

D.SCHOOL ACTION LAB

A design project accelerator for teams

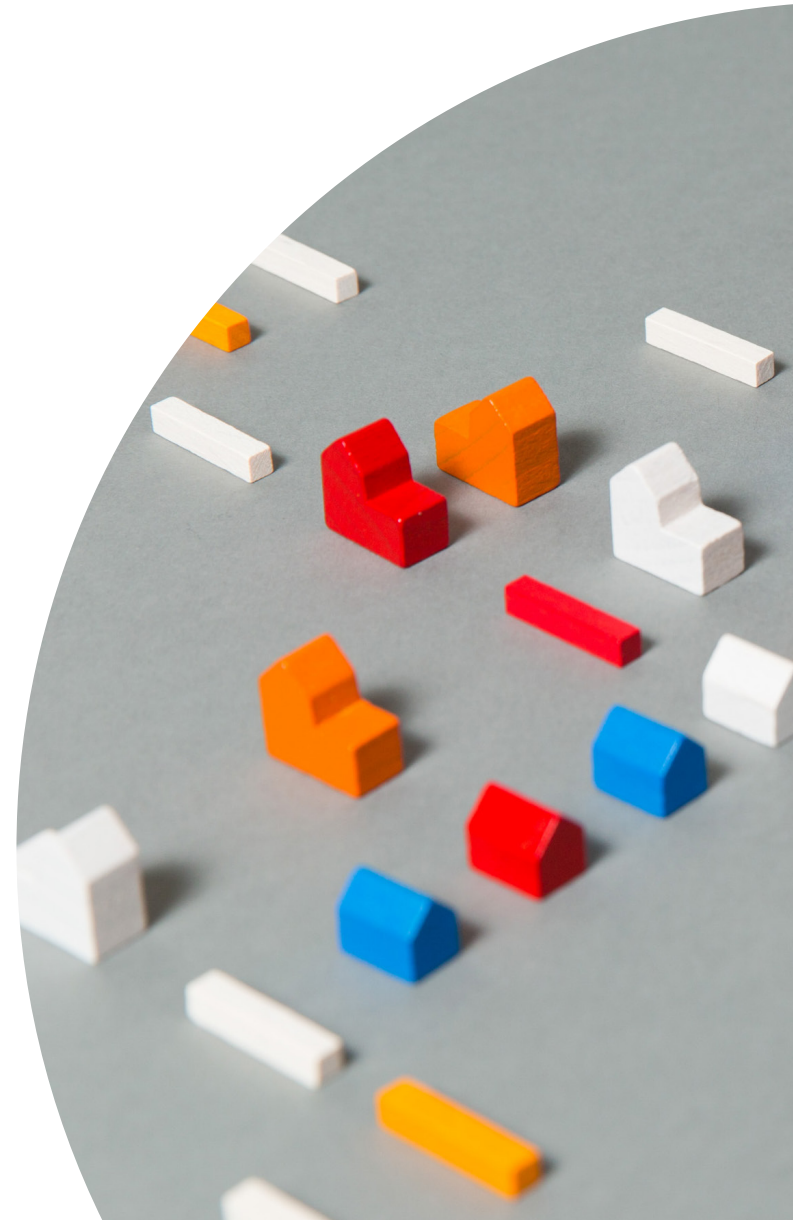
Application Prework

Hello! The d.school Action Lab is part-workshop, part-project-accelerator, part-coaching, with two unique features:

1. **Enrollment is by team**, made up of co-workers from the same organization, community members, and other stakeholders.
2. Individuals and teams will learn design thinking approaches, and **advance a real project of their own**.

The goals of the Action Lab are for each participant to gain a fluency in a design practice that they can continue to draw on; and each team to build a stronger collaborative practice and make a significant bound forward on a design project.

This document will prepare you to apply for the workshop with a draft of a project scoping that fits the duration and structure of the workshop. This requires some time upfront; we appreciate your efforts here, and hope it also bring some clarity to your work for yourselves.



d.school Action Lab 2022 Schedule

There are a total of 16 synchronous sessions, plus team work and coaching sessions. Please note the session dates and work noted below, and only apply if all members of your team are available to join for all sessions, and commit to completing the project work.

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Action Lab Kick-off Sessions: March 23 & 24, 9 am - noon PT

Meetings with your team (4-6 hours of independent team work) to:

- Meet your coach and discuss your learning and project goals.
- Map stakeholders and name forces at play.
- Revisit (confirm/revise) your design project scoping.
- Identify relevant interviewees and invite them to conversations.

Action Lab Sessions — Synchronous Session for Learning and Project Work:

April 20 & 21, April 27 & 28, May 4 & 5, May 11 & 12, May 18 & 19, May 25 & 26, June 8 & 9
All these sessions 9-11:45 am PT

Design Project and Team Work (independent team work, up to 4 hours/week) **including:**

- Complete scheduling of ethnographic interviews.
- Conduct interviews.
- Recruit co-designers for an ideation session.
- Plan and hold co-design session(s).
- Plan prototyping and recruit/arrange for testing.
- Create and deploy prototypes.
- Test prototypes, receive feedback, make sense of feedback.

Application Checklist

Please complete the items listed here to prepare your application.

In order to apply:

- **Build your team** of 3-5 people. We encourage you to create a team that includes not only co-workers from the same organization, but also affected community members, customers, partners, and/or other stakeholders. (If you can't confirm all team members at this time, apply with at least three committed members.)
- **Verify availability** of all team members for live sessions and asynchronous work. (See previous page.) Hold calendar dates.
- **Gather information for each member of your team:** name, email address, role (staff, community member, partner), job title*, are they available for all workshop sessions and work, race/ethnicity*, and gender*. (*Optional)
- **Work through** the following pages of this document. Ideally do this with all team members; however, we understand you may still be assembling your team.
- **Submit application** including the results from this prework by 5 pm PT on November 18, 2021 at bit.ly/Lab22app. Your project framing is a first draft! It may change as a result of feedback from us and your own further reflection.

Application Prework

The following pages are a guide to consider what project to focus on, and then to scope the specific design work that you would like to complete in the Action Lab.

Step one of this Application Prework asks you to outline the (potential) program/intervention and its goals – the overall 'project' you are working on.

Step two provides you with more information and guidance for scoping your design work.

Step three asks you to frame a cycle of design work that will inform and advance that larger project.

Typically, teams choose an area where they will design with/for –and hence positively impact– end-beneficiaries (program participants, customers, students/families, etc.). Most importantly, your team should choose something you ***care about***, have ***agency over***, and have identified a potential ***path to implementation***.

1 Select an activity/outcome area to focus on.

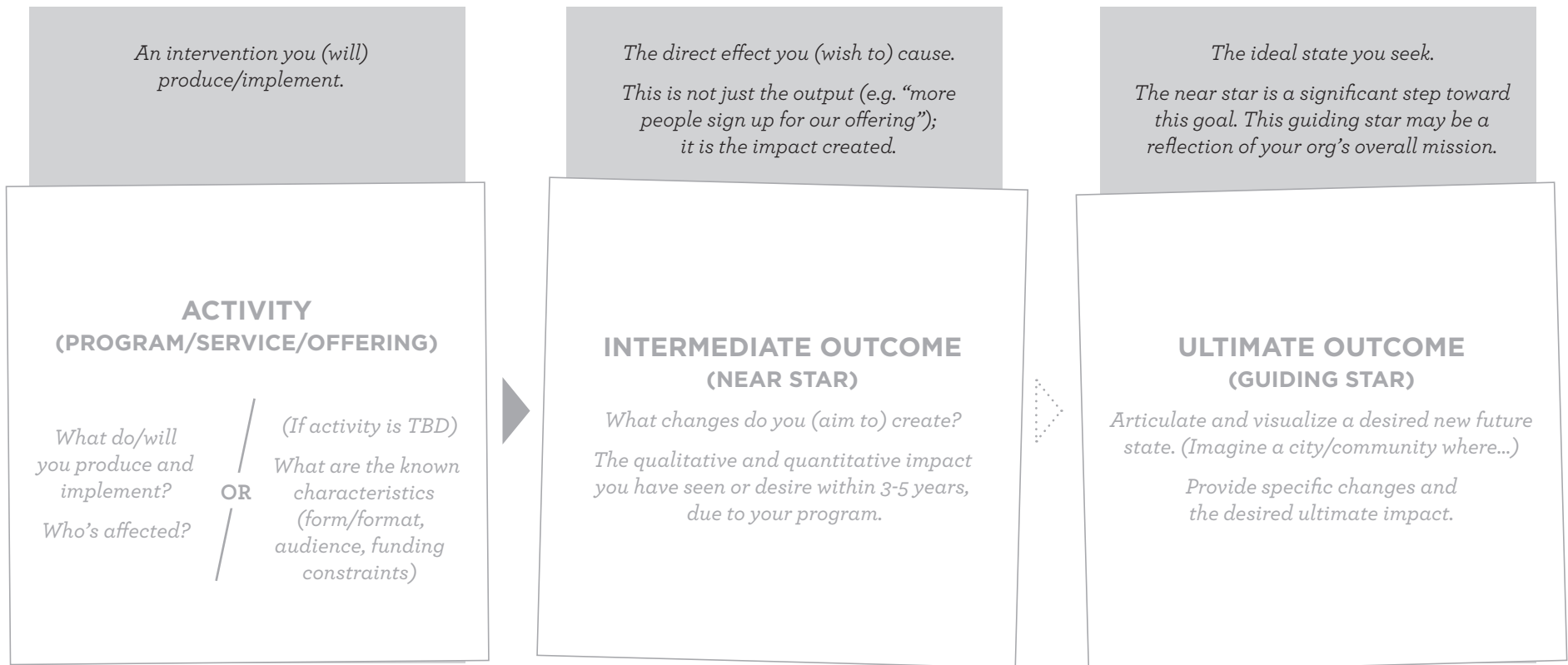
We recommend you select an area of work that is underway but still requires significant exploration. (In other words, a design approach of discovery, ideation, and experimentation would be beneficial.) Bound the scope of work at the level of an ‘activity’ (a program/offering; not the work of the entire organization).

The activity may be:

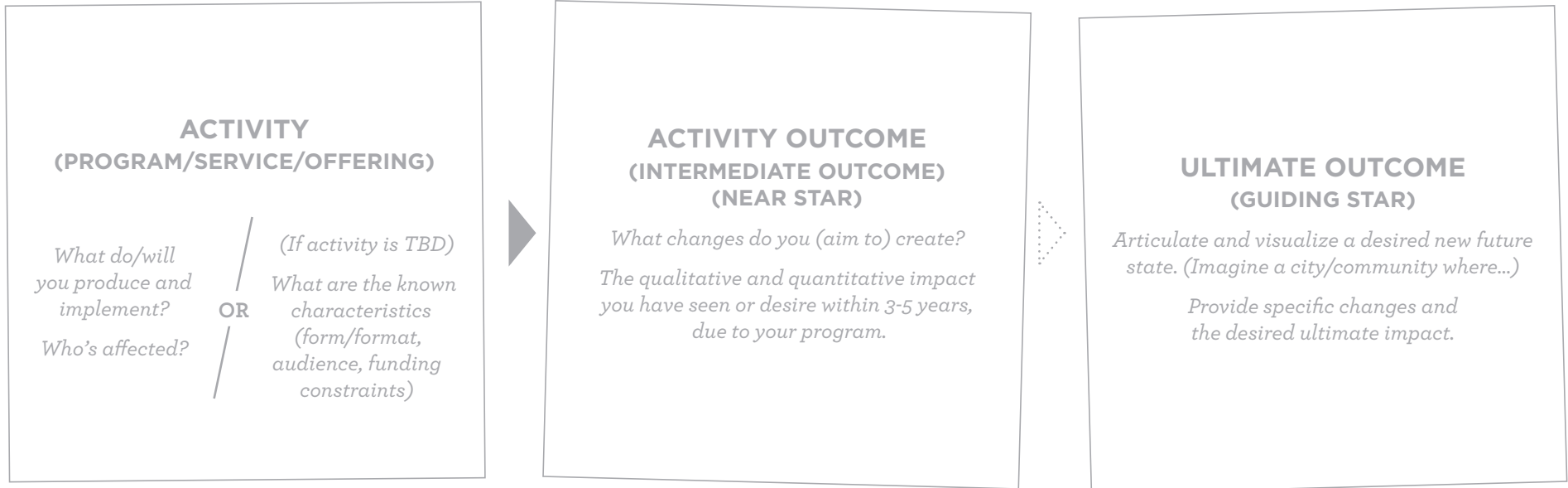
- a. Existing; needs to be evaluated and iterated or substantially redesigned (e.g., it is not achieving the desired outcomes), or
 - b. Not existing, to be determined (TBD); it needs to be created.
- If ‘a.’ then write the activity first; if ‘b.’ start with the outcome, and then write any known characteristics of the activity.

The “design project” you will scope (in Step 3) will be an exploration to inform the creation or revision of a more effective activity/offering. In the Action Lab, we will coach you to further scope this project, plan the methods to take it on, and advance the design work itself.

Write the three elements (activity, intermediate outcome, ultimate outcome) below. See examples on the next page.



EXAMPLES



Some intervention for advisors of high-net worth individuals (over \$10M) to help them advise strategic philanthropy. Needs to have in-person/physical component, not just online.

Increase quality of philanthropic advice from wealth advisors to high-wealth individuals. In turn, increase high-wealth donors gifts to outcome-oriented non-profit organizations.

Thriving and well-funded outcome-oriented non-profit organizations making change in the world.

TBD interventions for our students in middle schools of X Unified School District. We have flexible funding; could be program/campaign, change in the meal experience/process/space, and/or change in food itself.

Drastically increase the percent of students fed and eating healthy food each school day. Specifically, increase the participation rate for those entitled to free school meals (currently as low as 50% in some demographics).

No children going hungry in our schools. Students that are healthy and engaged in learning in our school district. No achievement/learning gap for free-and-reduced-fare-lunch-eligible students.

2

Read some about how to scope design work

In the previous step you outlined the activity/outcome area to focus on. Next, read the following three pages to understand some considerations for scoping and preparing for design work.

If you'd like to read more, see the complete *Design Project Scoping Guide* at <https://dschool.stanford.edu/resources/design-project-scoping-guide>.

What should I use design for?

Use design for human, subjective challenges

A human-centered design approach helps you excel in understanding how people think and act, and use that understanding to bring new clarity to the challenge by reframing it. The value of this is only relevant in problems that have to do with people. These problems are inherently subjective.

If there is a universal right answer to your question – independent of individuals, circumstance, and culture – then you don't have a design challenge.

Use design for discovery

Design can be used for diverse work, but it is most easily adopted for the discovery phase of a project: when you are still seeking the meaningful problem to work on, or the right solution to pursue. So when you select a project for a design approach, choose one in its early stages or one you want to really shake up.

Go for a project of exploration rather than optimization, for a first design project.

Use design to question assumptions

Often, you will have experience in the challenge space, and you may have a (type of) solution, technology, or response in mind. In this case, use design as an intentional approach to testing your ideas, and the underlining assumptions in your thinking.



Are these human, subjective challenges?

Optimizing a turbine –

No. This is an engineering problem.

Creating a better vaccination process –

Yes. Patients, doctors, pharmacists, etc. are all human elements in this system.

Developing a higher efficacy vaccine –

No and yes. Medical science would be one approach to this challenge. At the same time, the effectiveness of a vaccine is determined by many human factors as well as the vaccine itself. Design has a role there.

Making a supply chain more efficient – Maybe. Are there benefits to be gained by understanding the people involved in the supply chain and their behavior? Then this could be a good design challenge.

Redesigning a website –

Yes, but . . . reframe it. Take a step back from the layout and coding of the website, and ask yourself what experience you are trying to create for people. Then understanding your users becomes important, and design methodology becomes more useful.

Who to involve in the work and how?

Work with a diverse group of collaborators

Design benefits from diverse perspectives. The success of developed solutions depends on both understanding of and buy-in from stakeholders. As such, structure the team and work to include different perspectives. Importantly, ask yourself how those most affected by the work have a voice in it?

Create different configurations of “team”

Create different layers of collaborators that gather at different times and frequency. This allows for both agility and inclusion in the process. Include stakeholders (including “users” and “end beneficiaries”) in the framing, process and decision making.

Acknowledge people as whole and capable

You aim to create something useful and beneficial to others. In that endeavor, be conscious to see those you design for and with as whole and capable people — not people, groups, or demographics to be “fixed” or “saved” by your work. This is both respectful and puts you in the best position to make an impact with the design work.



For this project framing exercise we are asking who primarily is being ‘designed for/with’. (For the application we are also asking who is on the core team of 3-5 people.)

There are other opportunities for other team configurations and stakeholder/community engagement: particularly during interviews, co-design session(s), and when testing prototypes.

How should I scope a design challenge?

In general, constrain the challenge space, broaden the solution space

Typical instinct is to dictate the solution but leave the users and context ambiguous. Flip that.

Scope a project by giving bounds to the area to explore, not by dictating the solution space. Create design challenges that contain intriguing issues to learn more about. Think about redesigning experiences (verbs) not solutions (nouns).

Constrain the challenge space

A narrow framing of the challenge space (the playing field) is usually desirable, if done without dictating the solution or need. A narrow framing makes the project actionable, and allows the team to deeply understand one aspect of people's lives. This may be counter-intuitive: powerful insights result from constraining the project space. The trick is to have an open mindset on that narrow area (and allow yourself to break the constraint if you find a fruitful opportunity outside of the original framing).

Broaden the solution space

An open design challenge is one where neither the solution nor the *form* of the solution is known at the beginning. The solution could be a physical product, a new interface, an improved service offering, a new marketing message, a new space, a new policy, etc.

While all organizations have constraints that dictate viable forms of solutions, err on the side of inviting varied solution possibilities. Consider that the assumed form of solution may not be the only or best one to achieve your goal.



Don't do this:

"We need a new website" dictates the solution, but gives zero direction for whom, for what purpose, and what experience.



All these are potential valid project scopes. The narrower scopes will help teams know where to focus and may prompt stronger insights and novel solutions. The broader scopes may yield a wider range of discoveries:

Redesign the experience of caring for one's home for . . .

Redesign the home cleaning experience for . . .

Redesign the kitchen cleaning experience for . . .

Redesign post-dinner cleaning in home kitchens for . . .

Also note that the scope of these are quite varied, yet none dictate the solution or user need.

3

Frame the challenge, and what design could help you figure out

Now frame the design work that will help you gain understanding and insight, inform more effective activities/offerings, and ultimately contribute to reaching the desired outcomes you noted in Step 1. Use the structure below to write a first draft. See examples on the next two pages.

You may be able to simply rewrite your intermediate outcome as an actionable WHAT (Create ways to ...). If you have a broad intermediate outcome, then the WHAT should narrow the scope.

Be sure your challenge has a *human focus* (understanding people is key) and geared toward *discovery* (you need to explore possibilities, not simply execute).

THE CHALLENGE/GOAL OF THE WORK

QUESTIONS/UNKNOWNNS

Create ways to

_____ ,
human action

For _____ ;
user group

(while considering

_____).
other stakeholders

The second phrase (“while considering”) is optional but is a place to acknowledge other important players.

We really need to figure out

_____ .
question/assumption

(Up to three.)

WHAT

What are you aiming to do?

What’s the challenge space? What human experience are you trying to affect? (Not the solution to design.)

FOR WHOM

For what group of people are you designing?

Our tendency is to broaden this as much as possible (“All Teachers”); instead narrow your focus with a specific user group. Even if you want to affect a broad group, choose a place to start (“New teachers at Lincoln Elementary”).

THE CRUX

When it comes down to it, what are you trying to figure out?

Why are you employing an exploratory process? What’s not already known? This ‘crux’ could be an assumption you need to test [“X must be true (about our users) for this to work. Is it?”] or an unknown to explore [“How do people experience Y? What do people believe about Z?”].

EXAMPLES

WHAT

What are you aiming to do?

Create ways to increase wealth advisor's comfort in talking to, and working with, their clients about philanthropy.

Create a way to encourage students to eat healthy (lunches) at school.

FOR WHOM

For what group of people are you designing?

For wealth-advisors, at large financial institutions (start with Schwab Charitable), who want to proactively talk to their clients about philanthropy but do not have the confidence or knowledge; while considering the philanthropic support units within each institution (if any).

For 9th-grade female students at T.M. high school in X Unified School District (to start); while considering the constraints of the school meal program.

THE CRUX

When it comes down to it, what are you trying to figure out?

We really need to figure out:

- Do they want to become experts in philanthropy, or just learn enough to have the conversation and hand off to an expert?*
- What's the best way/format to engage and educate advisors?*
- Will wealth advisors use a 'Stanford' resource, or must it be branded/customized by their firm?*

We really need to test the assumption that students do not eat at school due to not liking the food options that are provided. (Or if/what other issues are at play.)

MORE EXAMPLES OF PAST PROJECTS THAT FIT THE ACTION LAB WELL

WHAT

What are you aiming to do?

FOR WHOM

For what group of people are you designing?

THE CRUX

When it comes down to it, what are you trying to figure out?

Create ways to support LA County's Foster Youth to build and maintain a formal and informal long-lasting support network

For LA County Foster Youth exiting foster care who do not have an identified support system.

We really need to figure out what interventions are needed and at what age should they begin, in order to build this support system.

Create ways to expand the City of X urban forest canopy in the underserved neighborhoods of the city.

For City of X residents at-risk of environmentally-induced asthma and extreme heat events due to lack of urban tree canopy.

We really need to figure out how do we partner with the community to make them feel comfortable in participating in and navigating city systems to promote urban greening?

Create ways to do school assignments in our district in a way that prioritizes diversity of choice and equity for all families. (Redesign the School Assignment System.)

For parents of children in our city's public schools, while considering the needs of the broader community and prioritizing the needs of our most marginalized families.

We really need to figure out how to gather input from our most marginalized families, who due to work schedules, transportation, and childcare needs are often least likely to be able to participate in a collaborative process.

Create ways to increase Franklin County landlords' confidence in joining the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. (i.e. accept housing vouchers from potential tenants)

For landlords who have not participated in the HCV program; while considering the experience and needs of residents who would like to participate in the program.

We really need to figure out what motivates or inhibits landlord participation in the HCV program?
(Note: this work was undertaken after a phase of work focused on the residents, which identified lack of HCV-accepting landlords as a barrier to quality housing.)

Create ways to provide access and support for highschoolers to enter into Computer Science (CS) learning and careers.

For low socioeconomic students, prioritizing students of color, specifically within our rural communities in rural Kentucky.

We really need to figure out the desire of, needs around and barriers to students engaging in CS. How do we design programs without inherent biases and barriers?