CODESIGN TOOL:

Design Principles and Considerations

In a facilitation role, you can support your designer—and ensure they are meeting expectations—by thinking about your co-designed resource's alignment to these principles and considerations.

Design Principles:

- **Precision.** Have a healthy tolerance for error during the drafting process, but keep your standards high. The designer (and other team members!) should implement processes to proofread charts, data visualizations, and other research findings against the original report to ensure accuracy.

- **Equity implications.** A crucial part of developing content (i.e., a prototype/product) is making sure the implications for equity that were outlined in the early stages are carried through in the design. For example, does the content demonstrate that you have explicitly attended to equity? Are additional materials or specific conditions needed for this resource to be used to achieve equity goals or to avoid unintentional reproduction of inequity?

- **Audience.** The target audience should be clear – who is using this? Students? Parents? Educators? Other researchers? Administrators? And the design should point to the ways in which the audience could benefit from this resource (see audience activity from Stage 2).

- **Clarity of purpose**. The design and copy should make obvious what the product is trying to accomplish, whether that is to inform, teach, persuade, prompt thought, or suggest change for the user. This can be done through calls to action (CTAs), "about" statements, or other techniques.

- **Meaningful graphics/artwork.** Visual elements should be chosen with thought and intention. Are the graphs, charts or infographics helpful in interpreting the data, and telling a story? (This includes good titles that explain what they are there for). Are icons and symbols as unambiguous as possible, used consistently, and have you considered possible meanings that may be different in different cultures??

- **Intentional tone through artistic choices.** The colors, fonts, and graphic motifs should work together to create a consistent tone for the piece, whether that is professional, whimsical, bold, subtle, or anything in between.

- **Language that both supports and elevates the audience.** Your designer — or copywriter, if you have someone on your team in that role — should be making language choices along the way that support the tone you have chosen, remove jargon or acronyms that the user may not understand, and define terms so that the user has an opportunity to learn. Make sure you define the term the first time it is used.

- **Inclusive.** Your designer (and team) should apply equity awareness in the development of products, for example, using people-first language, carefully considering colors, icons, and shapes to avoid stereotypes, and recognizing audience needs. They should always work to represent a diverse array of races, ethnicities, abilities, ages, genders, body types, family units, neighborhoods, and learning environments in the imagery, examples, and anecdotes used in the design. Be sure to revisit all copy and creative selections to ensure that you have created a representative product. Evaluate each scene not just for the presence of diversity, but look for diverse individuals being represented in culturally affirming ways and in positions of power, leadership, ability, and access.

- **Writing quality.** Your team should be creating with care, displaying the qualities of intentional, detail-oriented work: use of appropriate spelling and writing conventions, writing in a clear, accessible manner, and aligning design elements.

Visual Considerations:

- **Hierarchy.** The organization and order of concepts should be intentional and clear, expressed by consistent features of headers, narratives, bullet points or numbered lists, accents, callouts, and other effective information architecture.

- **Consistency.** Your designer should use a limited and consistent set of fonts, colors, and motifs that communicate an overall tone and are not a distraction from the content.

- **Negative space.** The design should embrace negative space so that the content can breathe, and the audience can pause to think about it.

- **Navigation and orientation.** Depending on what kind of resource is being created, the design may need both navigation (how do I get around?) and orientation (where am I?). These elements should be easily used and understood, and should follow a pattern across all elements of a design.

- **Intuitive and familiar.** If you find yourself clicking on things that aren't clickable, landing on pages you don't expect, or hunting around for what you need, the resource may need to be optimized for a more intuitive experience that more closely mimics other experiences and tools with which your users are familiar. Consider conducting user testing to gain insights that help you refine the click paths, sequences, expectations, and experiences for your users.

Technical Considerations:

- **Calls to action (CTAs).** Throughout the resource, there should be a clear action for the user, whether that's to go to the next page, or to take some other next step. These "calls to action" (CTAs) are what propel your user forward, through your design and beyond it. They might include words like Contact Us, Learn More, Continue Reading, and so on.

- **Contact information.** Be sure to decide upon a method to contact one or more of the team members. Consider adding a feedback mechanism, such as a survey or suggestion form, places for comments, social media handles, or a poll.

- **Accessibility.** Your designer should be creating materials that can be used by as many people as possible, explicitly including those who are differently abled. Ask how they are following accessibility standards for the medium they're working in (online, the WCAG standards: https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/; in print, consult general guides like https://www.si.edu/Content/Accessibility/Publication-Guidelines.pdf) and, in particular, considering color vision deficiency and dyslexia, which are very common. Ensure that all images, diagrams, videos, gifs, photographs, or graphs/charts have detailed and accurate alternative text descriptions.

- **Legal, properly cited, and credited.** Your designer should have permission or appropriate licenses to use all images, text, or other materials that they use in the design. Proper citations should be used, and space should be planned for them in the design. Your team should only provide content to the designer that you have permission to use. And, of course, all team members should be credited with work on this resource. Be especially careful to include those who have done labor that is often unseen or invisible, and to get professional titles correct for everyone.'

- **Copyrighted or licensed.** As a team, discuss whether you will release your final resource under a Creative Commons license (there are six license options to consider), or if you will otherwise copyright your team's work and/or offer licensing options. Discuss the importance of being able to share the work freely to reduce barriers for engagement by underserved communities or those with fewer resources available.

- **Branded.** Your designer should follow the branding guidelines of the organization(s) or other governing bodies that are sponsoring or overseeing your design.

- **Selectable.** Especially in an education setting, text should be selectable for easy sharing, reproducing, or quoting. Your designer should not be using images of text in any locations (this is also a concern for universal accessibility).