# PATHWAYS-OTTAWA DESIGN SPRINT

## Co-designing Virtual Services with Youth

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# INTRODUCTION

**Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre** has been working in collaboration with Pathways to Education Canada over the past several years to identify innovative ways to reach more students in need. The Equity in Education collective impact initiative, which PQCHC spearheaded from 2015 to 2020 was one such strategy. With the onset of the COVID19 pandemic and the resultant restrictions, PQCHC decided to redirect its focus on finding virtual means to innovate on the Pathways model to reach more students in need. This Design Sprint activity was one approach to that end.

# GOAL OF THE PROJECT

The goal of the Design Sprint project was to engage a group of youth in the design of a virtual program or service, while introducing them to human centred design techniques and processes.

# OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

**1** To gather the unique perspectives and ideas of youth in the design of a virtual program or service.

**2** To engage youth in a fun and creative process, while they learn new skills and participate in meaningful change.

**3** To create a feasible design for a new program or service that could be piloted.

# WHAT IS A DESIGN SPRINT?

**A Design Sprint i**s a process that involves a group working together to design a new product, service or feature. The process uses design thinking principles, rapid prototyping, and testing on real users.  As the word "sprint" indicates, the process is typically completed in a short period of time. Jake Knapp, in his book Sprint, describes the process he helped to develop while working at Google. While Knapp's process was developed for a large technology company, the general approach was helpful in providing a starting point in designing a process for our purposes.

**Knapp breaks up the process into five steps over a five day period.**

**1**

The first day of the Design Sprint typically involves understanding and defining the "problem"  and brainstorming challenges.

**2**

On the second day, the goal is to create solutions around the problem by generating ideas and sketching solutions.

**3**

The third day involves deciding on the solution that will be developed into a prototype.

**4**

On the fourth day of the sprint, a realistic prototype is made, whether that is a physical product or an app.

**5**

The fifth day involves validating the prototype/solution by testing on real users to gather feedback and incorporate in the potential product.

# BEST PRACTICES

Research shows that co-design with users provides benefits for project outcomes[1] as well as for the young participants themselves, in the form of increased confidence, knowledge and skills[2], and potentially to society overall[3]. The Design Sprint allowed youth to build skills while providing us with greater insight into the needs of youth and the problems they face.

## Building Trust

Research shows that it is important to spend time building rapport among the group. Doing this helps build trust between participants, which makes them more comfortable to share honest opinions and creative ideas[2]. This is even more important when working with youth, who may be less confident than adults in expressing themselves.

## Confidentiality & Sensitive Discussions

A high level of care must be taken by facilitators when engaging youth in co-creation where the problem space may be a sensitive area of discussion for participants. It's critical for facilitators to work with the group to create ground rules for sensitive discussions so that participants feel safe to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences but are also aware of what may be better shared in private[5].

## Motivation and Engagement

Making activities fun, interactive and age-appropriate is critical when conducting co-creation with children and youth[4]. By working in small groups, creating hands-on prototypes, visuals and flipboards, youth stayed engaged and were able to express their ideas through a variety of methods.

1 Steen et al., 2011; Trischler et al., 2019; Thabrew et al., 2018.
2 Druin, 2002.
3 Bjögvinsson et al., 2012.

4 Bowen, 2013; Brandt, 2006; Guha et al., 2013; Percy-Smith, 2006; Steen et al., 2011.
5. Trischler et al., 2019; Visser et al., 2005; Heeks, 2019.

# RESOURCES

Activities and inspiration were pulled from a variety of sources including:

• **Standford University d.school's Design Thinking Process** (see below) and the d.school Starter Kit, which is a virtual course designed to give students the opportunity to learn design methods by doing.

• **InVision's** Design Thinking Handbook.

• **Google's** Design Sprint Kit.

• **Jake Knapp's book** Sprint.

Activities were tailored to our participants' age and skill level, with the aim of providing them with skills they could apply to designing solutions to any problem.

## Stanford d.school Design Thinking Process

### EMPATHIZE
• INTERVIEWS
• SHADOWING
• SEEK TO UNDERSTAND
• NON-JUDGEMENTAL

### DEFINE
• PERSONAS
• ROLE OBJECTIVES
• DECISIONS
• CHALLENGES
• PAIN POINTS

### IDEATE
• SHARE IDEAS
• ALL IDEAS WORTHY
• DIVERGE/
  CONVERGE
• "YES AND"
  THINKING
• PRIORITIZE

### PROTOTYPE
• MOCKUPS
• STORYBOARDS
• KEEP IT SIMPLE
• FAIL FAST
• ITERATE QUICKLY

### TEST
• UNDERSTAND IMPEDIMENTS
• WHAT WORKS?
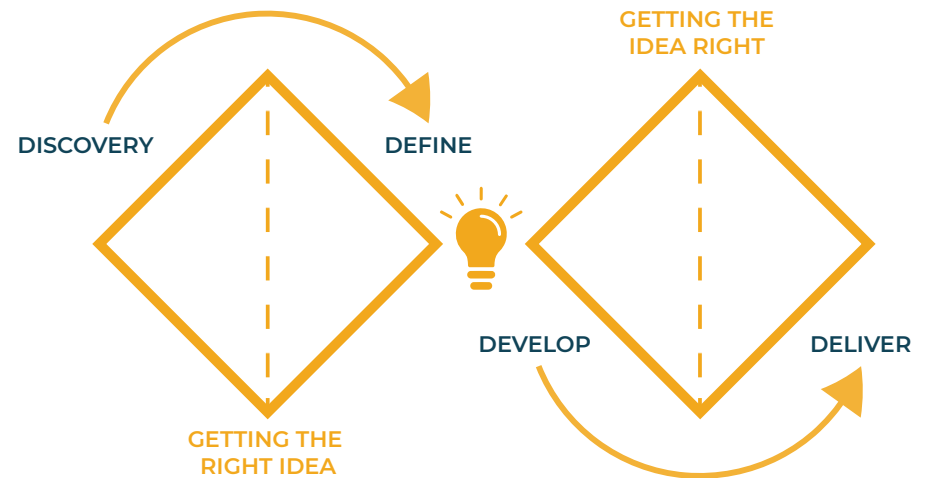• ROLE PLAY
• ITERATE QUICKLY

https://dschool.stanford.edu

# OUR **PROCESS**

Three staff members facilitated our design sprint process, working with a group of ten youth over a total of **10 weeks.**

The process took place in-person every Thursday, from evening at Pinecrest Queensway Employment Services office from October to December, 2021.

## **1** INTRO & RAPPORT BUILDING

**Week 1,** participants and facilitators took the time to build rapport with one another. Participants were also introduced to the goal and purpose of the Design Sprint project and participated in some skill-building activities. One of the skill-building activities, "Blind Contour Drawing", aimed to help the youth improve communication skills and introduced them to an important skill that designers need to possess: strong listening skills.

DISCOVERY

DEFINE

GETTING THE IDEA RIGHT
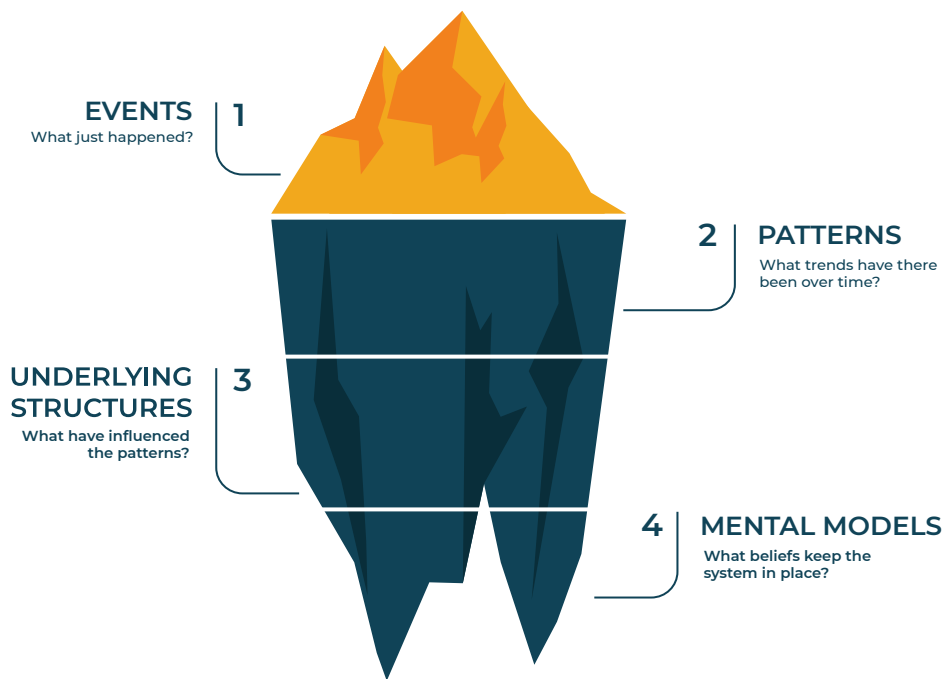
GETTING THE RIGHT IDEA

DEVELOP

DELIVER

Facilitators also introduced the Design Thinking process and the Double Diamond framework (above), to help participants understand and conceptualize the process we would be following.

# 2 — 3 DISCOVERY

**Week 2** saw participants engage in identifying problems. The iceberg framework (below) was introduced to teach the youth how systems and mental models can reinforce problems in society.

**EVENTS**
What just happened?
**1**

**2 PATTERNS**
What trends have there been over time?

**UNDERLYING STRUCTURES**
What have influenced the patterns?
**3**

**4 MENTAL MODELS**
What beliefs keep the system in place?

**Week 3,** the youth participated in a live Zoom presentation and discussion with two young leaders from Future North in Sudbury. This discussion showed participants how other youth were dealing with similar issues in their own communities. Following the presentation, the youth engaged in additional activities and discussion about Needs, Goals, and Barriers of high school students like themselves.

Focusing on youth
When we aren't clear who we are designing for, we often create solutions that don't work for anyone. This exercise will help us focus on the needs, goals and barriers faced by high school students. Thinking about your own life experiences and those of your friends and family members, fill out the following chart:

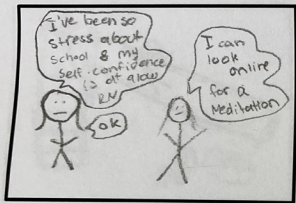| Key Needs What do youth need to have positive and successful experiences in High School? | Motivation and Goals What motivates them? Why do they have those needs? What are their goals? | Barriers What obstacles might they face that can make it hard to do well in High School? |
|---|---|---|
| Educational Support Hard work No Pressure | Family and friends Good Grades Goals! To Successfully complete highschool with no overthinking habits | Procrastination Time management Sleep Schedule High Pressure Stress Overthinking Their Phone High expectations |

## 4 — 5 DEFINE

Week 4 moved into the converging phase of the double diamond framework. The youth created **How Might We Questions**, and used Problem Framing worksheets as a way to help them narrow down their discussions to one or two problems they wanted to focus on.
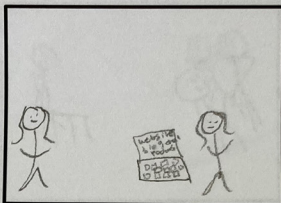
**In Week 5** the youth were provided with more time to fine tune their problem statements and receive feedback from their peers. This provided a solid foundation for defining the problem(s) that would be worked on for the remainder of the Design Sprint project.
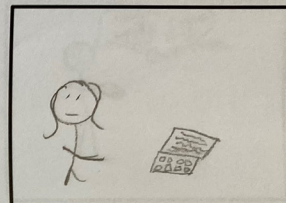
## 6 — 7 IDEATION

**In Week 6** the process shifted into the design phase of the project as participants began to ideate solutions to their identified problems. Activities involved brainstorming ideas using various imposed constraints (i.e. the solution has to be fun, or has to involve a robot). Each group also received feedback and chose one idea to work with and create a prototype for.

Storyboard

Name(s) _____

Your Solution: Website contaning blog, Podcast, chat

Panel 1: "I've been so stress about school & my self-confidence is at a low" "ok" / "I can look online for a Meditation"
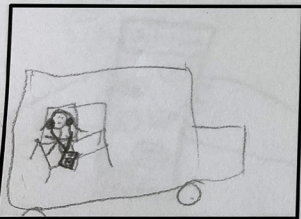someone expressing themself and doing _____ online
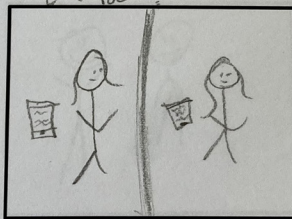
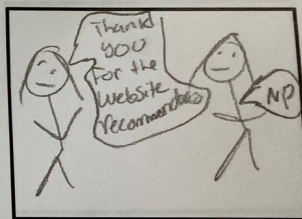Panel 2: Showing the website she found on mediation that has a blog, Podcast & chat room

Panel 3: reading some tips on Meditation

Panel 4: feeling overwhelm on the bus listening to Podcast

Panel 5: chatting anonymissle on the chat

Panel 6: "Thank you for the website Recommendation" "NP" / it help for stress low confedience.

**Week 7**, participants continued to share and flesh out their ideas by asking questions, creating a story board for their ideas and doing a second round of peer feedback.
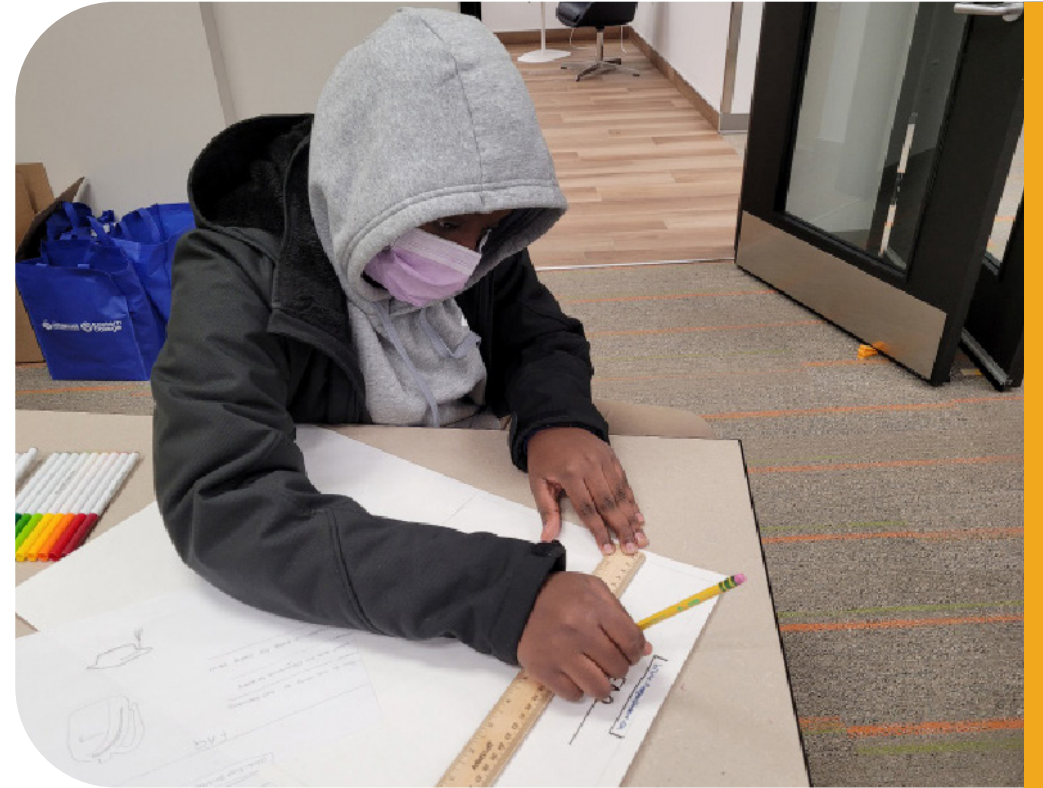
**8** **9** PROTOTYPING

**In Week 8,** participants used paper, markers, and craft supplies to create prototypes of their solutions.
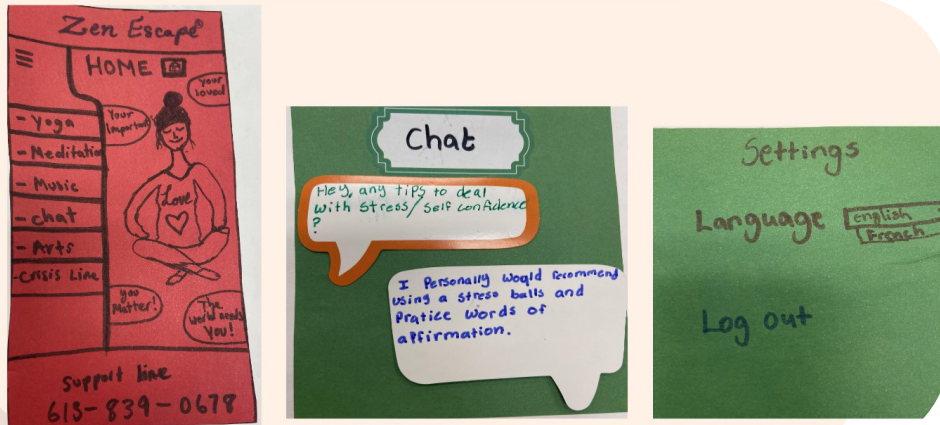
**In Week 9,** participants planned and rehearsed their presentations in preparation for presenting to a panel of experts.

**10** PRESENTATIONS

**In Week 10,** a panel of experts joined via Zoom to view the participant's presentations. The participants presented their ideas and received praise and constructive feedback from the panel.

# WHAT WILL HAPPEN WITH THE **DESIGNS?**

The designs that the youth created were reviewed by Pinecrest-Queensway CHC to determine the feasibility of implementation. Funding was secured to launch a podcast project focused on career exploration and preparing for post-secondary education. The podcast will simultaneously act as a skills-building project for youth to learn how to create a podcast and as a source of information for other youth to learn about different careers and post-secondary pathways and processes. The podcast project launched in October 2022, in partnership with CKCU-FM, the community radio station located on the campus of Carleton University. A decision on whether to move forward with developing the youths' two other ideas, a Mental Health app and an app to help youth transition to Post-Secondary Education, has yet to be made.

The youth that participated in the Design Sprint have been offered a spot in the podcast project. They will also be invited to participate in future design sprint and co-design activities.

# LESSONS LEARNED

As this was our first time conducting a design sprint with/for youth, a few lessons can be taken away from this experience.

## WHAT TO DO DIFFERENTLY

**Let the Youth Define the Problem**

Upon reflection, we realized that the way we started the process, i.e. by presenting the problem to the youth as we had defined it (i.e. the high school graduation gap between low-income youth versus that of youth in higher income levels) was too broad, top-down, and was not sufficiently sensitive to the lived experiences of the participants.

In the future, rather than presenting the youth with the problem as we have defined it, we will instead ask them what problems they experience in their lives. As co-designers, the youth represent the 'user' of whatever product or service we design, so giving them a blank slate to identify the problems to tackle is not only more trauma-informed, but it will also lead to problems that are more relevant to the target audience. Facilitators could support the process by gathering and sharing research on the problems identified by the youth.

## Even Move Rapport Building

Even though the research told us this was an important first step, we did not allocate sufficient time in the agenda to do this and as a result it took several weeks before participants began to genuinely open up and share their thoughts and ideas. The way we presented the problem, as mentioned above, could have also hindered the rapport-building process.

## Recruiting Participants with the "Right" Motivation

While we in no way want to diminish the effort and commitment of our Design Sprint participants, we observed that some participants had different understandings of the project and motivations for participating. While some participants were very keen on learning and contributing, others were more interested in the financial and other incentives. We expect that if we spend more time recruiting youth that clearly understand and are genuinely interested in program design, we will have more engaging and productive sessions.

## WHAT TO REPEAT

**In addition to identifying what could be improved, it is also critically important to pinpoint what worked well so it can be repeated. Some of the activities that worked particularly well include:**

- **Interactive d.school videos** are well made, easy to integrate and provide participants with a good overview of the design sprint process.

- **Activities that got the youth moving around and interacting,** such as brainstorming using post-it notes and flipcharts, and presenting to and getting feedback from one another, were very engaging.

- **Skills-building activities** such as the Blind Contour Drawing activity were interactive and helped participants build their skills as 'designers'.

- **Kahoot games** were frequently used at the start of each session to review what we did and learned the previous week. This was a crowd favourite among the youth and helped to reinforce learning and setting the stage for that evening's session.

**Creating prototypes** using art and craft supplies was creative and fun!

**Presenting to the panel of experts** provided participants with an outside perspective on their prototypes and gave them the opportunity to present their ideas in a "real world" setting and see the applicability of their prototypes. Panelists were very positive and complimentary in their feedback, which was encouraging for the youth.

**Collaboration with the youth from Future North** provided the participants with a valuable opportunity to hear what other youth are doing, which provided inspiration and ideas to the Design Sprint participants. Having a youth on the panel helped make the panel less intimidating and provided a perspective that was different from those of the adult panelists, one which likely carried a different level of credibility in the eyes of the youth participants.

> *I had a good time, you guys were supportive and motivated us through the workshops, I really liked it. Thank you and I hope there are more workshops in the future*

> *When you are creating a product, it is not specific, you must think of the audience you are creating for, it taught me more about business.*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## YOUTH FROM FUTURE NORTH

**High school students from Future North (FN)** in Sudbury joined our Design Sprint programming on two occasions. The first was during the Discovery phase of the project, when two FN youth interns, Kerry Yang and Aminat Lawal, joined our meeting by Zoom to discuss their youth-led research project called *Culture Of The North: BIPOC Youth Taking Action*. The project focused on "determining the degree to which multicultural education is being taught within the high school classrooms in the District of Sudbury and Manitoulin, and its impact on students that identity as Black, Indigenous (and) People of Colour (BIPOC)" (Duguay, p.2). The youth had recently completed the research collection and analysis phase and were able to share their learnings and experiences with their Ottawa peers. One of the youth interns, Kerry Yang, joined us again as a member of Panel of Experts.

## PANEL OF EXPERTS

The panel of experts consisted of 5 individuals who were subject matter experts in their respective fields. The subject matter experts included:

**Alasdair Stuart-Bell,** co-founder, Partner & Lead - Human Centered Research and Design at Jumping Elephants, a consulting firm located in Ottawa;

**Scott Smith,** the co-founder of Neo Insight and a member of the leadership team at DFFRNT, a strategic design consultancy based in Ottawa;

**Owen Hinds,** director of the Lawrence Heights Pathways to Education program at Unison Health and Community Services in Toronto; and

**Johannes Valdes,** Social Impact Manager, Youth Outreach on Shopify's Social Impact team, which aims to reduce barriers for BIPOC youth in STEM and entrepreneurship.

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