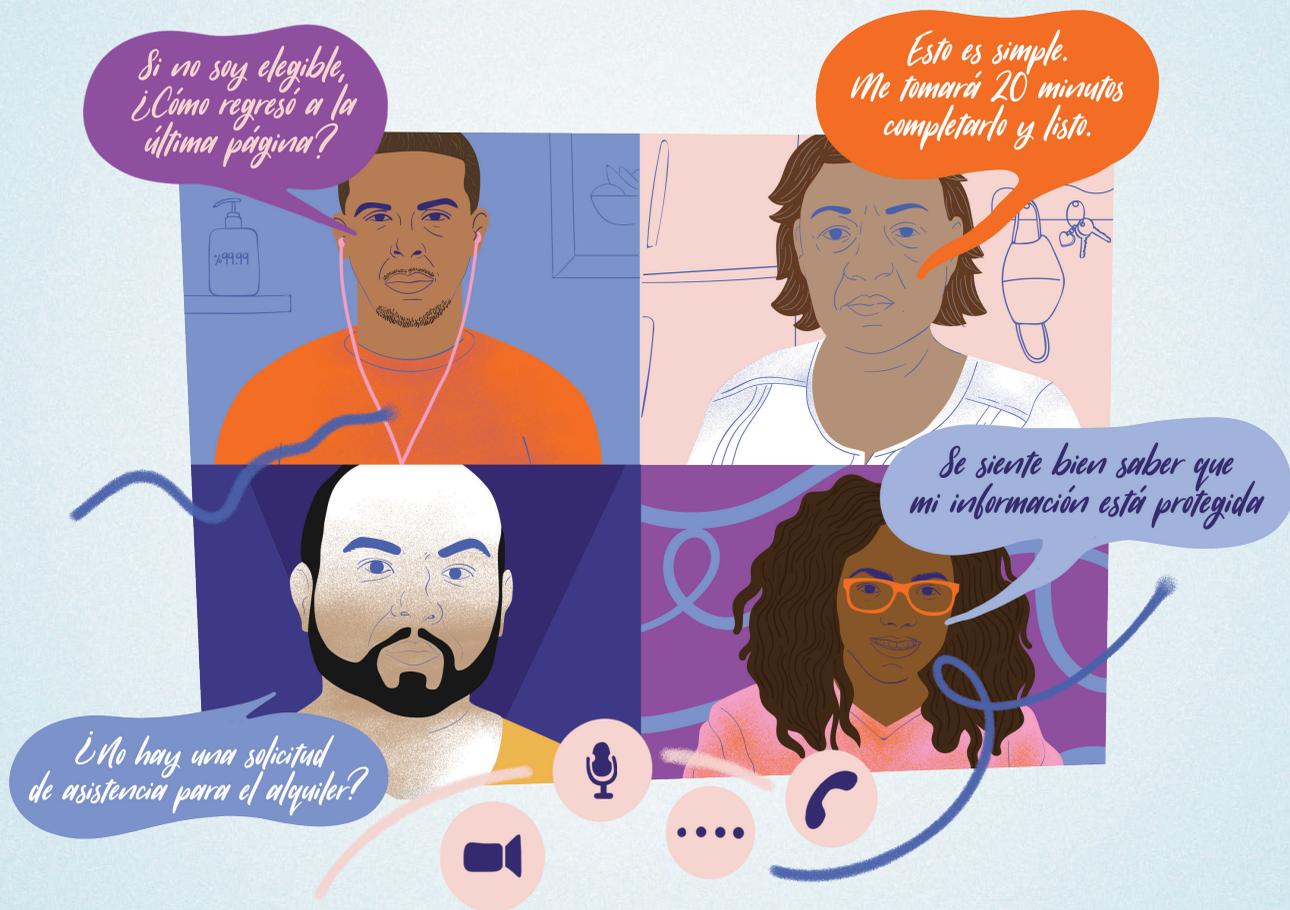


5

Designing Technology for Non-English Speakers

How might we design digital tools for Spanish speakers that address their specific needs?



Context

When we interviewed tenants for our previous design sprints, we saw that the Spanish-speaking tenants had a particularly unique experience — they were more likely to share mistreatment by their landlords. They were thus more likely to need help with measures such as preventing evictions. In light of the CDC eviction moratorium, we wondered how to design a simple tool to allow monolingual Spanish-speaking tenants to learn more about and take advantage of the moratorium. While we didn't set out to launch a tool, we developed a prototype and tested it out with multiple Spanish-speaking tenants.

Method

What Their Actions Say About Us: Prototyping and User Testing to Further Understand Human Behavior

We developed a prototype of a tool allowing users to learn more about the CDC moratorium, check eligibility, and, if eligible, sign and submit the relevant declaration form. Our goal was not to build a deployable product but to use the prototype to conduct user testing, which is another way to learn about human behavior.

We conducted **eight one-on-one, one-hour user testing interviews** over Zoom with Spanish speakers from all over the Greater Houston Area who were all current renters.

Our interviews were a mix of open-ended and specific questions. First, we got to know the participants; then, we asked them to use our tool. Through Zoom's screen share feature, we could observe participant behavior. And we asked them questions such as, "Why did you decide to click this link first?" or "What information were you looking for when you scrolled down?" We ended the interviews with open-ended feedback from the participants.

INSIGHT 16

Work closely with the community you're designing for and other people who serve that community. This will allow you to design features that you wouldn't otherwise have thought of. Our extended team included Spanish speakers. We solicited feedback from relevant service providers and interviewed several Spanish-speaking people on their experience using our tool. Even during COVID, we were able to schedule Zoom calls with seekers and have them talk us through their experience using the tool.



1

Reduce clicks!

Our tool's purpose was to help people see if they were eligible for protections under a certain law. Thus, the “check if you are eligible” button was placed front and center on the landing page.

Wherever possible, reduce the number of clicks required to achieve an objective. This means providing quick access to the tool on the first page with a prominent button and including supporting information in the main menu.

2

Prioritize information on privacy and immigration status.

On our landing page, we clearly stated that seekers were eligible regardless of their immigration status.

State what information would be and wouldn't be shared with the government. State if disclosure of immigration status would be required and if it could disqualify them or not. In our tool, we stated on our homepage that tenants are eligible regardless of their immigration status, and that the government won't have access to their information unless they are contesting an eviction in court.

3

Make your tool Houston-first.

For our tool, we included Texas-specific rules on the homepage, local court rules in the FAQ, and local organizations in the resources page.

Many existing tools, which are national, are of limited utility to this audience because of their lack of local-specificity. Ask: How can you add more local context to your tool? Is there a local law or a local service that people should know about?



INSIGHT 17

Technology tools built for non-English speakers will always have two audiences: the seeker and those who may be helping them access the tool. Because of distrust and lack of tech savviness, a large portion of this community won't access your tool without support. Build for BOTH seekers AND service providers, family members, and community navigators who help seekers fill out the application form.

4

Be intentional with your visual design.

We used purple and yellow colors along with illustrations of Latinx people filling out the form.

Use bright colors and visuals of Latinx culture to indicate that you are indeed a tool for the Spanish speaking community. Initially, the website for our tool used gray, black and white colors. We received feedback that this gave the impression that this was another institutional page. It wasn't inviting. So we reworked the colors to make it community-focused.

5

Define your specific audience.

For our tool, our audience was: "the non-English speaking, Spanish-speaking community in Greater Houston Area who may not have access to and experience with technology like smartphones, laptops, and printers."

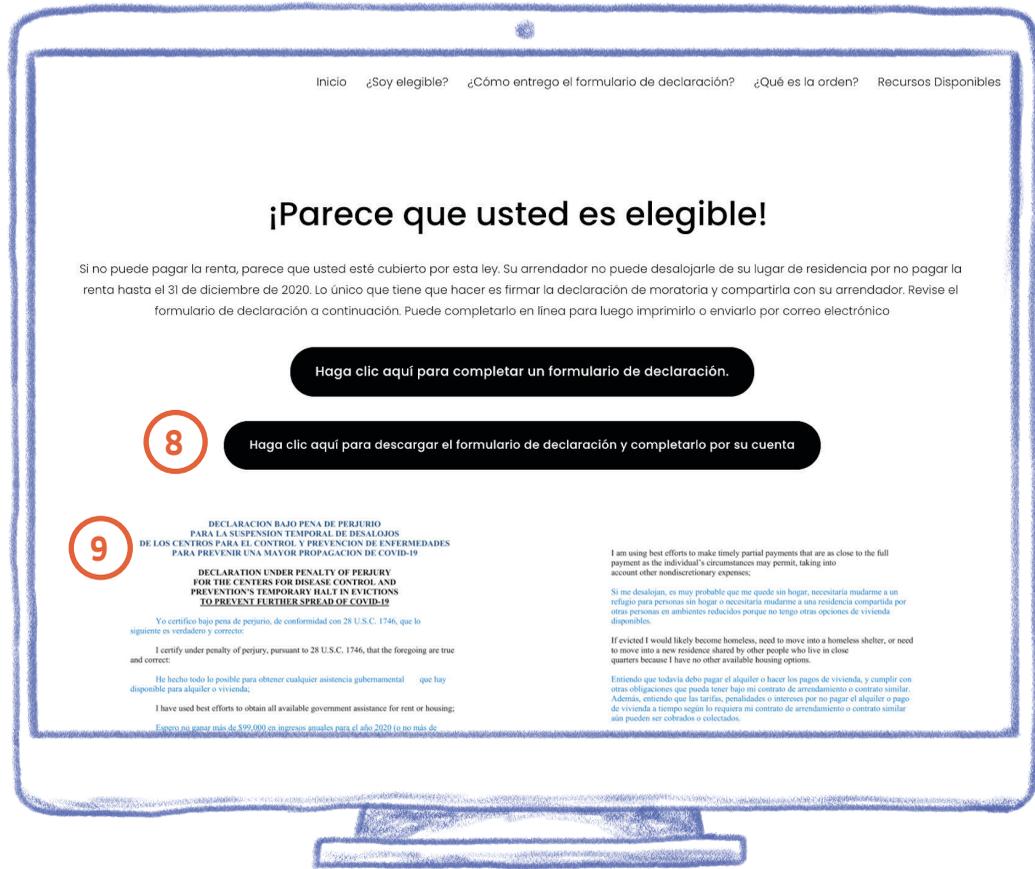
Within the target community (in this case, Spanish speakers), clearly identify and describe the audience you are designing for. Be specific. Doing so will help you make several design decisions.

6

Overcommunicate about how the tool works.

We communicated the goals and process of our tool upfront, as well as right before the user was using the tool.

Users may believe they are completing an application even if you have built an eligibility screening tool. When we first created our self-service eligibility tool, we called it a "tool." Many people we interviewed were confused. They were used to filling out applications for social services. They were expecting our tool to also be an application for assistance, likely financial assistance. We had to clarify our language at multiple points on our website, explicitly calling it a "eligibility screening tool" and qualifying it with "this is not an application."



7

Consider video!

Consider a quick 1–3 minute “how to use this site” video to explain how to navigate the site and privacy terms to help promote better understanding and trust.

9

Be mindful of other stakeholders and relationships.

In our tool, we purposefully added a cover letter for the eviction declaration form from the tenant to the landlord with cordial language to help tenants build trust with their landlords.

8

Give people options to view their information before they submit.

We received feedback that people wanted to have the option to download the declaration form on their own or use our tool, and that they wanted to view the electronically signed form before they emailed it to their landlord or printed it. Providing such options boosts their trust in the technology.

INSIGHT 18

Some populations may have less social capital in our community, such as newcomers. Use your tool to help them build relationships and network. Identify other parties indirectly involved in or impacted by your tool. Ask: Who does the seeker need to interact with to access your service? Who else is directly involved? How can you build trust between the seeker and that party?