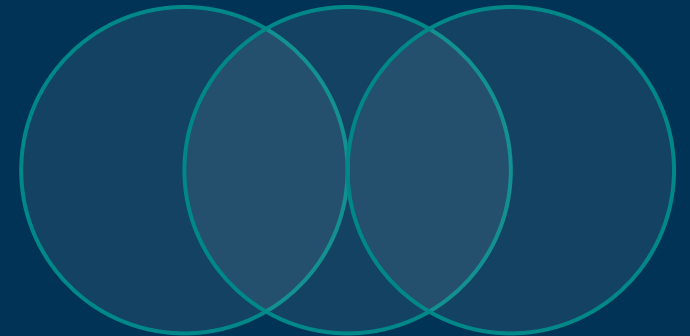


A HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN SESSION

Designing to Collaborate

Building sustainable, mission-aligned partnerships across Pennsylvania's nonprofit sector.

Inspiration → Ideation → Implementation



Welcome!



Director of Partnership & Operations
The Nonprofit Center



Fun Fact

I've visited almost all 50 states

Personal

Home: Newark, DE

Hobbies: Photography, Dancing around my house with wine (that's a Hobby, right?), Reading, Volunteering with youth organizations



SESSION STRUCTURE

Four moves, One plan



Opening & Intro

- Frame the session
- Why collaboration matters, especially now
- Introduce the HCD framing



Inspiration

- Reframe the problem as a How Might We
- Map the ecosystem in the room for gaps & overlaps



Ideation

- Brainstorm partnership shapes
- Narrow & build a partnership framework
- Discuss mission fit, funding, the sector's changing future



Implementation

- Prototype the partnership
- Get peer feedback
- Draft a potential 30–60 day action plan



Most partnerships don't fail at the handshake...

They fail eighteen months in; when the MOU describes a partnership nobody quite built.

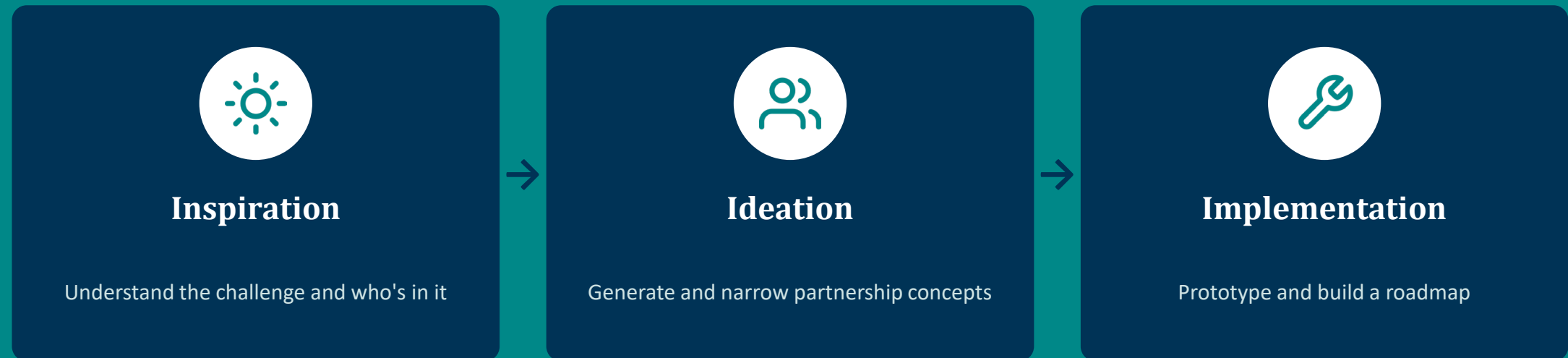
The intention was real. The design wasn't... finished.



What Human-Centered Design Actually Is

Don't design a solution, then go find out if people want it.

Design with the people affected. Test small before you build big. Expect your first idea to be wrong.



IDEO.org's three-phase process

Why "How Might We" Matters



COMPLAINT

"We're running basically the same after-school program as the nonprofit a few blocks away."

Nobody outside your org can solve it.



REFRAME



INVITATION

"How might we combine our reach, so families get one clear front door instead of two overlapping options?"

Anyone in the room can help design toward it.

A partnership is a designed thing...

whether anyone designs it on purpose or not.

Human Centered Design gives partnership-building three things:



Find the real, shared problem

Before anyone proposes a solution — so it isn't one org's agenda wearing another org's name.



Small, testable versions

A pilot or rough MOU, tested early — instead of a fully negotiated structure nobody's stress-tested.



A shared vocabulary

"Let's prototype this and get feedback" is easier for strangers to agree to than "let's talk governance."

Pennsylvania's nonprofit sector is being asked to solve bigger problems with the same or shrinking resources.

- Funding pressures and rising needs are colliding across our sector
- Duplicated effort quietly drains capacity that's already stretched thin
- The organizations best positioned to respond are rarely positioned to respond alone

The honest answer to “who's responsible for this” is increasingly:

The challenges are too big for any one organization alone.





PHASE 1 · INSPIRATION

Understand the challenge and who's in it

- Reframe each person's org-specific problem as a shared How Might We statement.
- Map the ecosystem in the room — who holds reach, credibility, money and capacity.
- Name the gaps and overlaps that surface on the map before moving forward.

The goal isn't a polished problem statement; it's a designable one, shared by more than one organization in the room that we can approach.





PHASE 2 · IDEATION

Generate and narrow partnership concepts

- Brainstorm possible partnership shapes against the shared How Might We.
- Narrow to one concept and build it into a working partnership framework.
- Talk through mission fit, funding approaches, and the sector's changing realities.

This is the longest block for a reason! It's where scattered enthusiasm turns into an actual structure the group can travel.





PHASE 3 · IMPLEMENTATION

Prototype and build a roadmap

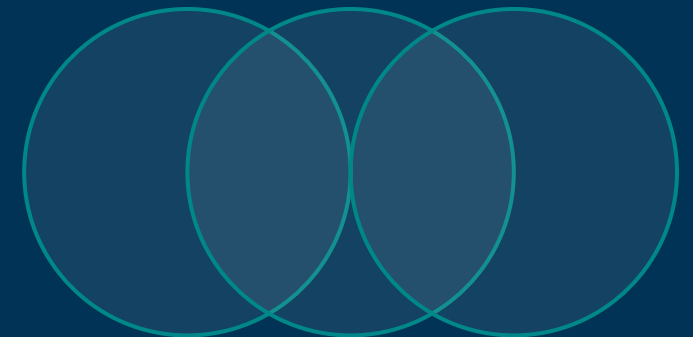
- Build a tangible, testable version of the partnership concept.
- Get structured peer feedback from another group in the room.
- Draft a 30–60 day action plan — if this is a partnership worth pursuing.

The plan is optional by design: a group that decides not to pursue the partnership has still done useful work!



What's Next?

WHERE DO THINGS GO FROM TODAY?



Thank You!

Roshawnda Washington, MSW | ro@npcenter.org
www.npcenter.org



The
Nonprofit
Center

Building sustainable, mission-aligned partnerships across our sector has to start somewhere...why not here?

