

Guiding Actions for Meaningful Change

Redesigning the Espoo Employment Services Guidebook for Immigrant Job-seekers

Team 5

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	04
1. Research	05
1.1 Interviews	
1.2 Observation	
1.3 Cultural Immersion	
1.4 Benchmarking	
1.5 Workshops	
2. Research Analysis	09
2.1 Insights	
2.2 Co-creation workshop	
2.3 Synthesis from the co-creation workshop	
3. Proposal	17
3.1 Guiding Principles	
3.2 Tangible Example of the Pro-	
4. Future Opportunities	26
5. References	27
Appendix	28

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Executive Summary

Guiding Actions for Meaningful Change is a collaborative project between Espoo Employment Services and students from the Designing for Services master's course at Aalto University. The project began with a practical brief: to redesign Espoo's existing guidebook for international newcomers using service design methods to make it more customer-centric. The need for this project arose from significant changes in the Finnish employment and integration landscape, including the TE25 reform, which transferred employment services to municipal responsibility, and the reform of the Integration Act, effective from January 2025. The existing 2024 guidebook had become outdated and no longer aligned with Espoo's leadership vision or current legislation.

The guidebook was intended to communicate clients' rights and responsibilities more clearly and support service providers in client interactions. However, through our research and critical inquiry, it became evident that the challenge extended far beyond the guidebook itself. This realisation prompted a reframing of the brief: rather than treating the guidebook as an isolated communication tool, the project team approached it as an entry point to rethink how Espoo Employment Services could create more coherent, accessible, and empowering client experiences.

Through qualitative research methods like interviews with immigrant clients and service actors, field observations, and document analysis, the team identified that challenges extended beyond the guidebook. The issues reflected deeper systemic gaps in communication, shared understanding, and role clarity within the service. To explore these further, a co-creation workshop with service actors was organised to translate research insights into actionable directions collaboratively.

The synthesis of research and workshop outcomes led to six guiding principles that form the core project deliverable. These principles extend beyond improving the guidebook itself; they serve as a holistic framework to enhance clarity, inclusivity, and coherence across the service.

1. Research

1. Research

The research was conducted during the first six weeks of the seven week project and the last two weeks focused on drafting the proposal. A Preliminary Research Plan was made to focus the scope of fieldwork to achieve project goals. The project team conducted desktop research, interviews, observations, cultural immersion, benchmarking and workshops. The project team convened with partners once a week to review project progress. This section reviews the conducted research.

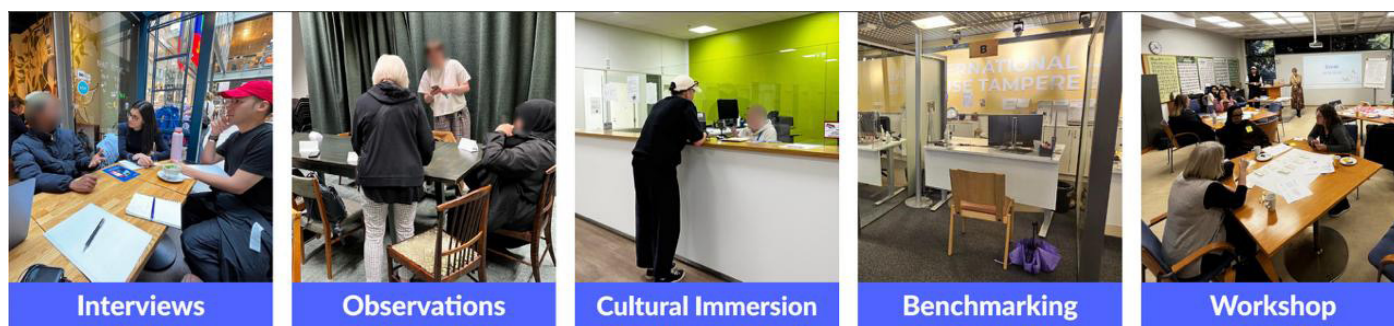


Figure 1.1 Research overview

1.1 Interviews

The project team conducted interviews with 15 people over 10 interviews. Interviews were mainly conducted in English and were either done face to face or over Teams.

Contextual interview at the service centre

The project team conducted the two contextual group interviews with Espoo Employment Service lobby employees at Matinkylä and Sello service points. The lobby personnel were chosen based on availability on the date of the service point visit. The goal of these interviews was to understand what registering in the service requires and how the lobby personnel interact with immigrant job-seekers.



Figure 1.2 Interview at the service centre

In-depth interviews with immigrants - service alumni

The project team interviewed three immigrants who were service alumni. Two of them were interviewed in-person and one online. The service alumni were found through interactions at an Indian grocery store and the other two through contacts of a team member. These interviews were done to gain deeper understanding into the immigrant job-seeker point of view, to understand the customer journey and gain valuable insights.



Figure 1.3 Interview with service alumni

1. Research

1.1 Interviews

Guerilla interviews with immigrants

The interviewees for guerilla interviews were found through a team member's interaction with Thai restaurant staff. This gave the team insights into what perceptions they had of the employment service.



Figure 1.4 Zaap, Thai Restaurant in Helsinki

In-depth interviews with adjacent service providers

The project team conducted online interviews with representatives from an NGO, a Development Manager at the Immigration Services, and a former Community Coordinator from Hello Espoo. These participants were selected to provide a broader perspective on how adjacent services influence the experiences of immigrant job-seekers. During the interviews, they were asked to describe the role of their respective organizations and how their services contribute to or intersect with an immigrant's employment journey.



Figure 1.5 Interview with non-profit organisation actor

1.2 Observations

The project team conducted interviews with 15 people over 10 interviews. Interviews were mainly conducted in English and were either done face to face or over Teams.

Employment Service Centers

The project team visited the Espoo employment service offices in Sello and Piispanportti to observe how immigrant clients and staff work together.

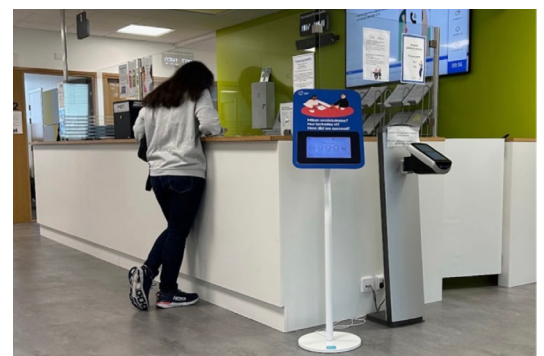


Figure 1.6 Espoo employment Center Matinkyla

1. Research

1.2 Observations

Finnish Language Café

In Espoo, five public libraries run a free Finnish Language Café where people can practice speaking Finnish. One team member joined a session, expecting participants from our target group. There were about ten people, but except for one, all were from European countries.



Figure 1.7 At the Finnish Language Café.

1.3 Cultural Immersion

Cultural immersion

The project team conducted a simulation using the “Cultural Immersion” method (Vink & Koskela-Huotari, 2022) to gain insight into the experiences of job-seeking immigrants when visiting the Espoo employment service lobby in Sello.



Figure 1.8 Conducting Cultural Immersion.

1.4 Benchmarking

Benchmarking

One project team member visited the employment office service point at Tampere. Tampere has organised their immigrant services in the International House model which has been successful in Copenhagen and Helsinki to name a few. The model aims to provide immigrants with all public services offered to them during their integration and job-seeking process under one roof. The aim of the benchmarking trip was to contrast the inclusive service model offered by Espoo Employment Service with an exclusive one such as the International House model.

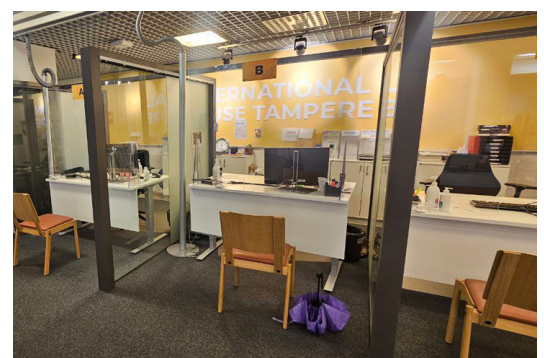


Figure 1.9 Tampere Employment Center.

1. Research

1.5 Workshops

The project team conducted interviews with 15 people over 10 interviews. Interviews were mainly conducted in English and were either done face to face or over Teams.

Co-creation workshop with personal advisors

The project team conducted a co-creation workshop with two personal advisors by filling out a customer journey map (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The aim of the co-creation workshop was to gain deeper insight into which stakeholder groups are involved and at which stages on the customer journey. The Miro board link can be found in the Define Roles Within The Ecosystem section 3.1.5.

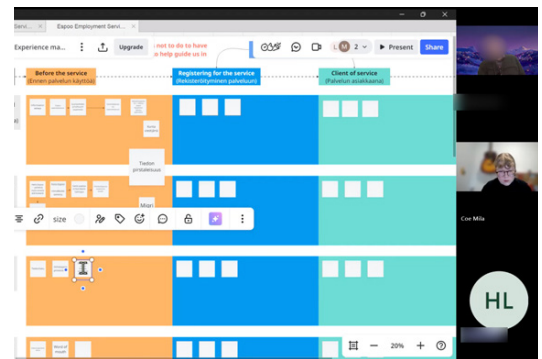


Figure 1.10 Co-creation workshop with personal advisors.

Guerilla workshop at OSKE

At Language Training Center OSKE, a guerrilla workshop was conducted for immigrant students. They were attending a caregiving course to become childcare workers. The workshop was conducted in agreement with the teacher present and was made up of giving each student one green Post-It for their positive experiences and a red Post-It for their negative experiences with the Espoo Employment Service. The students wrote their experiences, the Post-It's were gathered and placed on a wall and the results were reviewed with the group to generate conversation.

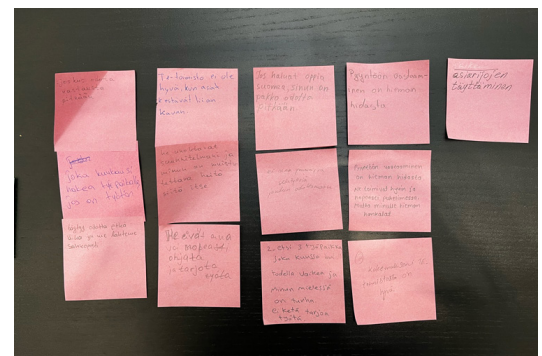


Figure 1.11 Guerrilla Workshop at OSKE.

Co-creation workshop with Service Actors

As part of the project scope a co-creation workshop had been organised by the Espoo Employment Service. The co-creation workshop was held at Valtuustotalo in city council building for 9 participants. These participants ranged from employees and specialists in individual customer services from Espoo Employment Services, KotoEspoo and Hello Espoo.



Figure 1.12 Co-creation workshop with Service Actors.

2. Research Analysis

1.5 Workshops

Guerilla workshop at Hello Espoo Event

To validate whether the guiding principles developed through workshops and field research were moving in the right direction, the project team participated in the Hello Espoo event on October 9, which was aimed at immigrants living in the city. While direct validation of the principles was not achieved during the event, engaging with service alumni provided valuable insights into their experiences and expectations, further enriching our understanding of the service journey from a client perspective.



Figure 1.13 Testing the Prototype and Guiding Principles at the Hello Espoo event.

2. Research Analysis

This section presents the emerging themes and insights derived from the research process. Through qualitative analysis of interviews, observations, and collaborative discussions, the project team identified recurring patterns that revealed underlying needs, challenges, and opportunities within the service. It also presents the co-creation workshop and synthesis.

2.1 Insights

The project teams research and encounters with different service actors led us to identify six emerging themes - long process as a client of the service, language barriers, cultural misalignments, information overload, perception of the system as distant, community influence.

These themes were further concretised into insights. Insights go beyond surface-level observations to reveal underlying motivations, emotions, and values.



Figure 2.1 Emerging Themes from Research.

2. Research Analysis

Insight 01 - Passively waiting to “Finnish”

‘Finnish’: a double wait - learning the language while waiting to finish the integration journey.

“Time for immigrants is very essential.”

- Iranian Woman, service alumni

During the two-year integration period, immigrants in Finland must demonstrate active participation by registering with multiple authorities, learning the language, following the integration plan, seeking work or education, and maintaining their residence status. The employment service process in itself involves idle moments. Availability for training, classes, and workshops are insufficient for all those who want them, at times causing further wait times.

“I registered for the service in September 2024. I got a call from my personal coach by the end of the month. I was assigned a language training class in March 2025.”

- Indian woman, service alumni

This creates a paradox: while the system demands active integration, immigrants often end up passively waiting.

Due to the length and complexity of the integration period, immigrants are left feeling lost between steps in the process. Language barriers with the services distance the immigrants further, leading to a disconnect.

“Gap during the winter period made me lose interest”

- Indian man, service alumni



Figure 2.2 Espoo Employment Services, Leppävaara

2. Research Analysis

Insight 02 - Different Cultural Expectations Create Hidden Barriers

Cultural misalignments exist between Finnish employment services and international newcomers because many newcomers are unfamiliar with Finland's culture of self-responsibility and independence.

“East asians and Indians usually don't ask questions because they think they are coming off as dumb, but in Finland, it is assumed that if you aren't asking questions, you know everything.”

- Development Manager for Immigration

In Finland, individuals are expected to advocate for themselves, but people from more interdependent cultures often rely on family or close social circles for tasks like paperwork and job searching.

“They don't take the first step, and we cannot understand what they really need..”

- Service Staff

Examples of such service interactions -

a. Form-filling can be intimidating:

In many other countries, especially for older adults, women who haven't worked formally, or less-educated individuals, it's normal for someone trusted to fill forms on their behalf. But in Finland, no one can fill a form on your behalf. This creates confusion and worry for the immigrant.

b. Silence can mean two different things:

What a Finnish advisor reads as “all clear” might actually mean “I don't know how to proceed.” Immigrants expect the service provider to be more proactive, but in Finland, service providers expect people to take the initiative and speak up.

c. Society is Built on Trust:

This was highlighted by Finnish hiring practices, which rely heavily on trust and personal recommendations, making networking events essential. Many immigrants underestimate the value of such informal connections, missing key opportunities.

From the project teams' interview with an educated individual who has used the service for a year, she stated that she found out about Career Club and KOSKE from her friends and not from the service. At the Career Club (which she said is the most beneficial of all), they had a workshop where they were taught about the cultural differences and how to integrate into Finnish society. She found that very helpful.

2. Research Analysis

Insight 03 - Information Overload, No Clear Path

“Immigrants only read half of the information provided to them”

- Service Actor at Espoo Employment Services

At the centre, they encounter text-heavy printouts and an overload of information, both difficult to navigate and often inaccessible.

Although materials exist, many stop using the guides offered after the first meeting because they cannot tell what is essential or when to use it.

The project team interviewed an Iranian woman who was called to translate the current guide to Farsi, and these were her thoughts: The information given is a lot in large paragraphs in this guidebook, which can be a very overwhelming process. There is no prioritisation, no step-by-step guidance for an international newcomer.

There are more than 300 services offered which not only the immigrants but also the service actors aren't well aware of.

“It feels like a maze to navigate.”

- Irani woman, service alumni

The employment services work with different entities; the roles of each community are not clearly defined. For example, the perception is that Espoo Employment services offer the Unemployment Benefit, but it is actually offered by Kela. People keep visiting the service asking for the benefit.

“I was working as a freelancer during my studies in Finland. So when I went to register in the employment services, there was a lot of confusion on what was eligible and what was not. People at the service do not know of the practicalities so it really delays the process.”

- Indian woman, service alumni

The guidebook uses the term expert, but in reality, they use different terms like personal coach. This, too, can be very confusing. Using the same terms in text and during the service journey would ensure consistency and reliability.

During the cultural immersion at the Employment Service Office in Sello, one team member observed a lack of clear information regarding the service process. Upon arrival, the staff requested an ID card to verify the right to work in Finland and visa status, after which a form was provided for completion. From the project teams perspective, the form contained numerous questions, and additional certificates were requested without prior clarification. These observations suggest that immigrant clients would significantly benefit from having access to clear and structured information about the process prior to their visit.

2. Research Analysis



Figure 2.3 Printable Materials at the Service Office.

Insight 04 - Why Many Don't Follow Through

Personal advisors at the employment services described unemployment as a state of crisis, where staying motivated becomes essential to moving forward. Yet, the reality is more complex.

They may lose interest, drop out, fail to understand the system, or find alternative work through community connections, such as delivery jobs. For some, fear of authority itself becomes a barrier.

"Fear of the authorities is a big explanatory factor, which is strongly related to this, that yes, when the country of origin may be there, as you asked the authority, that might be your last question."

- Employment Service Advisor

This shows that integration is not only about finding jobs but also about sustaining motivation and navigating daily life.

"Even if they don't find a job, making connections keeps them motivated."

- Non-Profit Organisation Actor

Social connections and support networks play a critical role in reducing stress, loneliness, and depression.

"One of the most common questions asked is will I get my €9/day allowance."

- Training staff at Omnia

Incentives like the travel allowance, encourages people to follow the track provided by the advisors and stay motivated.

2. Research Analysis

Insight 05 - Gap between Service Logic and Social Logic

Based on the research, the project team found that personal advisors at the service want immigrant clients to use the service more independently, without relying too heavily on outside opinions or past experiences.

From their perspective, direct use of the service builds confidence and reduces dependency.

Since the service has no control over integration or training opportunities beyond its partner network, advisors are often frustrated when immigrants make decisions based on community advice instead of professional guidance.

“My friend told me about KOSKE, not my personal coach at the TE office.”

- Iranian woman, service alumni

This creates a clear gap: while service advisors emphasize independence and direct engagement, immigrants often rely on collective experiences and social trust.

For many immigrants, however, networking and personal connections feel more tangible and trustworthy.

Word of mouth spreads quickly within their communities and strongly shapes perceptions of the service.

“If someone says the employment service takes too long, we believe it.”

- Thai restaurant server and bartender who did not sign up for the employment services and got jobs from another website recommended by their community.

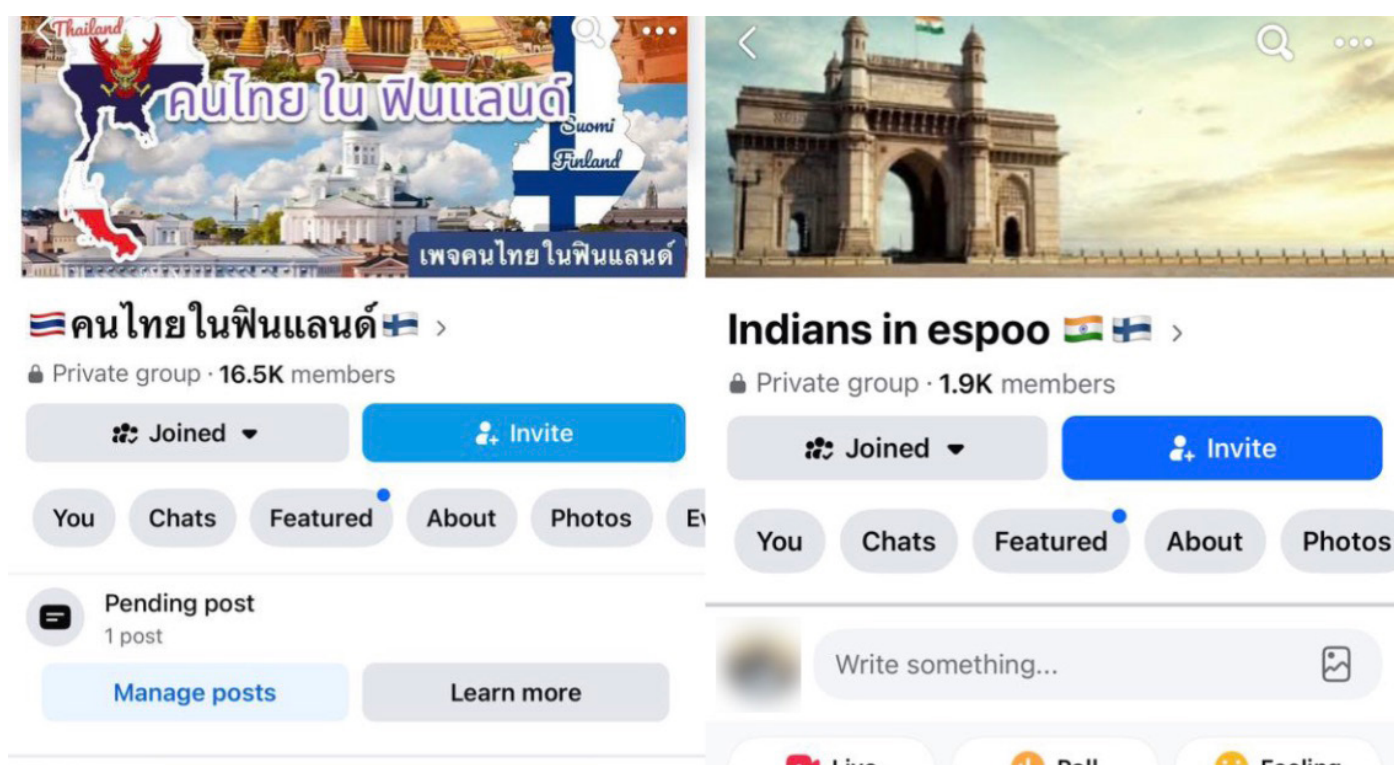


Figure 2.4 Local Immigrant Social Media Groups.

2. Research Analysis

2.2 Co-Creation Workshop Planning

The project team organized a seminar at the City Council building on Espookatu 5 in collaboration with service providers from Espoo Employment Services, Oske, and KOTO Espoo to co-create ideas for improving the employment service guidebook. The workshop was structured into three phases.

The project team began with a warm-up round, where each participant briefly introduced themselves. Seating was intentionally arranged according to existing collaboration patterns, allowing us to observe how participants naturally interact within their professional networks. The project team color-coded the sticky notes according to each table for clearer analysis afterward.

Workshop Phase 1:

Phase 1 - Participants were asked to write 4–5 sticky notes responding to the prompt: “What questions do you hear most often from immigrant clients?” Once the questions were placed as sticky-notes, they were then invited to collaboratively group these questions into thematic categories such as job search, education, family matters, language training, entrepreneurship, and financial issues.



Figure 2.5 Warm-up Questions Laid out at the Workshop.

Workshop Phase 2:

Phase 2 - The participants were divided into groups. Each group was given an insight to discuss and reflect on for a co-creation session. There were guiding questions prepared to start discussions :

What constraints limit the use of the guidebook? (e.g., language barriers, limited digital literacy, etc.)

What solutions could address these challenges?

What concrete changes could make the process more accessible for newcomers?

What complementary formats or tools could improve understanding? (e.g., podcasts, YouTube videos, etc.)

At what point in the client journey would the guidebook be most useful?

How and when should these questions be addressed to prevent frustration and misunderstanding?



Figure 2.6 Group Work at the Workshop.

2. Research Analysis

2.2 Co-Creation Workshop Planning

Workshop Phase 3:

Phase 3 - focused on harvesting key insights, forming guiding principles, and reflecting on the outcomes. Participants from each group were asked to suggest actionable ideas they believed would have the greatest impact on improving the guidebook. They presented these ideas to the other groups and explained their relevance and potential for implementation.



Figure 2.7 Presenting the Groups Work for Discussion.

2.3 Synthesis from the Co-creation Workshop

After co-creation workshop

After the workshop, the project team conducted an internal synthesis session. The project team reorganized and grouped both the participants' actionable ideas and the commonly asked questions into thematic clusters. The project team then named these categories.

These categories became guiding principles, each supported by sub-actionable suggestions derived from the contributions of the workshop participants



Figure 2.8 Synthesising after the Workshop

3. Proposal

3. Proposal

This section presents the proposals for the project. The project goals aimed at a very defined proposal regarding the guidebook, but as service design for public services does the project ended up proposing more than mere actionables for one touchpoint (Solsona Caba, Čaić, & Mattelmäki, 2025). The proposal aims to be holistic and specific at the same time, responding to the Espoo Employment Services need for a service design for the guidebook for immigrants and a need to develop services in the long run.

3.1 Guiding Principles

Through the project work what emerged were six guiding principles that act as consistent frames for designing services through aspirational yet clear instructions. The guiding principles provide a process for designing the guidebook for immigrants in not only this moment but also going forward. Each guiding principle has its own actionable suggestions that act as concrete examples on how to implement the guiding principles. The actionable suggestions might be geared toward the guidebook, but the guiding principles themselves can be holistically utilised beyond this one use case (Solsona Caba, Čaić, & Mattelmäki, 2025)



Figure 3.1 Guiding Principles and Actionable Suggestions

3. Proposal

1. Promote Meaningful Communication

Meaningful communication ensures that information flows clearly between all actors: clients, coaches, and services to create a shared understanding and reduce confusion.

Actionable Suggestions:

Keep it simple

Complex terminologies, especially in Finnish, can make people feel intimidated and confused. The guidebook should speak in simple, clear language, and the same terms should be used everywhere: in the text, online, and during coaching, so people aren't confused.

Show the Journey Upfront

Right at the start, there should be a step-by-step roadmap of the job-seeking journey. Something as clear as: Registration to Coaching to Training to Work trial to Job. It gives a sense of direction and helps people understand the process.

Visuals with Purpose

Use images, icons, and colours that actually help people remember, not just for decoration. For example, images of residence permit, documents like passport etc; or use logos of Migri, Kela, and other partner services. People often remember colours, shapes, and logos more than plain text.

QR codes for Additional Information

Keep it Simple: Almost everyone has a smartphone. QR codes can keep the guidebook light while still giving access to more. A link to a video instead of a page of text so both the immigrant and the advisor can find what they need.

Try Storytelling

Stories make processes human and memorable. For example: "Salma registered in September, started coaching in October, and by December was already in a work trial." A few short stories can make the journey feel real and relatable.

Highlight the Essentials

Quick "tip boxes" can call out the most important details. For example: always carry your residence permit to appointments or register online before your first meeting to save time. Tips can also be used to bridge cultural misalignments.

Answer the Obvious Questions

Based on the co-creation workshop, it was very clear that immigrants ask the same questions again and again during the job-seeking process. Having a simple FAQ page in the guidebook would make things much easier.

3. Proposal

2. Facilitate Cross-Cultural Understanding

Facilitate cross-cultural understanding between service providers and clients to deconstruct cultural expectations. Cultural expectations arise from one person assuming that the other relates to them within their own cultural understanding. When immigrants enter the Employment Services, these cultural expectations can cause confusion and distance.

Finnish culture values trust, independence, and self-direction, so services often expect people to manage information by themselves. However, many immigrants come from cultures where step-by-step guidance is normal, which can lead to frustration or even a feeling of discrimination. If both staff and immigrants learn about these invisible cultural differences, small misunderstandings can turn into moments of shared learning and better

Actionable Suggestions:

Leverage Cultural Ambassadors

Introduce cultural ambassadors who can share experiences, answer doubts, and offer emotional support. Highlight their role clearly so immigrants know whom to reach out to when they feel lost. For example, Koto Espoo has community advisors who have whatsapp groups with their clients to support them during the process.

Empathy from Advisors

For this understanding to go both ways, Finnish advisors also need to recognise cultural differences and approach each interaction with patience and empathy. A small effort to listen, explain differently, or reassure someone can completely change how supported a newcomer feels.

Finnish Culture Orientation

Include short, multilingual videos or FAQs explaining Finnish work and communication styles: such as directness, punctuality, and self-responsibility. This can help reduce misunderstandings and prepare immigrants for how welfare services work and culture is expressed in Finland.

3. Proposal

3. Encourage Ownership

Encouraging a stronger sense of agency and ownership among both immigrant clients and service providers is essential for accountability, collaboration, and long-term integration. While immigrant clients must take responsibility for learning and adapting to the Finnish context, service providers play an equally important role in facilitating this process through empathy, understanding, and proactive engagement.

Actionable Suggestions:

Language that Empowers, not Instructs

It is important to emphasize that immigrant clients are responsible for their own process, communicated through a supportive and empowering tone of voice. The guidebook should clearly state the client's responsibilities at each step of the service to help them better understand the process and become familiar with the Finnish cultural context, which values self-responsibility and independence.

Clarity on Roles and Expectation

The guidebook should clearly outline the obligations and responsibilities of job seekers using simple language and accessible visual elements. For example, including a friendly reminder such as: "If you are unsure about what is expected, speak with your advisor." Additionally, incorporating tip boxes can encourage clients to take an active role and be better prepared. For instance, a helpful note could be: "By updating your Työmarkkinatori profile and tracking your applications, you stay aligned with your advisor, which strengthens your employment plan."

Easy Access to Resources

The guidebook should be designed to make it easy for clients to access information in a way that encourages initiative and self-led exploration. For example, embedding QR codes would allow immigrant clients to quickly scan and view a list of available services and training activities they are eligible to join. Increasing awareness of options can motivate clients to take more initiative in their employment journey.

Short Stories to Foster Relatability

The guidebook could use short illustrative stories to demonstrate responsibility in action. These can be presented using visuals or simple journey maps to help clients with lower language or digital skills better understand the context. For example: "When Ahmed registered as a job seeker, he received a message from his advisor asking for more details. By replying quickly, he helped the advisor understand his skills better and was matched with a suitable training opportunity faster than usual." These narrative examples can model tone, initiative, and collaboration without sounding overly instructional.

3. Proposal

4. Active Waiting

Active waiting means shifting the mindset from waiting for opportunities to preparing for them. The “active waiting” period, such as during the integration plan process, is a critical phase that often leads to uncertainty and inactivity among immigrant clients. Many clients are unsure of what they can or cannot do, as well as how different service providers and organizations operate during this time.

Actionable Suggestions:

From reactive to Proactive

A dedicated section titled “While You Wait” could offer simple, motivating actions that help clients stay active and engaged. This section could include tips on exploring alternative job platforms, checking community bulletin boards, and participating in networking spaces. By encouraging proactive exploration, job-seeking can feel less dependent on a single system and more within the client’s control.

Practical Steps for Active Waiting

The guidebook should encourage clients to turn waiting time into active preparation rather than passive delay. By clearly listing accessible activities, it can help clients stay engaged, build confidence, and gradually integrate into the local context.

For example, joining language cafés or clubs at local libraries offers both practice and social connection, while attending city events such as Hello Espoo or volunteering fairs helps newcomers discover opportunities and networks. Short online or in-person courses can support skill development, and involvement in NGOs or cultural groups can foster a sense of belonging. Even simple actions like exploring the city using public transport can help expand comfort zones and increase independence. Volunteer work can further provide valuable experience and community connection. Presenting these options in an encouraging tone reframes waiting as an active phase of growth and self-directed progress.

3. Proposal

5. Define Roles Within The Ecosystem

The Espoo Employment Service is only one of the services offered by the welfare state. This ecosystem can appear convoluted and unclear to those who use said welfare services, especially for an immigrant for whom the Nordic welfare system logic is not common knowledge.

The network of services consists of parallel municipal services like Koto-Espoo and adjacent ones like Business Espoo to Espoo Employment Services and broader national and local services, such as KELA, MIGRI and education. External services, referring to services outside of the municipal and national welfare framework, encompass NGO's, local immigrant communities and private platforms such as housing and job seeking sites. With the TE25 and other political changes it can be difficult for service staff and immigrants alike to know which services are available from which bureau.

The project team conducted a co-creation workshop regarding the ecosystem actors affecting immigrant job-seekers with two personal advisors by filling out a customer journey map (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Here is a link to the Miro board page: https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVJDXZrlo=/?share_link_id=686416526833

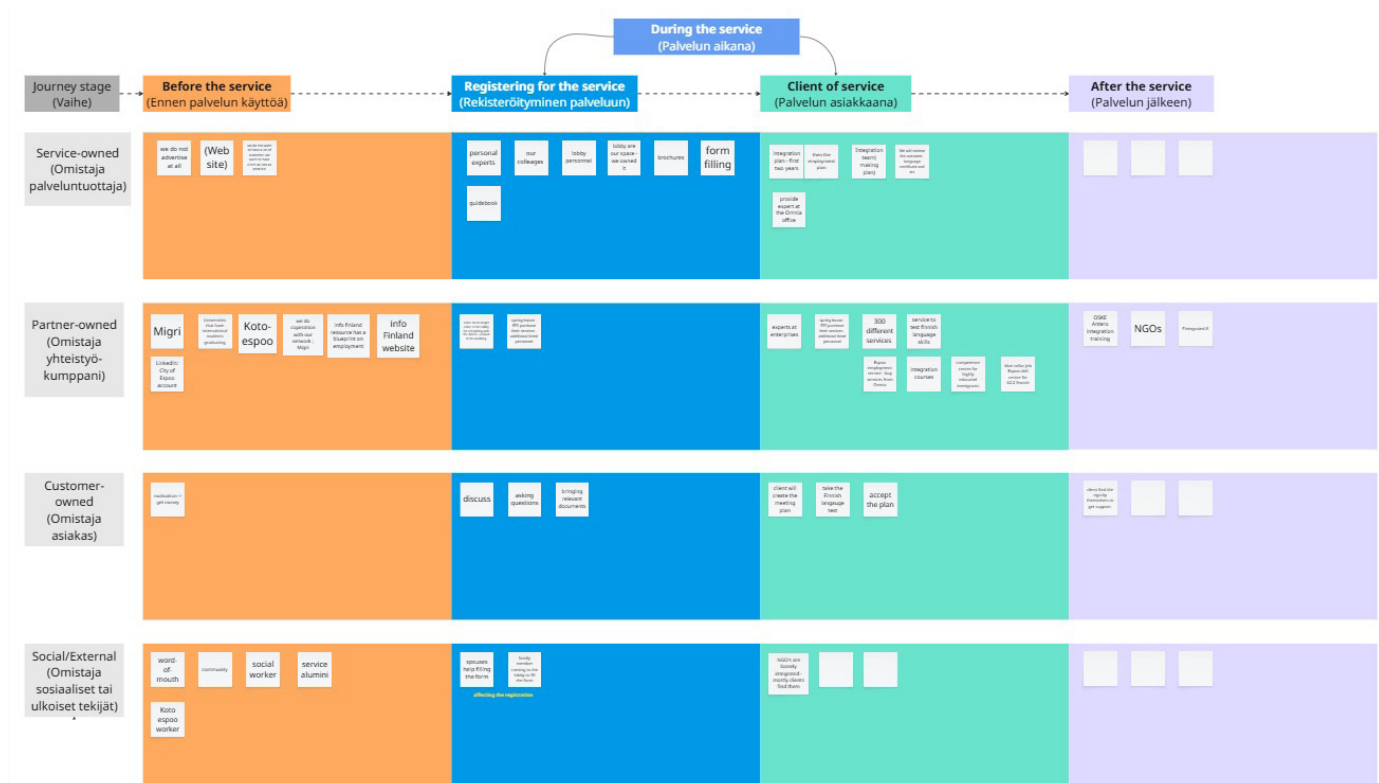


Figure 3.2 Co-created Customer Journey map.

3. Proposal

Actionable Suggestions:

Cheatsheet

A network of services translates well to a cheat sheet offered as a separate handout. Please review this list and update where necessary:

Parallel municipal services

- Koto-Espoo
- Hello Espoo
- OSKE/KOSKE

Adjacent municipal services

- Finnish language courses and testing
- Business Espoo

National and local services

- KELA
- Childcare
- Education
- Health services (Wellbeing services counties)
- MIGRI (immigration)
- Adult education
- National recognition of certification or degree
- Police

External Services

- NGO's / NPO's
- Own ethnic and language communities
- Job search sites
- Housing

Table and Training

The Espoo Employment Services role within the ecosystem is best described in the guidebook by defining what the service provides and what other municipal and national level services provide. This can be done by adding a table with relevant service providers and a short description of why their service is relevant to the immigrant job-seeker. Training for service staff on other services provided by the municipal and national services support this.

3. Proposal

6. Tailored Services

Espoo Employment Services faces people from all stages of life and diverse backgrounds. The service must guide immigrants through these different situations leading to differences in customer journeys. This can lead to a multitude of questions and misinformation, as one immigrant's situations might not apply to others.

The personal advisors at Espoo Employment Services manage informing and enrolling job-seekers into the 300 services on offer. Currently the process lacks transparency and the immigrant job-seekers in particular don't know which services might be relevant for them.

This need for tailored customer paths and scenarios has created a multitude of documentation and resources relevant for only a small part of the job-seekers. Tailoring of services is important, for example immigrants truly value being able to discuss their situation in their mother tongue at the Espoo Employment Services.

Actionable Suggestions:

Speak to your Advisor

The guidebook must be clear that all trainings and tailored services are offered through a personal advisor. For example: "Ask your advisor for training available for you. Consider your own background and what you want to do in the future. Your personal advisor can help you to choose the correct training for you." This guides the immigrant towards the advisor and towards utilizing the services and training to the fullest.

Meeting Needs

Learning to read and write as well as IT-skills should be addressed in the guidebook but by using means that don't require reading or using a computer. QR-codes are perfect for this when combined with pictograms.

There are 300+ services and trainings offered for different life situations. A list of those services might help people choose the best one available for them with their personal advisor.

3. Proposal

3.2 Tangible Example of the Proposal

This section showcases how the Guiding Principles can be applied to the actual guidebook demonstrating the value of the proposed changes. Based on each principle, actionable suggestions were developed and added to the draft version of the current Employment Services guidebook. Through this approach, the proposal remains realistic, as it considers stakeholder adoption in both use and delivery.

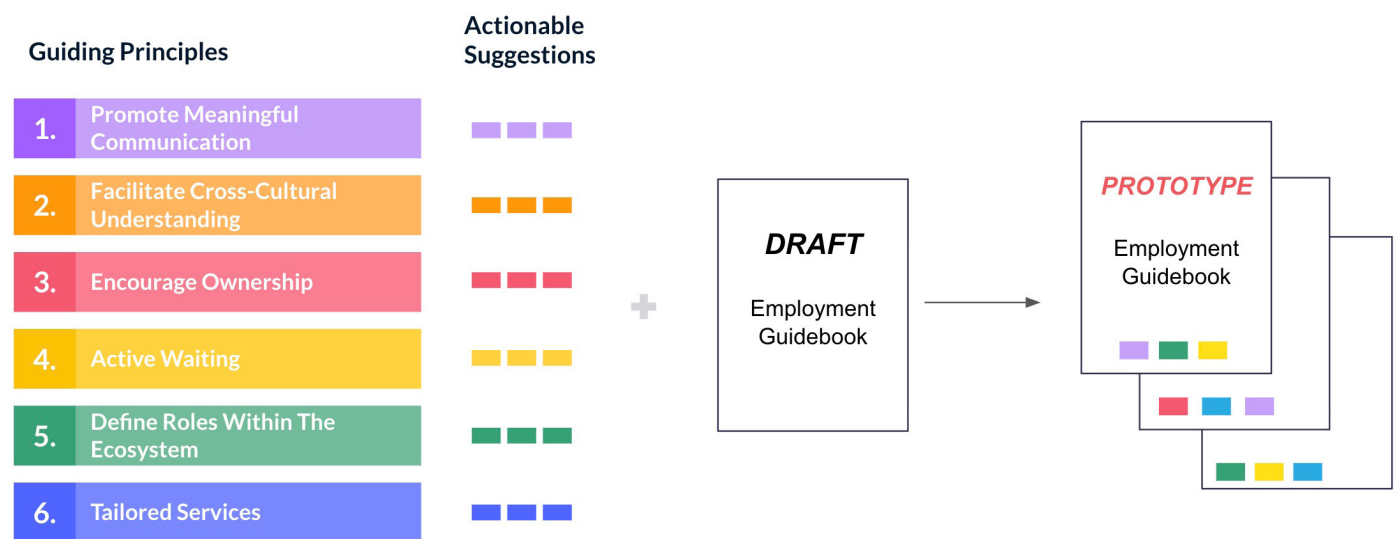


Figure 3.3 Visual diagram of How the Actionable Suggestions are Used in the Guidebook.



Figure 3.4 The Project Team Working on the Prototype.

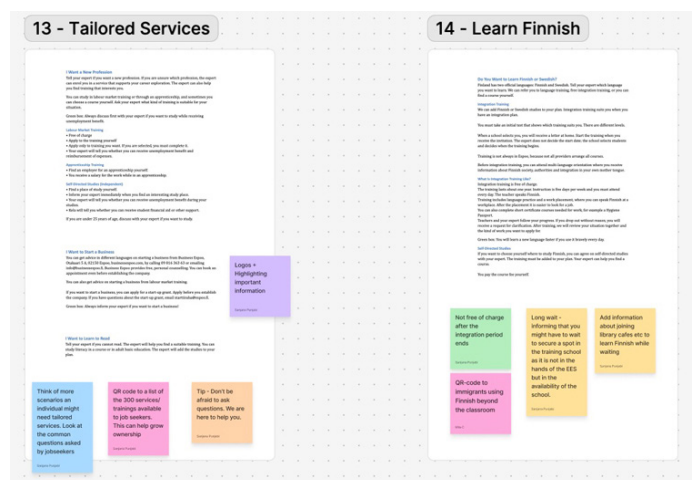


Figure 3.5 The Guidebook Prototype Digitized.

4. Future Opportunities

The guiding principles developed through this project are not set in stone, they are iterative in nature and can evolve as the service landscape changes. Their overarching themes are intentionally broad, allowing them to be adapted and reinterpreted according to what is most meaningful to the service at any given time. For example, during client registration at the service centre, the principles can guide how information is introduced (Promote Meaningful Communication), how roles are clarified (Define Roles within Ecosystem), and how trust is built from the very first interaction (Facilitate Cross-Cultural Understanding).

Beyond the principles themselves, the insights gathered throughout the process hold potential to spark reflection and dialogue among service actors at all levels. This became evident during the co-creation workshop, where participants expressed how engaging in collective discussions revealed non-obvious aspects of their daily work. These moments of reflexivity helped them better understand their relationships within the system and their shared role in shaping more inclusive practices (Hay et al., 2024).

Moreover, co-creation sessions that bring together those directly involved in the service have proven to be meaningful experiences. As one participant shared, “This is our reality; we face this every day. This workshop was mentally good for me.” Such feedback highlights that public service actors, too, need spaces to relate, reflect, and learn from one another. Workshops like these can act as vital outlets for generating shared understanding, empathy, and actionable ideas that contribute to ongoing service development.

Moving forward, these dialogues must continue. The guiding principles can serve not only as a design framework but as a catalyst for sustained collaboration, turning everyday interactions into opportunities for learning, connection, and meaningful change across the public sector.

5. Refferences

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6. Appendix

Glossary of terms, translating design to our partners

A visual diagram = Strategic framework stating a shared purpose, guiding internal collective action.

Actionable Suggestions = Tangible examples of how the guidebook could be designed by using the service design process.

Customer Journey Map = A tool for service analysis based on the end-to-end customer experience

Guiding principles = A set of principles or values statements guiding a new work culture/vision/service

Service Design process = A new way of developing services with a user-centred and co-creative approach

Touchpoint = New or existing contact points with the service; opportunities to engage with users/staff

Prototype = 'Live' projects that work as learning mechanisms to allow qualitative exploration before launching them - different to scientific experiments!

Guiding Actions for Meaningful Change

Redesigning the Espoo Employment Services Guidebook for Immigrant Job-seekers

Kiitos!

