

**Strategy Checklist****Design Thinking for Community Innovation**

Good things happen when community organizations work together to design service systems that work well for community members. But collaboration can be challenging if you don't have a defined process for identifying challenges and developing solutions. Design thinking is a collaborative process that can be applied to improve community service systems based on human-centered design principles. In this tool we offer a stepwise strategy for applying design thinking to solve community challenges. The suggested use is to review the tool and consider the possibilities for using design thinking to accomplish your goals. The CHS team is available to provide guidance and consulting support.

**1 Focus**

The first step is to define your focus for community innovation, and assure that design thinking is an appropriate strategy. Ask:

- What community services do we want to improve?
- Who are the community members who use these services?
- Who are the organizations that deliver these services?
- Where should we focus our efforts to improve design?
- Is design thinking an appropriate method for this task?
- Who is willing to engage in a design thinking group?

**2 Empathize**

The next step is to understand the needs, interests, and experience of community members. Convene the design thinking group, and ask:

- Who are the people that need these community services?
- How do they feel about the service system experience?
- What more do we need to learn about the user experience?

**3 Define**

In this step the objective is to define specific design challenges that should be addressed. Drawing on intelligence gained from Step 2, ask

- What elements of the service system are working well?
- What elements of the service system need improvement?
- What specific problems or challenges could be solved through better design?

**4 Ideate**

The 'ideate' phase is focused on brainstorming potential solutions to the design challenges identified in Step 3. Key steps include:

- List the specific design challenges to be addressed.
- Define a set of criteria for viable solutions (e.g., the solution should be helpful, feasible, and sustainable).
- Brainstorm solutions without judging – the more ideas, the better.
- Look for synergies across ideas, and group ideas into 'idea sets' for solving specific design challenges.
- Select one or more ideas for prototyping.

**5 Prototype**

The prototype phase is focused on producing early, inexpensive, and scaled down versions of an envisioned design solution. Key steps include:

- Prototype quickly (and cheaply) using process maps, illustrations, or simple models to show what the design might look like.
- Review the prototype design with key users, and incorporate feedback into the next iteration.
- Repeat the process until you have a prototype that shows promise in the eyes of key stakeholders.

**6 Test & Implement**

The sixth step is to test and implement the prototype solution. Key steps include:

- Start with a small test and expand implementation over time.
- Support implementation with training, tutorials, coaching, and technical assistance as needed.
- Optimize implementation through continuous improvement in response to feedback.

**Let's talk.** At [Community Health Solutions](#) we have 20 years of experience helping people create strong nonprofits and healthier communities. To learn more about our services and supports, contact Stephen Horan (CEO) at [shoran@chsresults.com](mailto:shoran@chsresults.com) or 804.673.0166. Also visit our website at [www.chsresults.com](http://www.chsresults.com).