End-of-Life Care

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Value Statement

Our service supports people after the death of a loved one so they can focus on healing and adjusting to life after loss.

Research Methods & Insights

We started with secondary research and a few semi-structured interviews and analyzed various pathways and services involved with end of life. Affinity diagraming found major themes related to; faith, next-of-kin, community care, and structured tasks. Co-design was facilitated to understand how people view death and value legacy. The Co-Design insights with the main themes revealed these four insights:



Emotions vs. Logistics

Support systems should reduce administrative load and provide clear ways to navigate unfamiliar processes.

Next of kin are left with an overwhelming amount of administrative tasks. There is tension between the impersonal, time-consuming need to navigate bureaucracy and the personal need to grieve.



Agentic AI as a Shield

Mindfully integrating an AI tool can give permission to focus energy on healing and community connection.

Grieving individuals will have to manage administrative tasks. Agentic AI can take on some of this burden, allowing people to focus on emotional needs. We caution that AI should not handle the innately human aspects of death. But there are opportunities to integrate AI into this problem space.



Lack of Death Literacy

Design interventions must provide sensitive frameworks that guide difficult conversations and community support.

Western culture glosses over death, and people generally lack the vocabulary and systemic knowledge required to confidently navigate these responsibilities. Their surrounding community may be unsure how to offer support.



Highlighting Life

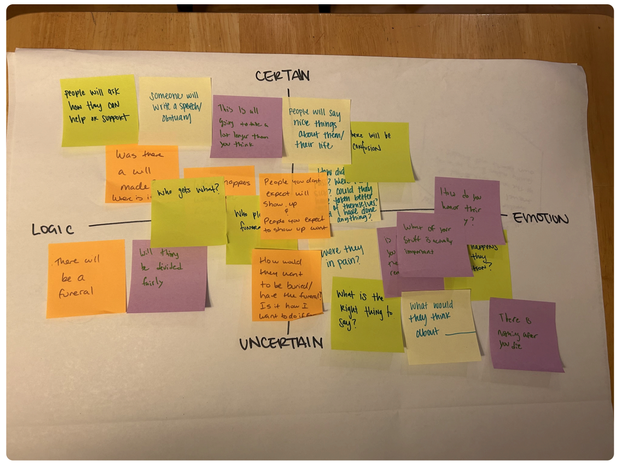
Support systems should create space for community-centered remembrance and celebration.

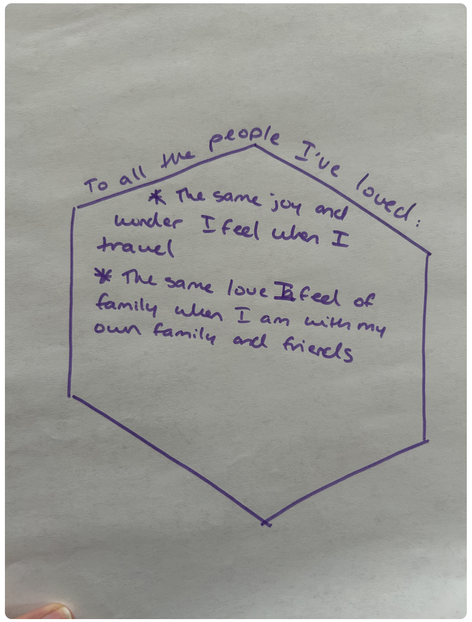
Current end-of-life services focuses primarily on the logistics of death, the surviving community cares about how life is commemorated. People want their legacy to be defined by joyful, lived experiences.

Co Design

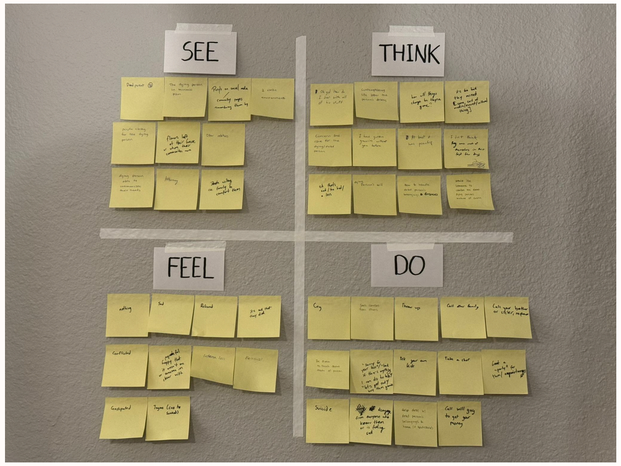
The Process

In our Co-design session we had participants complete 5 activities over the course of 60minutes. Participants engaged in empathy mapping, facilitated discussions, and creative exercises, revealing how they felt about death, grief, and legacy.









Insights

- End-of-life clashes with overwhelming logistics and personal grief, with bureaucracy adding more confusing and emotional barriers.
- Emphasis on protecting legacy through relationships, memories, and meaningful rituals.
- Pain points in communication and understanding what adequate support looks like for the grieving loved one.
- Service should reduce administrative burden, preserve user control, and support diverse grief responses while maintaining accessible dignified care.

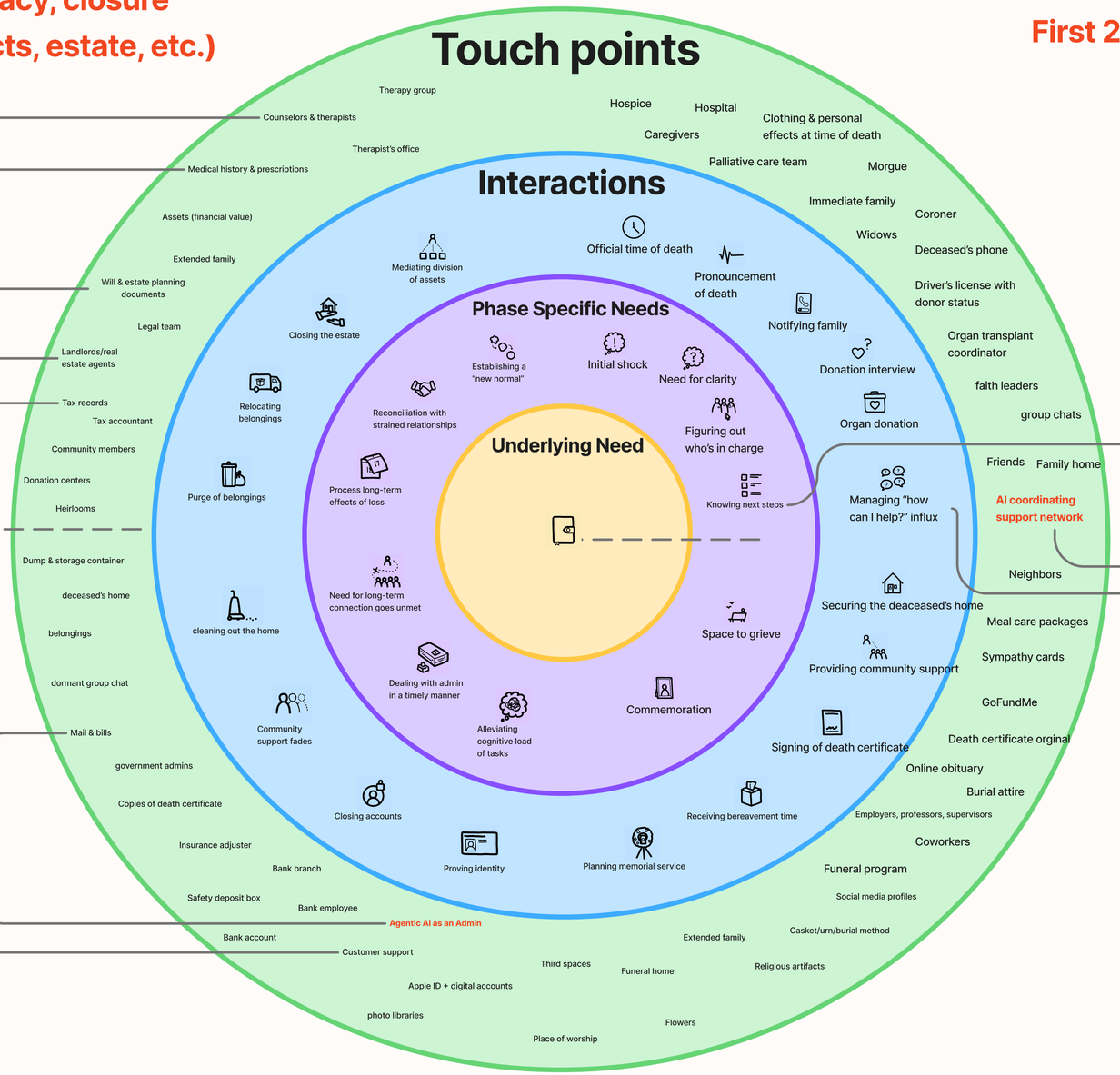
Reflection

As our team's first co-design experience, we saw how these activities enabled participants to talk to each other and articulate complex ideas much more naturally than standard in-depth interviews. In the future, we would run a single, combined session so multiple teammates could facilitate together and observe all participant interactions firsthand.

Ecosystem Map

Resolution: legacy, closure (physical objects, estate, etc.)

First 24 to 48 hours



Agentic AI: Documenting a paper trail.

Leah

Agentic AI: managing short-term tasks.

Leah

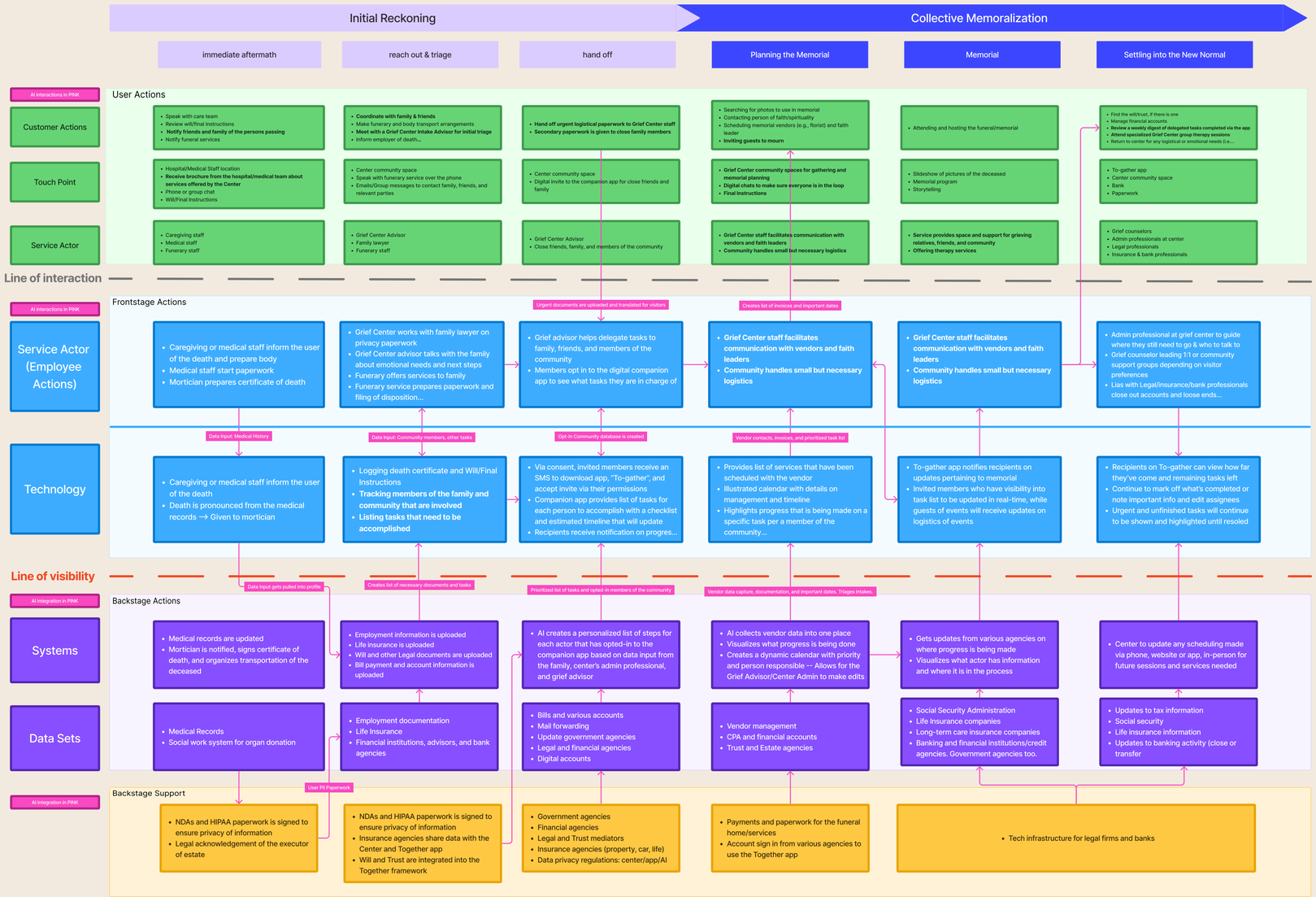
Agentic AI: providing tasks and managing coordination.

Leah

Within the month- paperwork/admin stuff

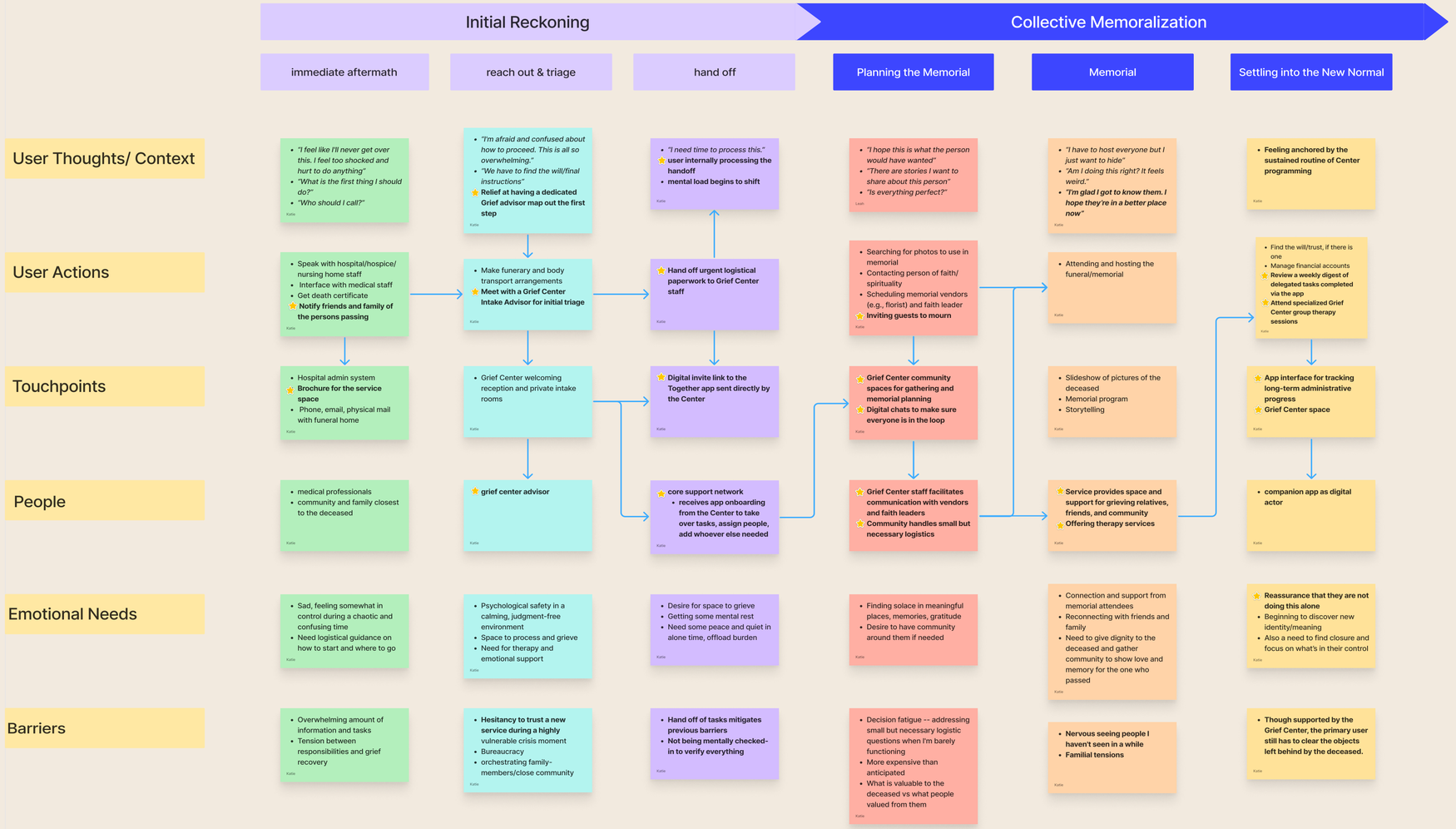
Burial/memorial (first two weeks)

Service Blueprint



Operations

User Journey Map



Primary User

The primary user is a recently bereaved individual facing overwhelming administrative tasks who needs a structured system to delegate end-of-life logistics to their willing support network.

Scope of Interaction

This map illustrates the user's transition from immediate, in-person triage at the Grief Center to the ongoing digital delegation of tasks via the companion app.

⭐ = directly related to our service

→ = service flow

Design Principles

Reducing anxiety

Aim to make people feel like they get some piece of mind during an uncertain and emotionally difficult time.

Service should provide guidance by clarity laying out next steps, distributing shared responsibility through community support, and integrating resources for people to manage the emotional and logistical burden in the best way possible.

Providing dignity

People should feel that they and their loved one who’s passed are respected through the process.

They should have an active role to make decisions that honor their loved one and be given the autonomy to lead in their desired way through their personal journeys. Technologies play a back-seat role through the grief process.

Maintaining sensitivity

Every person’s interaction with the service must be handled with compassion and empathy, particularly in a vulnerable phase.

This is maintained through any interaction be it the professionals at the center, through design and language on digital app, or the AI technologies incorporated in the service. Involvement with AI to be met with transparency and consent.

Honoring legacy

When a loved one passes, people are learning to adjust to their new normal and how they can stay close to them.

Service is meant to help people think through how they can do so with photos, videos, belongings, and digital accounts left behind. In this phase, people find some closure or meaning of their lives through their reflection and maintaining practices based on what they learned from their loved one.



Narrative Prototyping

Scenario 1: Expected

A family member accompanies their grandmother to the service's Center of Life and Death.
A front-of-house staff member is gathering information on their background and advising how to set possessions, paperwork, tax documents, and will in order beforehand so next-of-kin is prepped on what to do and where to go for help.

Scenario 2: Unexpected

A family visits the Center of Life and Death after receiving resources to handle their family member's passing from the hospital. They receive assistance for next steps and information to follow during a time they feel sad, lost, and confused. They return months later for assistance with closing leftover accounts.

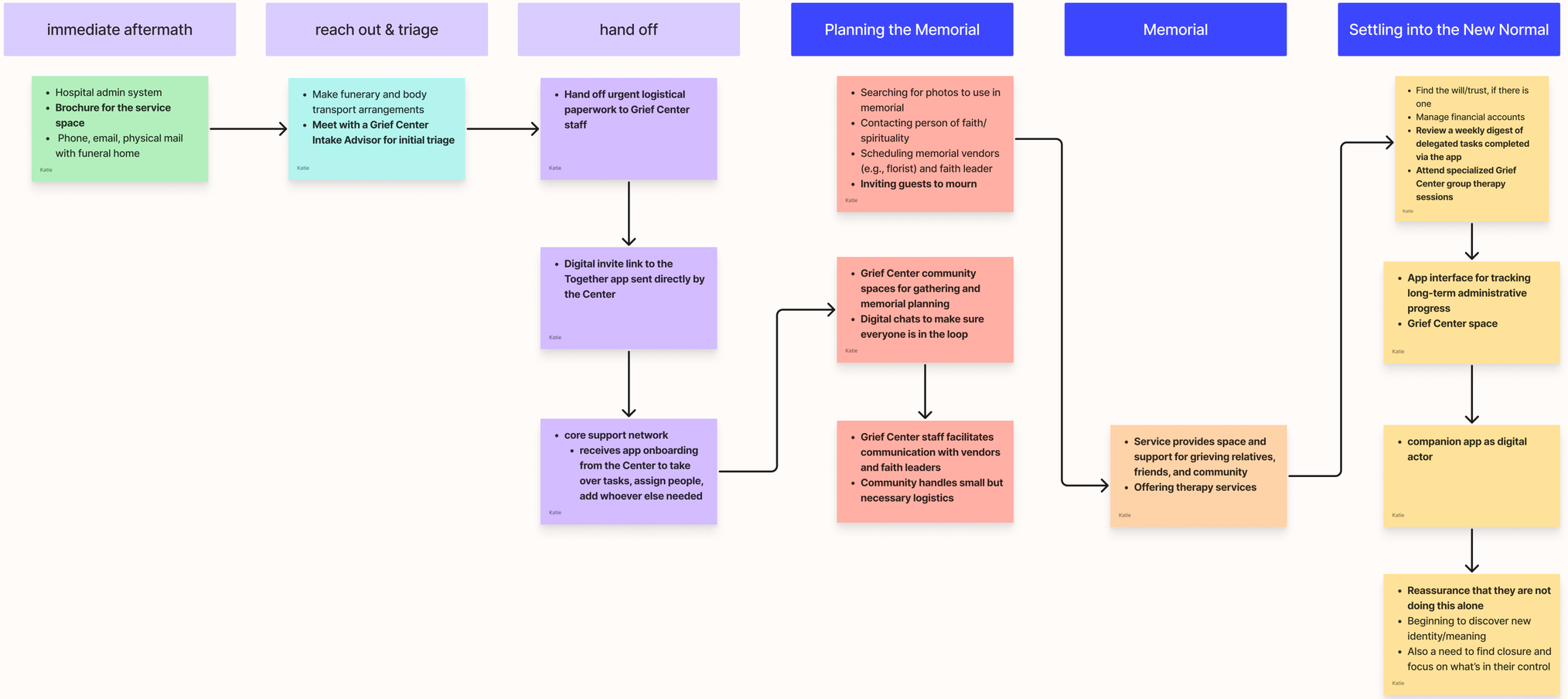
Role of AI assists to synthesize information given during a first-time visit and allows visitors to see priority of tasks on app based on their needs.

Insights & Feedback

- Difficult to encourage a loved one who's expecting to pass to consider how to logistically assist the family to prepare.
- Unrealistically jarring and swift transition between an emotionally difficult scenario to adjusting with practical next steps.
- Be more intentional of when service should leave more space for people to deal with their journey on their own.
- Interaction and how AI is integrated into a heavy scenario must also have more consideration.

System Flow

bolded text = service touchpoint



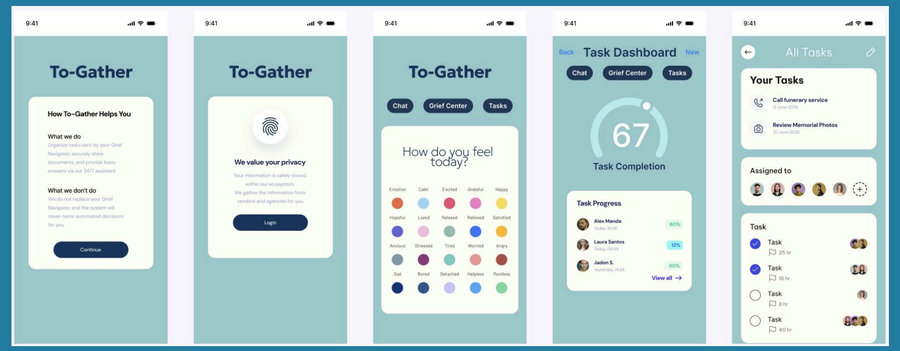
Prototype Feedback

Brochure & Service



- Low contrast and challenge of readability with white font
- Too much content to read
- Key parts of service or values are inadequately conveyed
- Visual of center does not connect to what it offers based on what the service is supposed to have
- “Grief navigator” role name does not sound empathetic enough
- Role of AI must be more transparent, not explained enough

Companion App



- Lack of user control and freedom to let them skip options
- Options to track emotions may be overwhelming and unnecessary
- UI design has an emotional mismatch and may appear too fun or casual as opposed to the reality of experiencing a heavy time
- Lack of clarity behind percentages for task progress
- Copy doesn’t feel encouraging enough and that progress has been made

Updated Service Flow

- Speak with care team
- Review will/final instructions
- **Notify friends and family of the persons passing**
- Notify funeral services

- Caregiving or medical staff inform the user of the death and prepare body
- Medical staff start paperwork
- Mortician prepares certificate of death

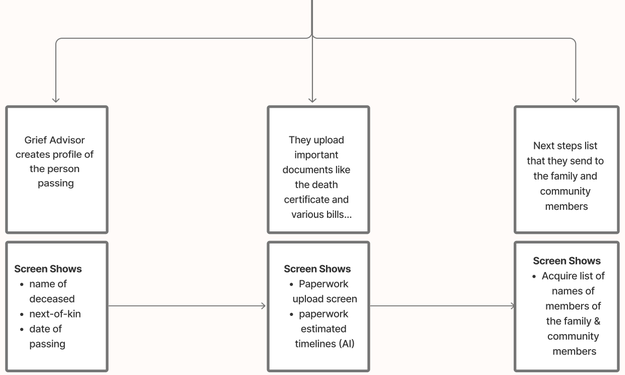
- **Coordinate with family & friends**
- Make funerary and body transport arrangements
- **Meet with a Grief Center Intake Advisor for initial triage**
- Inform employer of death

- Grief Center works with family lawyer on privacy paperwork
- Grief Center advisor talks with the family about emotional needs and next steps
- Funerary offers services to family
- Funerary service prepares paperwork and filing of disposition...

- **Hand off urgent logistical paperwork to Grief Center staff**
- **Secondary paperwork is given to close family members**

- Grief advisor helps delegate tasks to family, friends, and members of the community
- Members opt in to the digital companion app to see what tasks they are in charge...

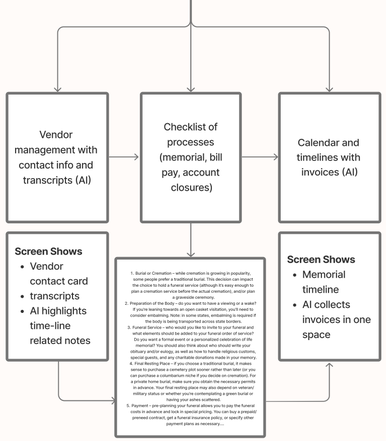
Grief Advisor Perspective
- Grief Advisor creates profile of the person passing
- They upload important documents like the death certificate and will
- Next steps list that they send to the family and community members



- Searching for photos to use in memorial
- Contacting person of faith/spirituality
- Scheduling memorial vendors (e.g., florist) and faith leader
- **Inviting guests to mourn**

- **Grief Center staff facilitates communication with vendors and faith leaders**
- **Community handles small but necessary logistics...**

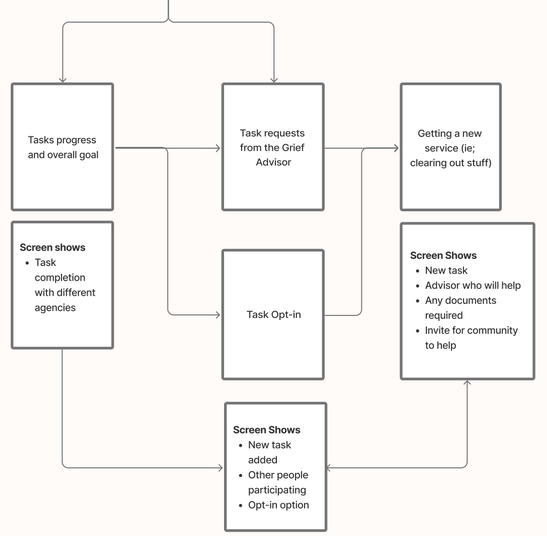
Grief Advisor Perspective
- Vendor management
- vendor checklist and invoice
- vendor calendar and timelines



- Attending and hosting the funeral/memorial

- **Grief Center staff facilitates communication with vendors and faith leaders**
- **Community handles small but necessary logistics...**

Community Member Perspective
- Community member perspective
- what tasks need to be done
- How can they feel like they're a part of a bigger thing



- Find the will/trust, if there is one
- Manage financial accounts
- **Review a weekly digest of delegated tasks completed via the app**
- **Attend specialized Grief Center group therapy sessions**
- Return to center for any logistical or emotional needs (i.e....

- Admin professional at grief center to guide where they still need to go & who to talk to
- Grief counselor leading 1:1 or community support groups depending on visitor preferences
- Lias with Legal/insurance/bank professionals close out accounts and loose ends...

Final Service

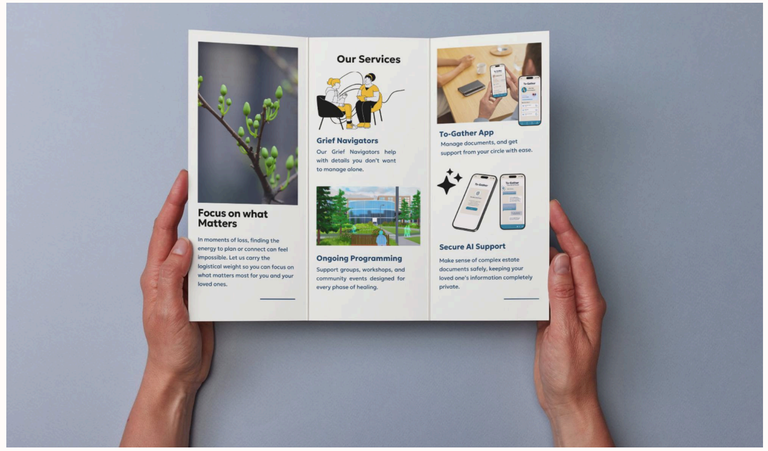


Touch Point: Brochure



Entering the Service

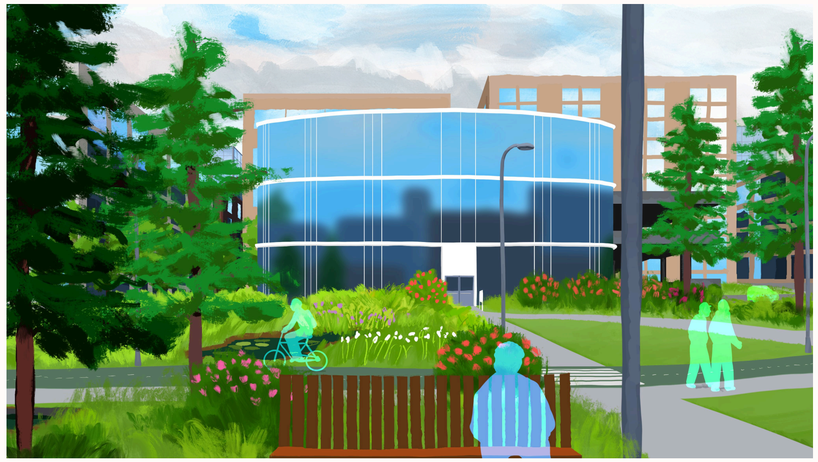
This brochure serves as the initial touchpoint to our service offered by the Center for Life and Death, also distributed through environments like hospitals and faith communities. It outlines the core offerings of our Center for Life and Death and app without overwhelming a vulnerable user.



A Gentle Approach

We intentionally designed a physical referral method over a digital one to reduce cognitive friction during a crisis. By providing a low-stakes physical touchpoint, the brochure offers immediate reassurance that support is available whenever they are ready.

Service Space: Center for Life & Death



Somewhere to reflect

The Center centralizes grief counseling, death planning, and paperwork processing, working in tandem with our application and an end-of-life care team. Native greenery, benches, and footpaths surround the Center, inviting visitors to reflect outside when the weather permits.



Long-term services

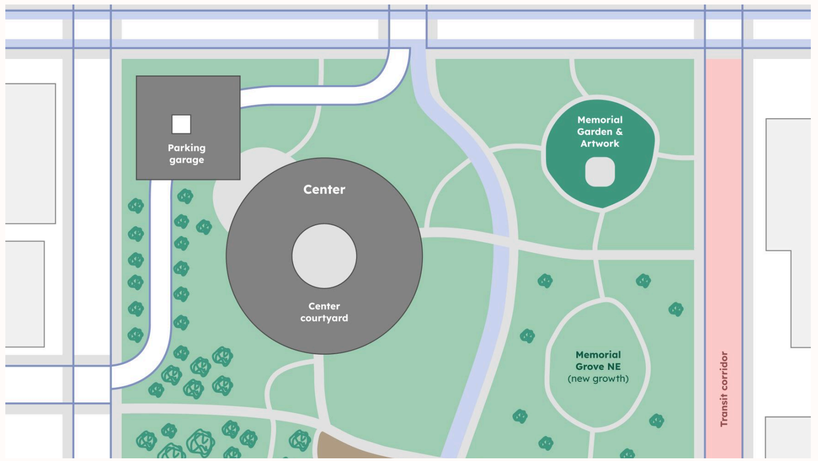
The Center contains dedicated spaces for group therapy and community-organized events. Once pivotal end-of-life milestones, like funerals and memorial services, are over, the Center remains a place loved ones and community of the deceased can find support.

Service Space: Center for Life & Death



Infrastructural support

Employees at the center bear much of the community's end-of-life burdens and receive specialized support based on their roles. Additionally, the Center's open infrastructure provides a well-lit workspace with plenty of areas for discussion and retreat for employees and non-employees alike.



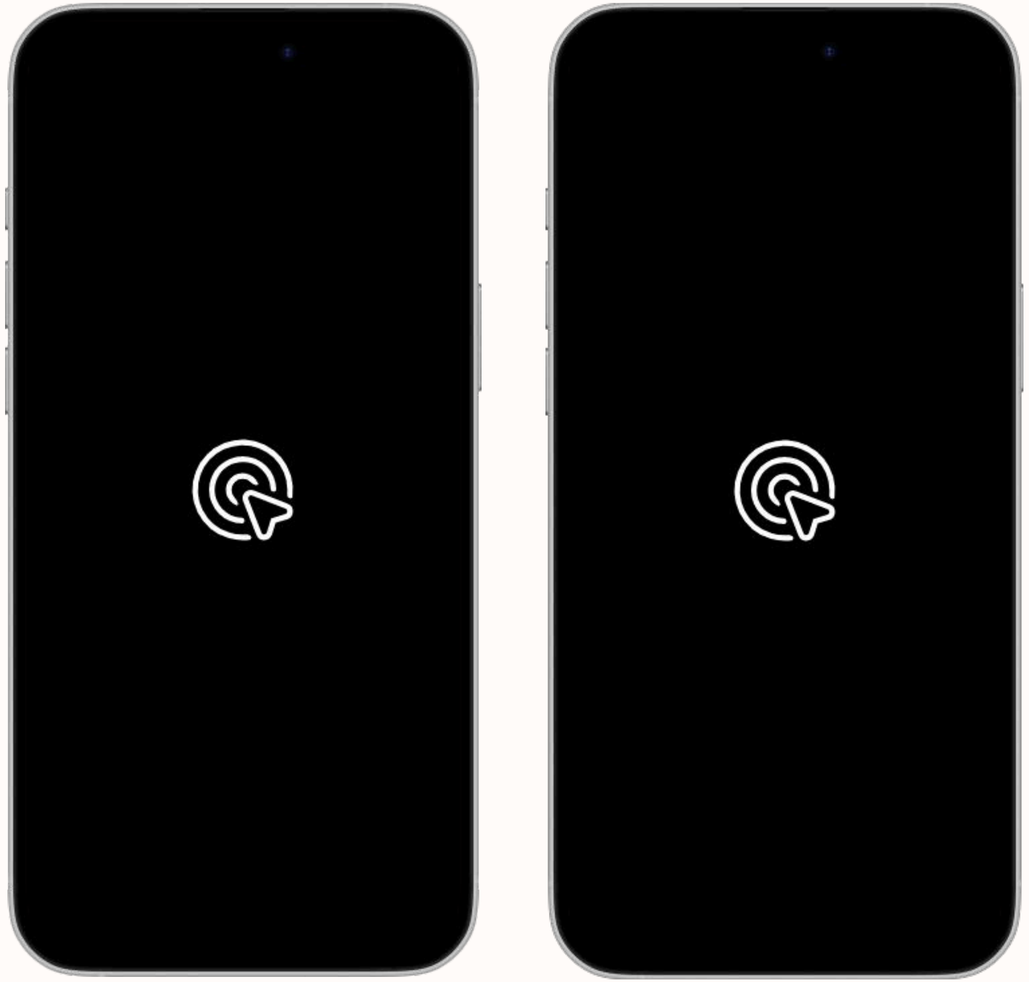
Easy, safe access

Urban space around and within the Center is updated for easy access via various transportation options. Though the site contains an on-site parking garage, nearby streets also serve as transit hubs and contain protected bike infrastructure.

Front Stage Product: To-Gather App:

We created a mobile application so that users would be able to include important files and bills into their account whenever they came across them. The AI interface works as a file manager and organizer; scanning, tagging, and organizing the documents. It’s role is to consolidate paperwork into one space and create a dynamic calendar for when things are due.

In order to incorporate social infrastructure we’ve included a version of this product for extended family and community members to opt-into. By opting-in extended family and community members are able to more cohesively work together to support the people most impacted by the loss of a loved one. These users can be assigned a prioritized task with tangible goals into order to relieve some of the cognitive load experienced by the main users.



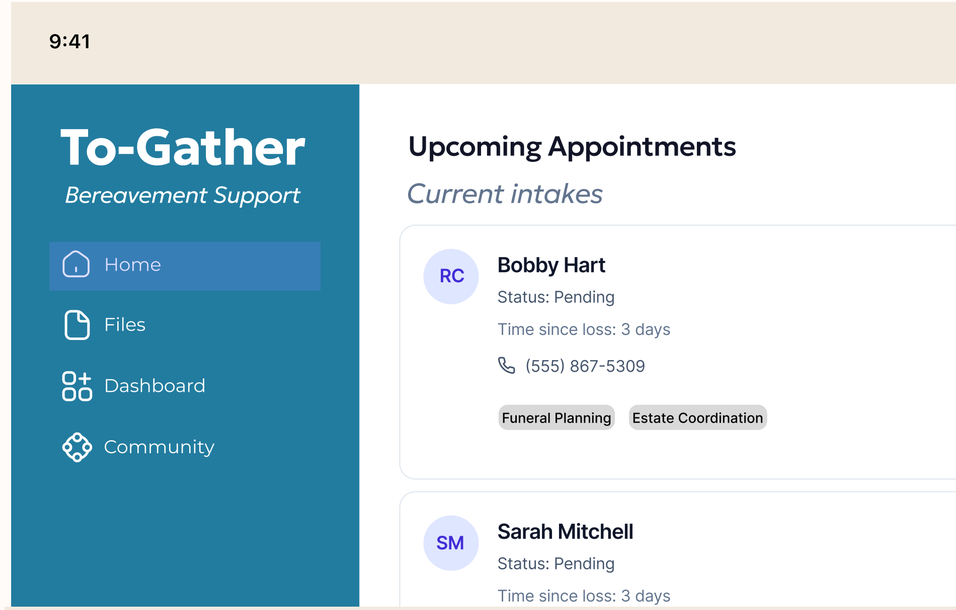
Back Stage Product: Digital Integration

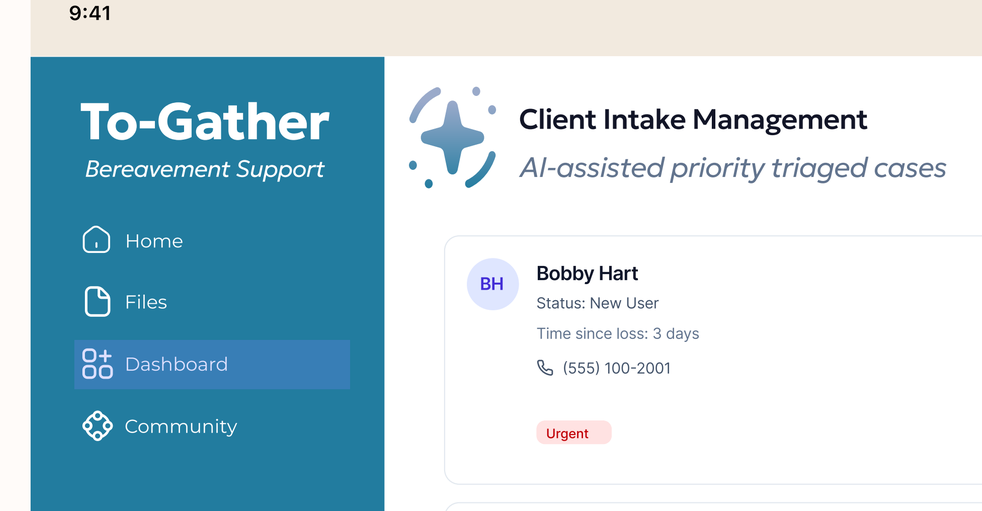
We wanted to lead with human-first interactions for the service. However, we realize that digital products and AI can be helpful when managing a lot of data.

Our mobile interface is to be used when working directly with front of stage customers. Both the customer and facility are designed similarly so that the facility staff can illustrate actions and wayfinding in a way that is similar to the product that the main users are also interacting with.

The back of house digital interface is designed to be used on a computer. It’s integrated into the back end support system of the service space and utilizes AI’s ability to gather and scan information to calendar manage for staff and triage users based on time and emotions.







AI Agents as Infrastructure

Technology Selection

We chose Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to bridge the gap between physical and digital document management. OCR software analyzes paperwork, identifies its context, and extracts key data like due dates and account numbers.

For in-person interactions, the service includes speech-to-text AI to assist staff with note-taking. This allows backstage actors to remain fully present and empathetic with visitors while accurately capturing complex details. Additionally, agentic AI provides a conversational interface for both users and staff.

Because our service handles highly sensitive PII and estate documents, the architecture relies on enterprise API connections with zero data retention policies. This infrastructure ensures user data is never stored or used to train future models.



New Service Capabilities

Previously, next-of-kin manually triaged estate documents and waited on hold to figure out how to close accounts. To-Gather automates this by explaining opaque bereavement protocols simply, recommending next steps, and flagging time-sensitive deadlines.

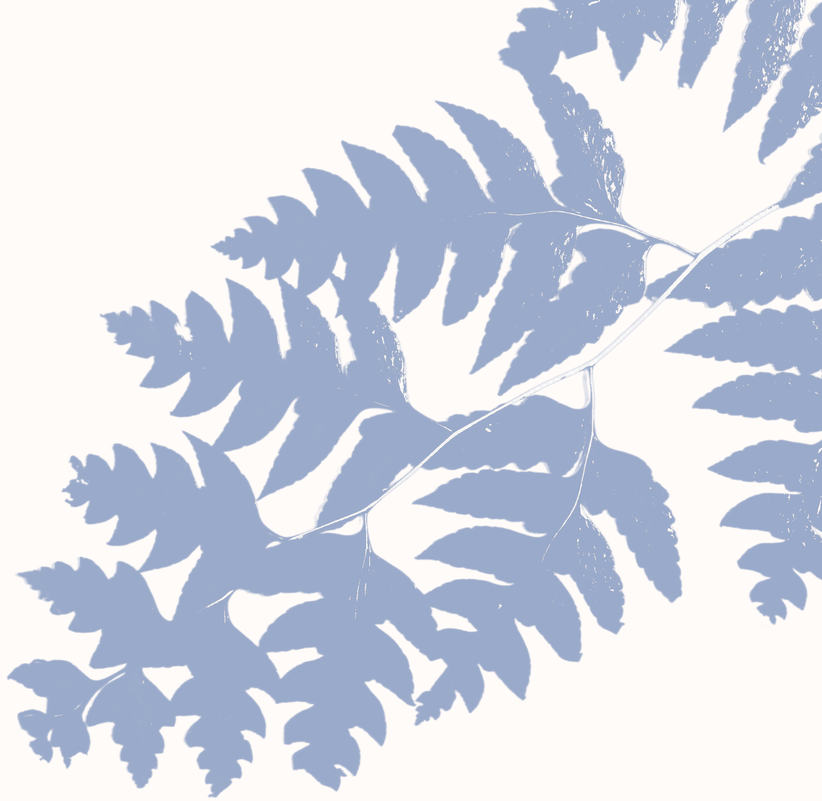
For backstage staff, having this contextualized data aggregated securely allows them to triage priorities faster, shifting the service ecosystem’s focus from mere information gathering to high-touch, human support. All information as with any use of AI agent deployment in the service, will be verified by professionals.

AI Agents as Infrastructure

Labor and Compliance

Next of kin will now have to act as a “final approver”. Because AI cannot legally act as an estate executor, the app’s onboarding process must carefully train users to review AI-generated suggestions before physically executing the steps themselves.

Behind the scenes, backstage actors must continuous audit and verify the AI’s performance. They must ensure the AI navigates the fine line between offering helpful administrative triage and giving legal or financial advice. The AI uses language that is only informational to help make that distinction. Backstage actors are required to conduct routine data privacy audits to maintain integrity.



Ecosystem Risks

Handling highly sensitive documents, from finances to government identity, introduces new security vulnerabilities. If compromised, this aggregated data presents an identity theft risk for the deceased. Because of this, rigorous data encryption is a priority to make our service work.

The To-Gather app part of our service introduces a dependency on the digital presence of external vendors and institutions. The AI’s ability to provide accurate, actionable triage relies entirely on these third parties maintaining up-to-date bereavement policies on their websites, creating a vulnerability that exists outside of To-Gather’s control.

Team Reflection

- *The design of a service is never truly finished. Instead, it's an ongoing dialogue shaped by the evolving values of the people who use it.*
- *The value of a service should be reflected in every touchpoint that users interact with.*
- *Articulated design values and value proposition of a service is the heart of its purpose. If unclear, the service will fail.*
- *A service ecosystem should enable shared autonomy where participation allows for dignity rather than simply maximizing efficiency.*
- *Services are sums of their parts. Various levels of a service need to be well-designed for the experience to feel seamless.*

Appendix

- Documentation of process (Weeks 1 – 10): **FigJam Board**
- Design file for final service: **Figma**

Showcase Day!

