# The Principles of a Human-Centered Safety Net

For too many people, the process of applying for and maintaining safety net benefits is complicated, time-consuming, and lacks clarity—leaving people to navigate a system with numerous barriers that push them further away from basic needs, like food and healthcare.

**We believe that it's possible to serve all safety net clients with empathy and dignity.**

A **human-centered safety net** is one that is simple, accessible, and easy for real people to use. It meets people where they are and provides clarity when there is confusion. And, most of all, it guarantees that the needs of clients are put first. These principles, when implemented, can transform how safety net benefits are delivered to people who need them.
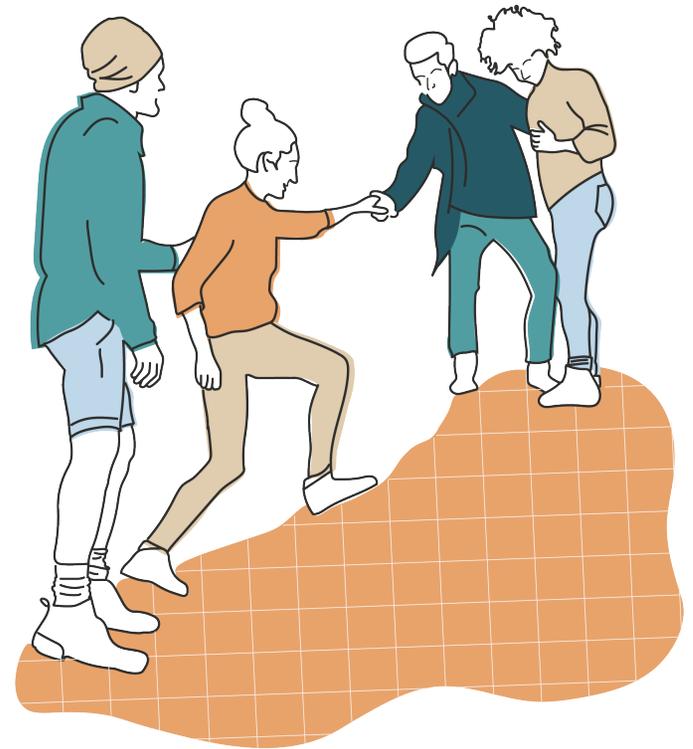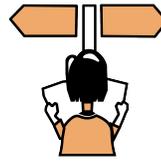
Many Welcoming Doors

Provide an equitable and positive experience both online and in person.
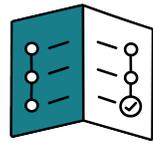
Easy to Understand

Clients should be able to make it through the process with minimal caseworker support.

Informed Decisions

Clients should clearly understand the implications of all of the actions they have to take throughout the process.

Responsive to Changing Needs

Build things that can change based on clients' needs, as well as shifts in policy and budget.

Simple Actions

Each stage in the enrollment and eligibility process should be able to be completed in as few steps as possible.

Build for all digital devices, but build for mobile first

25% of low-income households rely on a smartphone for internet access. Online applications need to work on mobile browsers to be accessible.

Provide a dignified, supportive experience

Services should support clients and shouldn't include overly complex barriers to access.

Ensure all clients can access services

Information should be accessible for all clients in multiple languages and across all levels of ability.

Conduct a plain language assessment of your applications and website

Copy should be written in simple, clear, and plain language in short, concise paragraphs.

Simplify the application, renewal, and reporting workflow

Directions across applications should be clear, simple, and easy to follow.

Provide supportive information that helps clients through the process

Offer additional information and explanation if necessary, while minimizing nonessential information or visual clutter that can be overwhelming.

Review notices for clarity and readability

Make sure the notices you're sending to clients are clear and easy to understand.

Clearly communicate needs and next steps

Communication from benefits agencies should be easy to understand and should clearly explain the implications of client actions and the consequences of inaction.

Use real time data to inform decision-making

Make sure you have access to—and use—analytics from your application funnel.

Employ agile technology and processes

Build smart, and build for change.

Implement the practices of delivery-driven policy

By tightly coupling policy and delivery, governments can use data about how people actually experience government services to narrow the implementation gap and help policies achieve the outcome they intend.

Integrate multiple benefits programs into one seamless application

Make it simple for clients to apply to multiple programs at once by bringing all applications into one central, easily accessible online portal.

Enable document upload in the application

Applicants should be able to quickly and easily submit supporting documents.

Promote a simple and clean user workflow in all forms and applications

Make it as easy as possible to work through all of the questions in an application or form.

Blueprint for a Human-Centered Safety Net

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