An Introduction To Our Design Process: Trusted Testers

Placing real people at the center of research and development is a critical component to how we design our tools at Recidiviz.

Think of designing a cockpit for a new type of aircraft without having ever piloted a plane—it would be impossible to know which buttons go where, what the most important switches are, or even how much legroom to provide. Design Research is the process of systematically investigating a) the expected user of a tool and b) the problem which the tool aims to solve for them.

Launching a tool without taking the time to understand the people who'd use it would be like building a plane without talking to pilots! The design research process is key to how Recidiviz help solve problems.

How does Recidiviz do this?

Each state will have two teams of Trusted Testers: one team of practitioners and one team of people under supervision. This ensures that both the user and the people impacted by our tools can provide input into the design process. This allows us to build products that improve outcomes.

Where you fit in

Once we enter a state, we need to build out these teams of Trusted Testers, and you can help us do that. Thank you, in advance, for your help!

Selection Criteria

The #1 priority when selecting individuals to serve on these teams is ensuring that the team is a representative sample of the larger population in the state. To assemble the trusted tester teams within the supervised population, we advise selecting officer trusted testers, and requesting that each officer recommend an individual on their caseload to serve on the team. Ideally, each officer can be instructed to select an individual that has access/fluency with
For practitioners (parole & probation officers), this means a representative distribution of:

Urban vs. rural geographic spread
Sex/Gender
Age (<40, 40-60, 60+)
Experience (<2yrs, 2-10yrs, 10yrs+)
Race/Ethnicity
Specialty caseloads (drug court, mental health court, risk level etc.)

For people currently under supervision, this means a representative distribution of:

State Parole vs. Probation
Urban vs. rural geographic spread
Sex/Gender
Age (18-30, 30-60, 60+)
Experience under supervision (# of times incarcerated)
Race/Ethnicity
Specialty court

Enough technology to partake in virtual meetings, and to fill the gaps to round out the group, based on the criteria above. It is important that the officer does not make the request of the client, themselves, but that they can simply share their contact information so that Recidiviz can initiate the correspondence.

Creating a representative sample in our Trusted Tester groups is critical in order to ensure that we are speaking with a group of people that represent reality, to allow us to extrapolate our findings into the real-life use of our tools.

Expectations for Trusted Testers
Each Trusted Tester team will meet once a month for a 1hr long participatory design exercise. In between workshops, there will be occasional correspondence to answer quick questions that arise as we are building as well as the occasional survey to gather a wider array of responses to a few more simple questions. This should total a time commitment of about 3 hours per month.

When we come and visit, we will facilitate workshops with both groups and hopefully spend some quality down time with them, as well. Visits are dependent on an array of factors, and are likely to occur once or twice a year.

The Trusted Testers that we’ve worked with so far in other states have loved the experience. From getting early access to our products, to having the opportunity to share opinions that will shape what we launch statewide, it is usually quite an enlightening experience for all parties involved. We hope the individuals feel the same way. Thank you for being our partner in this process!

Respectfully,
The Recidiviz Design Team