

WHAT IS CO-DESIGN?

Co-design is a process used to create products, services and programs. It brings people in as 'design partners', giving a voice to those who are often excluded from the design process. Decision-making, design, information sharing and project planning are among the equal roles between trained designers and design partners.

The Future Social Service Institute uses co-design to create world-best education, training and research programs for the social service sector. Social service workers, people with disability, older adults and sector experts are design partners in our projects, working alongside trained designers to create, prototype and design our programs. This ensures our programs meet people’s real needs.

Involve

Involve non-designers, such as end users, organisations, or other stakeholders as design partners.

Equals

Design partners should be involved as equals in the decision making process throughout all stages of the co-design process.

Sharing

Design partners should have access to information about the project. This will help establish a shared understanding about the problem.

Joint planning

Involve design partners in all stages of a co-design process, including the planning of the project.

Collaborate

Co-design is a collaborative process between designers, non-designers, businesses or organisations and is characterised by activities such as prototyping.

Change oriented

Organisations that value and encourage change are best suited to hosting a co-design project.

Generate or reflect

Co-design projects can be generative; what do we do? or reflective; what has happened?

Creativity

Encourage creativity. It creates the conditions to which co-design can thrive.

Define the problem

Involving all stakeholders in defining the problem the co-design process seeks to address, establishes common ground for all parties.

Frame the problem

‘Framing’ is a technique that applies different lenses with which to view a problem. Framing helps identify different approaches to solve a problem.

Iterate

A co-design project that is iterative affords multiple opportunities to apply new frames and search for alternative ideas.

Build in values

Allowing stakeholders to build their values into a co-design process helps sustain interest for individuals.

Making

A co-design process is one where stakeholders make artefacts, systems or experiences. These can be generative or reflective.

Making probes

Probes are designed to provoke responses from design partners. They are completed by design partners and used to inspire designers.

Making toolkits

Toolkits are made from a variety of materials. They are used by design partners to generate experiences and artefacts to be used in the future.

Making prototypes

Prototypes give form to the design partner’s idea. They can be used by both designers and non-designers as tools to create or evaluate ideas.

Products

A co-design project can focus the design process towards tangible products. Prototyping is a suitable method.

Human experiences

A co-design project can focus on designing human experiences. For example, what might a toothbrush look like if we re-design the dental hygiene experience?

Ongoing search

Allow multiple opportunities for design partners to work together and search for alternative ideas, never settling on the first concept.

Pooling

Pooling & sharing information, reaching common ground and asking questions are encouraged by design partners in a co-design process.

Facilitated

The facilitator can offer clarifications, give complementary information, and ask questions to prompt the design partner or designer.

Ambiguous

A co-design process is never pre-determined and is often navigated through ambiguous and unknown territory. If the final product is pre-determined, this is not a co-design process.

Recordings

Co-design data is captured in images of artefacts, audio or video recordings of the design process and notes.

Reviewing

Design partners should be involved in a review process, either at the end of a co-design event, or in later evaluative follow up sessions.

References

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