly making false statements.

Please note that by providing and submitting your SIN and Access code, you will be deemed to have signed your on-line report.*

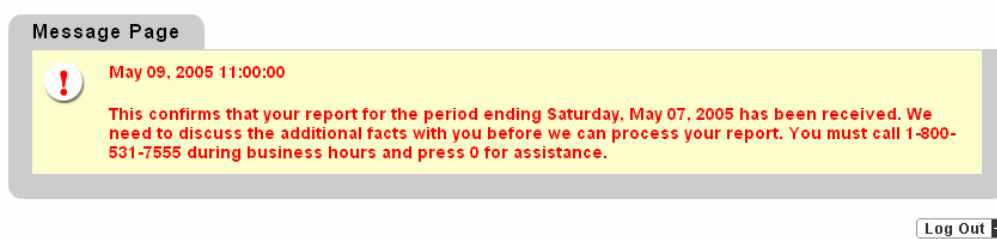
Review your answers to all the questions shown above. If the answers are correct and you agree with the Confirmation Statement choose "I Accept" to submit your on-line report. If you do not agree choose "I Refuse" and restart the report when you are ready.

Start Over Report
I Refuse
I Accept

Participants showed a preference for the "Confirmation Statement" section to come at the very end of the process, not at the mid-point as in scenario 2.

13

Figure 3: Message Page



Many participants failed to read the note advising them to call the office. They had stopped reading after the sentence confirming that their report had been received.

Among those participants that did read the entire note, some suggested that the wording could more clearly describe the reason that a phone call was necessary.

Figure 4: Training and Using the Help Feature

Training 1

Q Were you referred to this course by an authorized Government official?

A No Yes

Continue →

1) This question caused confusion for some who were unfamiliar with the meaning of an "authorized Government official".

Training

[View Previous Questions and Answers](#)

Q Please indicate the total number of hours spent per week on your studies. Include time spent in the classroom, labs, correspondence course or Internet learning.

A 2

When determining the total hours spent on your studies per week include time spent on all courses, if taking more than one. Also include time spent on study and preparation, assignments and other activities related to the course or training program.

Close x

Back ← **Continue** →

2) The total number of hours to input was unclear to some that assumed that time spent on study and preparation would not be included in the total hours.

Figure 5: Inputting contact information

Employer Information

This report covers the period from April 24, 2005 to May 07, 2005.

	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
Week 1	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Week 2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q How many employers did you work for during this period?

A

Help →

Q Provide the 10 digit phone number with area code of each employer for whom you worked during the period of this report. Include dashes and brackets, for example: 999-999-9999 or (999)999-9999.

A

Employer 1:

Employer 2:

Employer 3:

Help →

← Back Continue →

1) Two different formats for inputting telephone numbers are used in the application.

Training

[View Previous Questions and Answers](#)

Q What is the name of the institution?

A

Q Please provide the complete address of this institution, including postal code.

A

Apt./Suite:

Street Name and Number:

City:

Province/Territory:

Postal Code:

Q Please provide the telephone number of this institution, including area code.

A

Area Code and Telephone Number:

← Back Continue →

2) Many are unfamiliar with this address format that places the apartment/suite number first. Some expected to enter the street number here.

3) The cursor should automatically "tab" over to the next input box.

Figure 6: Improving functionality

Employer Information

This report covers the period from April 24, 2005 to May 07, 2005.

	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
Week 1	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Week 2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q How many employers did you work for during this period?

A 1

Help →

Q Provide the 10 digit phone number with area code of each employer for whom you worked during the period of this report. Include dashes and brackets, for example: 999-999-9999 or (999)999-9999.

A Employer 1:

Employer 2:

Employer 3:

Help →

← Back Continue →

1) If the claimant only worked for one employer during the period, only one telephone number input line should appear.

Training

[View Previous Questions and Answers](#)

Q What is the name of this class or subject?

A

Q What is the start date of this class or subject?

A Day: Month: Year:

Q What is the end date of this class or subject?

A Day: Month: Year: 2

Year
1998
1999
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006


← Back Continue →

2) The years in the "end date" section should start at the current year e.g., 2005.

Figure 7: "Week" marker

Training for Week 1

The first week of your report covers the period from April 24, 2005 to April 30, 2005.

 > Week 1	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
Week 2	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q How many hours did you attend school or a training course during the first week of this report? Enter 0 hours if you did not attend school or training this week.

A hour(s)

Help >

Q Did you or will you receive a training allowance from any source for the first week of this report?

A No Yes

Help >

Continue >

The arrow marker should line up with the week in question.

