CODESIGN TOOL:

Co-Design Role Guide for **Designers**

Welcome to co-design! This guide is intended to help you understand more about this work and the importance of your contribution. Some parts of this guide are general to collaborative work, and some are specific to this project. Be sure to connect with the project facilitator if you have questions or concerns.

Project Facilitator:

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[EMAIL]

[PHONE OR OTHER CONTACT]

What is Co-Design?

Collaborative design, or co-design as we call it, is an approach to finding solutions to complex problems by gathering a group of people working together with diverse perspectives. It is used in many fields and industries. A key feature of co-design is that those most impacted by decisions are treated as equal collaborators from the very earliest stages, addressing power imbalances in decision-making.[1] In education, we can more concretely define co-design as:

> *a highly-facilitated, team-based process in which teachers, researchers, and developers work together in defined roles to design an educational innovation, realize the design in one or more prototypes, and evaluate each prototype's significance for addressing a concrete educational need.*[2]

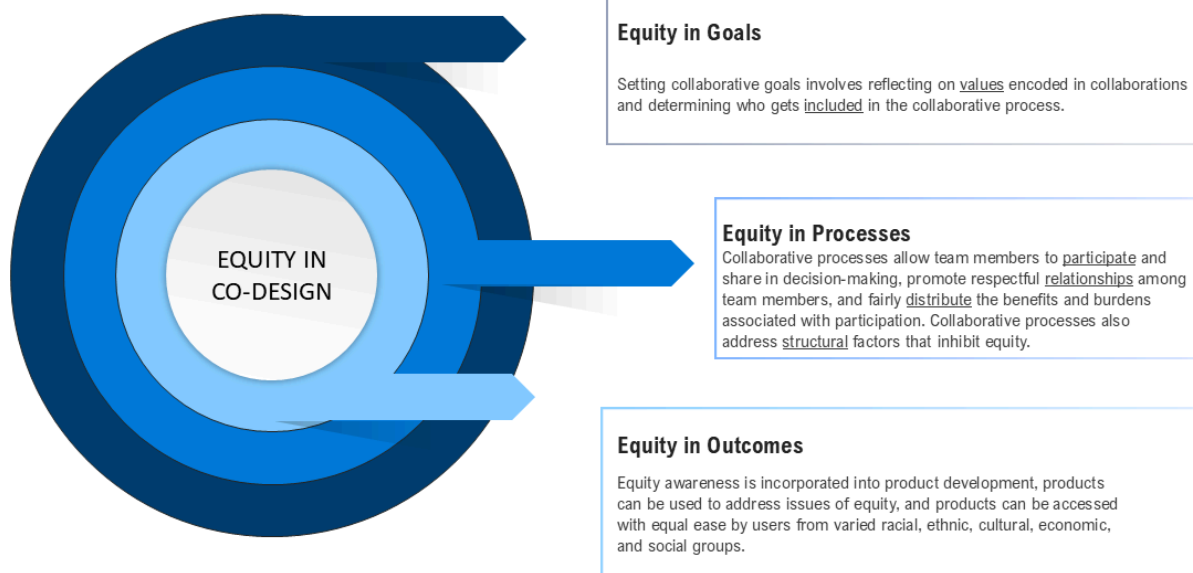[1] For additional information on co-design, visit: https://www.beyondstickynotes.com/what-is-codesign

[2] Penuel, W. R., Roschelle, J., & Shechtman, N. (2007). Designing formative assessment software with teachers: An analysis of the co-design process. *Research and Practice in Technology Enhanced Learning*, 2(1), 51–74. doi:10.1142/S1793206807000300

Co-design has been applied in education through research-practice partnerships, curriculum development, and the design and implementation of reform initiatives to generate equitable and impactful change.

In the context of our work, co-design is an innovative approach to **creating more usable research products,** but also for **democratizing research use through more equitable and inclusive processes**. The CREATEd co-design process leverages the knowledge and experiences of researchers, educators, communication design experts, and other stakeholders in envisioning and producing resources that both draw on high-quality research and are useful and relevant for achieving greater equity in educational policy and practice.

At the center of truly collaborative work – including co-design – is equity. However, equity has many dimensions and meanings in such work. Below is a framework based on interdisciplinary literature on engaged scholarship, participatory action research, organizational theory, and cultural anthropology. This framework highlights three critical equity issues: goals, process, and outcomes.

EQUITY IN CO-DESIGN

Equity in Goals

Setting collaborative goals involves reflecting on <u>values</u> encoded in collaborations and determining who gets <u>included</u> in the collaborative process.

Equity in Processes

Collaborative processes allow team members to <u>participate</u> and share in decision-making, promote respectful <u>relationships</u> among team members, and fairly <u>distribute</u> the benefits and burdens associated with participation. Collaborative processes also address <u>structural</u> factors that inhibit equity.

Equity in Outcomes

Equity awareness is incorporated into product development, products can be used to address issues of equity, and products can be accessed with equal ease by users from varied racial, ethnic, cultural, economic, and social groups.

These concepts are integrated throughout the CREATEd Co-Design toolkit to help users center equity in all aspects of their work.

What does the co-design process look like?

The co-design process consists of 4 phases, each with several distinct stages of collaboration and development, as shown below. However, your facilitator has developed a tailor-made plan for your specific project that may look a little different from this image. Some stages may be collapsed into single meetings, some may delegate work to specific team members to stay within the cost or time constraints of the project, and there may be more emphasis, time, or resources on particular stages. However, the process relies on the joint input of all members to accomplish its goals, and so it is helpful to see an overview of the whole thing before jumping in.
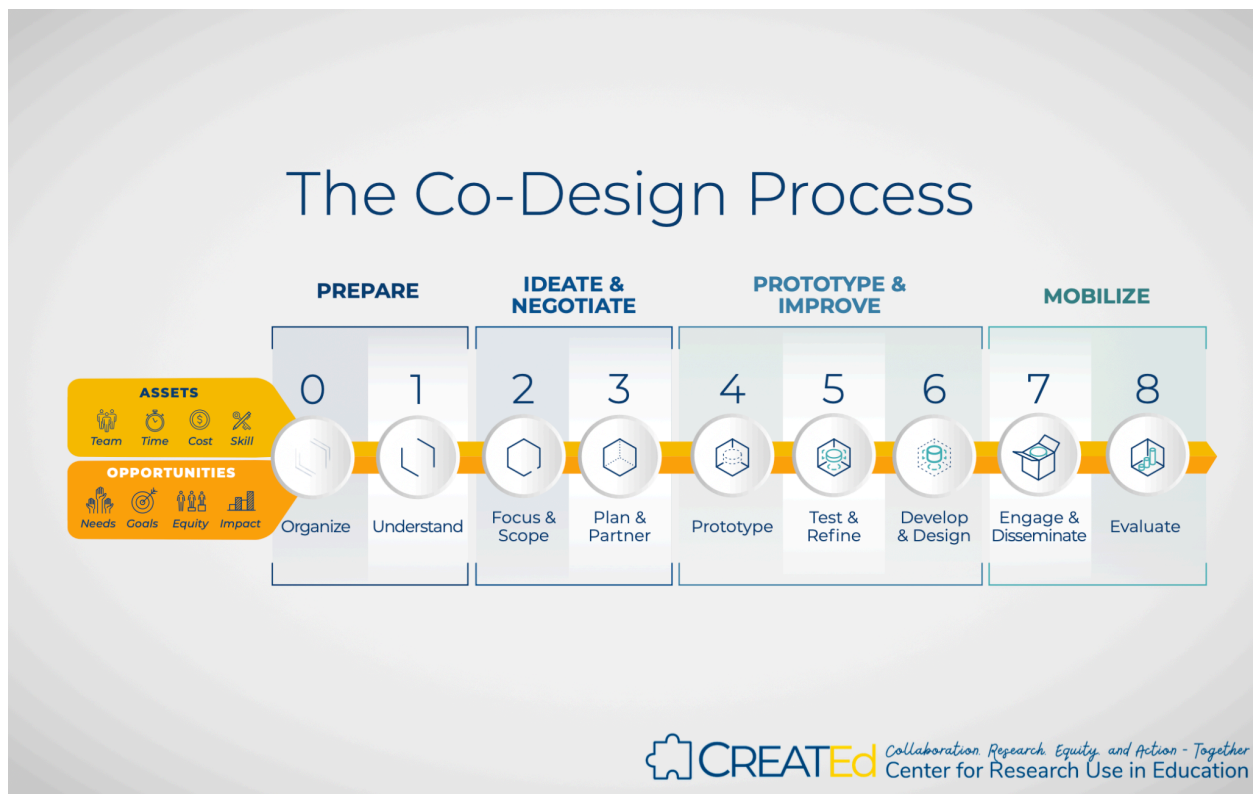
What is my role?

One of the challenges of bringing together a team with diverse sets of knowledge and experiences to accomplish a shared goal is helping them to understand their roles and how they can contribute to the final product. At its core, co-design integrates the knowledge and

skills of *all* team members through the collaborative process, ultimately yielding a product that reflects both research evidence *and* the needs of the end user.

Why is your role important?

Your experience, knowledge, and perspective are invaluable because they help ensure that products and solutions reflect best practices in communications and design to enable the products to be as useful, usable, and accessible as possible. Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners have expertise in the content of the design, but may need guidance about how to make sure that the product is designed to meet the needs they hope to address. As a designer, your knowledge and skills about audience, framing, communicating complex ideas, visualization, and more are all incredibly important to achieving the team's goals.

In a truly collaborative design process – which this is intended to be – your expertise is critically important in generating ideas and solutions that will be used by the intended audience.

How can I contribute?

As a member of the team, you are invited to contribute in any way you are comfortable at any point in the process. When working in a team, there are many ways to substantively contribute to work, including (but not limited to):

- *Seeking clarification*: In any setting, people may use language or images or refer to concepts that are not well understood by others, which can lead to misunderstanding and confusion later on. By asking for clarification, you can push the group toward common understandings or to value, recognize, and amplify the contributions of others
- *Lending support*: When ideas that make sense to you are shared, add that support to the conversation and help the team understand the ways in which evidence affirms or extends those ideas.
- *Pushing back:* When ideas don't seem to fit team goals, resources, or expertise, say so and explain what potential concerns you have with moving forward with that idea.
- *Making suggestions*: Offer new ideas or specific adjustments to others' ideas. Ideas based on your expertise are important for the group to consider.
- *Taking a step back*: When the team gets off track or seems to be headed down a problematic path, ask the team to take a step back to reconsider prior decisions or other considerations. Because you have unique expertise, others may not see issues or concerns the same way, and it is important to step in to help them understand before moving forward.

Although *any contribution in every stage* of the design is encouraged, it is *especially important* for the reasons described above to have your voice represented in:

- helping the team to clarify messages for intended audiences (Stage 1),
- brainstorming products that are appropriate for intended audiences and providing feedback that helps the team understand the pros and cons of their choices from a design and communications perspective (Stage 2)
- developing and implementing a manageable plan to create the product (Stage 3),
- prototyping the product (Stage 4)

- ensuring that audience feedback and subsequent revisions remain consistent with the research (Stage 5)
- Finalizing the product (Stage 6)
- contribute to effective approaches for evaluating and improving the use of research-based practices resulting from this work (Stage 8).

Keep in mind that although the other team members - including policymakers, practitioners, and researchers - have their own critically important expertise to lend to this work, it is important to ensure that the collective expertise is valued and leveraged in the co-design work. *This is an opportunity for you to learn from them and for them to learn from you*. Joint learning is a key benefit of collaborative design!

Team dynamics

Sometimes working in teams can be uncomfortable or challenging. Your facilitator's goal is to make sure that all members have the opportunity to participate and contribute in a way in which they feel comfortable; to ensure interactions are constructive, respectful, and honor team expertise; and to keep the process moving. If you have concerns about how this process is playing out, bring them to the attention of the facilitator.

At the same time, we can be proactive in supporting positive team dynamics and ensure productive meetings by:
- Being prepared and punctual
- Listening carefully to others
- Giving everyone an equal opportunity to talk
- Welcoming counter-argument or disagreement
- Acknowledging others' ideas and contributions

What should I expect when it comes to doing the work?

What will it look like to actually do this work? In this section, you'll find details about your project, including timeline, time commitment, compensation, and expectations for team dynamics.

Project details

This project is intended to [Describe objectives. Add information about any relevant materials that the work will draw on.]

Timeline

The timeline for this project is as follows:

[add information about timeline]

Time commitment

The co-design process typically includes about 15 hours of in-meeting work, distributed over a combination of short and extended meetings. [Add details about meeting plan if available]. In addition, there is some out-of-meeting work, including preparing for meetings, "homework" between meetings, which is typically decided by the team, and some time for follow-ups or feedback. This is variable by project and team member, but may be as much as 15 additional hours. Team members who are contributing to writing or design work in Stage 4 (Prototype) or Stage 6 (Develop and Design) should expect to spend additional time, to be determined by you and the team based on availability and need.

Importantly, things happen - life happens. It is important to expect the unexpected. We cannot predict exactly which life events may intervene with our plans, but we can be sure that at some point they will. We have built into this process a "centering tool" to ensure that as we work through each stage, we consider the resources - including your time and expertise - available to the team. It is important to be open about what you can and can't commit to this work and to communicate with the team – especially the facilitator – if anything changes.

Compensation

You will be compensated [add information] based on anticipated meeting hours and out-of-meeting work. If there are additional tasks such as contributing to the prototype or final design, they will be compensated differently.

In order to be compensated, you will need to complete forms as directed by the facilitator. [Add details about invoicing, sending hours, getting installations, etc].

Crediting and Copyright

All team members will be credited with work and acknowledged in the final product. The products developed by the team will be freely available to the public and may be distributed by all members of the team as decided during the process.

[Add any additional information that might be relevant to branding, ownership, etc.]

Evaluation

[If the process is being evaluated in any way, please add details about evaluation activities, participation, and consent.]