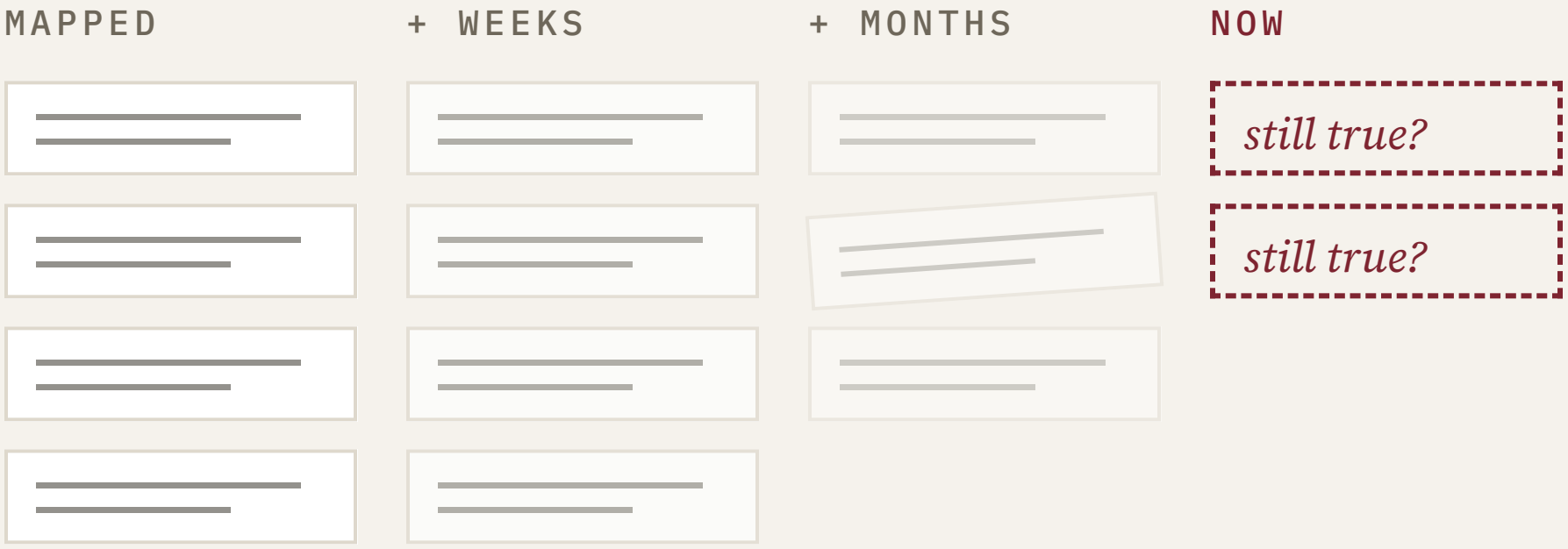
DISCOVERY PHASE · A RECIPE

Discovery dies of old age.

How to run discovery in weeks, not months, and let AI take away the write-up tax.



WHERE DISCOVERY LOSES ITS TIME

DRAG

Months pass between the first interview and the first decision. The context shifts underneath the work.

THE WRITE-UP TAX

Every hour in a workshop creates a day or more of documentation. Nobody budgets for it.

THE SILO

Findings that belong to other teams get noted, filed and lost. The same service gets discovered three times.

None of them is a people problem. All three can be designed out.

STEP 1 OF 6

1

Sweep before anyone enters the room.

Gather what already exists: complaint records, previous reviews, performance data. From it, draft:

- A one-page brief
- A partly filled map of the service
- A few real cases

Where the evidence is thin, the map says so and asks the room to confirm. Nothing is invented to look finished.

STEP 2 OF 6

2

Session one: map the friction.

Three hours with the people who run the service, telling you exactly where it hurts.

- Map the service as it really runs
- Mark where the friction sits
- The room votes on which problem to fix first

3

Session two: score the options.

Score the options for fixing the chosen problem.

Always include the option of changing the process and touching *no technology at all*.

4

Session three: plan the first slice.

Turn the chosen option into a delivery plan for its first slice, the smallest change worth shipping.

The person who owns the decision confirms it in the room, with the people who gave the evidence watching.

Not in a follow-up meeting. Not at a board six weeks later.

STEP 5 OF 6

5

Move governance at the same speed.

Between sessions, the relevant leads see the outputs and can object in writing by a deadline. If they don't, the cycle proceeds.

- Owns a decision: named
- Owns an interest: kept informed

Silence is alignment.

STEP 6 OF 6

6

Industrialise the write-up.

FIXED INPUTS

- The transcript
- Wall photos
- Pre-cycle materials

FIXED OUTPUTS

- Updated service map
- Pain-point register
- Packs for other teams
- Messages back to the service
- An action list

Any trained operator can run it, with no skill at writing prompts. The capability lives in the process, not in one person.

THE RULE THAT MAKES IT SAFE

Keep people in the loop.

PLAY BACK FIRST

Before anything is produced, someone who was in the room confirms or corrects what the AI understood.

TRACE EVERY CLAIM

Every output points back to something said in the room or written on the wall. Gaps say *to confirm*.

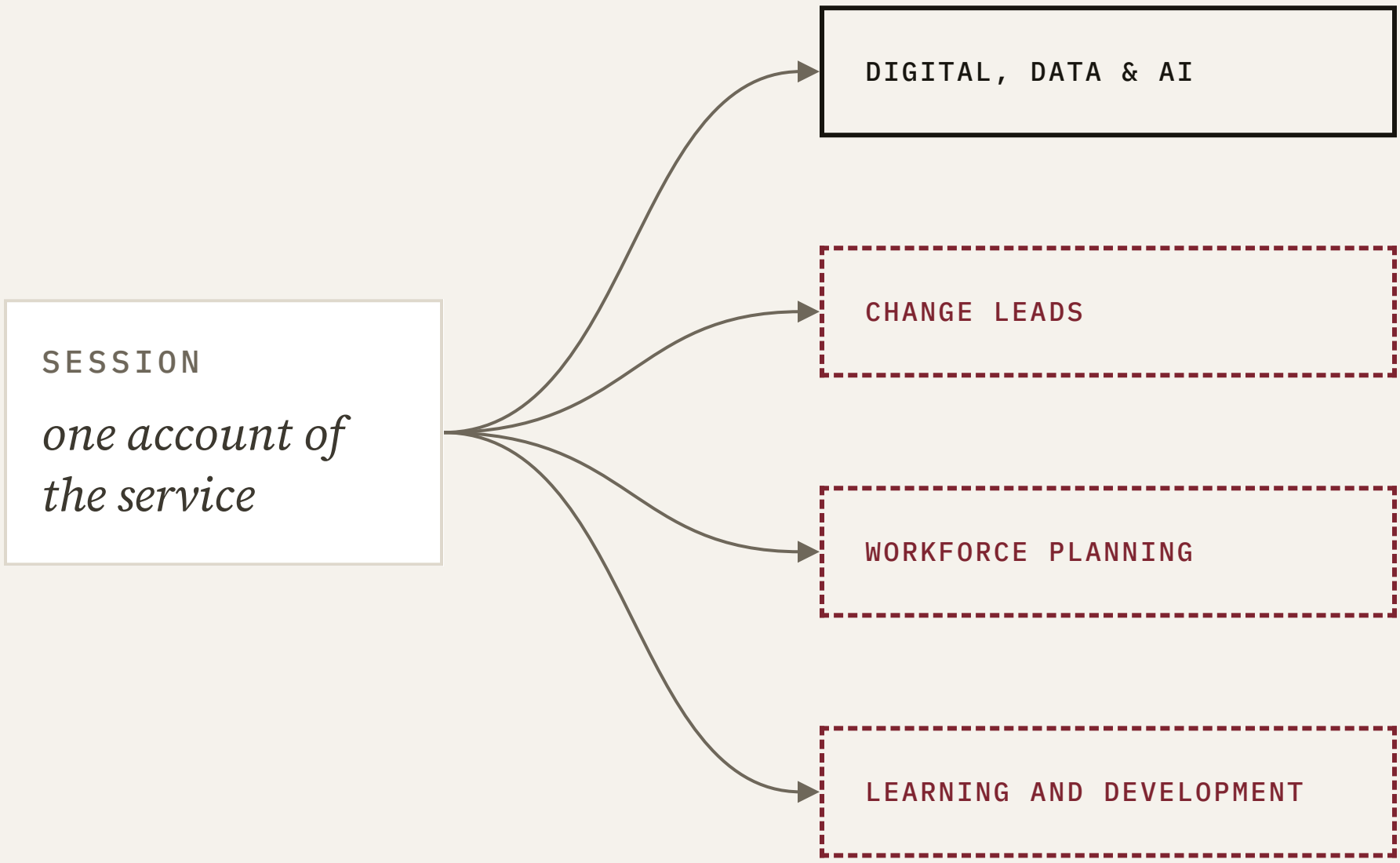
PROTECT THE DATA

A data protection impact assessment before live records. Run inside your own systems.

The AI does the assembly. People do the judgement.

ONE SESSION, FOUR TEAMS

One afternoon of evidence. Four teams fed.



Digital, Data & AI runs the session and takes the build. The other three get handover packs, marked on one shared map.

WHAT IT CHANGED

< 1 day to write up a three-hour session, down from two to three days of analyst time

2 weeks from the session to a prioritised backlog with the delivery team, ready to build

How old is the discovery your next decision rests on?

Full article: kubairshirazee.com/agilesociety/discovery-phase