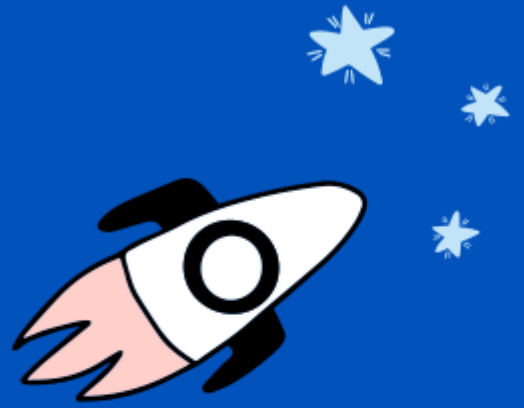




Text only version

MAP DIFFERENT CANVAS

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Guided prompts to help you plan a visual that engages your stakeholders and adapts as your work changes.

Section 1: Scenario

What is your project about?

What is the purpose of creating a visual for your project?

- Purpose
- What problem could it solve?
- How could it be used? For example, in workshops, printed for a wall, slide decks.

Your audience

- Who is your audience?
- What level of detail does your audience need? For example, are they interested in the big picture or the detail of a specific area?
- What political sensitivities do you need to consider? For example, dynamics, attitudes or cultural values.
- What types of visuals have they previously engaged well with? (optional)

Building blocks

- What do you want to show? For example, services, organisations, systems, people or places.
- What is the one thing you want viewers to take away?
- What are you deliberately leaving out?

Section 2: Low-fidelity sketching

What are the core components that must be visualised? Consider what building blocks can be used to convey the information about your project. For example, shapes, lines, textures or Venn diagrams.

Section 3: Optional extras

Additional considerations that may help you develop your visual.

Metaphors

Can your idea be represented by a metaphor? This helps turn difficult, abstract concepts into pictures people are familiar with.

Modularity

- Does your visual need to meet the needs of different audiences? Consider how you can build in flexibility. For example, do some audiences need more detail, while others need less? Which parts of the visual can be separated?
- How can layers be structured for different levels of detail / different stakeholders?
- How can layers / different aspects of the visual be used to tell a story about the work?

Testing plan

- How are you going to test your illustration?
- Which users could you conduct research with?
- How will you collect feedback?
- What does good look like / How will you know it works?

Section 4: Design principles

What are design principles?

Design principles are foundational guidelines that help shape and inform design decisions, ensuring consistency, usability, and alignment with user needs.

What design principles aren't

Design principles aren't rigid rules or step-by-step instructions. They are flexible guidelines that inform decision making rather than dictate exact solutions. Not all of these design principles might be applicable all of the time.

How we created our design principles

Our design principles have been shaped by research into what works best when presenting information to senior leaders within Defra, ensuring these principles are grounded in real user needs.

How we used these principles

We have used these design principles as a guiding framework to shape how we tell the story of Defra's whole service landscape.

Content

- **Ensure clarity at a glance:** Design visuals that convey the core message quickly and intuitively. Use clear labels and structured layouts to aid comprehension.
- **Support visuals with a simple narrative:** Provide a clear, concise explanation alongside visuals. Ensure the narrative enhances, rather than duplicates, the **data**.
- **Balance high-level insights with detailed information:** Provide an overarching message while allowing deeper exploration when necessary. Use expandable sections or layers to reduce cognitive load by gradually revealing more complex information
- **Make your visual accessible:** Consider areas like colour contrast, cognitive load and readability. Think about how people who are blind, visually impaired, or struggle to take in complex visual information will interact with your visual.

Data

- **Use personas to bring data to life:** Incorporate real-world user experiences to contextualise complex services and data. Ensure personas reflect different audience perspectives, making the information relatable.
- **Consider how data could be more interactive:** Allow users to explore different levels of detail based on their needs. Use interactive elements to enable easy navigation across service areas.
- **Maintain consistency in data presentation:** Standardise design elements such as colors, fonts, and layout structure. Ensure consistency across different data points to improve readability.
- **Tell a story with data:** Use a structured flow to guide the audience from context to conclusion. Apply storytelling techniques to make the data engaging and memorable.

Supporting decision-making

- **Emphasise the cost implications if applicable:** Clearly outline financial considerations, including potential savings and risks. Use charts, comparisons, or callouts to highlight key cost factors.
- **Identify risks and implications:** Call attention to potential risks and their impact. Use visuals such as warning icons, risk levels, or scenario comparisons.
- **Highlight areas of responsibility:** Clearly define ownership and accountability within processes or services. Differentiate responsibilities using distinct sections, or markers.
- **Show reasoning behind conclusions:** Clearly illustrate how findings or recommendations were reached. Use step-by-step breakdowns, visual workflows, or data trails where needed.

What doesn't work

- **Including too much detail** – Overloading with excessive information makes it harder to understand. Keep it focused and digestible.
- **Creating documents that can't stand alone** – Ensure visuals are clear and meaningful without requiring additional explanation.
- **Only engaging with people who are already invested** – Design for a broader audience, not just those familiar with the topic.
- **Assuming people know what you're talking about** – Avoid jargon and provide context to ensure accessibility.
- **Relying solely on Mural or complex formats** – Not everyone is comfortable navigating certain platforms. Ensure accessibility across different formats.

- **Failing to provide opportunities to explore further detail** – People should be able to dive deeper into relevant areas without confusion.
- **Assuming people automatically care** – Make the content relevant by showing real-world impact and benefits.

Section 5: Mood board

Examples of work

- [Public policy design gov.uk blog](#)
- [Bi-Borough Place-Based Collaboration: Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster](#)
- [Centre for Care](#)
- [DWP 2020 vision](#)
- [Creative Industries Access to Finance Support, TPXimpact](#)
- [DCMS Town of Culture discovery](#)

Metaphor

Hidden depth. The visible part isn't the whole story

- **Iceberg** – behaviours on the surface, causes beneath
- **Roots and tree** – outcomes above, enablers below
- **Strata** – layers laid down over time, still shaping today
- **Stage and backstage** – what users see vs the work behind it

Connection and flows

The relationships matter more than the parts

- **Transit map** – messy reality made legible; interchanges are handovers
- **River and tributaries** – separate streams joining, and where they silt up
- **Circulation** – something essential moving through; blockages hurt elsewhere
- **Power grid** – shared infrastructure nobody notices until it fails

Structure and modularity

Parts that can be rearranged

- **Building blocks** – standard interfaces, many configurations
- **Board game** – pieces, rules and players; made to be used, not admired
- **Scaffolding** – temporary support for something permanent
- **Nesting dolls** – same shape at every zoom level
- **Honeycomb** – repeating units, self-contained but part of a whole

Change over time

Movement, not a snapshot

- Journey with terrain – obstacles, forks, milestones
- Growth cycle – some seasons look unproductive but aren't
- Tide – cyclical pressure, reveals and covers
- Weather system – interconnected forces, no single controller
- Solar system – Using gravity to visualise user push and pull factors

Gaps and overlap

The problem is what's missing or repeated

- Venn – the overlap is the story
- Jigsaw – shows fit and absence together
- Patchwork quilt – variation without calling it failure
- Archipelago – silos, without the blame

Choice and trade-off

Supporting a decision

- **Dials and levers** – turn up or down, not on or off
- **Portfolio** – a mix of safe and speculative bets
- **Traffic system** – flow, bottlenecks, priority, congestion
- **Menu of routes** – different paths, different costs

Choosing your metaphor

- **Test it before you commit.** Discuss the metaphor with someone in the organisation. If they immediately extend it themselves ("so the platform team would be the interchange, then?") it is working. If you have to explain it, it is not.
- **Check where it breaks.** Every metaphor fails at some point. Know where yours does, so you are not caught out in the room. An iceberg has no people in it. A journey has one destination. A machine has no politics.
- **Watch the connotation.** Some metaphors carry judgement you did not intend. "Silo" blames. "Archipelago" describes. "Machine" implies people are parts. "Ecosystem" implies nobody is accountable. In government contexts this matters more than usual.
- **Avoid the ones that have been drained.** Journey, ecosystem, iceberg and jigsaw are heavily used in public sector work. They still function, but they no longer surprise anyone. If you use one, commit to it properly rather than gesturing at it.
- **One metaphor, held consistently.** Mixing them is the fastest way to lose people. If you start with a transit map, do not add weather.
- **Consider whether you need one at all.** Some information is clearer shown plainly. A metaphor that is doing no work is decoration.

About TPXimpact Ltd

TPXimpact is a digital transformation company supporting organisations to build a better future for people, places and the planet.

We help the public, private and third sectors with their digital transformation journey, delivering high quality solutions that improve services, experiences and outcomes.

Certified B Corporation™

We're proud to be a Certified B Corporation™, with every step we take measured against the highest standards of social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability.

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