

Beta Service

SERVICE DEFINITION

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Beta Overview

The Beta phase signifies the progression of your top idea from the alpha stage to practical implementation. This phase involves not only building the service but also considering its integration with existing services and preparing for its transition to a live environment, in line with the UK Government Digital Service (GDS) approach.

During the Beta phase, the service is initially rolled out to a limited number of real users, known as 'private Beta,' to gather insights and refine functionality. Once confidence in the service's scalability is established, it advances to 'Public Beta,' making it accessible to a wider audience in need of its capabilities.

Our Approach

In the Beta stage of the UK Government's digital service development process, the focus is on building the service for real and testing it with a larger group of users. Here's a more detailed overview:

1 Building the Service:

During the Beta phase, the service is developed based on the findings and insights gathered during the Alpha phase. This involves building the necessary infrastructure, coding the features, and integrating any third-party systems or components.

2 User Testing:

The service is made available to a larger group of users, typically referred to as 'Private Beta.' These users may include members of the public, stakeholders or specific user groups. User testing is conducted to gather feedback on usability, functionality, and any potential issues.

3 Refinement:

Feedback from users is collected and analysed to identify areas for improvement. Teams iterate on the service, making adjustments to address user needs and enhance the overall user experience. This iterative process may involve multiple rounds of testing and refinement.

4 Scalability Testing:

As the service progresses through the Beta phase, teams also assess its scalability. This involves testing the service under different loads and conditions to ensure it can handle a significant number of users and transactions without performance issues.

5 Security and Compliance:

Throughout the Beta phase, teams also focus on ensuring the security and compliance of the service. This includes conducting security assessments, implementing necessary controls, and adhering to government standards and regulations.

6 Transition Planning:

In preparation for the transition to a live environment, teams develop a transition plan outlining the steps and timelines for moving the service from Beta to live. This includes considerations such as data migration, user communication, and training for support staff.

7 Public Beta:

Once the service has undergone sufficient testing and refinement and is deemed ready for wider use, it may progress to 'Public Beta.' This stage involves making the service accessible to anyone who needs it, while continuing to monitor its performance and gather feedback for further improvements.

Overall, the Beta phase is a critical stage in the development of digital services, where teams work to refine and optimise the service based on user feedback and ensure it is ready for full-scale deployment.

Our Beta Process

- Building on the ideas validated in alpha and creating production-ready software
- User centred agile sprint-based delivery
- Use of technical spikes and functional prototyping
- Product backlog development
- A focus on securing the service's information
- Ensuring appropriate metrics are in place
- Meeting accessibility requirements
- Open standards for APIs, data and software
- Deploying to production-ready environments with uptime and monitoring
- Facilitating third-party vulnerability and penetration testing
- Quality Assurance (QA) testing
- Facilitating further User Acceptance Testing (UAT)
- Deployment using DevOps principles
- A report of activities, findings and recommendations and a proposed approach for Live
- Follows Government Digital Service Standards
- GDS assessment support

Some of the key benefits of a Beta project

- ✓ Develop and test at a larger scale
- ✓ Working production-ready software
- ✓ Sustained learning and iteration
- ✓ Develop and test the approach to security
- ✓ Meeting WCAG level 2.2
- ✓ Understand your costs for Live
- ✓ Aligned to GDS Service Design
- ✓ Support through GDS Assessments
- ✓ Compliance with Digital by Default Service Standard
- ✓ Transfer knowledge to your team



Why work with PDMS?

PDMS can add value to your project through:



Industry expertise and track record

Successfully implemented Discover, Alpha & Beta service and solutions for a range of clients including central and local government.



Flexibility and customisation

There's no one-size-fits-all approach so we take the time to understand your organisation, people and systems and customise solutions and our service to meet your requirements.



Innovation and creativity

Experienced team with a focus on innovative solutions that leverage current technology and transform it through creative thinking.



Scalability and future-proofing

Up-to-date solutions that are scalable to provide long-term value and be ready for future growth and technological advancements.



Data security and compliance

Strong focus on protecting sensitive data often associated with government systems to ensure it is protected every step of the way.



Collaborative and personalised service

Capable of delivering at scale whilst maintaining a focus on a personalised service.





Approach to Delivery

Agile development – testing and learning

- Short Sprints to test and validate the outcomes and determine the requirements for the next sprint
- Frequent measuring and reporting of progress against roadmap to ensure meeting the project outcomes
- Experienced agile team with an established process
- Inception Workshops
- Daily Scrums
- Sprint Reviews
- Sprint Retrospectives



Following core principles for agile:





Accessibility

Accessibility is a core principle which is considered throughout our software and solution delivery process. The UK's Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations 2018 stipulates that all digital services should comply to WCAG 2.2 AA level, and all sites and services PDMS develops are tested against these criteria. As well as providing for accessibility and inclusivity, designing, developing and testing websites against WCAG 2.2 also has significant benefits to the search engine performance, mobile-friendliness and overall usability of a website or service.

We use a combination of automated testing, manual testing and testing with assistive technology such as screen readers, to make sure our systems and websites comply with WCAG. We will also draft and publish accessibility statements. In line with UK Government advisory, PDMS recommends periodic review of accessibility due to ongoing content changes. We are also able to provide 'experts by experience' testing by arrangement which involves inviting users with a range of disabilities to test the website and feedback on improvements.





Using the Service - Onboarding

Ordering and Invoicing

Requests for more information or to place an order for our Beta service, contact PDMS on sales@pdms.com.

We would propose arranging a meeting to find out more about your precise requirements and answer any specific questions you may have. If required, we are also happy to provide an additional detailed proposal which will cover the specific deliverables, approach, timelines etc.

Should we then progress to the order stage, the GCloud call off contract would be signed by both parties. Depending on the solution or service we are delivering, we will also provide a Statement of Work(s) which clearly defines the project deliverables and ensures that we are both fully aligned in terms of the approach and the outcomes.

The minimum contract period will depend upon the project deliverables and will be agreed as part of the onboarding process.

Once we have a more detailed understanding of your specific requirements, we can provide a detailed cost breakdown which is usually on a Time and Materials basis. We can also provide Fixed Price quotes depending on the project deliverables.

- Time & Materials services will be invoiced monthly in arrears.
- Fixed Price projects payment milestones will be discussed and agreed as part of our onboarding process.
- Recurring fees will be invoiced annually in advance.

Use of the service is subject to the PDMS Terms & Conditions and any terms outlined in the Call Off Contract.

Pricing Overview

You can find pricing information in the Beta Service Pricing Document and the PDMS Rate Card.



Implementation Plan

We will hold a number of briefing calls as part of our onboarding process where we will ensure that we have a shared understanding of the project outcomes, the broader project context and to establish agreed ways of working.

As part of our onboarding process, we will provide an implementation plan that may cover the following:

- Project Overview covering objectives and scope
- Project Roles & Responsibilities for stakeholders and key team members
- Project Delivery methodology e.g. Agile, Waterfall
- High level Project Timeline with major milestones etc.
- Risk Management to identify and mitigate any potential risks
- Change Management procedures
- Communication Plan, including channels, frequency and format
- High Level Technical approach
- Hosting (if applicable)
- Documentation and knowledge transfer
- Go-Live
- Post go-live processes such as support and system enhancements

Offboarding

We will agree an offboarding process which will include details of the data that will be provided, the format, any relevant documentation and details of how knowledge and learning can be handed back over to the organisations. Depending on the specific tasks related to offboarding at the end of a contract, there may be additional costs.

Termination Process

Our terms and conditions are tailored to meet the nature of the specific solution, project or service we are delivering to ensure that it best meets our client's objectives. The specific terms relating to contract termination would be agreed as part of the contract award and onboarding process and form part of our final contract.

Our standard termination clause, without cause requires 3 months' notice of termination.

Training

PDMS provides training for our services and solutions in a variety of different ways. We will outline and provide costs for an agreed training plan and knowledge transfer as part of our onboarding process.

We offer several different training approaches including:

- Workshops and training sessions – in person or online
- User guides – including online wikis
- Online video tutorials and how to guides – for self-paced training or as refresher materials

We can also provide in-depth training to “Super-Users” of the solution to support a “train the trainer” approach.





Data Security

PDMS is certified to ISO/IEC 27001, the internationally recognised standard for Information Security Management and is certified under the Cyber Essentials Plus scheme.

In the Isle of Man, the Data Protection Act 2018 makes provisions for the regulation of the processing of information relating to individuals.

The Data Protection (Implementation of GDPR) Order 2018 gives effect in the Island to EU Directive 2016/79 of the European Parliament (General Data Protection Regulation).



Data Back Up & Restoration

PDMS understands the requirements and the comfort that is brought about by backing data up. PDMS has exceedingly high levels of uptime, resilience and redundancy although there are still occasions where data will need to be restored to a previous date.

PDMS has therefore built a backup system which provides continuous recovery points for the data underlying the systems that we have developed. These backups are written to online storage for quick recovery and also regularly taken to tape so as to provide a point in time archive.

The underlying database engine allows point in time recovery, giving an RPO of near zero in the case of data corruption. In the unlikely event of a total system failure, our combination of backup strategies (including transactional data backups every 4 hours) supports an RPO maximum of 4 hours.

We perform periodic testing of the backup archives to ensure integrity of the data and restore capabilities.





Business Continuity

PDMS has a robust set of policies and procedures, which form part of an overall Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Framework to ensure that PDMS is able to provide services to its customers during, and after, significant events that can occur from time-to-time. These policies and procedures form part of PDMS' ISO 27001 and ISO 9001 certified management systems, and as such are externally audited to validate their appropriateness and effectiveness.

PDMS' general approach to business continuity is to ensure that there are no single points of failure within any part of the business.

This ethos means that we make use of multiple, geographical diverse, tier 3+ datacentres to house all of our business-critical data processing units. Our systems are setup in such a way that should a single datacentre fail then customers and PDMS staff should see no loss of service. Should an incident occur then the system will automatically fail over to the other data centre for the provision of services.

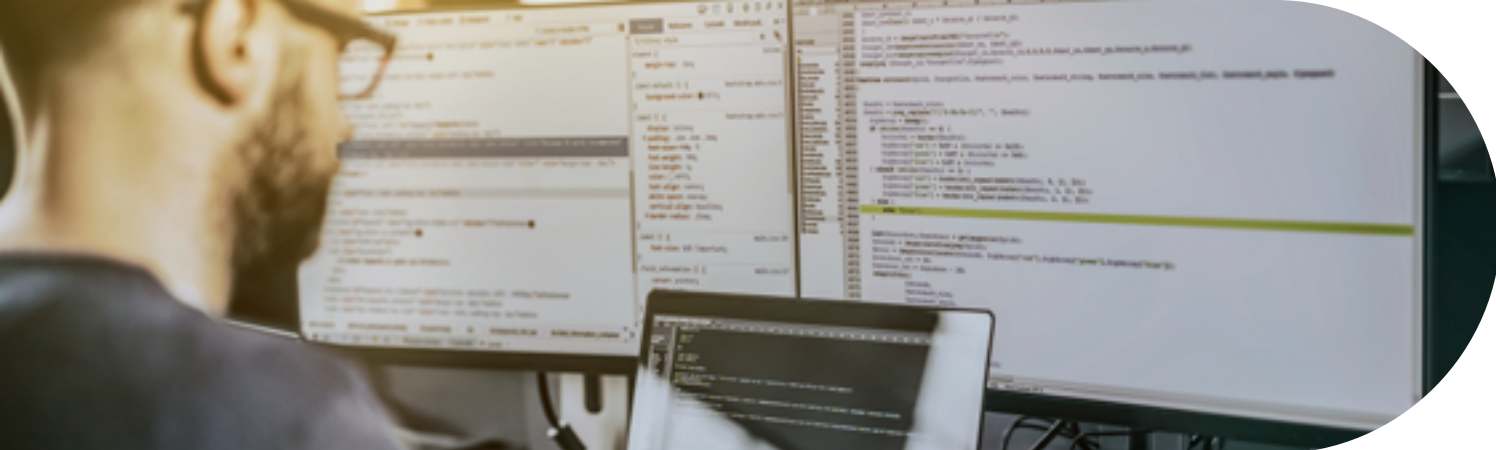
We can provide copies of the various policies and procedures that relate to Business Continuity on request.

Data Protection

PDMS has a dedicated, qualified Data Protection Officer who is responsible for overseeing data protection across the organisation. PDMS has a Data Protection Policy that details how PDMS and our staff will conform to the requirements of the applicable Data Protection Legislation. The Data Protection Officer provides support and advice to each department and ensures ongoing compliance with the legislative requirements through auditing each department. These audits cover all aspects of data protection from collection through to disposal, ensuring that we correctly follow the identified requirements.

PDMS will also, in conjunction with our customers as the Data Controller, provide assistance for any required Data Protection Impact Assessments as part of our services and solutions, which may identify any controls needed that are over and above the standard provision.





Support

We have a dedicated support team providing support for the solutions we have developed. We will agree a support service that meets your specific needs as part of our implementation plan and we provide a support and management contract which outlines our support commitments.

Support is typically available during office hours but can be extended to provide 24/7 coverage if required.

We have a number of channels for reporting support cases including an online system to record, manage and monitor the progress of individual support cases.

PDMS will work with you to identify suitable KPIs for ongoing monitoring to demonstrate adherence to agreed service levels. These will be included within regular project service reports. An example of a typical response time KPI is as follows:

Target achievement of SLA response times	P1 (High): Response within 1 working hour; resolution within 4 working hours.	>95%
	P2 (Medium): Response within 4 working hours; resolution within 2 working days.	
	P3 (Low): Response within 2 working days; resolution within 5 working days.	

Account Management

We assign a dedicated Account Manager to all our customers. Our Account Managers, together with our Project Managers are a main point of contact for our customers. They are responsible for contract management and any account queries that you may have over the course of the contract. They will proactively support you to ensure that our services and solutions are delivering the best possible outcomes for your organisation.





About PDMS

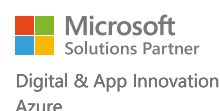
PDMS is a technology company specialising in software development and digital services. With a unique blend of software engineering excellence and creative digital design, we prioritise user-centric solutions. From analysis to ongoing support, we guide clients through every stage of their digital journey.

Our team consists entirely of full-time employees who are committed to continuous learning and skills development. Each member undergoes BPSS checks, with the majority holding SC security level clearance. Our diverse team brings expertise in project management, business analysis, UX design, software development, testing and infrastructure support.

We prioritise customer success, fostering long-term relationships - working with over half of our clients for a decade or more.

With three decades of industry experience, we've honed our understanding of the unique challenges, pressures, and opportunities encountered by the public sector in harnessing technology for maximum impact. Passionate about leveraging technology for tangible outcomes, our digital projects have saved millions, benefiting both public and private sectors while reducing environmental impact and enhancing productivity and customer service.

Accreditations



Memberships





Social Value

Right from the outset, giving back to our local communities has always been important to PDMS. We do this in many ways including fundraising activities undertaken by our generous and enthusiastic staff, corporate charitable donations to local, national and international causes and providing services in kind - for example, a new website for a sporting club or a database for a wildlife charity.

However, what we are most proud of is the time that our team generously gives up to support many community charities and organisations - particularly those that focus on young people. We provide mentors to schools and students, support the work of Junior Achievement and help to broaden the horizons of young people, especially young girls, when it comes to career opportunities in tech. We've welcomed hundreds of students on work experience, placements and apprenticeships over the years and have loved helping young people to learn more about the world of work and grow in confidence.

We want to play our part in protecting our environment too. Our ISO14001 accreditation, is helping us to measure and minimise our impact.

PDMS has committed to achieving Net Zero and has pledged not only to take action to measure, educate and offset its carbon footprint but to also champion environmental protection within all spheres of influence including biodiversity.

When awarded contracts to undertake work as part of the GCloud framework, we will discuss with the buyer appropriate levels of social value that we could offer that are aligned with the buyer's social value objectives, we also liaise with the relevant buyer project team to see how we can develop and maintain skills as part of any contract. We will look to support the buyer's own social value framework by offering work careers support, mentoring and supporting charities that help women and young girls to progress a career in tech, STEM ambassadors etc.

We regularly take on apprentices across different technical roles and 17% of our current development team started as apprentices.

We will pro-actively seek to openly share our knowledge/ expertise by providing online 'lunch and learn' training sessions on accessibility, agile delivery and UX design. Examples include work experience placements, careers talks & mentoring, diversity & inclusion initiatives and supporting the development of digital skills.

Our areas of social value focus are:



We will provide regular updates on how we are performing in relation to our social value commitments as part of our regular Account Management meetings and will provide an annual report detailing the activities undertaken which have been attributed to a buyer's specific contract and the impact delivered.



Our Clients





Skills England

Challenges

The Occupational Maps were originally developed to showcase apprenticeship standards. As apprenticeships expanded and Skills England adopted a broader, occupation-centric approach, the Occupational Maps required enhancement to encompass other technical education programmes.

Benefits and outcomes



Interactive platform that provides Skills England's technical education data in a comprehensive and intuitive library



Tackled major risks iteratively with user feedback in Alpha phase then created a data service using an API-first approach in Beta



Stakeholders can easily extract occupation data in a range of formats to suit multiple user types and purposes



Platform provides clarity in navigating the interconnected world of education and careers



Positive user feedback on creativity, informative content, and ease of use



"It has been an incredible privilege to work with very talented professionals on delivering occupational maps service to public beta. As Product Owner and Contract Manager, I have been consistently impressed with the creativity and tangible outputs. I wanted to say a personal thank you to the Occupational Maps team. Though employed by PDMS, they have been valued members of my whole team. We delivered public beta on time and on budget. Thank you."

Hannah Morgans

Product Owner at Skills England



Crown Commercial Service (CCS)

Challenges

Originally modernised from manual processes twenty years ago, there had been no significant upgrades or enhancements to the fleet portal for some time. The interface looked dated and more sophisticated users were requesting additional functionalities in line with recent technological developments.



Benefits and outcomes



Enhanced search functionality for common search criteria and comparing up to three vehicles



Mobile responsive website with modern front-end where CCS can easily maintain content



Improved reporting and features to comply with GDPR



Delivered £5.4m savings in the first 18 months



Registrations quadrupled to circa 1600 site users





Contact Details

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