



Human-Centered Programs for Sustainable Impact

Co-Design Tools and Templates Workbook

Center for Design Kindness



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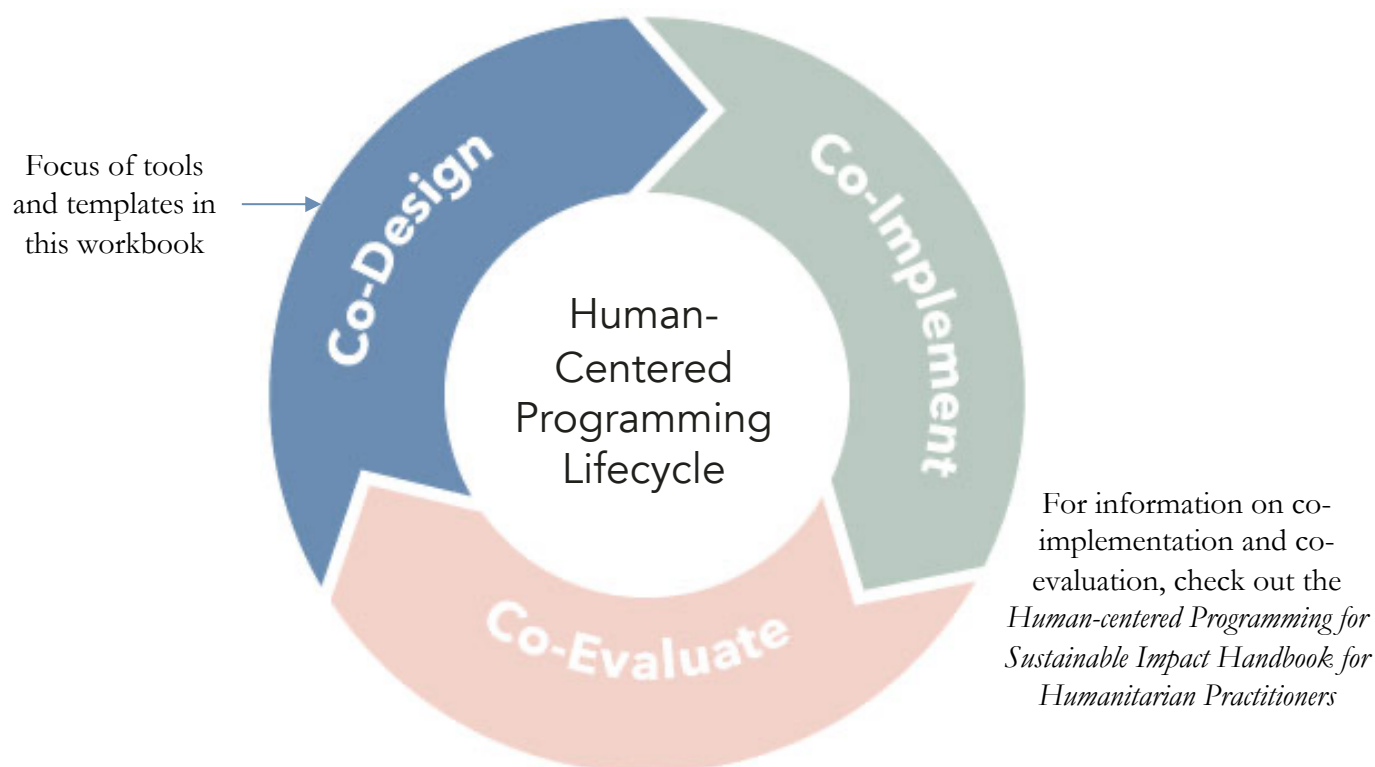
Introduction to Using this Workbook

Human-centered programming is an approach to solving challenging problems in deep partnership with your audience. Each person is the expert on their own life. Partnering with your audience brings their stories, their goals, their challenges, and their creativity into your programs. It will both challenge and inspire you as you design, implement, and evaluate programs together.

This workbook includes templates and tools to **co-design** solutions with your beneficiaries. Start by reviewing the intro sections on co-designing solutions and the overview on Human-Centered Design (HCD). Then take in an overview of all the tools available in the table of contents.

Then, choose one or two to start with that seem most helpful for your program. We recommend beginning with Empathy Interviews! Not every tool will be necessary for every program, and you can consider this an à la carte workbook.

Try them on. We can't wait to hear how it goes!



Co-designing Solutions

Your programs are intended to help others overcome very difficult challenges.

Providing a seat at the table for those most affected by these challenges seems obvious, but is frequently overlooked.

Failing to truly understand the lived experience of your audience can lead to unintended consequences. These may include lack of adoption, poor outcomes, wasted resources, and even outright harm.

Each person is the expert on their own life. Co-designing with your audience brings their stories, their goals, their challenges, and their creativity into your programs. It will both challenge and inspire you.

By co-designing solutions with your audience, Your assumptions will be put to the test and both you, your audience, and your programs will be changed in amazing ways.



co-designer
(n.) a person who creates solutions **with** you.

Who are (or who will be) your co-designers? Describe your program's audience below.

Human-Centered Design Overview

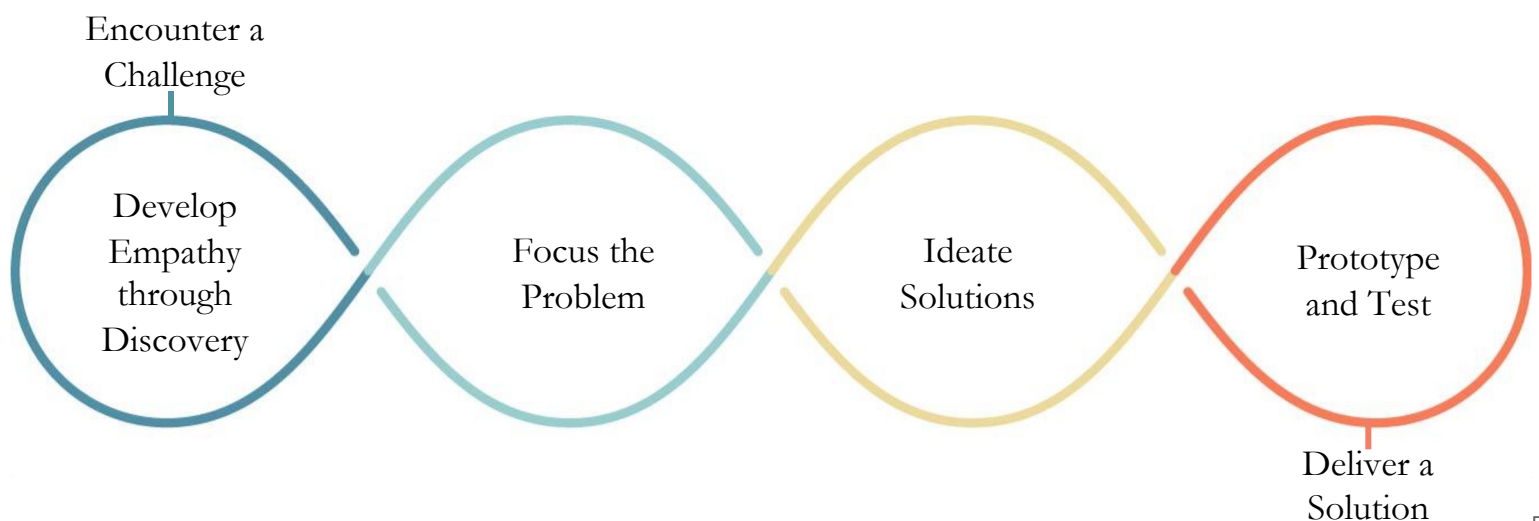
With so many difficult challenges and so many people to help, it is tempting to run with the first feasible solution. Time is often short and moving quickly is necessary. There may be pressure from donors, solutions may have been predetermined by leadership, or there may be legacy solutions in place.

But jumping to a solution can cause more problems than it solves. Following an intentional design process helps you truly understand the problem and to bring your audience in. Take a beat. Design, don't jump.

Whether you are designing a new program, or improving an existing one, the process is the same. It starts with a **discovery** phase where you understand the context of the challenge and develop empathy for your audience. Next, **you focus the problem** and describe it through the eyes of the person you are trying to help. Then you get creative and **ideate** as many solutions as you can! Next, you **prototype and test** a solution and try it out in a small way, learning as you do. Then you scale and deliver your solution.

With practice and the right tools, this process is done quite rapidly. And the cost of not doing it can be significant. Not one minute is ever saved by implementing a solution that does not help the true problem.

Following are templates and tools you can use to co-design solutions that will help your beneficiaries with the challenges they face. These tools can be used together as you design from scratch, or individual tools may be useful for you as you look to improve existing programs. Try them on.



Discovery Tools

Learn context and develop empathy

Empathy Interviews

Gain empathy as you listen to the stories your audience tells. Your goal is to begin to understand the challenge from their perspective, and the best way to do this is to **listen**.

"The shortest distance between a human being and truth is a story.- Anthony de Mello

Interview Structure

1. Introduce the purpose of the interview and how it will inform the program
2. Gain their consent to participate
3. Interview
 - a. Ask for **stories** related to the challenge your program addresses
 - b. Listen carefully, asking clarifying questions if necessary
 - c. Explore areas that seem particularly important to them
4. Close by warmly thanking them for sharing their perspective

Interview Tips

- Ensure a safe environment. Use trauma-informed approaches to the interview.
- If you find yourself explaining, teaching, or offering solutions... Stop... Breathe... and Listen.
- Consider yourself a novice learning from someone who is an expert in their own life.
- Consider representation and diversity in your interviewees, gathering multiple perspectives
- Allow interviewees to quietly contemplate if they choose. No need to fill the silence.
- Allow the interview to be an opportunity to build a relationship of mutual respect and trust.
- Interview with a partner who can take notes and capture verbatim statements

Interview Administration and Analysis

- There is no magic number of interviews. A good rule of thumb is interview until you find themes emerging and you are no longer learning new insights, usually *at least* 5 interviews.
- Sit together with your partner afterwards to process what you heard and note all the insight.
- Keep notes in a consistent format to help you draw themes across interviews afterwards.
- Once you have completed your interviews, agree on themes in partnership with your co-interviewer(s). Place direct quotes into categories based on these themes. Look at the data in multiple ways, looking for additional overarching insight. If you are unsure of the themes, test the themes with those you interviewed to ensure they also agree.

Try it now. Practice holding an Empathy Interview with a colleague. Reflect on your experience below.

Participant Advisory Council

One approach to discovery is to create a Participant Advisory Council. This is a group of beneficiaries and community members who can advise on your program. They can be a great resource throughout the entire lifecycle of your program. They will have valuable insight and can share context regarding the challenge you are addressing. They can also participate in ideation sessions, review early prototypes and advise on improvements. Their feedback will give you valuable cues regarding how to best evolve programs. Considerations regarding how to organize a council follow.

Questions to Address

- How will you gain informed consent from participants?
- How can you ensure inclusive representation across different groups (e.g. age, gender, race, status in the community, etc.)?
- Is this volunteer work? Could/should it be paid?
- Will the council stay together through the program lifecycle?
- What will be the structure of meetings? Who will facilitate?
- How can you set up collaborative governance between your organization and participants to mitigate power imbalances?

Draft a proposal addressing the questions above. Use it to seek support and guidance from your leadership, community leaders, and other impacted stakeholders. Use the template below to begin.

Participant Advisory Council Proposal for:

Sponsoring Leaders and Stakeholders:

Proposed participants:

Governance structure:

Topics to address or tasks to complete:

Duration of Council activities:

Meeting Schedule:

Surveys

Surveys can be a valuable tool to understand and quantify a broad understanding across multiple beneficiaries. They can also help to validate themes that emerged in empathy interviews, participant advisory councils, or other empathy-building approaches. Conversely, surveys may help to identify themes to explore in other empathy-building approaches.

The design of the survey is important. Finding results that are valid and meaningful is directly tied to the survey design. Ensure that questions are clear and neutral in tone. Assure participants that their responses will be kept confidential and data will only be represented in aggregate form. This will help participants be much more open in responding to the survey. Take special care in your data collection so that confidentiality and data integrity are assured.

Below is a sample survey template.

Survey Title: (use a clear title that explains the purpose of the survey)

Demographics gathering section (Respondents select from a list of demographics e.g., gender, time in the program, country of origin, or any other question that will help you meaningfully analyze the data.)

Quantitative Questions (e.g., Likert scale, rankings, radio buttons, etc. Keep questions brief and write clearly. Have at least person review your questions to be sure they are clear.)

- Example: Please rank the following items in order of importance to you. (provide a list of items)
- Example: How strongly do you agree with the following statement(s)? (provide a statement)
- Example: How frequently have you experienced _____? (list the challenge you are researching)

Qualitative Questions (e.g., open-ended questions. Keep questioning neutral so participants are free to answer openly and honestly.)

- Example: Please share a story about _____
- Example: Describe your feelings about _____
- Example: Is there anything else you would like to share? (This question is a great way to see what else is on their mind, and often provides incredibly fruitful insight.)

Closing (thank respondents for their participation)

Who will be your survey respondents? How can you be sure you are inclusive? List them here.

Stakeholder Map

A stakeholder is anyone who has a direct stake in your program. Stakeholders will help you gather the context necessary to start your co-design. List key players and note their insights and priorities. Where possible conduct interviews and review existing research or materials. Consider how each may influence your program and how you will engage them through the co-design process. Audience is right at the top of the map since they are the most important stakeholder.

Direct Beneficiaries/Audience

Organizational Leadership

Community Members

Family Members

Subject-Matter Experts

Internal Team

External Team

Donors/Funders

Other:

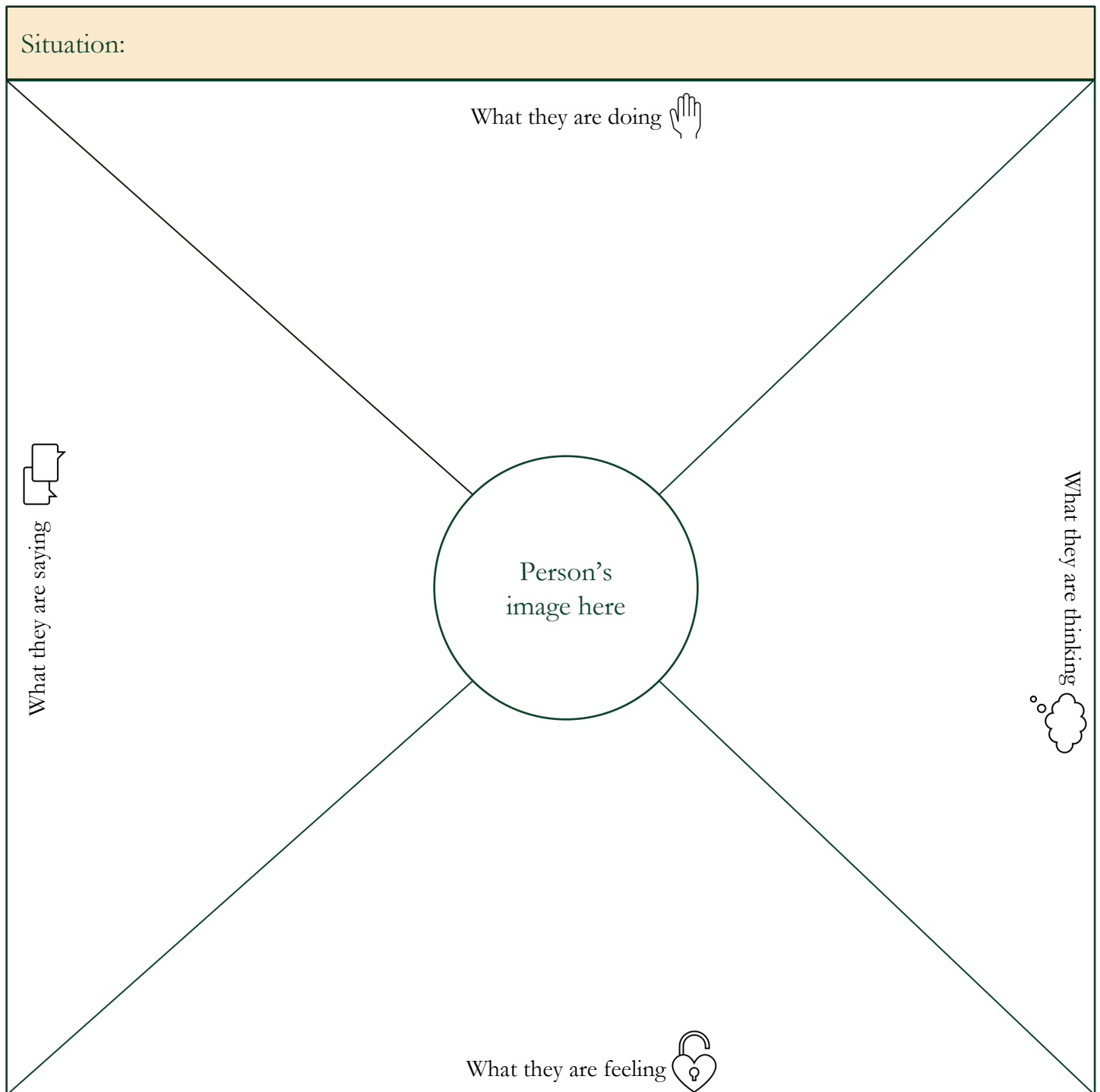
Other:

Focus Tools

Distill discovery and focus the problem





Empathy Map

An Empathy Map provides a richer understanding of a person's experience at any given time. Creating these in partnership with your beneficiaries will be a valuable way to understand how best to help. Often it is helpful to create 2 maps, one for the current state, and one that you are striving for.



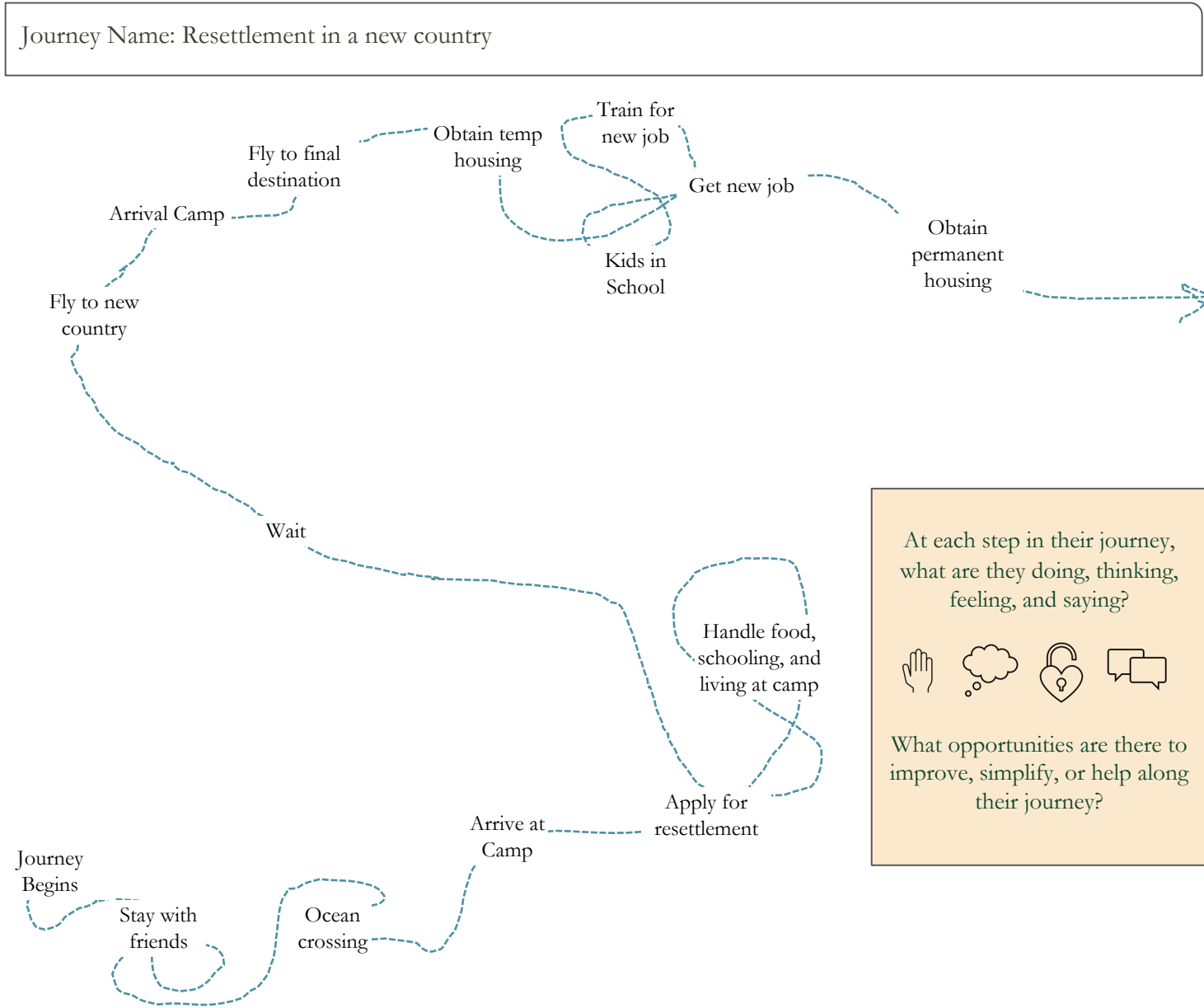
Journey Map (Example 1)

A journey map can help you understand an experience that has multiple steps. They are created in partnership with the audience member. Journey maps are often created twice. Once to illustrate the existing challenging experience, and again as an aspirational or hoped-for experience.

| | | | | | |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Journey Name (e.g. accessing new or existing services or resources): | | | | | |
| | Step 1: | Step 2: | Step 3: | Step 4: | Step 5: |
|  I am doing this | | | | | |
|  I am thinking | | | | | |
|  I am feeling | | | | | |
|  I am saying | | | | | |
| Opportunities | | | | | |

Journey Map (Example 2)

It can also be helpful to actually your map in a shape that illustrates the actual journey. Below is one example, but there could be many other ways. The goal is to accurately illustrate their experience.



Persona

A persona is a humanizing description of your audience. They are often an amalgamation of several people, to protect confidentiality. It helps to design for a person, not an abstract, and having persona in mind and on hand can help you make decisions that best align with their goals and needs. It is helpful to develop multiple persona that characterize the different segments in your audience.

Consider checking your persona with members of your audience, your team, and leadership. They will be quick to let you know if your characterization feels authentic or could use some tweaking.

| | | |
|------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Image | Bio | Resources |
| | | Frustrations |
| Name | Motivations | Goals |
| Age: | | |
| Role: | | |
| Family: | | |
| Gender Identity: | | |
| Location: | | |

Problem Statement

After doing a good discovery you can focus on the **true problem** you are addressing. A good problem statement is written from the perspective of your audience. It synthesizes the findings from your discovery and is likely pretty different from your initial understanding of the challenge.

A good problem statement is **compelling** and will inspire so many ideas for you and your team! It provides a clear and concise statement of the challenge your audience is facing. It also includes their emotional experience and feels authentic to your audience.

One thing it doesn't include is a solution! Embedding solutions into the problem statement will limit your team's ability to ideate on the problem. This is often difficult and takes real discipline since our instinct is to solve problems. But holding yourself back at this state will truly pay off in the ideation phase of your project.

Sample Problem Statement for a food security program

I am struggling to provide enough food for myself and my family. It is hard to make money and get what we need because our community has been hit so hard by COVID. The help we need either isn't available or is too hard to access. I feel frightened and ashamed that I am failing everyone who depends on me.

Sample Problem Statement for a workplace diversity and inclusion program

I feel overlooked and frustrated working here. I have a valuable perspective but I rarely get an opportunity to share it. In meetings the same people get the floor and talk over me. I'm missing out.

Write your problem statement below. This formula will get you started: I <audience member> am encountering <this challenge> and it feels <like this>.

Review and align on your problem statement with your co-designers and organizational leadership.

Ideation Tools

Dream up solutions to the real problem

Creativity Warm-up

Once you have a clear understanding of your problem, it is time to get creative! Finally, it is time to think up as many solutions as you can! It helps to get your team into a creative mindset so the ideas can flow freely. Below are tips to help your team shift from daily work mode into a creative mindset.

A Creative Environment

The physical or digital environment can really help or hinder creativity and openness. It can be a tool for you to help signal to your team that you are now in a new space, ready to create. Adjust the space so that everyone is on equal footing and create a pleasing environment for everyone. In person, this might include setting chairs in a circle, or maybe removing chairs all together. Consider the light in the room, and maybe even provide snacks or little toys at tables for everyone to enjoy. You may even wish to have music playing. Have your flip charts, sticky notes, and pens ready to go!

Virtually, this may mean setting some ground rules so that every person has equal opportunities to speak, asking everyone to turn on (or off) their cameras, or giving everyone a second to choose a fun background for the duration of the meeting. Be sure you understand how to use the collaborative features in your virtual platform (e.g. voting or emojis in the chat, white board capabilities, break-out rooms etc.) so you can make the most out of them for the session. It is a good idea to practice using these with a colleague so you know what to expect and can help other participants as necessary.

Brain-Activating Activities

Create work requires the brain to work in a new way, and there are many activities you can do to help activate the brain. Select one or two of the activities below or design another appropriate to your culture to get things flowing.

- Have each person imagine a beneficiary in their minds eye and have them draw that person in context.
- Have a team doodle, where two people sit back to back and one describes a picture that the other person draws.
- Do stretches or movements that move arms and legs across the body, activating new neural networks.
- Sing a song together, or two.
- Come up with your own!



Ideation Session

Facilitating an effective ideation session is as much art as it is science. Now is the time to go wide and dream up anything and everything that might help. Some tips for facilitating this are below.



“If at first the idea is not absurd, then there is no hope for it.” — Albert Einstein

Invite multiple perspectives. Bring people to the ideation table from different backgrounds. Include your audience co-designers. The more diverse your group, the more creative the ideas!

Review the problem statement and program outcomes. Ask if there are any questions or clarifications. Ask the group, “How might we address this?”

Ideate away! If you are in person, this can be done by breaking topics into different posters and giving everyone sticky notes to write as many solutions as they can. Virtually, you can use an online ideation tool, or simply introduce a topic on the screen, and have them add solutions to the chat. Keep it lively and upbeat by highlighting great ideas as they come in.

Go for quantity over quality. There will be time to refine ideas later, but at this phase, your goal is to generate as many ideas as possible. Now is not the time to have a feasibility conversation for any one idea. Gently prompt the team to move forward and generate more ideas.

Surface ideas with the most potential. Once you have exhausted your team’s creativity, have them review each other’s ideas. Give them each 10(ish) votes and have them vote on the solutions they think have the most potential. Explain that their ideas will significantly inform and inspire the prototype.

How might you best create a creative environment for ideation?

Prototype & Test Tools

Try and then evolve your solution

Minimum Viable Product

“The faster you can iterate, the faster your pace of improvement and innovation.” - Ann Mei Chang

Focus your solution. Select the solution you want to test. It may be an idea directly from your ideation session, or it may be a combination of ideas. Agree on which you will test with your co-designers.

Build an MVP. A **M**inimum **V**iable **P**roduct is the leanest, simplest, and most quickly made version of your solution that you can test. Your goal is to create a low fidelity version of the solution that you can quickly test with your audience. It doesn't need to be pretty, just testable. A few examples of MVPs for humanitarian and non profit organizations are described below.

Food Security Program MVP and Test. A new process for food distribution was hand drawn on notebook paper. A mini-crew of program employees set up a test run of the new process. They delivered food using the new process to 5 families. After running the new process, they sat down with the families and conducted interviews to see how the new process worked for them. They also checked in with the program employees involved to see where there were hiccups and what needed to be modified for their next run. They made some changes based on their findings and then ran the test again, this time with 10 families, looking to see how the process scaled if they doubled their deliveries.

Hygiene Kit MVP and Test. A homeless shelter developed a sample hygiene kit and shared it with a small group of their clients. They then asked the clients to show them what they did and did not use. They learned that the large toothpaste tubes included in the kit were often thrown away after one or two uses because they were cumbersome to carry around. They made another version of the kits with travel toothpaste tubes that were not thrown away.

Workplace Inclusivity Training MVP and Test. A non-profit developed a training to support inclusivity in decision-making in meetings. They first developed a presentation that was presented in three team meetings. They then surveyed the participants to see whether there was a meaningful change. They found that there wasn't. So, they revised the training to include direct observations and coaching during and after meetings. They surveyed again and found that this change made a significantly more meaningful impact.

What solution will you prototype?

How might you create a low-fidelity version to test?

Outcomes

Now you are closer to understanding the true problem, you can develop program outcomes for the true needs and goals of your audience. Clear outcomes help you understand whether you are making the impact you had hoped.

To develop meaningful outcomes, it helps to think of three kinds of measures: Reach, Response, and Impact. **Reach** measures tell how many people you are reaching. This may include the number of program participants and participant demographics. **Response** measures describe what your audience thinks of your program. Did they like it? Did they hate it? These could be survey responses, interview quotes, or even sharing stats or attention metadata. **Impact** measures demonstrate the impact your program actually makes in their lives. These are different for every program and planning them from the very beginning is crucial. *Review and align on program outcomes with your co-designers and organizational leadership.*

Reach Measures (how many people your program will reach):

Current:

Target:

Response Measures (what your audience thinks of your program):

Current:

Target:

Impact Measures (the impact your program will make in their lives):

Current:

Target:

Theory of Change

In its simplest form, a Theory of Change (TOC) is an if-then logic model that describes how your solution will create impact. Your If-then TOC statement can be accompanied by a detailed diagram of the whole system that will need to work together to accomplish this impact.

Simple If-then TOC Statement Pattern:

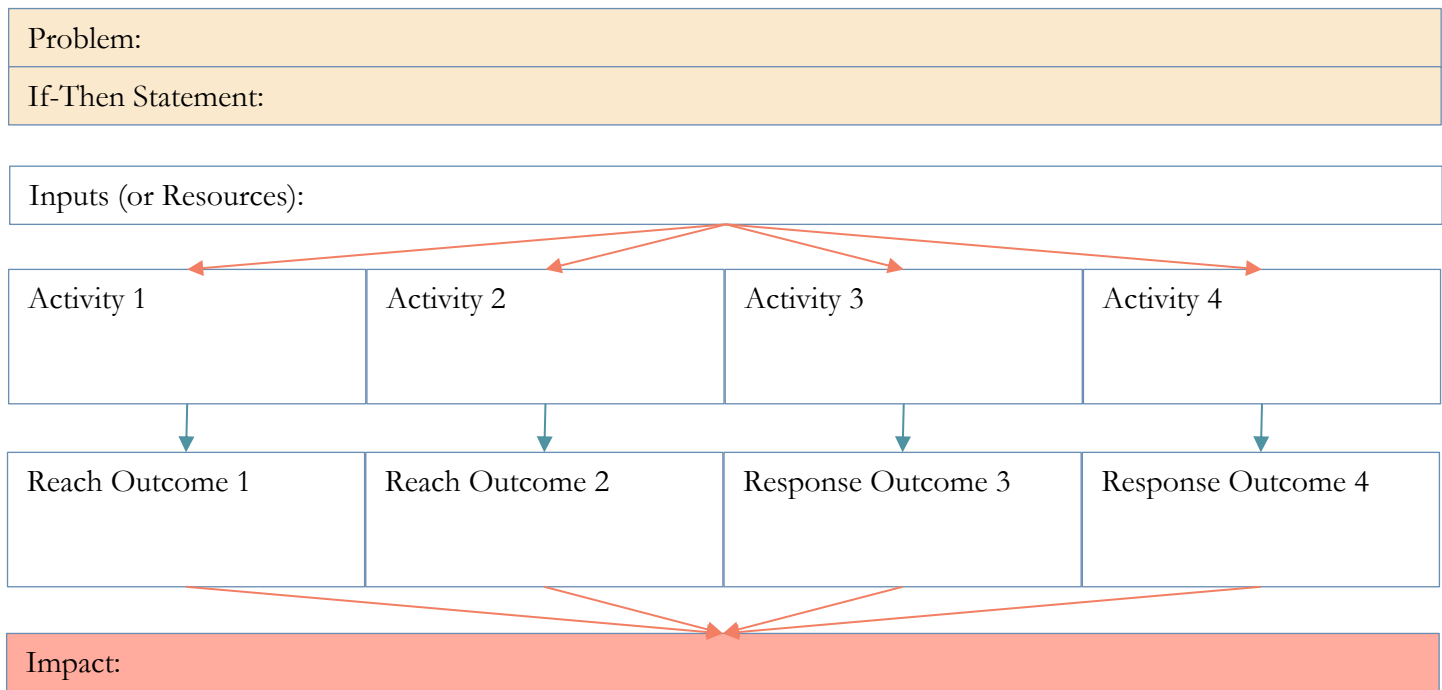
If [describe your solution]... then [describe the expected impact]... because [explain why].

Example 1: If a women’s cooking collective is established in camp, then childhood malnutrition will decrease because women will learn and share best practices for cooking nutritious recipes from camp-provided food.

Example 2: If the sustainable irrigation workshop is co-facilitated with local farmers, then sustainable irrigation approaches will increase in the village because farmers will be more willing to try recommendations provided by people they know and trust.

Detailed TOC Diagram Template

The system-level view starts with the problem and includes resources or inputs you have to help, activities your solution will include, and the outcomes and impact that are expected. The sample template below will need customization for your program as you may have more or fewer activities and outcomes, and some activities may impact multiple outcomes or are tied to specific inputs.



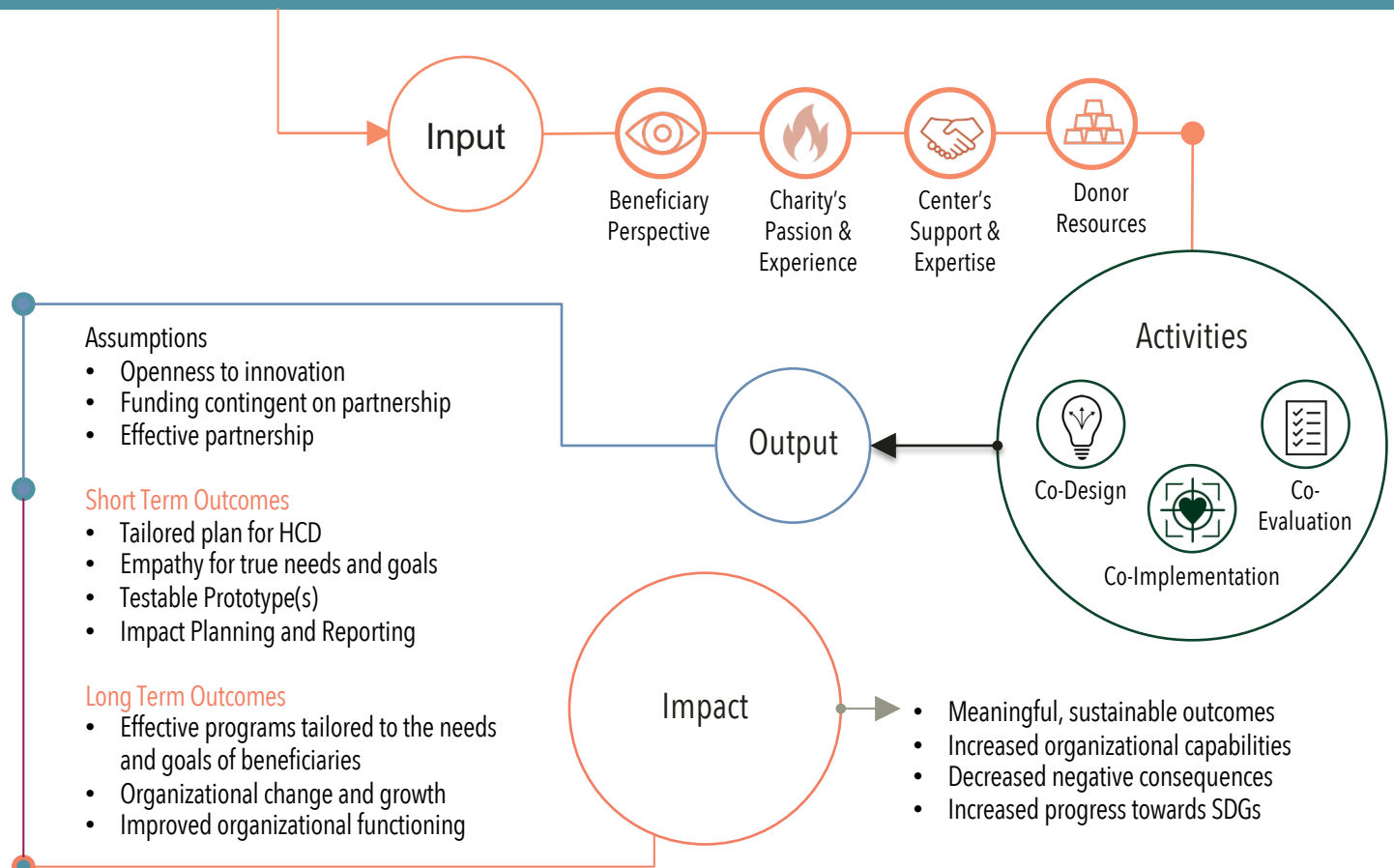
Theory of Change, Cont'd

Below is another example of a Theory of Change (TOC). This example demonstrates how humanitarian organizations can use human-centered design to improve outcomes. You will see similar elements to what is on the template in the previous page. There is no one right or wrong way to illustrate your TOC, the purpose is to think through connections between what you and your co-designers will do, and what impact those activities will have.

Problem

Many charitably funded programs fail to make meaningful, sustainable impact.

If charitable organizations adopt human-centered design, **then** their outcomes will improve **because** they will more sustainably address the true needs and goals of beneficiaries.



Conclusion

Congratulations! You are ready to bring your design to life. Stay connected with your co-designers. Our audience, their challenges, needs, and goals change all the time, so use the tools in this workbook to ensure your program continues to address true needs.

Next Steps. Share your Theory of Change with your senior leaders to secure their support and resources to scale and implement it. Check out the *Human-centered Programming for Sustainable Impact Handbook for Humanitarian Practitioners* also developed by the Center for Design Kindness for tips on co-implementation and co-evaluation.

Need more help? Design Kindness can provide support using this workbook and developing an implementation plan. Find us at designkindness.org for more information.

