



PARIVEDA

Design Thinking Workshop Facilitator Toolkit

Playbook & Templates

- What is a Design Thinking workshop?
- How to Run a Design Thinking Workshop
- Workshop Tips & Facilitation Best Practices
- Workshop Activity Templates



WHAT IS A DESIGN THINKING WORKSHOP?

A design thinking workshop is a highly interactive, **hands-on session** structured around the **design thinking principles** to solve problems and generate innovative solutions with a strong **human-centered focus**.



Why Run a Design Thinking Workshop?



Reframe the Problem
Around Real Human Needs



Break down Silos & Align
Diverse Perspectives



Spark Creativity &
Divergent Thinking



Promote Exploration
Before Solutioning



Align teams around
a Shared Vision



Build Buy-in
& Ownership

Run a Design Thinking Workshops When You Need to...



Gain Alignment

Team members stakeholders converge to understand the current state and build consensus for project version and goals.

- Gather knowledge from stakeholders
- Build alignment across project supporters
- Establish purpose, objectives, and goals



Build Empathy

Designers, researchers and other stakeholders create a shared understanding of user needs before designing a solution.

- Empower a human-centric approach
- Gain clarity on user needs, motivations and behaviors
- Build empathy for end users



Ideate Rapidly

Cross-disciplinary team members gather to rapidly generate and discuss a wide set of ideas from various perspectives.

- Rapidly generate broad set of ideas
- Explore ways to solve a user experience problem
- Inspire innovation and foster shared ownership of a solution or product vision



Set Priorities & Parameters

Team members and key decision makers come together to decide which items are most important and prioritize them.

- Prioritize features to shape a product roadmap
- Understand which internal initiatives are most important
- Define MVP and manage scope creep upfront

How to Conduct a Design Thinking Workshop



Workshop Planning Overview



BEFORE Plan & Prep

--

Define the purpose & goal

Conduct research &
interviews

Design workshop agenda

Plan logistics

~ 2-3 WEEKS



DURING Execute

--

Introduction

Workshop activities

Reflections

Wrap up & next steps

1-2 DAYS



AFTER Follow Up

--

Synthesize workshop output

Create workshop read-out
and recommendations

Develop actionable plans
& roadmap

~1-2 WEEKS



BEFORE

Plan & Prep



1

GOALS

Why do we want to have this workshop?
What are the key objectives?
What does success look like?

- Define your challenge: create a clear design challenge framed as a "How Might We" (HMW) question.
- Ensure it is focused, user-centered, and open-ended (e.g., "How might we improve the onboarding experience for remote team members?")
- Gain support from your stakeholders and seek their advocacy to encourage attendance and participation.

2

INPUTS & OUTPUTS

What do we need for the workshop?
What are our deliverables?

- Research such as customer interviews, sentiment surveys, or competitive landscape analysis may provide insights to your participants to facilitate ideation
- Pre-work may be necessary or helpful to streamline workshop activities, such as defining personas ahead of time to set the stage for empathy mapping.
- Determining the deliverables needed will help you plan the appropriate workshop activities

3

PARTICIPANTS

Who should participate?
What do they bring to the table?
What is their availability?

- Recruit a cross-functional group of participants to ensure a diverse range of experiences and perspectives.
- A group of 8 to 15 people is ideal. A group of fewer than 5 will not offer enough diversity of thought, while a larger group of more than 20 may present challenges in facilitating unless you have multiple facilitators.

(Cont. on next page)



BEFORE

Plan & Prep



Leverage the [Workshop Planning Canvas](#) to help your planning

4

ACTIVITIES & TIMING

What activities will help achieve our goals?
What tools can I use?
How much time should I plan for?

- Identify the most suitable design thinking activity(ies) for each phase that will tackle your challenge and lead to the desired outcomes.
- You may need to adjust the workshop duration and number of activities to accommodate your participants' availability.
- Do your best to make sure participants are present for the entire workshop (discourage in-and-outs).

5

LOGISTICS

What should this take place?
What tools and materials do you need?

- Determine whether the workshop will be in-person, virtual, or hybrid.
- If in-person, consider sufficient space for movement and convenience of location for your participants.
- If virtual, use collaboration tools like whiteboards, polls, and breakout rooms. Address technical issues and ensure participant familiarity with online tools prior to the workshop.

6

EXPERIENCE

What is the tone of the workshop?
How can we make it engaging?

- Create a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment.
- Plan a warm-up activity or icebreaker to build rapport from the start.
- Prepare snacks, beverages, and coffee. Consider providing a catered breakfast and lunch, if suitable.



Reference these key components of a design thinking workshop to design your workshop agenda:

Welcome	Opening remarks; Set the tone & expectations for the workshop
Icebreaker	Build trust and rapport; Ease into an open-minded mental state
Empathize	Understand real user problems and build empathy for key personas
Define	Define the problems & pain points; Reframe as opportunities
Ideate	Aggregate collective intelligence to generate a wide range of possibilities
Prototype & Test	Quickly transform top ideas into tangible concepts for early feedback
Prioritize / Plan	Explore what needs to be true; Make ideas actionable
Closing	Wrap up; Group reflection; Communicate next steps



Refer to the following “Key Workshop Components” slides for potential design thinking activities at each phase of the workshop.



KEY WORKSHOP COMPONENTS

Empathize

Understand real user problems and build empathy for key personas

To create meaningful innovations, you need to gain a deep understanding of your end-users. Guide participants to step into the user's shoes to uncover real needs, behaviors, emotions, and experiences.

POTENTIAL ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Persona Definition	Persona definition involves creating detailed, fictional representations of target users based on real data and observations to encapsulate their goals, motivations, behaviors, and pain points. This activity helps teams internalize user perspectives by synthesizing research findings into relatable archetypes, ensuring the design process remains grounded in authentic user needs and experiences.
Empathy Mapping	Empathy mapping is a collaborative exercise where teams visualize what users say, think, feel, and do to build a shared understanding of their experiences, emotions, and challenges. It deepens empathy by making abstract user insights tangible, enabling teams to better grasp the user's mindset and emotional landscape at the outset
Current State Journey Mapping	Current state journey mapping documents and visualizes the user's real-world experience as they interact with a product, service, or process, highlighting their actions, pain points, and emotions at each step. This activity reveals critical moments of frustration or delight, providing a holistic view of the user's experience and uncovering unmet needs that inform opportunities for improvement
Sailboat Retrospective	A Sailboat Retrospective is a metaphor-driven reflection exercise where teams identify factors that propel them forward (wind), hold them back (anchors), and pose risks (rocks) as they pursue a shared goal. When there is a need to foster internal team alignment around an initiative, this activity can promote open dialogue about shared goals, challenges, and enablers across various roles and departments.



KEY WORKSHOP COMPONENTS

Define

Synthesize Insights into a focused problem to solve;
Reframe as opportunities

Facilitate the synthesis of key insights from the Empathize phase into focused problem statements and user needs that frame the challenges in a user-centered and opportunity-driven manner.

POTENTIAL ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Problem Framing	Problem framing is the process of articulating and clarifying the core challenge or opportunity the team will address, ensuring everyone shares a common understanding of what needs to be solved. This activity distills complex user insights into a focused problem, guiding the team's efforts and preventing misalignment or scope creep.
Needs Statement	A needs statement is a concise summary that captures the essential requirements, desires, or pain points of users, based on empathy research and observations. By clearly stating what users truly need, this activity helps the team move from broad findings to specific, actionable insights, laying the foundation for targeted ideation.
How-Might We Statements	How Might We (HMW) statements are open-ended questions that reframe user needs or problems into opportunities for creative solutions, sparking ideation and exploration. HMW statements translate the defined problem and user needs into actionable prompts, bridging the gap between understanding the problem and generating innovative ideas in the next phase.



KEY WORKSHOP COMPONENTS

Ideate

Aggregate collective intelligence to generate as many ideas as possible

It's not about the 'right' idea – it's about generating a broad range of possibilities. Encourage open-minded, judgment-free brainstorming where all ideas are welcome. Leverage prompts and creative constraints to spark fresh thinking.

POTENTIAL ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Rapid Ideation	Rapid ideation is a fast-paced brainstorming technique where participants generate as many ideas as possible in a short, focused session, suspending judgment to encourage creativity and volume. This activity is central to the Ideation phase, as it expands the solution space, enabling teams to move beyond obvious answers and uncover innovative possibilities for the defined problem
SCAMPER	SCAMPER is a structured ideation method that prompts teams to generate new ideas by systematically modifying existing solutions using seven strategies: Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to another use, Eliminate, and Rearrange. By challenging assumptions and exploring alternatives, SCAMPER helps teams break habitual thinking patterns and develop creative solutions directly aligned with the problem statement
Future State Service Blueprint	A Future State Service Blueprint is a visual mapping exercise in which teams collaboratively design and document how an improved or ideal service experience should function, detailing user actions, frontstage and backstage processes, and supporting systems. This activity translates generated ideas into a tangible, holistic vision for the future, helping teams conceptualize how new solutions could transform the user experience and operational workflows.



KEY WORKSHOP COMPONENTS

Prototype & Test

Turn ideas into tangible concepts with simple sketches, storyboards, or mockups

Facilitate quickly transforming top ideas into tangible, low-fidelity representations that bring the most promising ideas to life for early feedback. Focus on fast, low-fidelity expression. The goal is to experiment and learn, not perfect.

POTENTIAL ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Crazy 8s	Crazy 8s is a fast-paced ideation exercise where each participant folds a sheet of paper into eight sections and sketches a different idea in each section within a set time limit, typically one minute per idea. This activity encourages divergent thinking and the rapid exploration of multiple solutions, producing a variety of concepts that can be quickly prototyped and tested for user feedback.
Storyboarding	Storyboarding is a visual storytelling technique that sequences sketches or images to illustrate how a user interacts with a product or service over time, highlighting key moments and emotions. Storyboarding helps teams prototype the user experience by mapping out scenarios and interactions, making it easier to identify potential pain points and opportunities for improvement before building physical prototypes or conducting user testing.
Paper Prototype	A paper prototype is a physical, hand-crafted model of a product or interface made from paper and other simple materials, used to simulate user interactions and workflows. Paper prototypes offer an inexpensive, flexible way to visualize and test design ideas, enabling teams to identify usability issues and gather feedback in real-time



KEY WORKSHOP COMPONENTS

Prioritize / Plan

Make ideas actionable

Guide the group in evaluating, ranking, and selecting ideas based on impact and feasibility, then collaboratively outline actionable next steps and responsibilities to move forward.

POTENTIAL ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Innovation Proposal	An innovation proposal is a structured presentation or document where teams outline a specific solution or idea, detailing its value, feasibility, and potential impact. This activity helps teams clearly communicate and evaluate proposed innovations, enabling stakeholders to assess and select the most promising ideas for further development and resource allocation.
Feature Mapping	Feature mapping is a collaborative exercise where teams organize and visualize proposed features or functionalities, often grouping them by priority, dependencies, or user value. By mapping features, teams can identify essential elements, sequence development, and ensure alignment with user needs and business goals, supporting informed decision-making about what to build first
Prioritization Matrixing	Prioritization matrixing involves using tools like the Impact-Effort Matrix or MoSCoW analysis to systematically rank ideas, features, or tasks based on criteria such as value, feasibility, and urgency. This activity enables teams to evaluate options objectively, focus on high-impact and achievable initiatives, and create a clear, actionable roadmap for implementation
\$100 Test	The \$100 Test is a voting exercise where participants are each given a hypothetical \$100 to distribute among proposed ideas or features based on their perceived value or importance. This method quickly surfaces collective priorities, ensuring that resources and efforts are directed toward the solutions that the team or stakeholders value most, facilitating consensus and commitment.



Keep the momentum going after the workshop while the insights and discussions are still fresh.

Follow up with a Workshop Output Summary

Send a summary email or schedule a more formal read-out session to share:

- Workshop synthesis and key insights
- Polished Artifacts (e.g. empathy maps, journey flow, top-voted ideas)
- Strategic recommendations and next steps

Providing this concise, visual summary of the distilled workshop output will help to reinforce stakeholder alignment, create shared understanding across participants who could not attend, and build momentum for next steps.

Plan and Schedule Relevant Post-workshop Activities

Based on your workshop objectives and the initiative at large that this may be supporting, the workshop output should serve as a launchpad for activities such as:

- Follow-up working sessions to deepen concepts
- Feature definition & prioritization
- Wireframing and concept sketching
- User testing for early validation
- Roadmap Planning and delivery alignment

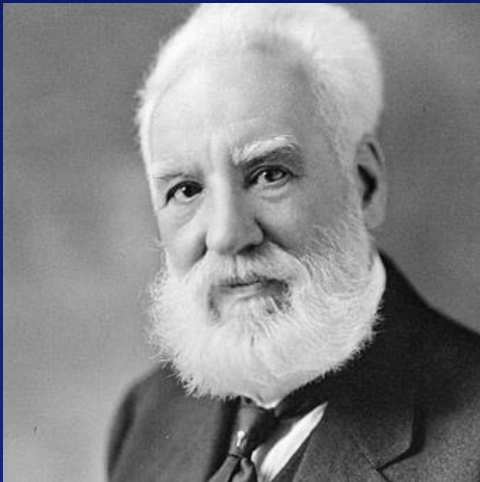
Tips & Best Practices



TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

Before Anything Else, Preparation is the Key to Success

Alexander Graham Bell
Inventor, scientist, engineer



○

1

Set a clear objective and problem statement

Ensure alignment with stakeholders; Spark curiosity with participants

○

2

Curate the right mix of participants

A diverse group with mixed perspectives leads to richer ideas

○

3

Plan a structured but flexible agenda

Keep each activity time-boxed, but leave some buffer room

○

4

Do the research and pre-work

What might you need to inform, inspire, or accelerate?

○

5

Gather your materials and plan your logistics

Sticky notes, markers, whiteboards, Miro/FigJam access, etc

○

6

Assign workshop roles & responsibilities

(Facilitator, Timekeeper, Notetaker, Historian, etc.)

○

7

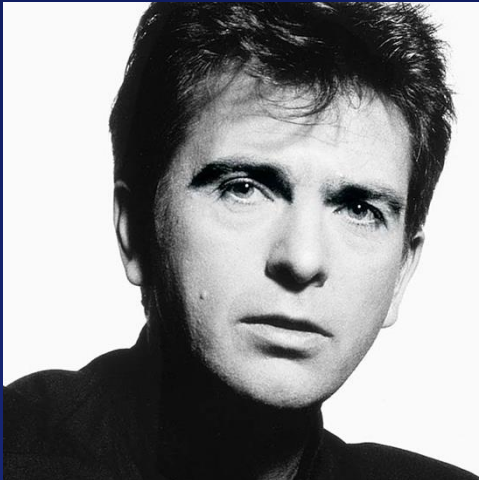
Plan for ample time to set up

It always takes longer than you anticipate

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

Sometimes a creative environment affects what happens within it.

Peter Gabriel
Singer, songwriter



Create an engaging and collaborative workshop environment

Set the scene for a fun, safe, and fluid environment that encourages creative and dialog



FACILITY & SPACE

- ✓ Ample space to move freely
- ✓ Table arrangement for breakouts
- ✓ Plenty of wall space & whiteboards
- ✓ Equipment & Wifi



CREATURE COMFORTS

- ✓ Comfortable seating
- ✓ Good ambiance (e.g. natural light)
- ✓ Coffee, drinks & snacks
- ✓ Catered breakfast/lunch
- ✓ Easy access to restrooms



REMOTE SET UP

- ✓ Select appropriate video conferencing tool and a virtual whiteboard
- ✓ Set up practice whiteboards
- ✓ Use virtual collaboration tools: Polls, breakout rooms, etc.
- ✓ Schedule stretch breaks

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

Constraints drive creativity.

Tina Seelig

Professor, Stanford d.school



It's worth taking the time to establish ground rules at the start.

Setting the tone and clear expectations around workshop norms up front helps create a safe and productive space where innovative ideas can thrive

Workshop Ground Rules



Be Present & Participate



Thinking Caps On



NO Idea is a Bad Idea



One Voice at a Time



Be Open & Honest



HAVE FUN & ENJOY!

IDEO U

Rules of Brainstorming



Defer Judgment



Encourage Wild Ideas



Build on the Ideas of Others



Stay Focused on the Topic



One Conversation at a Time



Be Visual



Go for Quantity

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TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

Mix & match like Lego blocks to build the right workshop experience

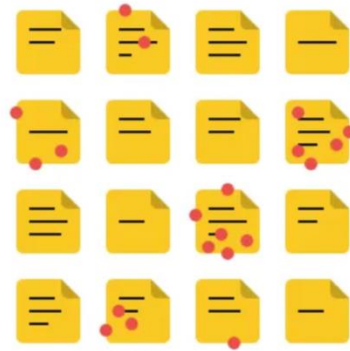
Lego construction figurine



All workshops are atomic.

Mix and match tools, frameworks and activities to create a session that works for your workshop objectives and engages your audience.

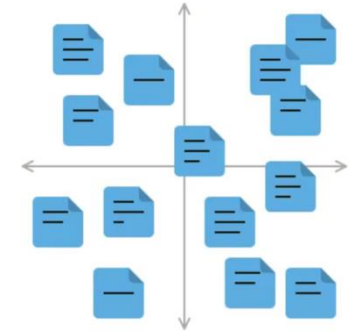
Post-up & Dot Voting



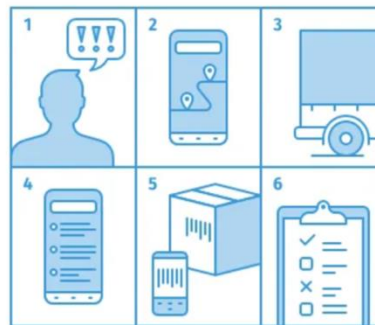
Affinity Sorting



Landscape Mapping



Storyboarding



Force Ranking



Playback



Foundational Activities of Every Design Thinking Exercise

Credit: Anatomy of Design Workshops

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

You don't have to be a hero, you just have to be a guide.

Sir Edmund Hillary
Explorer, philanthropist



Guide, don't dominate



Encourage all voices



Have a parking lot



BE THE SHERPA



Keep track of time



Manage energy levels



Stay Positive & Energetic

Sometimes, you may run into difficult participants...



THE DOMINATOR

Set ground rules upfront

Acknowledge, summarize, & redirect

Set time limits and use structured turn-taking



THE SILENT OBSERVER

Ask direct questions that play to their expertise or interest

Utilize small group breakouts

Offer alternate ways to contribute (e.g. sticky notes)



THE SKEPTIC

Acknowledge and validate their concerns

Share success stories to support workshop methods

Involve them in the process



THE DISTRACTOR

Use proximity to subtly signal awareness

Use engaging activities that require attention & focus

Address privately if necessary



THE NAYSAYER

Validate their concerns without necessarily agreeing

Reframe perspective and ask for alternative solutions

Maintain positivity and enthusiasm

Design Thinking Activity Templates



WORKSHOP PREPARATION CHECKLIST

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP

Workshop Foundation:

- ☐ Define the goal and frame the challenge
- ☐ Complete workshop preparation canvas and share with key stakeholders
- ☐ Align with stakeholders on expected outcomes

Participants:

- ☐ Define workshop participant list
- ☐ Send workshop invitation to participants
- ☐ Follow up and confirm final attendee list

Agenda & Activities

- ☐ Confirm workshop format (In-person / Remote / Hybrid)
- ☐ Build workshop agenda
- ☐ Create templates for key activities (Empathy map, Journey Map, HMWs, Ideation Board, etc.)
- ☐ Complete any pre-workshop research (Market research, customer survey, current state analysis, etc.)
- ☐ Prepare workshop materials (Sticky notes, markers, printed activity sheets, easel pads, virtual collaboration tools, etc.)

Logistics

- ☐ Confirm meeting space (or virtual conference bridge)
- ☐ Test all technology ahead of time (Screenshare, mic, breakout rooms etc.)
- ☐ Assign roles: Facilitator, Co-facilitators, Timekeeper, Notetaker, etc)
- ☐ Order catering (breakfast or lunch depending on timing)
- ☐ Prepare coffee, drinks, and snacks

AT THE WORKSHOP

- ☐ Access meeting space early to set up
- ☐ Test video and audio connection and quality
- ☐ Distribute workshop materials across the room
- ☐ Invite stakeholder/workshop sponsor to make opening remarks
- ☐ Welcome participants and introduce goals and ground rules
- ☐ Take photos during workshop activities
- ☐ Document key ideas, decisions, questions, and parking lot items
- ☐ Breakdown and clean up

AFTER THE WORKSHOP

- ☐ Send a thank you email to participants
- ☐ Transcribe and synthesize workshop output
- ☐ Create a workshop summary presentation
- ☐ Send a follow-up email or schedule a read-out session to recap workshop activities, key outcomes, and next steps

WORKSHOP PREPARATION CANVAS

PURPOSE

At a high level, why is this workshop happening?
What is the consequence of not holding this workshop?

GOALS

What are the key objectives and success criteria?

INPUTS & OUTPUTS

What do we need going into the workshop?
What needs to be prepared beforehand?
What are our deliverables?

PARTICIPANTS

Who should be there?
What are they roles?
What do they bring to the table?

LOGISTICS

Where and when will the workshop take place?
What tools and materials do we need?

ACTIVITIES

What will engage participants and help achieve the purpose of the workshop?
What is the agenda and order of activities?

EXPERIENCE

What is the tone of the workshop?
How can we make it engaging?

ICEBREAKER MADLIB

Hi, my name is _____ , and my role is _____ .

If I were a superhero, I would be _____ .

The one thing I desire out of this session is _____

_____ .

IDEATION MENTAL WARM UP MADLIB

My favorite app is _____ *<name/brand>* .

It offers _____ *<features or capability>* ,
which makes it _____ *<easier/faster/more fun>* for me to
_____ *<user goal>* and _____ *<user goal>* .

I would recommend this app to a friend because it makes me feel
_____ *<adjective>* and _____ *<adjective>* .

EMPATHY MAP

DOING

What do they do today?
What behaviors have we observed?

THINKING/FEELING

How do they feel about their
experience?
What really matters to them?

SEEING/HEARING

What people, things, or
environment may
influence how they act?

PERSONA
AVATAR &
NAME

PAIN

What are their
fears, frustrations,
and anxieties?

GAIN

What are their wants,
needs, hopes, and
dreams?

PROBLEM FRAMING

WHO HAS THE PROBLEM?

Who is having the problem?
Who will benefit from our solution?

What do we know/assume about them?

Who is having the problem?
Who will benefit from our solution?

What do we know/assume about them?

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

What is the problem from our persona perspective? How do we know?

What is the problem from our persona perspective? How do we know?

WHEN/WHERE DOES THE PROBLEM APPEAR?

When/where is our persona experiencing the problem? What is the context?

When/where is our persona experiencing the problem? What is the context?

WHY IS IT WORTH SOLVING?

What is the value for our persona?

How will the business benefit from solving this problem?

What is the value for our persona?

How will the business benefit from solving this problem?

BUILD YOUR PROBLEM STATEMENT: Based on the top-most voted answers in the brainstorm board above, create an articulated Problem Statement

Our _____ *<persona>* has the problem _____ *<issue, challenge, pain>* _____ *<situation, context>*
_____ *<customer value/benefit>* • _____ *<business value/benefit>*

Our solution will _____ and also help our business _____

Our _____ *<persona>* **has the problem** _____ *<issue, challenge, pain>* _____ *<situation, content>* **when**

<customer value/benefit>

<business value/benefit>

Our solution will and also help our business

HOW MIGHT WE STATEMENT

Brainstorm “How Might We” statements as to reframe problems and pain points into opportunities to set the stage for ideation.

To keep in mind:

- ✓ Start with the problems and Insights we have uncovered
- ✓ Avoid suggesting a solution
- ✓ Focus on desired outcome
- ✓ Phrase it positively
- ✓ Keep it broad enough to ensure many ideas

How might we _____ *<do what>*

for _____ *<for whom>* **in order to**

_____ *<benefit, gain, or result we’d like to see>* .

JOURNEY MAP

PHASES	<Journey Phase>	<Journey Phase>	<Journey Phase>	<Journey Phase>	<Journey Phase>
KEY OBJECTIVES/NEEDS	<Help me... so that...>	<Help me... so that...>	<Help me... so that...>	<Help me... so that...>	<Help me... so that...>
ACTION What do you need to accomplish?					
QUESTION What do you need answered in order to move on?					
HAPPY MOMENTS What would be a positive experience? What does success look like?					
PAIN POINTS What obstacles, frustrations or challenges get in the way?					
OPPORTUNITIES What are some ways to address the pain points or opportunities to create a good experience?					

SERVICE BLUEPRINT

PHASES	<Journey Phase>	<Journey Phase>	<Journey Phase>	<Journey Phase>	<Journey Phase>
CUSTOMER ACTIONS Steps, choices, and activities a customer may go through to reach their goals					
LINE OF INTERACTION					
EMPLOYEE ACTIONS Steps, choices, and activities an employer may go through to reach their goals					
TOUCHPOINTS Digital or manual touchpoint the customers and employees will interact with to complete a task					
LINE OF VISIBILITY					
BACKSTAGE ACTIONS Activities that occur behind the scenes to support frontstage activities					
SUPPORTING SYSTEMS & PROCESS Supporting systems, processes, enabling technology to enable above actions					
DATA ELEMENTS Data that is being created, captured, sent or shared					

INNOVATION PROPOSAL

<A Fun and Compelling Title>

GOAL/OBJECTIVE

WHAT NEEDS TO BE TRUE FOR THIS TO WORK?

HOW CAN WE GET THERE?

HOW WILL THIS TRANSFORM OUR BUSINESS?

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?