

Education & Skills Funding Agency

Calculate Funding Service

Challenge

Methods was asked to undertake a Discovery to:



Understand:

- The necessary activities to allocate funding
- The needs of users and how they interact with the service
- How the capabilities are currently delivered by the Agency, by who, and using what technology



Identify common capabilities required to deliver an allocation service



Make recommendations on how the capabilities could be delivered in the future, with a focus on technology

Background

In April 2017, ESFA identified several areas of duplication, including Allocations - a yearly process where funding is allocated to education providers.

Allocations was managed by three teams, each doing it their own way.

Our approach

We set up a multi-disciplinary, blended agile team to gather insights from sources such as existing users and documentation.

We found each team had developed their own approach. This was often to reassure themselves that they were delivering accurate and timely allocations, because they had low levels of trust in the data, tools and systems. This was often exacerbated by no clear definition of 'good' or quality assurance processes. However, when viewed holistically, there were similarities and repetition.

Our recommendations were to:

- Implement standard procedures and digital tools that provide a common basis to the design, build and test of allocation calculations
- Build automated allocations testing capability that delivers the same level of assurance, but more efficiently

The business benefits of these included:

- Quicker calculations
- Future-proofing
- Increased traceability

Results

The recommendations were accepted and the Calculate Funding Service Alpha began. Since then, we've successfully taken the service through each successive assessment from Alpha through to Public Beta. To date, the service has been responsible for:

£350m

of payments to more than 17,000 schools.

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