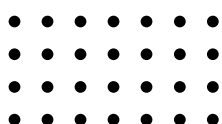




TOOLKIT

Human Centred Design (HCD)

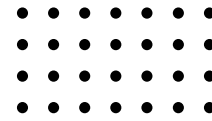
FOR IMPACT DELIVERY PRACTITIONERS



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Overview



Human-Centred Design (HCD) is a problem-solving approach anchored in design thinking that uses empathy to understand people and then iterates toward solutions that meet their needs. It is hands-on, creative and iterative and well suited to Impact Delivery because it foregrounds lived experience, supports rapid learning cycles, and creates evaluable prototypes and evidence to inform scale-up or redesign. HCD is a process (not a silver bullet) and is best used alongside rigorous Impact Delivery methods to improve relevance, uptake and learning.

Main Topics



EMPATHY-LED
DISCOVERY

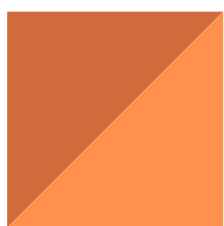
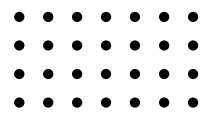


PROTOTYPING &
ITERATION



INTEGRATION &
LEARNING

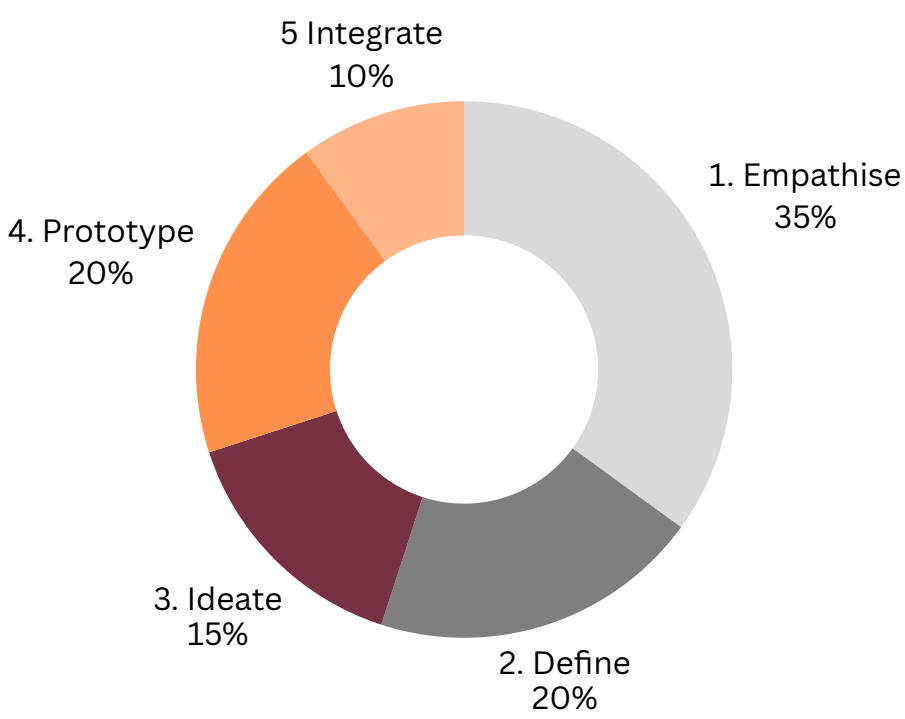




Human Centered Design

E.D.I.P.I

Components
for emphasis...

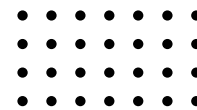


DISCLAIMER

▼

In using the contents of this Toolkit, we recommend adapting rather than adopting. This guide was developed for internal use, the LEAP MERL Advisory and collaborator briefings. It includes practical steps and templates. Do not reproduce or distribute this document without prior written approval from LEAP Africa. Photos were sourced from Canva.

Core Principles



Adopt these mindsets...

In Practice



How Inclusive Can We Be?

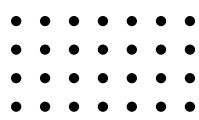
To offer meaningful and sustainable value, our approach to impact delivery must be grounded in principles that reflect both rigor and humanity. These core mindset should guide how we design, implement, and reflect on our learning processes, reminding us that evidence and practice are only as valuable as the empathy, curiosity, and intentionality we bring to them.

CORE PRINCIPLES & ATTRIBUTES

Our impact delivery approach should be anchored on principles that balance empathy, curiosity, and evidence. These principles ensure that our work remains people-centred, adaptive, and driven by continuous learning.

IMPACT DELIVERY MINDSET IN PRACTICE

Adopt mindsets that foster meaningful impact: lead with empathy, embrace complexity, learn by failing forward, stay people-focused and bias-aware, and remain solution-oriented through experimentation and iteration.



The Human Centered Design Cycle

1. Empathise & Define: Contextual understanding and prioritization

Conduct in-depth interviews, participant observation, narrative analysis or empathy mapping to capture what people see, think, feel, say, and do. Use problem trees and “How Might We” (HMW) reframing to clarify challenges and opportunities.

Output: Personas, journey maps, and validated problem statements that surface user needs, pains/gains, and priority learning questions.

2. Ideate & Prototype: Generate, visualise, and test

Facilitate multidisciplinary co-creation sessions with beneficiaries; use affinity mapping to cluster insights and form testable hypotheses. Develop low-fidelity prototypes (storyboards, mock briefs, workflows) to make ideas tangible and co-design simple monitoring tools for testing.

Output: Shortlisted solution concepts linked to hypotheses, with prototype test plans.

3. Test & Iterate: Validate what works & refine through learning

Use mixed methods, quick surveys, interviews, structured feedback or field observation, to gather evidence and user insights. Analyse findings to inform adjustments and next iterations.

Output: Evidence of usability, acceptability, and early effectiveness (or otherwise), supporting decisions for scaling or redesign.



HCD is a guiding philosophy, NOT a fixed set of techniques. It rests on the principle that innovation should begin by developing a deep understanding.

INTEGRATION

HCD in Impact Delivery

1 | START WITH EMPATHY



Begin with immersion: do empathy interviews, short ethnography and journey mapping before you finalise instruments. This uncovers the language, decisions and constraints that ensure your targets reflect lived reality.

2 | CONVERT INSIGHTS INTO HMW + HYPOTHESES

Turn findings into focused “How might we...” prompts and then into clear, testable hypotheses that state who will change, what will change and how you’ll measure it. This links insights directly to measurable objectives.



3 | PROTOTYPE MONITORING TOOLS



Treat tools as prototypes: co-design short surveys, checklists or contents with users and pilot them. Use cognitive interviewing and walk-throughs to check comprehension and reduce measurement error.

4 | AFFINITY MAPPING FOR SYNTHESIS

Cluster notes visually to surface themes, patterns and potential mechanisms. These clusters become the basis for indicators, priority recommendations and reduce single-person bias.



5 | EMBED SMALL TESTS IN IMPLEMENTATION.



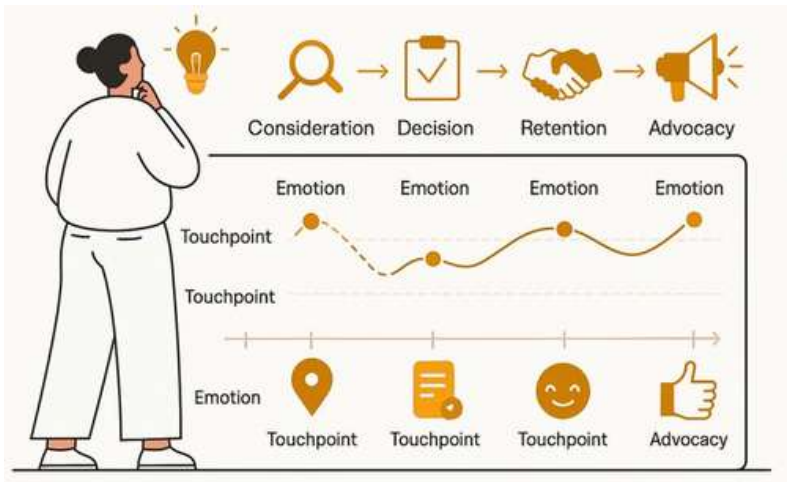
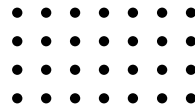
Run small pilots that test one hypothesis at a time and collect mixed-methods evidence. Document how and why changes occur so you can iterate or scale with confidence.

6 | TRIANGULATE & VISUALISE



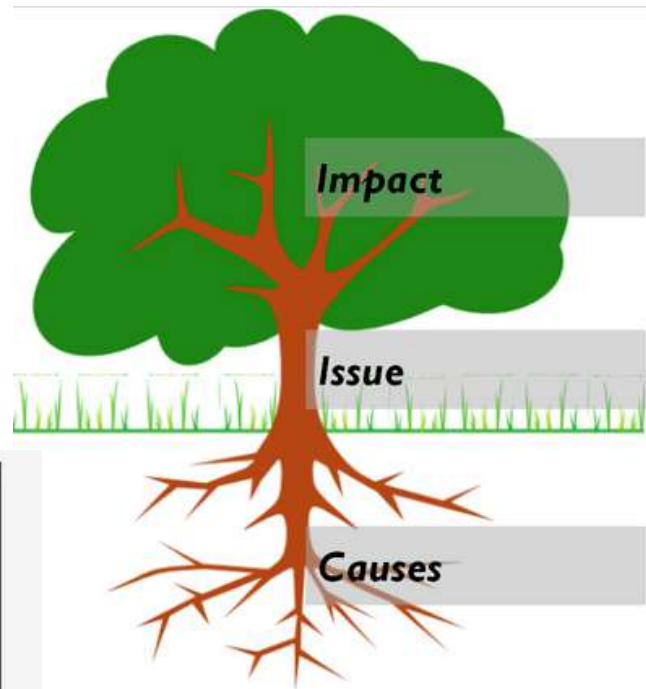
Triangulate qualitative narratives with quantitative trends, and translate results into journey maps, problem trees and simple dashboards. Good visuals make insights and recommendations clear and drive action.

Simple HCD Templates



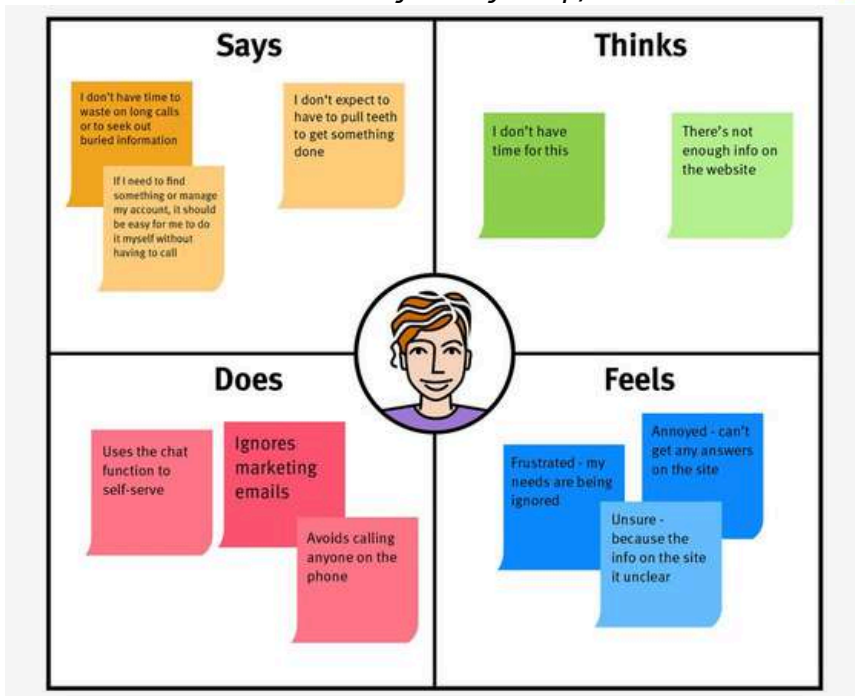
Journey Mapping

Source: <https://www.netsolutions.com/insights/how-to-create-a-customer-journey-map/>



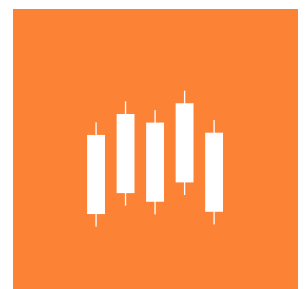
Problem Tree Analysis

Source: <https://childreninemergencies.org/2016/10/18/problem-tree-understanding-the-issue/>



Empathy Map Analysis

Source: <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/using-empathy-maps/>



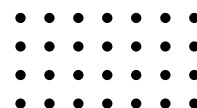
Use visual artefacts for maximum uptake: journey maps, problem trees, HMWs, prototype storyboards and a “what we changed & why” summary. Keep reports succinct and actionable for partners and decision makers.





HCD TOOLKIT

For Impact Delivery
Practitioners



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LEAP AFRICA'S MERL UNIT

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FOR MORE INFORMATION



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