Creating Solutions Together:

DESIGN THINKING,
THE OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE,
AND 3 GRANTEES.

TTCW
Tribal TANF–Child Welfare

HMRF
HEALTHY MARRIAGE & RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD

HPOG
Health Profession Opportunity Grants

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Family Assistance (OFA) fosters family economic security through grant programs, including three competitive grant programs: Tribal TANF Child Welfare Coordination Grants (TTCW), Healthy Marriage And Responsible Fatherhood(HMRF) and Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG). Since poverty is a highly complex social issue, the work that our grantees do is not easy. We work closely with our grantees to identify solutions to the challenges that their programs or the families they serve may be facing. Some challenges are seemingly intractable. Some grantees request assistance for the same issue, year after year.

OFA's journey with design thinking began with a desire to help grantees serve families more effectively and the belief that persistent problems require innovative solutions. We wanted to explore a new approach to solving problems **with** our grantees, one that would empower grantee organizations to come up with creative and high impact solutions to longstanding challenges. We wanted to test an approach that, we believed, matched our grantees' needs and abilities, as organizations that deliver a variety of social services. The fact that design thinking is a people-centered process (and all of our grantees work with people), it seemed well-suited to solve the service delivery challenges of our grantees. Further, it met, or did not exacerbate, budgetary constraints. Grantees are often non-profits, community-based organizations or public institutions. Much like that of our office, our grantees' budgets are fixed and staffing levels are tight. One of the benefits of using design thinking is that the biggest cost of implementation is typically staff time.

Finally, we needed an opportunity to test design thinking's utility with our grantee organizations. That opportunity presented itself in the form of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' (HHS) Entrepreneurs-in-Residence program, which pairs external innovators with HHS employees for a year to work on a particular project. We submitted a proposal to introduce design thinking to our discretionary grantees, and in late summer 2013, we were informed that it was one of five projects selected by then-Secretary Kathleen Sebelius as a part of the HHS-wide program.

Shortly thereafter, we formally started our experience with design thinking. Our journey included the selection of a design thinking consultancy, Motiv Strategies, whose model of design thinking we would learn and utilize. It also included finding grantee organizations who were interested in partnering with us on this project. We are grateful for the partnership of the three grantee organizations, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, First Things First, and the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, who learned design thinking and implemented the methodology through a project of their choice at their respective sites. Their interest, passion and hard work on this project was invaluable and provided our office with perspectives on design thinking from each of the three competitive grant programs that our office administers.

In the following pages, we define design thinking and the coaching model that we utilized with our grantee partners. We also share insights that we have gathered through this experience about the use of design thinking in human services. We provide a brief description of each grantee project, along with our pilot grantees' thoughts on the process and their results. We conclude with some of OFA's thoughts on the pilot projects and reflections from our grantees on their experience with design thinking.

Tribal TANF Child Welfare Coordination Grants (TTCW) seek to improve coordination of Tribal TANF and child welfare services provided to tribal families at risk for child abuse or neglect. OFA administers $2 million in funding to support grants to 14 tribes and tribal organizations. The Tribal TANF programs affiliated with the TTCW grants range from an annual caseload of 5 families up to the highest caseload of 578 families served.

The Healthy Marriage Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF) initiative is part of OFA's strategy to improve the lives of parents and children by making healthy marriage and relationship education, parenting classes, and economic security activities more accessible to low-income individuals and families. OFA administers $150 million in funding to support a network of 121 organizations in 47 states, which served approximately 90,000 participants in its first year.

Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) provide education and training to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other low-income individuals for health occupations that pay well and are expected to either experience labor shortages or be in high demand. OFA administers $85 million in funding to support 32 grants in 23 states. As of March 2015, HPOG has served over 35,000 individuals.

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Design Thinking Defined & Our Approach

WHAT IS DESIGN THINKING?

Design thinking "is a deeply human process that taps into abilities we all have but get overlooked by more conventional problem-solving practices."[1] At its heart, design thinking is a human-centered approach to problem-solving. It consists of a set of tools that focus on empathy for the end-user (or the families in our world) in the creation and consideration of any solution.

> **At its heart, design thinking is a human-centered approach to problem-solving. It consists of a set of tools that focus on empathy for the end-user.**

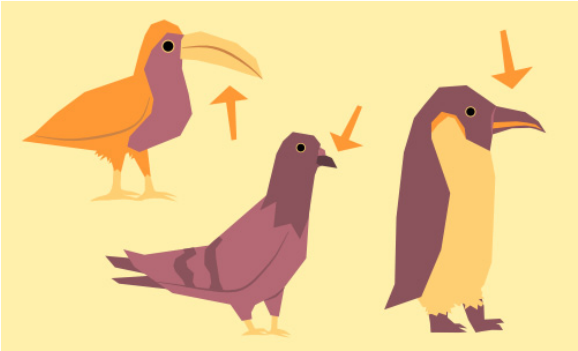
This creative problem solving approach is a departure from how we normally solve problems. Often, we employ traditional problem solving approaches, such as deductive and inductive reasoning, immediately upon hearing about a problem. These approaches use our experiences to help us logically reason what a solution might be, encouraging us to jump quickly from problem statement to solution (see INDUCTIVE REASONING and DEDUCTIVE REASONING for more information). In addition, we often utilize these approaches working alone, without looking to others for their perspectives. Instead, the approach that design thinking encourages consists of a team of individuals who work together to consider a variety of possibilities, grounded in the needs and desires of the end-users.

The possible solutions will then be tested by the end-users, who will help to determine which possible solution is the best. End-users will also help to refine the solutions, co-creating the product or service that they will ultimately use or experience. The different tools that the team uses throughout the design thinking process helps to facilitate a balance between conventional problem solving approaches and abductive reasoning. Both are needed to create innovative, yet practical, solutions. (see ABDUCTIVE REASONING for more information)

It is both this collective problem-solving approach that includes families and this emphasis on empathy that drew us to design thinking. We hypothesized that utilizing an approach with this focus would equip our grantees with a replicable methodology that would better enable them, together with their staff and partners, to understand family experiences, more effectively match problems to solutions, and produce innovative and high impact responses to challenges. Ultimately, our hope was that the solutions derived through design thinking would enable our grantees to really understand the root cause of an issue, allowing them to remove barriers to program access, retention and success.

INDUCTIVE REASONING

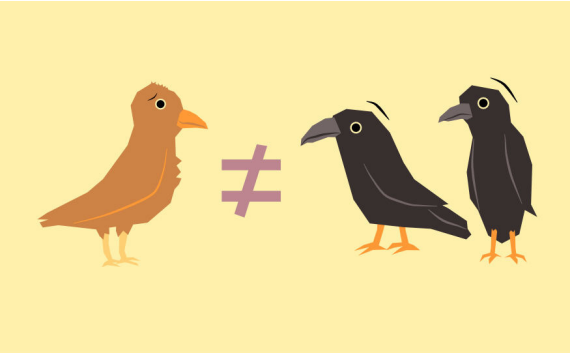
"Every bird that I see has a beak, so all birds have beaks."



Inductive logic — the logic of what is operative — reasons from the specific to the general.[2] Inductive reasoning is based on past experiences that inform your reasoning about the present or future.

DEDUCTIVE REASONING

"If the general rule is that all crows are black, and I see a brown bird, I can declare deductively that this bird is not a crow."



Deductive logic — the logic of what must be — reasons from the general to the specific.[3] With deductive reasoning, you use general rules to inform your reasoning about specific things.

[1] http://www.ideo.com/about/
[2] Martin, Roger. "Business of Design." June 2008. Page 28.
[3] Martin, Roger. "Business of Design." June 2008. Page 28.

ABDUCTIVE REASONING

"Imagine you are an archeologist and during an excavation, you find bones like you have never seen before. In order to determine to what type of species these bones belong, you guess that they are from a new type of species that civilization has not discovered before. This educated guess is your starting point. You begin testing your hypothesis by comparing the bones to all different types of species to determine whether you are correct or not."

Abductive reasoning generates new ideas through "modal reasoning; its goal is to posit what could possibly be true." [4] Abductive logic is similar to making an educated guess related to something that you have never seen or experienced before.

OUR APPROACH

If you conduct a search for "design thinking" or "human-centered design" on the internet, you will find a number of results that link to different design thinking models. To a large degree, all of these models are similar, but may use different terms to describe steps of the methodology. In order to create consistency across our pilot projects, we decided to have the Office of Family Assistance staff and three grantee programs learn and utilize the same methodology. Thus, we learned Motiv Strategies' design thinking methodology. It consists of 5 phases: **Investigate, Reframe, Ideate, Refine and Implement.** Below is a brief overview of Motiv's model. Want to learn more? Check out Motiv's website at **www.motivstrategies.com.**

> **It's only when you understand people's needs and desires that you can create solutions that truly address the root cause of an issue.**

INVESTIGATE: The investigate phase is all about empathy, and empathy is all about understanding people's needs and desires. In this phase, you learn about people's needs and desires by conducting interviews and through periods of observation. These activities provide you with a more informed view of the context and environment in which your clients or customers live and work. During these interviews and observations, you should take notes about what you are hearing and experiencing. You do this because even those of us with the best memory may forget some really important comments, body language or aspects of the environment that can be important pieces of information for future phases. The investigate phase is important because **it's only when you understand people's needs and desires that you can create solutions that truly address the root cause of an issue.**

REFRAME: In design thinking, you re-define the problem after the investigate stage, using what you have heard and learned to make sure you are solving the right problem. This is the phase where the notes you took are very important. You will work with your team and share all of your notes, grouping them into common themes or concepts. You will use those themes to create insights related to the particular problem you are looking to solve. These insights help to focus you on key areas for solutions by turning them into "How might we…" statements. The use of a "How might we…" statement allows you to take a pain point or area for improvement and put a positive and open-ended spin on it. This will be important for the next phase.

> **In design thinking, you re-define the problem after the investigate stage, using what you have heard and learned to make sure you are solving the right problem.**

IDEATE: This is often considered the brainstorming phase. In design thinking, it's where you propose solutions to the redefined problem, taking into consideration the needs and desires of your clients or users. These ideation sessions are focused around answering the different "How might we…" statements developed during the previous phase. Ideation sessions are run without constraints, and people are encouraged to throw out wild ideas. Try to build on one another's ideas and go for quantity, but you want to make sure that you stay relatively focused on your "How might we…" statements as you brainstorm.

[4] Martin, Roger. "Business of Design." June 2008. Page 28.

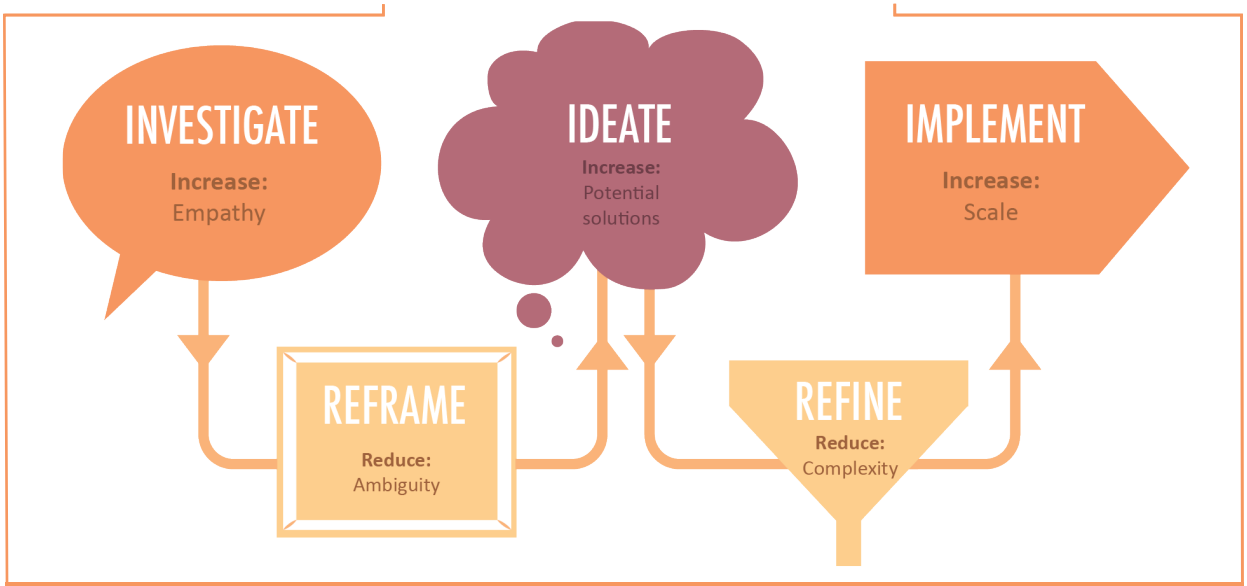
REFINE: During this phase, you select a few of your ideas from the ideate phase and create prototypes. Prototypes are visual representations of an idea. These can be very simple, like a picture sketched or a storyboard with stick figures. After creating your simple prototypes, you should take them out into the world to allow your customers (or families) to interact with them. This helps you understand your ideas' strengths and weaknesses. The more you test your prototypes with families during this phase, the more the prototypes will evolve and the better prepared you will be for when you actually invest time and money in your final solution.

Prototypes are visual representations of an idea.

IMPLEMENT: Incorporating the feedback and lessons learned from the refine phase, you will likely launch a few pilots before implementing your final solution.

Our grantee pilot sites learned design thinking by using it; however, in order to get a sense for design thinking and be introduced to Motiv Strategies' approach, representatives from each of the three pilot grantees came to Washington, DC, for a one-day, in-person training. Immediately following the introductory training, members of Motiv's team scheduled monthly coaching calls with each of the pilot organizations. These calls lasted one hour, each month. Each month, the grantee reviewed and implemented a different phase of Motiv's 5-step process. In the first month, Motiv helped the grantees to clearly define a problem that they wanted to solve. This problem became the focus of the 5-months of coaching calls.

Motiv Strategies' Design Thinking Model



Motiv's Model: Investigate, Reframe, Ideate, Refine, Implement.

DESIGN THINKING COACHING CALL PLAN

OBJECTIVE: Guide grantee organizations in their efforts to use design thinking to solve a problem in their own work through five one-hour calls over the course of five months.

August

- **Grantee Inputs** – Ideas for potential projects.
- **Motiv Inputs** – Investigate overview, discussion guide template.
- **Meeting Outputs** – Defined project scope, identified interview candidates.
- **Grantee Assignment** – Conduct interviews.

September

- **Grantee Inputs** – Interview notes.
- **Motiv Inputs** – Redefine overview, ideate overview, affinity mapping one-pager.
- **Meeting Outputs** – Well-defined research themes/patterns, How Might We statements, plan for ideation session.
- **Grantee Assignment** – Conduct ideation session with stakeholders or colleagues.

October

- **Grantee Inputs** – List of ideas, passed through first filter.
- **Motiv Inputs** – Refine overview, storyboarding one-pager.
- **Meeting Outputs** – Prioritized list of ideas to be storyboarded, identified users for feedback.
- **Grantee Assignment** – Storyboard ideas, solicit feedback from users/stakeholders, refine ideas.

November

- **Grantee Inputs** – 1-2 refined ideas.
- **Motiv Inputs** – Prototyping one-pager.
- **Meeting Outputs** – Prototyping & testing plan.
- **Grantee Assignment** – Complete prototypes, test prototypes with users/stakeholders.

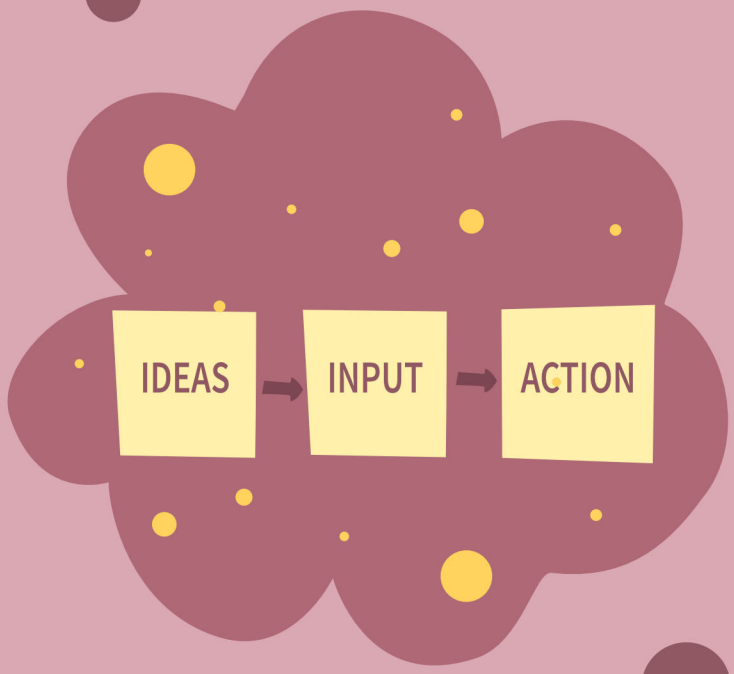
December

- **Grantee Inputs** – Testing results, decision on final concept.
- **Motiv Inputs** – Scale overview.
- **Meeting Outputs** – High-level plan for full-scale implementation.

2

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE FIELD

The purpose of this project was to test our hypothesis that design thinking would be a valuable problem solving methodology for our grantee organizations that provide social services. While we were testing design thinking's utility to our grantees, we learned valuable insights about what aspects of the methodology really resonated with our grantees and how our grantees utilized the information that they received by implementing design thinking. We also learned how to improve the implementation of a similar type of pilot program in the future.


IDEAS
INPUT
ACTION

:30

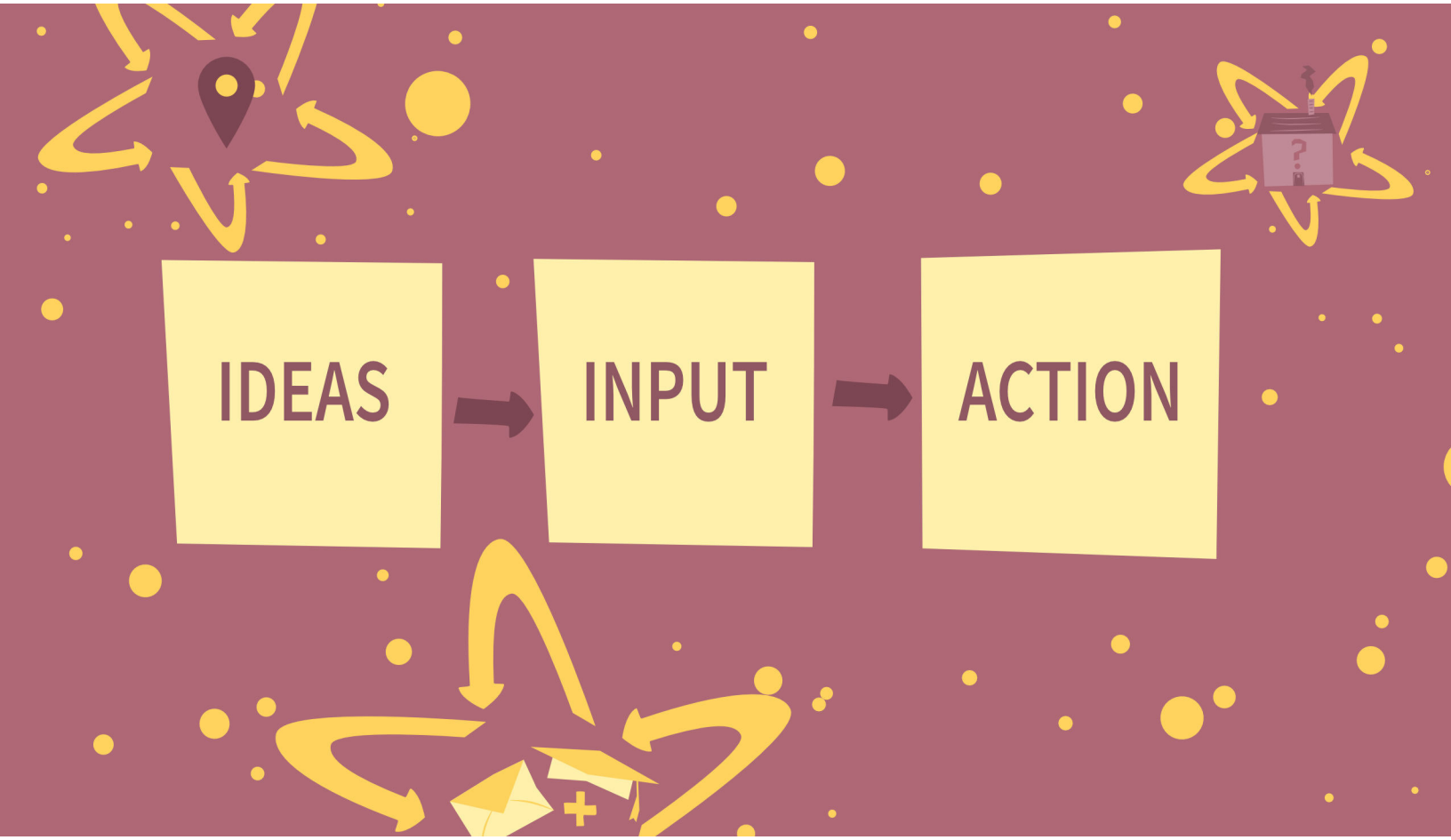
AUG

INSIGHT 1:
INTERVIEWS WERE EYE-OPENING.

Getting out and sitting down to talk with stakeholders as part of the interviews was the part of the design thinking process that all of the grantees agreed was extremely informative. The interviews were valuable to both the grantees as well as the stakeholders that they interviewed.

INSIGHT 2:
A SENSE OF COLLECTIVE EMPOWERMENT EMERGED.

The design thinking methodology is a collective approach to problem solving. The collective nature of the project led to the empowerment of all stakeholders involved, as well as the formation of new relationships for our grantees and their staff.



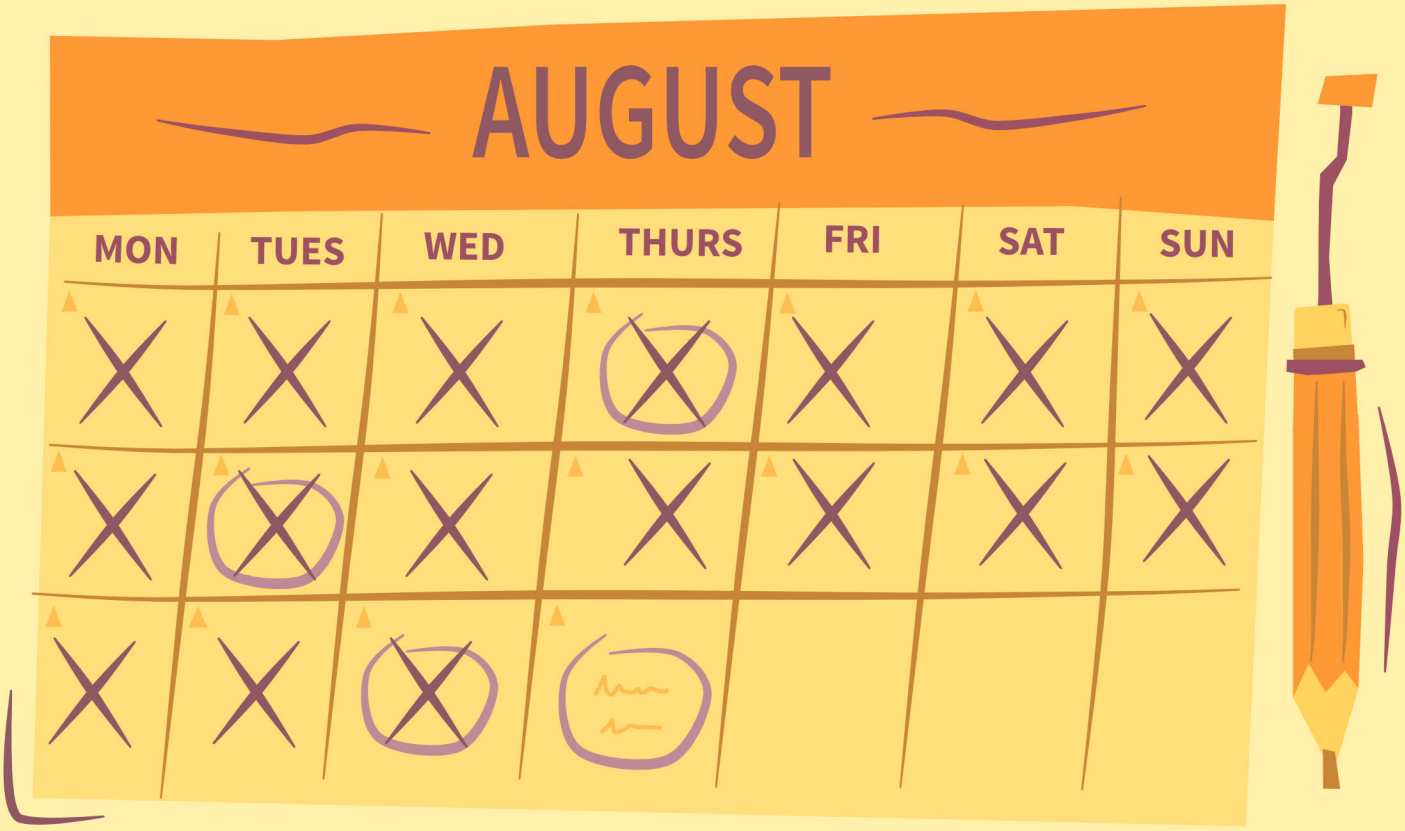
INSIGHT 3:
THE PROJECT WAS A CATALYST FOR INFORMED ACTION.

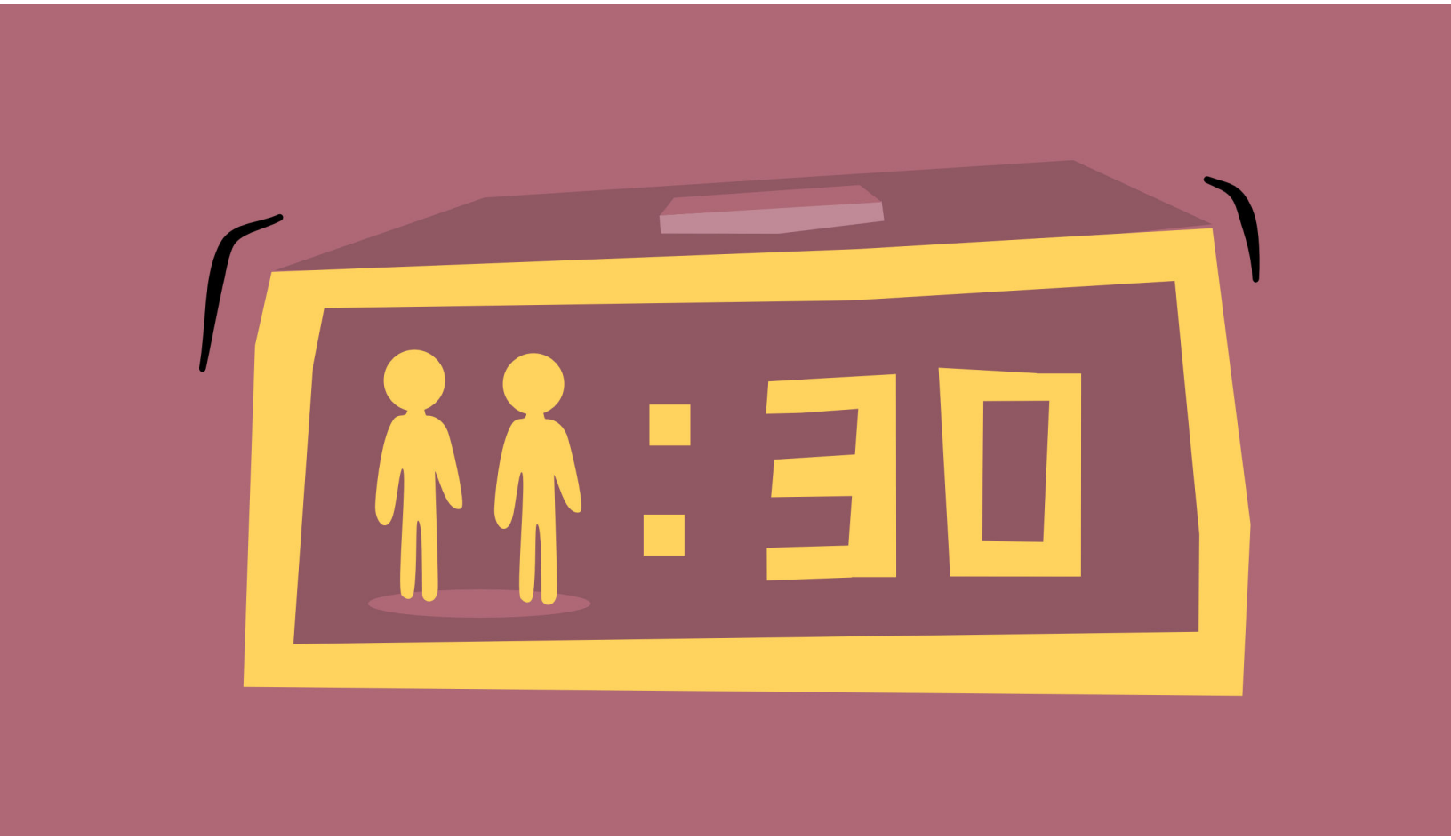
> Grantees moved quickly to solutions after starting to hear from stakeholders, often departing from the model. The fact that the information that the organizations gleaned from listening to their stakeholders compelled them to act illustrates that the organizations were embodying the essence of design thinking: having empathy for your end-user.

INSIGHT 4:

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING WITH SUPPORT WAS EFFECTIVE.

Grantees saw great benefit from learning design thinking by using it. Still, being new to the concept, additional support enhanced their learning experience. Grantee organizations found participating in an in-person introductory training and attending monthly check-in calls with experts integral to staying on track and grasping the utility of tools and the process.





INSIGHT 5:
YOU NEED A TEAM AND TIME.

> Grantee organizations needed to have a project lead and at least two staff participating. This was helpful, not only because design thinking is supposed to be team-based, but because it allowed the individuals to divide responsibilities and keep one another accountable. Setting aside a good amount of time outside of their regular duties was necessary to complete this project.

INSIGHT 6:

THERE WERE THINGS THAT WE COULD DO BETTER.

Since this was a pilot, it was certainly not perfect. (No pilot or prototype should be, right?) One key take-away: we need to do a better job of teaching some of the tools related to different phases of the methodology. For example, the concept of prototyping, specifically related to storyboarding, was new and difficult for some grantees to understand.

3

PILOT PROJECTS

The following pages provide a brief snapshot of the projects through which our grantees learned and used design thinking. If you are interested in learning more, please contact the grantee contacts listed at the end of each pilot project.

Name:	Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians
Location:	Siletz, Oregon
Design thinking Pilot Project:	Improve collaboration among social service providers
Pilot Leads:	Megan Hawley and Angela Ramirez
Program Website:	**www.ctsi.nsn.us**

TTCW
Tribal TANF–Child Welfare

= 40+ *Interviews*

= 50+ *Ideas*

= 3 *Prototypes*

Name:	First Things First
Location:	Chattanooga, Tennessee
Design thinking Pilot Project:	Post-grant sustainable business model
Pilot Leads:	Julie Baumgardner
Program Website:	**www.firstthings.org**

HMRF
HEALTHY MARRIAGE & RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD

= 20 *Interviews*

= 20 *Ideas*

= 3 *Prototypes*

Name:	Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit
Location:	Milton, Pennsylvania
Design thinking Pilot Project:	Improve communication with partner schools.
Pilot Leads:	Katherine Vastine and Gaye Jenkins
Program Website:	**www.csiu.org/watch**

HPOG
Health Profession Opportunity Grants

= 20+ *Interviews*

= 88 *Ideas*

= 4 *Prototypes*

CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF SILETZ INDIANS (CTSI)

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

The primary components of CTSI's Tribal TANF Child Welfare Coordination grant (TTCW) are:

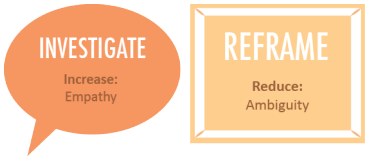
- Facilitating Wraparound Case Management meetings with clients
- Teaching Positive Indian Parenting Courses
- Facilitating the Multi-Departmental Team (MDT) meetings with other Tribal Social Service providers

CHALLENGE:

CTSI experienced several challenges related to the MDT meetings, including low attendance and participation. CTSI also serves an 11 county service area, which presents challenges in coordinating with other area offices. High staff turnover and staffing shortages in the local social service industry further impede partners' ability to attend the MDT meetings. Finally, CTSI is in the final year of the TTCW grant and is very worried about sustaining the MDT meetings when this grant ends.

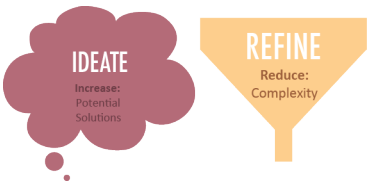
PROCESS:

After brainstorming with Motiv and the OFA Program Specialist, CTSI decided that improving the MDT meetings would be a good project to pilot using design thinking in the CTSI community. CTSI believes that a successful MDT meeting leads to a more successful Wraparound Case Management meeting and ultimately better outcomes for TANF and Child Welfare clients.

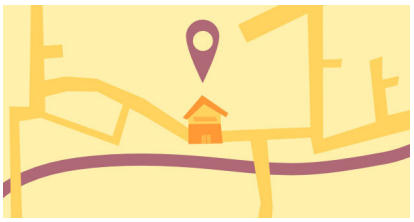


Between the first and second call, CTSI conducted 40 interviews with community stakeholders and developed a long list of "how might we statements".

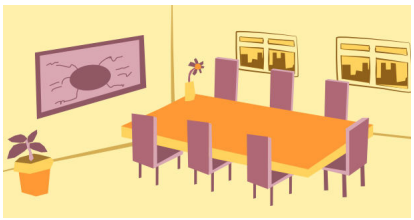
Between the second and third call, CTSI held another MDT meeting. This allowed CTSI the opportunity to prototype some of their initial ideas, including moving the meeting site, incorporating tribal culture in meetings and reviewing confidentiality agreements among the different agencies participating in the MDT meetings. CTSI gave out evaluations after the MDT meeting with the prototypes and received valuable feedback. This feedback encouraged CTSI to further expand on some of their prototypes. CTSI also noted an increase in participation in the MDT meeting. For example, everyone present spoke at least once.



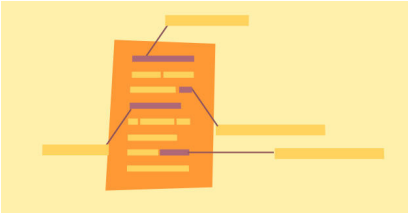
PROTOTYPES:



Moving the MDT meetings from the Indian Child Welfare Office to a more neutral location (Community Center) and sitting in a cirtcle.



Bringing Tribal culture into the meetings, like prayer and smudging (native cultural practice of cleansing. It rids the room of negative energy.)



Reviewing confidentiality policies for MDT meetings and each social service program.

Between the third and fourth calls, CTSI held another MDT meeting. This provided them with another opportunity to test their prototypes. They distributed a revised release of information to address confidentiality issues and reminded meeting participants what is and is not appropriate to share during the meetings. They moved the location of the meeting from the Indian Child Welfare wing and put it in the clinic. The move was so that members of the group felt that it was not just about child welfare, but a more neutral setting where other items could be addressed. They also traveled to other offices to help with the facilitation of meetings. The Salem office found it helpful to have them come and facilitate the meeting. At the next MDT meeting, they were going to test the following:

- Host at the clinic again
- Will be creating a "to-do list" at the end of the meeting to help with accountability and to know who does what.

SINCE THE LAST CALL: Siletz has been implementing their prototypes. They finalized and shared an updated version of the Release of Information for all Tribal Social Service programs. They have also continued to change the way the meeting is organized. The most recent change was to the agenda. They are now starting meetings by having each social service program report out on any changes or updates to their program's services. After each program has had the opportunity to report out, they then move to discussing the shared families that they serve and their needs. Anecdotally, meeting participants seem to appreciate this change, since it is one of the only opportunities for all of the social service agencies to be together and to talk about what is going on with each of the programs. The knowledge that is shared is helpful for when they are discussing the families and how to connect them with services to meet their needs.

CTSI INSIGHTS:

Design thinking helps identify the root cause of a problem, which may be different from an initial assumption or educated guess. CTSI tried multiple methods of increasing participation in the MDT meetings prior to using design thinking. These methods included things like calendar reminders and sending out agendas in advance. However, in the design thinking process, CTSI learned that one of the major barriers to active participation in the MDT meetings was the case workers lack of comfort with the confidentiality policies. CTSI is now starting to see greater success in improving the MDT meetings because they are addressing a previously undetected barrier.

Cross-functional sharing provides the opportunity to address a client issue before it becomes a larger problem. The design thinking process reaffirmed the importance of the MDT meetings and the need for communication between service providers.

Some people aren't comfortable talking in front of the entire group, so doing the evaluation forms at the end of the meetings and conducting one-on-one interviews gave them an opportunity to provide valuable feedback.

To learn more about CTSI's project, please contact Megan Hawley at meganh@ctsi.nsn.us.

FIRST THINGS FIRST (FTF)

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

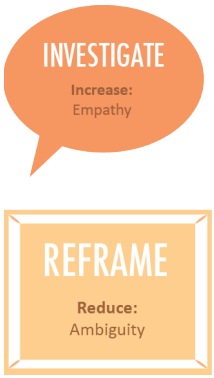
First Things First (FTF) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to strengthening families in Hamilton County, Tennessee through education, collaboration and mobilization. FTF is a community resource that collaborates with and is supported by a broad cross-section of community organizations, groups and individuals in an effort to strengthen fragile families. One of the programs that FTF provides is pre-marital classes. Its purpose is to help couples plan beyond just the wedding day in order to improve their likeliness for a healthy and long-lasting relationship.

CHALLENGE:

For the past three years, the pre-marital training program has been provided by FTF for free, as a result of the Healthy Marriage Responsible Fatherhood grant that they received from OFA. This is the final year of the grant, which has left FTF trying to figure out how it can sustain this very important, and popular, training program.

PROCESS:

FTF identified sustainability of its pre-marital class as the biggest pain point or cause for concern with respect to its program. FTF was considering charging prospective participants a nominal program fee in order to continue the pre-marital training program.

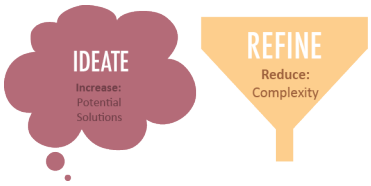


Between the first and second call, FTF interviewed roughly twenty current and former participants. These interviews gleaned two key take-aways:

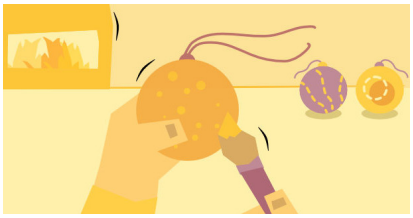
- Participants did not enroll in the pre-marital classes just to take advantage of the marriage license discount, as originally assumed. They enrolled because they really wanted to acquire the requisite skills to have a long and healthy marriage.
- Participants wanted more financial literacy education. While the curriculum discusses this issue, it is not emphasized as it should be since financial issues between spouses is the number one reason why couples call it quits.

Based on these insights, Motiv and FTF developed a long list of "how might we statements" during the second coaching call."

Between the second and third call, Julie brainstormed solutions to her "how might we statements," focusing particularly on "How might we get prospective participants to pay for our premarital classes?" One idea conceived consisted of connecting financial products with the education necessary to use them responsibly. Prior to the call, Julie reached out to a local bank to become a partner. Julie also considered other ideas to attract and retain couples, especially experiential activities to help couples improve communication and financial practices.



PROTOTYPES:



Couples make and decorate a glass blown ornament to talk about aspects of their relationship.

A card sorting exercise helps couples learn whether they are a planner, carefree, giving, need security, are spontaneous or like status when it comes to money.

Partnership with local bank to link financial products with the financial literacy necessary to use them responsibly.

Between the third and fourth calls, Julie tested an activity in which couples make a glass blown ornament together to discuss the importance of playing together as a couple, making memories together and communicating through the process. She also tested a card sorting exercise that helps couples talk about their money styles, habits, and attitudes. During the call, Julie shared with Motiv that students responded positively to the activities.

SINCE THE LAST CALL: FTF has continued to explore ways of using experiential learning so that people might be willing to pay for the class. FTF has also continued to engage clients when developing new ideas. In particular, they have transformed a singles class which they now call "The Art of Living Single". In the class, participants discover real-life strategies for building solid relationships while creating a beautiful piece of art to take home. With the new approach, registration fills up quickly!

FTF INSIGHTS:

Human centered design has to become business as usual (without consuming all their time and attention).

People can tell you a rather basic level of information through an evaluation or pre and post survey; however, human centered design provides a much greater level of insight.

It's really important to capture the thoughts and opinions of participants and staff regularly.

Programs and participants are fluid; therefore, you must create service offerings that are dynamic, flexible and more importantly helpful in order for your program to stand the test of time.

Be sure to incorporate the voices and attitudes of participants when brainstorming solutions to a particular problem.

To learn more about FTF's project, please contact Julie Baumgardner at julieb@firstthings.org

CENTRAL SUSQUEHANNA INTERMEDIATE UNIT (CSIU)

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

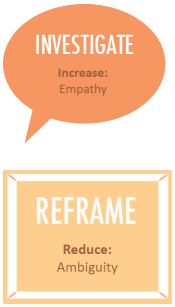
Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit's WATCH Project helps low income individuals from a largely rural, 10-county region get education and training in the following in-demand healthcare fields: Direct Care Worker, Certified Nursing Assistant, Licensed Practical Nurse, Registered Nurse, Emergency Medical Technician and Paramedic. The WATCH Project helps participants be successful in their programs of study by providing students who need it with tuition assistance, uniforms, and other services as necessary. Participants are assigned a career coordinator who helps them before, during and after training, as well as during transition to employment.

CHALLENGE:

Although WATCH and its training partners have shared goals, the project has better communication with some educational programs than with others. The WATCH Project wants to scale the success of communication it has had with one of its training partners to all of its training partners to ensure that all WATCH students are successful in school, no matter where they attend school. Because the WATCH Project serves a 10-county area, some regional schools have enrolled more program participants than others, resulting in varied levels of communication between WATCH and each educational partner. Staff decided to focus this design thinking project on communication with three training partners: the Central Susquehanna Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) Career Center, Pennsylvania College of Technology, and the Central Pennsylvania Institute for Science and Technology.

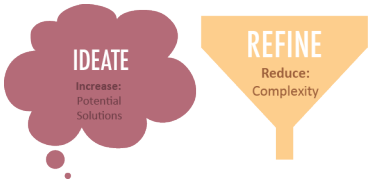
PROCESS:

After brainstorming with Motiv Strategies and the Federal Project Officer, WATCH decided that improving communications with its training partners would be a good project to pilot using design thinking. WATCH believed that good communication with training partners resulted in better service to their participants.

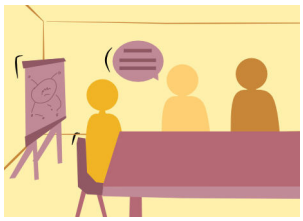


Between the first and second call, WATCH conducted over 20 interviews with the administrators and instructors of training partners. They also interviewed WATCH participants and career coordinators. Katherine and Gaye felt their familiarity with interview data might cause them to overlook some key ideas. To sort through what they heard during the interviews, they invited two other WATCH staff members to help them sort through interview notes, find patterns, identify, and group common themes. Working with these other staff members provided perspectives that were different from Katherine and Gaye's. As a group, they came up with 10 "how might we" statements. During the second coaching call, they went through the "how might we" statements and decided to focus on a range between 5 and 6.

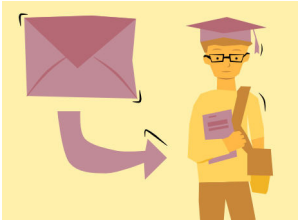
Between the second and third call, WATCH narrowed their "how might we" statements down a bit further and used them to frame their ideation session. Katherine invited her entire staff of 15 to participate in the session. Katherine felt that including the team in the meeting would help them understand the project and get them invested in the results. During the ideation session, the group came up with more than 88 ideas. Katherine and Gaye talked through some of the ideas they thought were most viable during the third coaching call.



PROTOTYPES:



Meet with training partner staff at their locations during regular staff meetings. This prototype was tested with Pennsylvania College of Technology and Central Susquehanna LPN Career Center.



Invite students from training partners (both those engaged with WATCH and those that were not) to participate in WATCH cohort meetings. These meetings included opportunities for participants to engage in nursing civility training, mock interviews, study skills development and soft skills training.

Post WATCH Project marketing materials targeted to potential clients and partner school staff in the schools' electronic newsletters and on bulletin boards.

Include WATCH Project announcements and events on bathroom stall walls at Pennsylvania College of Technology.

Between the third and fourth calls, Katherine and Gaye refined the ideas that were developed during the ideation session by getting additional feedback from the WATCH employment specialist and project supervisor. Because schools were nearing the end of a semester and there was limited time for prototype testing, they narrowed the number of ideas down to four. They tested the prototypes by contacting partner schools and floating those ideas by them. During winter break at the Pennsylvania College of Technology, Gaye tested participating at partner's staff meetings by attending a drop-in with the nursing program. Contacts within the Pennsylvania College of Technology were also interested in WATCH posting activities and information and the involvement of WATCH at faculty meetings.

SINCE THE LAST CALL: Katherine and Gaye continued to move forward testing their prototypes. Shortly before the final call, they received approval from Pennsylvania College of Technology and the Central Susquehanna LPN Career Center to post to the schools' bulletin boards and attend their next faculty meetings to connect with instructors and administrative staff. The team was still working to receive approval from Pennsylvania College of Technology to post in the school's electronic newsletters and to place informational flyers on the doors of stalls in bathroom facilities across the campus.

CSIU INSIGHTS:

Different partnering organizations have different expectations. Some organizations want the project leadership to communicate with them and be a continuous presence rather than other staff members. Now that the WATCH team is aware of this, Katherine has created time in her schedule to be available for that particular training partner.

Inviting additional staff members to participate in the design thinking reframe and ideation phases was very helpful. WATCH Project staff built upon one another's ideas to produce new ideas Katherine and Gaye might not have thought of if the process had involved only the two of them. It also ensured the staff buy-in needed for prototyping and implementation.

Communication cannot take place only when there are issues with clients. Communication with partner schools should be on-going and consistent.

To learn more about CSIU's project, please contact Katherine Vastine at kvastine@csiu.org

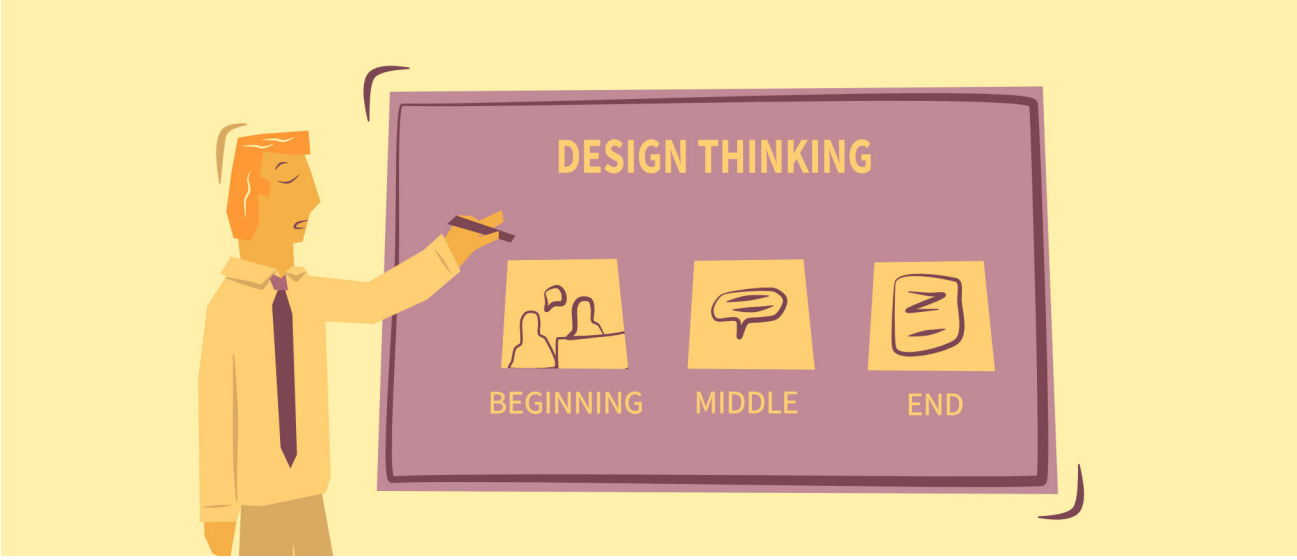
THE END GAME

Our desire to do better for our grantees resulted in testing a creative problem-solving methodology **with** our grantees. Through the three pilot projects illustrated in the previous section, we tested whether design thinking would be a successful way to empower grantee organizations to come up with creative and high impact solutions to longstanding challenges. Since the grantees are still working on their pilot projects, we do not yet have definitive results. However, we do know a number of things.

We know that the grantees embraced the methodology because each of the three grantees plan to utilize it to address other challenges. We saw that, with just a little support, grantees were able to grasp the concept of design thinking and use it rather effectively to improve program functionality. With that said, we do realize that the implementation of the methodology was not perfect. Still, the fact that the grantees were able to utilize the tools and go through the process largely on their own illustrates the accessibility of the content within the methodology. Ultimately, we know that this experience caused our grantees to run their programs a little differently. They are continuing to utilize design thinking tools, such as interviewing and continuously receiving feedback from families and stakeholders.

We saw that, with just a little support, grantees were able to grasp the concept of design thinking and use it rather effectively to improve program functionality.

We also know that this experience encouraged many in our office to embrace design thinking. The positive experience of our grantees illustrated the value of this methodology in addressing the challenges faced by federally-funded grant programs, and more generally, challenges faced by public and social service agencies within the United States. As a result, our office is planning to provide design thinking as part of its technical assistance efforts with grantees moving forward. In those efforts, we will use what we have learned from this experience to improve how we deliver the training and support to grantees in the future. In particular, we will consider alternate ways of teaching the different design thinking tools to grantees. One of the first areas that we need to work on is storyboarding. We will also consider tying our use of design thinking to particular types of problems, rather than any problem. Additionally, we want to create awareness and provide training on design thinking on a larger scale (beyond just three sites). Finally, we will make a point of embodying the tenets of design thinking by weaving its mindsets and tools into our normal work processes. For example, we want to figure out ways to regularly get end-user feedback, co-create experiences and products with end-users, and better understand how our policies and programs affect peoples' lives. To hear where we are with all of that, be sure to check **The Office of Family Assistance's website** in the near future for updates.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

While we might like to call the project a definitive success, we know that these pilot projects were only truly successful if the grantees thought the use of design thinking resulted in the creation of meaningful solutions. In the spirit of design thinking, we in OFA needed to understand whether providing design thinking met an unmet need for our grantees. For that reason, we followed up with the grantees. This is how they answered our questions:

Are you doing anything differently or in a new way? If so, would you be doing these things if it were not for your introduction to design thinking?

"We have found that we are approaching our Multi-Department Team (MDT) meetings differently, especially in a logistical way. We have determined that the environment sets the mood or atmosphere for the meeting. We also found that developing an action list during the meetings has been helpful in members leaving the meeting with a sense of purpose and accomplishment. They now leave with knowledge that we worked together to think of as many options as possible for our families to succeed. We have developed a more concrete schedule to include dates for team members to submit agenda items and a schedule for ourselves to send out reminders regarding the items on the action list. We have also gone back to holding separate meetings in the individual area offices."
– Megan Hawley (CTSI)

"First Things First is doing some things different as a result of design thinking. We were heading in that direction, but I'm not sure we would have ended up where we did without the design thinking process. We will continue to use it moving forward."
– Julie Baumgardner (FTF)

"As a result of participation in the design thinking pilot the WATCH Project is now using the process to further investigate TANF referral processes, ongoing support and participant persistence. If not for the design thinking pilot, and the support of the coaching calls, the WATCH Project team might not have the tools and processes to address this particular topic."
– Katherine Vastine (CSIU)

What's your opinion of whether this was a useful experience - Given the choice between design thinking and other types of technical assistance, which would you prefer?

"Using the design thinking model allowed us to think about our challenge or barrier with a fresh perspective. We were able to connect with each of our MDT team members to be sure that their perspective was being heard and we informed them of the process, so that they were aware to expect change by use of the process. I would most certainly recommend design thinking to other human service programs. I have found that as we have integrated this approach into our working minds, we have begun to use design thinking naturally in developing ideas for new projects and to redesign old projects for improvement."
– Megan Hawley (CTSI)

"I prefer design thinking because it involves the team. You can learn the process and run with it."
– Julie Baumgardner (FTF)

"The WATCH Project staff recognizes the value of the design thinking experience and process. The process produced data that we might not have otherwise discovered and forced us to look at data in a more creative way. Design thinking is a creative tool that, when used with other technical assistance processes, can expand the options for continuous improvement and problem – solving."
– Katherine Vastine (CSIU)

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Would you refer this methodology to other grantees and why?

"I believe that any work that includes working closely with the perspectives of other people would be a great opportunity to use design thinking. I could see this approach working in many different fields, including and beyond human and social services. "
– Megan Hawley (CTSI)

"I would totally recommend this process to other grantees. I think it is a great methodology to use in start-up and in enhancing the work being done. I am grateful for the opportunity to be included in the pilot process. While it definitely has helped us, I wish we had had it earlier."
– Julie Baumgardner (FTF)

"The WATCH Project staff recommends design thinking because it results in improved services and accelerated innovation. The process promotes a clearer understanding of the client. Human-Centered Design encourages you to go outside your usual sources of ideas and allows you to be creative in your thinking processes. Using the design thinking tools and methodologies, we were able to take what we learned to move partnerships to new levels and replicate the success with others. We would encourage other programs to take advantage of any opportunities to learn more about design thinking, participate in a pilot or receive technical assistance."
– Katherine Vastine (CSIU)

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