



**EQUITY-CENTERED  
COMMUNITY DESIGN  
FIELD GUIDE**

A CREATIVE REACTION LAB PUBLICATION

# **SUCCESS!**

WELCOME TO YOUR  
FREE DOWNLOAD OF  
THE EQUITY-CENTERED  
COMMUNITY DESIGN FIELD  
GUIDE. USE THIS GUIDE  
TO BECOME A NEW FORM  
OF LEADER: AN EQUITY  
DESIGNER. WANT TO  
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sappi | ideas  
that  
matter

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## CREATIVE REACTION LAB

St. Louis, Missouri

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- Follow us on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.
- Join our Slack channel to engage with aspiring and current Equity Designers at [www.bit.ly/ECCDSLACK](http://www.bit.ly/ECCDSLACK).

## TELL US HOW YOU'RE USING THE GUIDE

We'd love to hear from you about how you're using this Field Guide. Share this information with us at [info@creativereactionlab.com](mailto:info@creativereactionlab.com).

# HUMAN EQUITY

is when outcomes are not predictable based on someone's identities or characteristics (e.g. race, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability status, etc.).



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## **FIELD NOTES**



**HELLO**

**ASPIRING EQUITY  
DESIGNER!**

**Did you know that you're a designer no matter your field? As a teacher, nurse, politician, graphic designer, etc., your "designs" (also known as plans or decisions) impact others. How can we make sure that you're designing inclusive and equitable outcomes for all - no matter how big or small the decision?**

The reality of our society is that any system produces what it was designed to produce (unless a stronger force intervenes). Therefore, if oppression, inequalities, and inequities are designed, they can be redesigned. As we strive for human equity, we have to be able to recognize inequity and have the ability to recognize ourselves as designers who have the power disrupt it.

In addition to the practices of social innovation and organizing, some people have started to use creative problem solving processes, such as human-centered design and design thinking, to address human inequities and injustices. However, these methodologies in their current state are not enough to combat these complex human systems.<sup>1</sup> At Creative Reaction Lab, we've pioneered a framework called Equity-Centered Community Design (ECCD)<sup>2</sup> that acknowledges and utilizes the role of people + systems + power when developing solutions or approaches that impact "the many" within different communities.

We hope this Field Guide will provide a starting point for you to (1) identify where, how, and why to apply Equity-Centered Community Design, and (2) provide key strategies for thinking like an Equity Designer.

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1 Learn why at [www.creativereactionlab.com/eccd](http://www.creativereactionlab.com/eccd).

2 ECCD is one of the processes in the emerging Equity Design Field.



The image features a teal background. A large, white, trapezoidal shape with a thick black border is positioned on the left side. Inside this shape, on the left edge, there are several horizontal black lines of varying lengths, creating a striped effect. The text is centered within the white area of the shape.

**WHAT IS  
EQUITY-CENTERED  
COMMUNITY DESIGN?**

**Equity-Centered Community Design<sup>1</sup> is a unique creative problem solving process based on equity, humility-building, integrating history and healing practices, addressing power dynamics, and co-creating with the community.<sup>2</sup>** This design process focuses on a community's culture and needs so that they can gain tools to dismantle systemic oppression and create a future with equity for all. Creative Reaction Lab's goal is to share Equity-Centered Community Design to achieve sustained community health, economic opportunities, and social and cultural solidarity for all.

Through Equity-Centered Community Design, we are building and supporting an emerging movement of equity designers who take on systems with self- and systemic-awareness of oppression, creativity, and action. These designers -- students, activists, organizers, educators, government staff, hospital workers, and beyond -- seek to disrupt and dismantle these challenges in, and with, their communities -- school, city, family, culture, and so on.



EQUITY DESIGN COMPONENTS

- 1 ECCD is one of the processes in the emerging Equity Design Field.
- 2 For tools developed by Creative Reaction Lab to help you understand and break down the Equity-Centered Community Design process, visit [www.creativereactionlab.com/eccd](http://www.creativereactionlab.com/eccd).

## WHO'S A DESIGNER, ANYWAY?

We believe that a designer isn't just someone who uses creative software and products to make things look visually appealing or to render buildings. In fact, a person may not have formal training or an official title as a "designer" to be a designer.

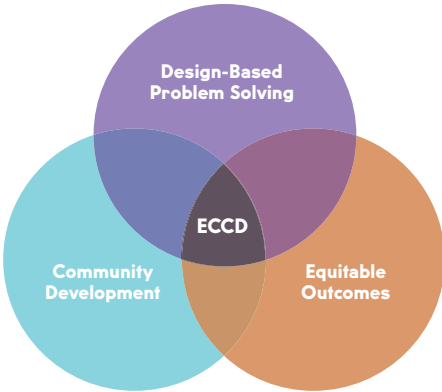
**A designer is anyone who has agency to make a decision, however small, that will impact a group of people or the environment. Every decision we make has an impact on equity.** Using this definition of design, we hope that anyone who uses this Field Guide recognizes their power to work towards a more equitable future for all. Remember, inequities exist by design, and only intentional acts can dismantle them.

**“Design is the intention  
behind an outcome.”**

– IBM

According to IBM, “Design is the intention behind an outcome.” We agree with this definition and more. We believe that not only is design intentional, but also has unintentional impact.

**“Design is the intention  
(and unintentional impact)  
behind an outcome.”**

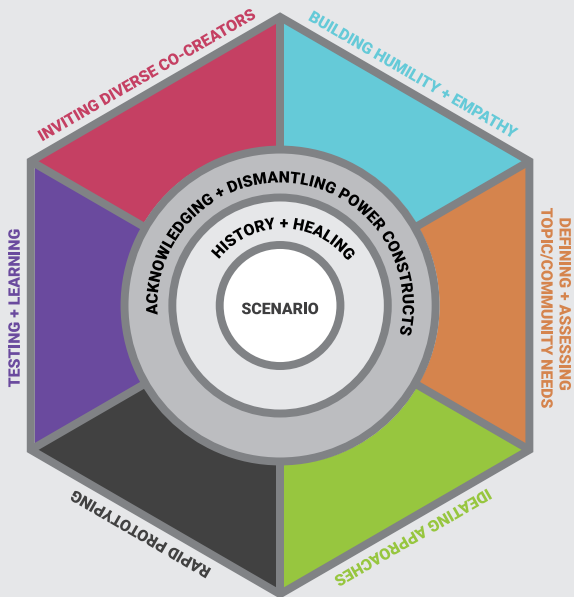


FOUNDATION OF EQUITY-CENTERED COMMUNITY DESIGN

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We see Equity-Centered Community Design as the intersection of community development, design-based problem solving, and equitable outcomes. Whether you're a high school student, community organizer or activist, user experience designer, someone who works in social impact, or aren't in any of these spaces, you can be an Equity Designer.

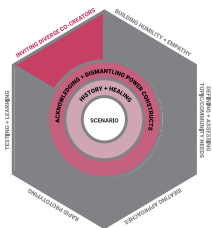
Here at Creative Reaction Lab, we target four key sectors – which we call Narrative and Livelihood Shapers – to transform the ecosystem of inequity through design: Public Health and Healthcare, Education, Government and Public Service, and Media. However, we acknowledge that there is work to be done in all sectors. Therefore, this Field Guide was developed to support Equity-Centered Community Design practices across industries.



## EQUITY-CENTERED COMMUNITY DESIGN

## EQUITY-CENTERED DESIGN (ECCD) IN ACTION

Equity-Centered Community Design is a flexible system for intersectional issues. When solving problems for complex, real-world issues, the process is not linear nor step-by-step. The Equity-Centered Community Design Framework was designed to allow various combinations when addressing different challenges and/or situations. Also, within the Equity-Centered Community Design process, the integration of 'history + healing' and 'acknowledging + dismantling power constructs' is crucial in every step of the problem solving process.



### ECCD AREAS OF FOCUS FOR THIS PROJECT STAGE

Inviting diverse co-creators

History + healing

Acknowledging + dismantling power constructs

### EXAMPLE SCENARIO:

Your community is a food desert with only the corner candy store and a bodega. You want to lead a movement to bring in more food options while continuing to support the locally-owned small businesses that's been in the community for decades. You decide that your first step is to call a community meeting. Who do you invite and what will they do at the meeting? What are the community roles of the candy shop and bodega besides providing food? Did the community previously have grocery stores? When and why did they leave?

## MINDSETS FOR A SAFE AND EQUITABLE SPACE

When problem solving with an equity- and community-centered lens, you should acknowledge the various perspectives and backgrounds in which your co-designers, and the larger community, will be approaching the same problem. The rules of respect and assumptions below will help you retain an equity-centered mindset and create safer spaces. Not only is it encouraged for you to be consciously aware of these “agreements,” we also encourage you to start each working session with collaborators and co-designers with the acknowledgement of these mindsets (as well as create your own).

### COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

- Ensure all voices are heard.  
*(Recommendation: In addition to facilitating discussions inclusive of a variety of personality types, use a variety of activities that highlights everyone’s strengths and comfort at different moments.)*
- Actively listen and respect differences in opinions.
- Use “I” statements. Remember, you cannot speak for others, only your own experiences and opinions.
- Lean into discomfort.
- Address the issue, not the person. If conflict arise, we should not personally attack someone.
- Be honest and embrace honesty.
- Don’t assume everyone has the same beliefs and understandings as yourself.  
*(Recommendation: Develop agreed upon definitions for any*

*recurring terms you will use throughout your work.*

*Ultimately, this is about language setting.)*

- Don't disclose others' information without their knowledge and consent.

## THINGS TO REMEMBER

- People are not born with prejudice. Prejudice and bias are learned through experience.
- We are all members of many social identity groups, based on race, gender, ethnicity, class, age, ability, sexual orientation, religion and others.
- People are not defined by one identity, but a myriad of identities and characteristics. Everyone is intersectional. However, the ability to define oneself's primary identity, or preferred lack of, is up to that person and not others.
- Oppression takes many forms, including prejudice, discrimination, marginalization, powerlessness, exploitation, violence, and cultural imperialism.
- **There is no hierarchy of oppression.** Oppression is oppression. Underrepresented and marginalized groups should not compete for the "most heavily oppressed prize."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Modified from NCCJ



## LANGUAGE SETTING

We believe that common language is an crucial foundational step in dismantling systemic oppression and designing equity. We offer the following definitions for a few core terms that are vital to the work of Equity-Centered Community Design.

.....

### DIVERSITY

Diversity is when there is a variety of characteristics within a group, such as a neighborhood, school, community, or city. Diversity is defined by a variety of identifiers and characteristics that, in the case of people, reflects our individuality. However, definitions of diversity are often limited and largely confined to visible aspects such as race, age, or gender rather than less visible aspects such as ability status, nationality, or mental well-being.

When we say that a group of people is diverse, we mean that the people that make up the group represent different backgrounds, perspectives, and life experiences.

### INCLUSION

Inclusion is the leveraging of difference by integrating diverse perspectives and creating a better outcome for all. Inclusion is an invitation that not only accepts differences, but celebrates and embeds them.

**Note: Diversity and inclusion are not interchangeable. There can be diversity without inclusion and inclusion without diversity.**

## **EQUALITY**

Equality is the basic need of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities.

## **EQUITY**

Equity revolves around systemic outcomes and exist when outcomes are no longer predicted by any aspect of an individual's identity.

## **LIBERATION**

Liberation is the freedom from limits on thought and behavior. Understanding how equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion are by design is one of the first steps towards liberation, when everyone is free from systems of oppression.

## **OPPRESSION**

Mistreatment at scale.

## **DESIGN**

Design is the intention (and unintentional impact) behind an outcome. It's also the art and practice of planning and projecting ideas and experiences with physical products, such as a plan, visual and textual content, or attire. Every design has an impact on equity, including the decisions we make in a community project, the blueprints created for a new building, and the policies implemented in our workplaces.

## **COMMUNITY**

Community is a group of people in a shared space or with a shared interest, identity, or goal. Some communities bring a sense of fellowship and bonding due to commonalities.

## NAVIGATING THE FIELD GUIDE

In the following pages, we break down each step of Equity-Centered Community Design. **Within each step, you'll see the following:**

**WHAT & WHY:** This is a brief overview of what each step is about, and why this step is important.

**TIPS & HOW:** This is a set of tips and strategies for approaching and applying the step in your practice.

**SAMPLE ACTIVITY:** This is a sample activity you can use to practice the step. Most activities can be done individually or in groups.

**SPACE FOR REFLECTION:** We've included space for you to reflect on how to apply each step, along with some guiding questions. Use this to write, draw, doodle, brainstorm, pose questions, dream, plan, and more.

As you explore each step, remember that Equity-Centered Community Design is not a linear process. Instead, it's helpful to think about each step as intersectional, and that we must make various combinations as we approach different scenarios.

**Equity-Centered Community Design isn't about process adoption; it's about shifting mindsets.** While the Field Guide is a starting point for becoming familiar with Equity-Centered Community Design, it is just that: a starting point. Practicing Equity-Centered Community Design is an ongoing process of learning, unlearning, and relearning that goes beyond this Guide.



# INVITING DIVERSE CO-CREATORS



## WHAT & WHY

People with different identities, perspectives, and backgrounds (e.g. race, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) will bring holistic insights into any setting, particularly through knowledge building, problem solving, and implementation. Also, each sector of society contributes different perspectives and knowledge bases that should be brought together to effectively approach problems. We especially need to include the individuals and communities affected, also known as living experts, who are often excluded from design and decision-making processes.

## TIPS & HOW

- When inviting diverse co-creators, you need:
  - To build trust
  - Authenticity
  - Diversity, inclusion, equality, and equity
  - Advocates
  - On-the-ground engagement
- Acknowledge, understand, and utilize the strengths and the nature of the expertise each stakeholder brings, but don't confine their roles and input to these areas.
- Understand the barriers of sharing power and/or access that prevents diverse co-creators from coming and working together.<sup>1</sup>
- Address those barriers and include their voices. It takes work and it is hard, but the output will be stronger.

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<sup>1</sup> See *ACKNOWLEDGING + DISMANTLING POWER*.

## **SAMPLE ACTIVITY: Table Of Collaboration™<sup>1</sup>**

Think of a current (or upcoming) project in which you are a team member. Grab a sheet of paper and fold it to create six boxes. In each of the boxes, write the following category names:

- Community Members
- Creative Sector
- Education Sector
- Social & Civic Sector
- Media Sector
- Business Sector

Then list out the names of people who are (or will be) involved in your project in the appropriate boxes. Review your boxes and reflect on the following questions:

- What skills and/or expertise does each group of people bring to your project?
- How is each group of people involved in your project? What are everyone's roles and responsibilities?

*Factors to consider include:*

- Who is benefiting (e.g. socially, economically, financially) from the project?
- Who has decision-making power?
- Are some boxes fuller than others? Why?
- Are there any empty boxes? Why?
- What does your "Community Members" box look like?
- Are there other voices or perspectives that might be missing?
- How can you ensure there is balanced representation across sectors?

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1 Visit [www.creativereactionlab.com/eccd](http://www.creativereactionlab.com/eccd) for Table of Collaboration worksheet to supplement activity.





**BUILDING  
HUMILITY + EMPATHY**



## WHAT & WHY

**Humility** is recognizing the influence of your own biases and perspectives when trying to understand another's emotions, thoughts, experiences, and actions.

**Empathy** is the active attempt to understand another person's perspective by imagining how you would feel, think, or act if put in their situation.

Empathy and humility help us understand others while also acknowledging our biases. Equity-Centered Community Design requires the humility to acknowledge where our assumptions and biases lie and the empathy to observe and listen with suspended judgment. Building humility and empathy is critical for self-awareness and reflection, both of which take time and trust.

## TIPS & HOW

- Lean into discomfort. Recognize gaps in your knowledge and challenge your assumptions.
- Be observant.
- Be open to new ideas and perspectives.
- Actively listen to the perspectives of others. Try to understand what life experiences led to their current worldview.
- Name the systems of power, privilege, and oppression that have impacted, and continue to impact, the life experiences of yourself and of those you engage with.
- Remember that you don't have to share someone else's opinion in order to understand or acknowledge it.

## **SAMPLE ACTIVITY: Eyes, Ears, Mouth™**

This is an exercise in radical listening. Too often, we don't listen to one another in deep, sustained ways. For example, when we're listening to others speak, we tend to think of how we might respond, about other things we need to do, or about why we might not agree with what is being said. This activity challenges us to listen deeply - to listen radically - and to find connections with others that we might otherwise miss.

For this activity, find a partner, preferably someone you don't know well. Face one another. For 60 seconds, stare into each other's eyes without speaking or laughing. Don't break eye contact!

Reflect on how this felt -- for you and your partner.

Next, one person will speak for 60 seconds on any topic of their choosing. The other person will simply listen without interrupting or saying anything. Keep eye contact with one another throughout this process. After 60 seconds, switch roles - the listener will not speak, and the speaker will now listen.

Reflect on how this felt -- for you and your partner.

For the next two to five minutes, have a dialogue discussing what you both heard previously.

Then discuss:

- How did that process feel? What emotions emerged?
- Were there any connections or commonalities that emerged between you and your partner?
- What was the point of this activity?
- How might this conversation have been different without radical listening?

## SPACE FOR REFLECTION

**WHAT MIGHT BUILDING HUMILITY + EMPATHY LOOK LIKE IN YOUR WORK AND/OR LIFE?**

**WRITE YOUR THOUGHTS:**



**DRAW YOUR THOUGHTS:**



# HISTORY + HEALING



## WHAT & WHY

Through media, education and social interaction with our family, friends, and colleagues, we have learned about our cultures and history. However, because we have learned within the context of structural oppression, some vital stories and identities have been erased. We need to unlearn what has been given to us and reclaim the culture and history that is a part of our identity.

## TIPS & HOW

- Ask questions: who, what, when, where, why?
- Be critical of how history is being taught and understood in school, the media, and by your community. Ask yourself and others, "Who wrote this narrative?" "What was its purpose?" "In what time context did this occur?"
- Seek out alternative perspectives and think about how they influence the telling of or interpretation of history.
- Urban spaces are constantly changing so take time to peel back those layers of history!

(For example, you can conduct interviews with members of your community to gain their perspective on how the neighborhood has changed. Then you can look into any historical event that would have impacted your neighborhood or the people that lived there. This is an example of a small-scale approach. We recommend you think both large and small, such as considering cultural and familial history.)

## **SAMPLE ACTIVITY: Unfolding History™**

*This activity is best done in groups.*

Have each person grab a sheet of paper. Fold each sheet into six boxes.

Collectively pick one recent event that has impacted your community, city, or region. Have each person write down the event in the center of their sheets of paper.

Then, in each of the six boxes, write the following questions:

- How was the event portrayed? By whom?
- What do people think about this event?
- What do I think about this event?
- How was I affected by this event?
- How were others around me affected by this event?
- What was the role of design in this event?

Spend 5-10 minutes individually answering the questions. Then, come back together to share out responses.

Consider the following questions for discussion:

- How do the responses differ among the group? How are they similar?
- How diverse are the viewpoints expressed in your group?
- How does this event impact your relationship to your community? To community members?
- What power or agency do you have to shape history?
- How might you use your power or agency to shape history?





**ACKNOWLEDGING +  
DISMANTLING  
POWER CONSTRUCTS**



## WHAT & WHY

Power<sup>1</sup> constructs are invisible delineations of power that are created and maintained by larger systems such as government, media, education, and private industries. We need to acknowledge and dismantle these systems because they continually disenfranchise marginalized communities by limiting and erasing their social, economic, and cultural growth.

## TIPS & HOW

- First, begin to understand how the system is designed before attempting to disrupt it.
- Lean into discomfort. It may be uncomfortable at times to recognize how you may benefit from power, how you reproduce harmful power dynamics, or how you are harmed by power, but only after we acknowledge and get past discomfort can we truly dismantle power constructs.
- It's especially critical to recognize the power dynamics within your project. *Some questions to reflect on include:*
  - Am I designing **with** the community being impacted by the project, or **for** the community?<sup>2</sup>
  - What power and/or privilege do I hold over the community being impacted by the project?
  - Who has decision-making power in the project? Why? Do the people making decisions reflect the people in the community who are impacted by the design?

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

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1 Power (noun): the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events.

2 See *INVITING DIVERSE CO-CREATORS to diversify your team*.

## MORE TIPS & HOW

- What assumptions am I making about the community being impacted by this project?
- Remember empathy and humility as you acknowledge communities' experiences with power constructs.<sup>1</sup>
- Examine the history of oppression on your own and with others. Start conversations with friends, families, politicians, educators, and others that illuminate the negative effects of power constructs on marginalized communities.<sup>2</sup>
- Because we live in a system in which power is often abused, we can be prone to thinking that power is inherently negative, and that we should dissociate ourselves from power. However, it's important to acknowledge where we do have power, so that we can use it for good. If we try to deny the power we have, others can misuse our power.
- Explore the power that you already have. Generate more of your own form of power through gaining knowledge.
- Share your power with others to expand the impact of your work - and theirs.

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1 See *BUILDING HUMILITY + EMPATHY*.

2 See *HISTORY + HEALING* to learn more.

## SAMPLE ACTIVITY: All That Power (Analysis)

Grab a sheet of paper and draw an image to represent yourself. Then, write words (and/or draw images) to represent all of the ways you interact with power<sup>1</sup> (e.g. how you have/hold power, how you experience power, how others hold power over you.)

Ask yourself:

- Which forms of power are **helpful** to myself and others? How? Why?
- Which forms of power are **harmful** to myself and/or others? How? Why?
- Which forms of power are **given to me**? Which forms of power do I **give myself**?
- Are there places/spaces/ways in which I can share and/or give up power? Where? How?
- How can I harness the power I have to create positive change?
- How does my relationship to power impact my work (in community, while designing, with other people, etc.)?

To take this further, find a friend or someone you trust. Ask them to answer the questions above about you. Be prepared, as this will require humility and deep listening. However, asking others for honest feedback about your relationship to power could result in key insight.

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<sup>1</sup> Power (noun): the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events.

## SPACE FOR REFLECTION

**WHAT MIGHT ACKNOWLEDGING + DISMANTLING POWER CONSTRUCTS  
LOOK LIKE IN YOUR WORK AND/OR LIFE?**

**WRITE YOUR THOUGHTS:**



# DEFINING + ASSESSING THE TOPIC/ COMMUNITY NEEDS



## WHAT & WHY

The better we can understand a community, the better we can narrow down needs and the causes of why they are not fulfilling those needs. We can then use this step to begin designing a way to improve futures.

You can't create a solution without first understanding the problem to address. Once we have built up the ability to be inclusive and understand others, we can focus on understanding the community.

## TIPS & HOW

- Connect with the community through conversation, observation, empathy, and humility.
- Create space for community members to have consistent input in the project. Often times, community members are asked to provide input at the beginning of a project and are excluded in subsequent steps. In Equity-Centered Community Design, it's crucial that community members are seen and treated as leaders and decisionmakers throughout the process.
- Engage the community through canvassing, doorknocking, and participating in community events.
- Zoom in and out on the need. Scope down the need to be small and specific, from there you can zoom out.
- Gather insights, perspectives, and expertise from groups whose voices are often dismissed or excluded, such as youth.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)



## MORE TIPS & HOW

- Think about who's inviting you to engage with the community - as well as who you're inviting.<sup>1</sup> (What's their, and your, agenda?) The community gatekeepers are not just the people with titles or assigned roles.
- Make sure the needs come from the community. Brainstorm **with** the community about their needs, not for them. *Map out your project stakeholders and consider the following questions:*
  - Who is from the community?
  - Who is not? Why are they involved?
  - Who holds the most power?
  - Who is most impacted by the project, design, or process?
  - Who will benefit the most? Who will benefit the least?
  - Have needs been identified without community input? Why?

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<sup>1</sup> See INVITING DIVERSE CO-CREATORS.

**SAMPLE ACTIVITY: Community Pledge for Action™<sup>1</sup>**

Design a template for pledges that you can print and distribute in your community. We suggest the following prompt:

**I will make \_\_\_\_\_ better  
by \_\_\_\_\_ .**

The first blank is for the name of one's community (neighborhood, city, school, place of employment, etc.) and the second blank is for an action one commits to taking to improving their community.

Print copies of the pledge and invite people in the community to make pledges. You can make this a social media campaign by taking photos of community members (with their permission) with their pledges.

The content of the pledges is one way to identify community needs. With permission, collect and review the completed pledges and see if you identify any patterns or trends.

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1 Visit [www.creativereactionlab.com/eccd](http://www.creativereactionlab.com/eccd) for pledge worksheet to supplement activity.

## SPACE FOR REFLECTION

**WHAT MIGHT DEFINING + ASSESSING THE TOPIC/COMMUNITY NEEDS  
LOOK LIKE IN YOUR WORK AND/OR LIFE?**

**WRITE YOUR THOUGHTS:**





# IDEATING APPROACHES



## WHAT & WHY

After understanding the community and the effects of the larger systems, ideating is the process of beginning to find tangible actions. This step is important in equity-centered and design-based work as it moves the process from theory, research, and competency building to the development of interventions, initiatives, and other approaches.

## TIPS & HOW

- Don't have a preconceived notion of what the approach should look like. Be confident and create ideas that challenge the status quo, whether big or small.
- Conduct timed ideation sprints - set a timer and stop when it rings.<sup>1</sup>
- Generate as many ideas as possible without thinking about limitations or constraints. Remember, it is easier to refine after developing a large amount of ideas as opposed to building up from a small amount.
- Brain purge! Avoid overthinking by writing quickly.
- Find additional ways to share your ideas besides writing. For example, try to draw out ideas to visualize your thoughts in a creative way. Don't be shy about drawing as it's about the idea not the technique.
- Don't be afraid of failure as every design or project started with numerous failures.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Sticky Note Ideation* activity on page 40 for an example ideation sprint.

## SAMPLE ACTIVITY: Sticky Note Ideation

Pick a problem or challenge to address. For example, a design challenge can be something you're currently working on or a hypothetical scenario. (It's best to present the problem as an open-ended question to guide the brainstorming process.)

Form a group of three to seven people who are directly impacted by the problem of focus for a quick ideation session. For instance, if your design challenge is addressing rider safety on public transit, gather people who regularly ride public transit (or, more specifically, people who feel/have felt unsafe on public transit.) **Don't do this activity without including people who are directly impacted by the problem area.**<sup>1</sup>

- Set a timer for *two* minutes. (The timing is flexible. Decide a time that works best for the group, but not too long.)
- Gather sticky notes, start the timer, and rapidly brainstorm ideas for how to creatively approach this problem. Do this individually. (Write/draw one idea per sticky note.)
- When time is up, stop!
- Then, collaborate with the group to categorize ideas. (It's okay to have outliers.)
- Notice and discuss the approaches (and categories) that emerge. *Example guiding questions:*
  - What were the commonly brainstormed trends or categories? What were the least common? Why?
  - What categories are missing from current ideas (e.g. awareness campaigns, technology, etc.)?
  - How did our backgrounds, expertises, and personal interests impact the type of ideas proposed?

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<sup>1</sup> See *INVITING DIVERSE CO-CREATORS*.

## SPACE FOR REFLECTION

**WHAT MIGHT IDEATING APPROACHES LOOK LIKE IN YOUR WORK AND/OR LIFE?**

**WRITE YOUR THOUGHTS:**



**DRAW YOUR THOUGHTS:**





# RAPID PROTOTYPING



## WHAT & WHY

To visualize ideas, prototyping allows you to create basic 2D drawings or 3D sculptures of the concept to understand what works and what doesn't. It can also be used to communicate the ideas to others during testing and feedback.

## TIPS & HOW

- Determine whether the prototype should communicate the idea or recreate the experience of the idea to others.
- Do not invest much time, energy, or resources.
- Build the prototype with everyday materials, such as paper, popsicle sticks, glue, string, etc.
- Remember that prototyping is meant to be a quick and iterative process. You're not trying to make the perfect representation of your idea in its entirety. You're trying to test out assumptions of your idea to make mistakes early, so that you can correct those assumptions before investing more time and resources in making your idea a reality.
- Start small, then build big.

## **SAMPLE ACTIVITY: Prototype Model**

After completing an IDEATION session, select an idea to prototype.<sup>1</sup> Gather everyday items and craft materials, such as: construction paper, pipe cleaners, tape, scissors, old toilet paper rolls, etc.

To challenge your regular mode of solution development, form a team of three to five individuals (including people impacted by the problem).<sup>2</sup> With these team members, construct the prototype. (If you're designing a product, you might prototype what the product looks like. If you're designing a more abstract concept, such as a policy or a program, your prototype might represent what the idea looks like when implemented in a community.)

Define your testing and feedback audience.<sup>3</sup> Share the prototype for public feedback.

Consider the following questions about your prototype:

- Who benefits the most from this prototype?
- Who benefits the least from (or is harmed by) this prototype?
- How does the prototype make people feel?
- What might be some consequences, positive or negative, the prototype has on the community in which it is intended?
- What assumptions are made in the creation of the prototype?
- How did the type of people at the table impact the way the prototype was designed and constructed? What would happen if a different team (or several) created a prototype of the same idea? **(TEST this inquiry!)**

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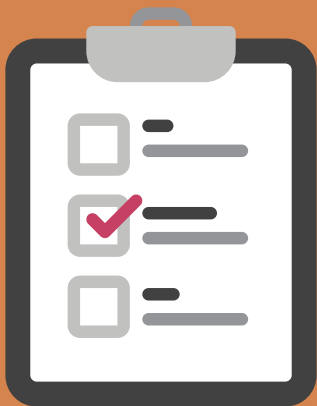
1 If you don't have an idea, see *IDEATING APPROACHES* and ideate!

2 See *INVITING DIVERSE CO-CREATORS* for tips on team development.

3 See *TESTING + LEARNING* for tips.



# TESTING + LEARNING



## WHAT & WHY

Once you have a representation of your idea, it must be tested by community members with different perspectives in order to see if it is usable, addresses the problem identified, and accessible. This information can help you improve your idea so that it truly fits the community's needs and can be implemented.

After launching your concept, continuously evaluate the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of your intervention, program, or initiative. Use the input and feedback to improve and iterate new prototypes. The larger the range of perspectives, the higher the feasibility, desirability, and viability of your project.

**Remember: Testing and learning should continue throughout the lifecycle of the project.**

## TIPS & HOW

- Test the idea with community members who are the target audience(s) of the design.
- Consider testing with people that may have an indirect stake, too, as their perspectives may provide insight you hadn't considered.
- Fail early and often. Modify your prototypes and test again. Iterate, iterate, iterate!
- Learn from failure; the lessons are eternal.
- Listen and learn from the community's comments.
- Observe the community's reactions. Insight can be gleaned from non-verbal cues as well.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

## MORE TIPS & HOW

- Ask questions.
- Don't take critical feedback personally, and don't get defensive when receiving critique.
- Allow space for silence and critical reflection.
- Don't be afraid to go back to the other design steps. Remember, it is a nonlinear process.
- Testing and learning should be happening throughout any design process. Since Equity-Centered Community Design is about designing with, not for, it's important that there are clear, consistent channels for all stakeholders -- especially those directly impacted by the designs and decisions at hand -- to share feedback.
- During concept prototyping, develop evaluation metrics to be used during experimentation and post-concept launch.
- Acknowledge that testing is infinite.

## SAMPLE ACTIVITY: ON-THE-GROUND CRITIQUES

Once you have a prototype that is ready for testing, host a community event to test it (e.g. a prototyping fair). Keep in mind that it's important to meet people where they are. You can also host a prototyping or informational booth at established public and/or work events.

There are a number of ways to gather feedback on a prototype during a prototype testing event:

- Host an open forum for discussion/Q&A.
- If your prototype is easily replicable, have multiple copies of your prototype available.
- Set up “stations” of prototypes where people can engage with the prototype in small groups.
- Along with each prototype, set up stations where people can leave anonymous feedback about the prototype.

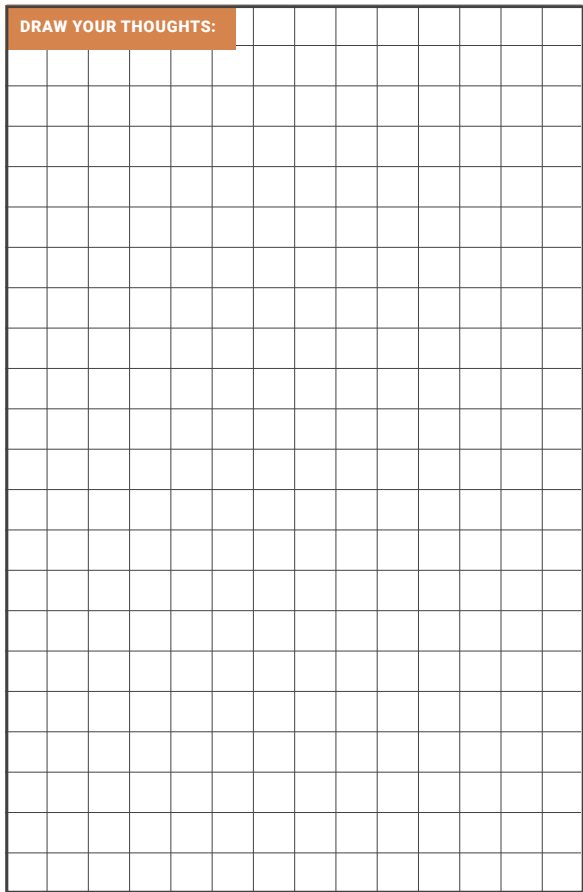


## SPACE FOR REFLECTION

**WHAT MIGHT TESTING + LEARNING LOOK LIKE IN YOUR WORK AND/OR LIFE?**

**WRITE YOUR THOUGHTS:**



**DRAW YOUR THOUGHTS:**

# **FIELD NOTES**





















sappi | ideas  
that  
matter

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