CONDUCT IDEATION SESSIONS

ACTIVITY GUIDE

OVERVIEW

**NOTE**

PSI wishes to acknowledge the inspiration for certain principles described in this activity guide from the following resources: *The Field Guide to Human-Centered Design* by IDEO.org; *design thinking bootleg* by d.school at Stanford University; the *Introduction to Human-Centered Design* online course taught by IDEO.org through +Acumen, a program of the Acumen Fund, Inc.; and PSI Board Member and Maverick Collective Founding Member, Pam Scott.

“Ideation” is a systematic approach to creative problem solving. It involves various techniques and exercises that teams can use to help generate ideas that go beyond the usual assumptions about how to solve certain types of problems and find innovative, new solutions. This can be extremely helpful when designing new intervention programs in situations where existing models aren’t working or don’t apply. It can also be used to brainstorm ideas for a particular element of your intervention — for example, for the launch of a product, you may want to do ideation to come up with new ideas to promote the product. However, it may not be appropriate to ideate across all the P’s.
WHEN TO CONDUCT THIS ACTIVITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideation can be useful when:</th>
<th>Ideation might be less useful when:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• You are looking for new, innovative solutions for your intervention objective. What we have done in the past hasn’t worked.</td>
<td>• For elements of your mix that are ‘fixed’ – e.g., packaging configuration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Trying to come up with ways to address ‘sticky’ or challenging issues.</td>
<td>• When the donor already has a prescribed solution in mind</td>
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TIME, RESOURCE AND STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

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<th>Who will participate in this activity?</th>
<th>Who time and resources are required?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Design Team</td>
<td>• Usually this is conducted in a working session that can be 0.5-2 days depending on the complexity and scale of your intervention area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Technical, evidence and Marketing Advisors</td>
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<td>• Members of target audience (if feasible)</td>
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INSTRUCTIONS

Ideation provides a more structured approach for conducting “brainstorming” sessions, using a set of activities and techniques that have been proven to help teams generate more innovative and useful ideas, rapidly and consistently.

In this guide, we have included a set of recommendations to help you apply ideation techniques as part of the program design process, to help your team develop new intervention models in situations where no existing model seems appropriate.

GOAL/OUTPUT

The goal of this activity is to generate as many ideas as possible, then determine which (if any) merit further development, prototyping and testing.

GUIDELINES FOR FACILITATING IDEATION SESSIONS

Ideation sessions can last a few minutes, a few hours or an entire day, depending on the complexity of the challenge and scope of possible solutions. Regardless of length, here are some general recommendations to ensure ideation sessions are productive.

- **Invite a diverse group** – Conducting ideation sessions as a group allows participants to inspire one another and feed off each other’s ideas.

  Including people from different career and personal backgrounds, age groups and parts of your organization is likely to produce a wider variety of ideas than if everyone involved came from the same group or had the same professional background. The benefits of diversity are multiplied as people from different teams build on each other’s suggestions, arriving at solutions that neither one would have discovered on their own.

- **Have one, tightly focused conversation** – The purpose of ideation sessions is to come up with as many potential solutions as possible to one, clearly defined challenge. If you need to ideate solutions to two related challenges, it is better to have two sessions than try to address them both at once.

- **Track ideas using post-it notes or a similar mechanism**

  The stereotypical depiction of a professional “ideation” or “brainstorming” session involves a crowd of people standing around a whiteboard covered in Post-it notes—and while this is not all that goes on in an ideation session, Post-it’s are a great way to record and review what’s been suggested and use it to inspire more creativity. And unlike a group sharing a single flip chart or dry erase board, using Post-its allows groups or individuals to record their ideas separately, then bring them together to compare and contrast.
If using Post-its, participants should limit themselves to one idea per note, so individual ideas can be moved around and re-categorized as necessary throughout the process.

- **Ask “How might we?” (HMW) questions**

  One useful way to elicit creative suggestions from a group is to ask questions beginning with “How might we...” For instance, if launching a behavior change communications intervention to promote condom use in a country where talking openly about certain aspects of sex is taboo, we might ask “How might we talk about contraceptives in a way that de-links them from sexual activity?” This keeps the conversation focused, while still suggesting that the floor is open to new ideas.

  Your responses to HMW questions will often contain the beginnings of a solution. You and your team can begin to generate concepts on how to address them. This is a very useful tool for ‘sticky’ or particularly challenging tasks.

  Examples of HMW questions include:
  - How might we...
    - Make contraceptives emotionally relevant & beneficial RIGHT NOW?
    - Build trust that her fertility is safe?
    - De-link contraceptive use from sexual activity?
    - Make it effortless and delightful to get family planning services?
    - Create a sense of security in a rapidly changing world?
    - Make girls feel safe, understood, valued?

- **Try to generate as many ideas as possible**

  Try to think of as many ideas as you possibly can without stopping to evaluate or judge them. Don’t self-censor or censor others. Encourage wild ideas even if they seem impossible: it’s much easier to make a big idea feasible than it is to take a practical idea and make it big and creative.

- **Actively listen to what others have to say (instead of just waiting to voice your own opinion)**

  There is an unfortunate human tendency to value one’s own thoughts and opinions more than the thoughts and opinions of others. If an idea occurs to you while someone else is speaking, odds are you will stop paying attention (or only pay half attention) to the speaker, while awaiting the chance to share your idea. We are even more likely to stop paying attention if the speaker is voicing an opinion with which we do not agree.

  Fortunately, there are a number of techniques for countering this tendency, including:
When another person finishes making a point, say “Just so I understand…” or “If I understood you correctly…” then summarize whatever the other party said.

Mentally repeat the speaker’s words as they say them.

Commit to asking a relevant follow-up question to whatever the speaker just said before voicing your own opinion.

If a speaker pauses, make a gesture or say something to encourage them to continue speaking before responding, yourself. A simple nod is often enough.

Maintain a culturally appropriate level of eye contact and use non-verbal cues such as “mm-hmm” to show the speaker you’re listening.

• **Build on one another’s ideas.**

Thinking of new ideas takes considerable time and energy, while criticizing someone else’s idea is relatively easy.

Before saying “No, because…” or “Yes, but…” and explaining why someone else’s idea won’t work, try responding “Yes, and…” then seeing how you can expand upon or improve their suggestion (without contradicting anything they said).

For instance, if one team member says “Maybe we can launch a campaign to convince women to buy men’s condoms, just so they have them available for their partners…” instead of saying “No, because we don’t want men thinking this is women’s responsibility,” you can try adding “Yes, and maybe we can get a female celebrity to act as our spokesperson…”

While not all ideas will be good/feasible, the act of building on them might lead to surprising new ideas that can point in the direction of innovative, workable solutions. With that in mind, you should move on only when an idea has been exhausted.

**Examples**

**Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC)**

• **Service/product: VMMC**

  o **Insight:** “Men never go to the clinic. They don’t know what to expect at the clinic or for the procedure, so they assume the worst.”

  o **Question:** “How might we get men over their fears and help them ‘experience the clinic’ without ever stepping foot in one?”

  o **Idea:** “Maybe give them virtual reality glasses that provide a virtual clinic walk through.”
Adolescent Girls & Young Women Family Planning

- Service/product: AGYW FP
  - Insight: "My mother is the only person I fully trust (but I can’t talk to her)."
  - Question: "How might we get moms on board as allies?"
  - Idea: "We can start a moms’ referral network. Moms are mobilized and given referral forms to either overtly or discreetly give to their daughters for a private moment with the at a local clinic."

CONCLUSION
FROM IDEATION TO PROTOTYPING

After ideating on concepts around each of your HMW questions, you and your team should prioritize those you think will be most feasible and/or best address the health need. You can then spend additional time elaborating on these ideas until they grow into an actionable set of specifications for prototyping.

Prototyping is a process whereby your team builds, tests and rapidly iterates low-cost models or demonstrations of a solution to validate an idea. It can provide an opportunity to see if an idea will work without the investment and risk of fully developing a solution.

It is unlikely that you will have the time or resources to prototype every idea produced in the ideation session. How many ideas your team brings forward to prototyping is dependent on your resources and program needs.

You can use the idea concept sheets included in the output template as a guide to help your team think through some of the necessary details for prototyping.

Summarize your work in the Keystone Project Presentation template, with a short explanation based on the ideas you generated during this Design phase. Then return to the Keystone Manual and continue with the next phase.