WEBINAR VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Office of Population Affairs

Inspiration, Ideation, and Implementation: The Power of Human-Centered Design in Teen Pregnancy Prevention

26 February 2020

MODERATOR: Good afternoon. And welcome to Inspiration, Ideation, and Implementation–The Power of Human-Centered Design in Teen Pregnancy Prevention. I will now turn it over to Lizzy Laferriere from OPA. Lizzy?

ELIZABETH LAFERRIERE: Thank you, Jamie. And thanks to everyone for joining us today. Like Jamie said, my name is Lizzy Laferriere. And I'm a project officer with OPA's Innovation and Demonstration team. This is our first webinar today in our series of critical concepts in teen pregnancy prevention. Each of our three webinars will be led by an expert in the field who will present content at an introductory level.

Please do note that these webinars do not cover any information specific to the funding opportunity announcements. All youth-serving organizations working in this space, including potential applicants, are invited to participate in these live sessions with us or to access the recordings on our website at any time. Registration info is also on our website.

Of course, you have joined us today for design thinking. And we are so glad that you were able to join us. Please note that neither OPA nor our speakers today will answer any FOA-specific questions. Instead direct any questions on application content or submission to OPA or to the Office of Grants Management as is appropriate.

And with that, I am now thrilled to turn it over to our two speakers today. I always think it's best to allow folks to introduce themselves as they wish. But I will say that Sarah Axelson is the director of training and innovation at Power to Decide, where she manages the Innovation Next incubator. And Elise Schuster is a cofounder of the online platform okayso. They have also been working in sexual health and youth development for nearly two decades. Sarah, thank you. The floor is yours.

SARAH AXELSON: Thank you so much, Lizzy. I'm thrilled to welcome everyone to the webinar today. And of course, we've already shared with you what we'll be talking about, which is the exciting power of human-centered design in teen pregnancy prevention. My copresenter, Elise, and I will introduce ourselves shortly. But we wanted to start by sharing with you what today's webinar will include.

The webinar today will be 60 minutes in length. And this is our journey for our time to get there. We'll introduce ourselves, as I shared. We'll talk about what human-centered design is.

We'll give you some examples and case studies of how human-centered design has been used in the field of teen pregnancy prevention through the Innovation Next project and okayso. And then we'll talk about why we see so much value in this particular approach. We'll also have an opportunity for questions and answers. We'll share some resources with you and then close before 3:00 PM today.

So we'd like to take this opportunity to introduce ourselves first. As Lizzy shared, my name is Sarah Axelson. And I am the director of training and innovation at Power to Decide. I was first introduced to design thinking over six years ago through reading about it online. And I immediately dove more into depth because I loved the idea of an approach that provided a structure for how to innovate.

As a project officer with the Family and Youth Services Bureau in my previous role, I developed a training for APP grantees on human-centered design and then, following that opportunity, applied for and was selected to be part of a competitive accelerator program called HHS Ignite, which was a competition to catalyze innovation in the federal government using design thinking. I participated in an eight-month program on a team with colleagues from OPA and CDC. And from more than 100 applicants at the beginning, our team was part of the top five. So we're really thrilled about how we learned to use design thinking in that process.

I now serve as the project director for Innovation Next at Power to Decide. And I'll talk more about Innovation Next later. But it is a Tier 2A project funded by OPA to catalyze innovation in teen pregnancy prevention using design thinking.

As part of that project, we've developed and delivered workshops for teams of innovators from all over the country and supported them through their use of design thinking. And outside of my full-time work related to design thinking, I also teach a new undergraduate course at George Washington University on using design thinking in public health.

So as you can see, I'm steeped in this work. I love the approach, and I want to share it with everyone. I'm so excited that OPA sees that value as well and is supporting innovation and the use of design thinking. And now I'd like to allow my copresenter, Elise Schuster, to introduce themselves. Elise?

ELISE SCHUSTER: Hi. This is Elise Schuster. I am the cofounder of okayso, which is an online platform that does sexuality education and teen pregnancy prevention work. And I was first introduced to human-centered design because we are funded by the Innovation Next program at Power to Decide.

As part of that funding, we actually got to go and receive a human-centered design training from IDEO, which is one of the many places that does this kind of training. And it really

revolutionized the way that we were thinking about the work that we were doing and took us from an idea to an actual product with lots and lots of human-centered design intermingled along the way. I'm really excited to be here with everyone today to talk to you a little bit about how that process worked for us.

SARAH AXELSON: Thanks so much, Elise. So we thought it would be helpful to start by doing some level setting of what human-centered design is. And you'll note that we may also use the term "design thinking." We are using those interchangeably for the purposes of today's webinar. Some folks in the field do see slight differences between the two approaches. But at an introductory level, just know that if we use both of those terms, they do mean the same thing.

Perhaps it's easiest to talk about what HCD is by talking about why it's helpful. Generally in the world, when we build something new, we do it this way. We figure out what's needed, build it, release it, and hope that it will have value.

Sometimes as we're defining what's needed, we talk to the people who will end up using it. But a lot of the time we don't, oftentimes due to pressure or barriers related to time, funding, staff availability, et cetera. When we do things this way, we can end up creating something that no one actually wants to use or needs.

Human-centered design offers a different way of working, one where interacting with the target consumer, or what we call the "end user," is front and center and that where creation happens in smaller bursts with lots of opportunity for feedback and change. And this feedback is happening from the target consumer, or the end user, which is why it's so important. Using human-centered design reduces the risk that we will build something that people don't ultimately want to use or that has value in the world.

Human-centered design is a lot of different things. Although it's become a buzzword in recent years, it's actually been around for a long time. Being a human-centered designer means believing that all of the problems or challenges in the world, even really big ones like poverty and gender inequality and teen pregnancy, are solvable. It also means believing that the people who are experiencing those challenges are the ones who know best how to solve them and that if we can stay committed and rooted in the experiences of those people, then we can come up with creative, innovative solutions.

Embracing human-centered design all starts with your mindset. Human-centered designers embrace seven key mindsets that set them apart. And here they are.

Creative confidence is the belief that everyone is creative and that creativity isn't your capacity to draw or sculpt a work of art, but that it's a way of understanding the world. It's the belief that you can and will come up with creative solutions to big problems and that all it takes to do so is to roll up your sleeves and dive in. And it's also the belief that creativity is a muscle and

that, like all muscles, you can build it. It just needs constant exercise to stay sharp and to get stronger.

The second mindset is "make it," which focuses our attention on building our ideas so that we can actually test them. Making something means that we confront challenges and opportunities that we may not have even known existed when it was only in our head. As part of human-centered design, we have a bias toward action. And we know that the sooner that we can make something and put it out into the world, the sooner we can test it, get feedback from our end users, and iterate, which we'll talk about in just a minute.

The third mindset is to learn from failure. Learning from failure recognizes that failure is actually a really powerful tool. Human-centered designers live by the motto of, fail early to succeed sooner. And that gives them permission to get things wrong. Failure is an inherent and accepted part of human-centered design. We recognize that we rarely get it right on the first try.

The next mindset is empathy, which is the capacity to step into other people's shoes, to understand their lives, and to start to solve problems from their perspective. Human-centered design is built on the premise of empathy, on the idea that the people that you're designing for are your roadmap to innovative solutions.

Embracing ambiguity means always starting from the place of not knowing the answer to the problem that you're trying to solve. And this one is really tricky for folks who are used to having to propose a solution. This forces us to get out into the world and talk to people and to believe that there will always be more ideas.

The next mindset is optimism, which comes through in believing that the answer is out there even if we don't know what it is. Human-centered designers are some of the most inherently optimistic people that I know. We maintain a consistent focus on what could be rather than what the obstacles are because we hold the core belief that every problem is solvable.

And then the last mindset is iterate, iterate, iterate. This is what keeps human-centered designers nimble and responsive. And it trains the focus on getting the idea right after a few tries because, remember, failure is part of the process. It also means that an idea can be advanced without investing hours and resources, which is really helpful given that human-centered designers are constantly trying to iterate on an idea again and quickly.

Human-centered designers embrace these mindsets as they go through the process of human-centered design, which is often referred to as "design thinking." Human-centered design involves three main phases–inspiration, ideation, and implementation, or, as you see here on the slide, execution.

In the inspiration phase, you learn how to better understand people, and specifically the people that you are designing for. You observe their lives, learn about their hopes and desires, and

refine your challenge to align with their needs. In this phase of design thinking, you're doing what we call "diverging." You're going big and wide to learn as much as you can about the end users that you're designing for.

In the ideation phase, you collect, analyze, and make sense of what you learned in the inspiration phase. You generate tons of ideas for how to address your refined challenge, select the ideas that seem the most promising, and turn them into low-fidelity solutions. And then you test and refine those solutions. During this phase, you're starting to converge on a particular idea or solution that you think will best meet your end users' needs.

In the implementation phase, you bring your solutions to life. In this phase, you get to a more finalized version of your solution, though anything is rarely final in human-centered design. You get that solution to market or to an RCT. And you design a plan for using it to maximize impact in the world.

HCD is also a set of tools that you can use as you go through these phases that we just mentioned. This is an example of the tools that are typically used during the inspiration phase. And even though some of these feel like things that we often use in the field of public health just to be good stewards of federal funding, there are specific strategies to using them in the design process that help you develop that radical empathy for your end users that is key for human-centered design.

As you work through your HCD process, you might use some of these tools multiple times, others only once, or some maybe not at all. And any of those things are OK because, ultimately, HCD is really messy. In practice, it is not a list of linear strategies that you do independently, one followed by another.

Throughout the process, you will feel yourself shifting often. You'll get really specific with concrete observations about your end users. And then you'll go really wide and abstract as you think about possible solutions. And then you'll narrow right back down into nuts and bolts as you start to create specific solutions that will have an impact and be sustainable.

This process is designed to force you to learn directly from people and to design for their needs rather than your assumptions about their needs. It often feels uncomfortable and disconcerting. And if you feel that way, you're probably doing it right.

There are also some overarching guidelines to the tools that stay the same no matter what you're designing for. In human-centered design, we always conduct interviews with what we call "end users," the people that we're designing for. We always work in teams to generate creativity and energy because we know that multiple heads or brains are always better than one.

We always make tangible prototypes of our ideas, again, so that we can embrace that mindset of getting it out into the world and trying it. And then because we rarely get things right the first time, we always share what we've made, get feedback, and iterate on those ideas.

And while we can explain to you what human-centered design is, it's often easiest to understand it when you see how it can be used to address a particular challenge or need. So we wanted to give you some examples of how we've used HCD in our own work.

The first example is Bedsider, which is now the largest online birth control support network. In 2008, here at Power to Decide, we were wrestling with the challenge that we noticed in the field. We saw a gap between what young people were saying they wanted to do, which was use contraception to prevent pregnancies, and what they were actually doing, which was not using contraception effectively or correctly.

We wanted to create a digital tool to address this gap that could impact our audience's knowledge, attitudes, and use of birth control. So working closely with IDEO, we started by engaging with members of our audience and a team of experts in the field. We rooted the project in a place of deep empathy and real connections with our audience.

We recruited a small group of people who reflected the extremes on the spectrum of behaviors that we were interested in–so people who always used contraception and people who almost never did despite not wanting a pregnancy or not wishing to contract or transmit an STI. We conducted interviews in people's homes, often lasting several hours each. This approach helped us unearth behaviors, desires, and needs, which are often difficult to articulate.

And with extreme participants, the underlying causes of those behaviors are often more obvious, raising important, provocative questions. So by including both ends of the spectrum, as well as some people in the middle, the full range of behaviors, beliefs, and perspectives can be heard even with a small number of participants like you would use in human-centered design.

The core insight that resulted from the audience research that we conducted was that most public health messaging about sex and contraception focused on risk. Imagine a well-known soda company putting the ingredients, like high sugar content, front and center rather than their promise of happiness or life. So we created and framed Bedsider as a brand designed to be there in the heat-of-the-moment decision making that often accompanies risky behaviors that can be a precursor to unintended pregnancy. We ensure that Bedsider gives advice that takes these moments into consideration.

We also found that young adults often place the social ramifications of behaviors, like the, quote unquote, "cool factor," above health considerations. So rather than appealing to logic, which is the more common approach to educating people about unintended pregnancy prevention in public health, Bedsider specifically acknowledges that sex is complex and

emotional. Bedsider doesn't talk like a health department or a teacher. We intentionally take the voice of your confident, knowledgeable best friend that you actually want to listen to.

Understanding our end users deeply allowed us to develop something that at the time didn't exist elsewhere. And it's been a huge success. With human-centered design, we created an online network that now sees on average over 8 million unique users every month.

The next example is with our Tier 2A project Innovation Next. In this project, we set out to answer a question. How might we catalyze innovation in teen pregnancy prevention using technology?

We developed a process to support those who were interested in innovation in the field of teen pregnancy prevention. Applicants selected a team of three. Remember that HCD rule to live by. And they applied for our accelerator program.

In their application, we required that they identify a challenge, something that they felt wasn't working or that they wanted to solve in the field of teen pregnancy prevention. And we also required that they give us at least two totally different potential solutions because we wanted to ensure that they weren't wedded to any assumptions about what the solution would be but that they were open to what they would come to learn from their end users.

Teams that were selected received a series of workshops from Power to Decide and IDEO in the first year and then Power to Decide in the second and third years to teach them a human-centered design process, as well as support and coaching in between those workshops from Power to Decide staff who have expertise in human-centered design. At the end of the process, which lasted anywhere from 8 to 18 months depending on which cohort the teens were in, the teams pitched their final solutions, which were almost always completely different than their initial ideas because the human-centered design process gave them new insights and learnings that informed their designs.

But in the spirit of human-centered design, hearing from end users is the most important thing. So at this point, I'm going to hand it over to one of our end users, a cohort one innovator, Elise Schuster, to share a bit more with you about their journey with human-centered design and the value that it has brought to their work. Elise?

ELISE SCHUSTER: Thank you, Sarah. So I want to talk a little bit about how we use human-centered design and how effective we found it to be by talking a little bit about okayso. So as Sarah mentioned, we are one of the Innovation Next projects. We were in the first cohort. And where we are now today is that okayso is an app that connects users to teams of vetted volunteer experts who have conversations with them about a wide range of sexual health issues.

But this is not at all where we started. So when we joined Innovation Next, we had a "how might we" question. And our "how might we" question was, how might we use technology to help teens have one-on-one conversations about sexual health?

Essentially, we wanted to think about how we would scale the kinds of one-on-one conversations that we knew were happening effectively in clinics and health centers. And so we wanted to try to do something with conversations. We didn't know exactly what that might look like. And so we really started talking to people.

And so we talked to a ton of potential users. We're located in New York City, so we had lots and lots of young people to go talk to. And we started talking to them about what happened in those conversations that they might have already had or what they would want that was what they were looking for in conversations with experts.

And we discovered that, much more than information, people really wanted to feel heard and validated. And so we knew that as we were building a solution that it really had to put that front and center.

We also heard from them that context was incredibly important. So more than reading an article that goes over their issue, people wanted to be able to tell their story and feel like they weren't just getting a canned response. And so we knew that we then had to figure out a way for the conversations to really feel unique to each user even if we were potentially also doing some canned responses.

And we also knew that we didn't just have the user side of things. We also had the people who were going to be answering those questions. So we were going to need experts on the other end. And we had to look at what they needed, too.

So using human-centered design, we found a lot of different types of experts, not only sexual health folks. But also, one of the principles of human-centered design is talking to analogous users. And so we spent a lot of time talking to other types of volunteers, other types of people with expertise. We thought a lot about how people build trust when you're remote or when you are a stranger and don't know someone. So one of the people that we talked to was a hostage negotiator, who talked to us about how he builds trust with people in stressful situations.

So all of those things came together. And actually, this piece of the human-centered design process was, I think, what resulted in one of the biggest shifts in our ideas. As we were thinking about how we might have these conversations, we had been making an assumption that users would be having one-on-one conversations with someone.

However, as we talked to folks who had volunteered in other capacities, and as we did a lot of testing and having conversations with our potential experts, we discovered that being the only volunteer responsible for a user was actually incredibly stressful for them. So we started

thinking about what we could do to lessen that burden. And we shifted to putting them into teams.

And so what we have seen is that this is actually one of the main reasons why okayso works. Experts don't feel burdened anymore. They get to learn from the other experts in their team. And users feel like multiple people care. So there's value added on all sides. And it's so much better than what we would have created if we had not listened to our experts.

That's a basic idea of how we used human-centered design. And I want to share just a couple of other examples of things that we did as well. We went out into the parks in New York City. And we didn't even have a prototype. We had these things that we printed out on cardboard paper to ask people about what they might–who they might want to hear answers from or how they might want to categorize their questions and recorded what they told us.

We also did what we call an "end-to-end prototype." So we had an expert on one end of an iPad who could answer questions. And then we just walked up to young people and asked them if they had a question that they wanted to ask. And this in and of itself is a test to see how interested people are in asking a complete stranger their questions about sexuality.

And one of the things that I loved about this test is that you can see from people's body language that they were actually really excited about the opportunity to talk to someone. So we then talked to these folks after their conversation was over about what that experience was like for them and actually have continued to do things like this as we have tested.

We also asked people about the resources that they're using now to get information and what that journey has been like for them. So we would start out with this two-by-two of having people rank resources that exist around what they feel gets them and what feels like it actually answers their question. And then we would allow–users could add new resources that we hadn't thought of.

And then we would also ask them to take us through a journey of a time when they had a question and they needed to try to find an answer. And we really wanted to break it down with them every single step of the process, including steps like, and then I felt worried. And I wasn't sure what to do next. And I didn't do anything for two weeks, instead of just saying, I googled this, and then I did all of the action pieces.

We have really continued to use design thinking throughout this whole process. In our initial phase with Innovation Next, we talked to about 100 users and experts. We looked at hundreds of questions that had been answered. We did tons of different types of prototyping. And we did beta testing as well.

And then I think as we have continued to work on okayso, we continued to come back to the human-centered design process. Every time we need to build a new feature, every time we're thinking about marketing or branding, everything really comes back to, how do we talk to the

end users? What are they telling us? And what assumptions are we making that we need to be careful about so that we make sure that we are creating something that they are actually going to want to use and that they will use?

So the human-centered design process has been incredibly helpful for us in okayso. And we are so grateful to Innovation Next for helping us learn how to do it.

SARAH AXELSON: Thank you so much, Elise. So we hope that this example was also helpful in giving you some more understanding about how human-centered design can be used in the teen pregnancy prevention field. I do want to remind folks that you're welcome to submit your questions at any point in the question-and-answer box. And we will have a question-and-answer period shortly to be able to answer some of those.

So again, we hope that these concepts that we've shared, from Bedsider to Innovation Next to okayso, have shown you and helped you understand the concept of human-centered design a bit better and also to see how it could benefit you in your work. We feel and hope that you do as well–that human-centered design offers an incredible amount of value and promise specifically in our field.

Unlike other approaches, human-centered design designs for impact. We align around purpose. And we start and keep people at the center of the work. We also don't stop at face value, what people say to us or what we see them do. We dig deep using human-centered design strategies to learn about what they also think and feel. Because as we can probably all attest, our actions aren't always aligned with how we truly think or feel.

And we think that that's what makes human-centered design so unique and so valuable. It helps us develop solutions that are desirable, feasible, viable, and truly innovative.

So we'd like to close by sharing some reflections on human-centered design from others in Innovation Next who weren't able to be here with us today. But these come from other innovation teams that we have worked with throughout this project.

One of our innovators said, "working with teens on a day-to-day basis, you think you know teens" or day-to-day business. "You think you know teens, but the design thinking process changes things. We do everything very different after the process."

Another one of our team members shared, "what we realized is we need to focus on the end user of the teen and the fact that they aren't in control of things. The people we were trying to affect and who they affect was so critical. I carry this with me in everything I do. It isn't about me and my ideas. What I do needs to evolve all the time, and I need to be patient in everything I do to get teens' perspective."

Of course, Power to Decide is not the only organization that does work in this space. So we wanted to share with you some of the well-known human-centered design organizations that

we partner with and a few of their resources that we have found particularly helpful. You'll see here on the screen there are several resources from IDEO, which is the organization that both Elise and I have mentioned. The Stanford d.school also has many resources available on their website, in addition to the Luma Institute.

And we're always here to help as well. Power to Decide also offers training and support in human-centered design via Select360, which is the TA arm of our organization.

I hope that we've succeeded in giving you a general introduction to human-centered design if you weren't familiar with it already or in deepening your knowledge. We also hope that the examples we provided gave you a sense of what human-centered design could do in your work.

In this project, we set out to answer a question. How might we use HCD in our work? And that's our charge to you. We want you to think about what this could look like and what this could bring in terms of value to your work in teen pregnancy prevention.

At this time, we'd like to open the floor up for questions and answers. I'd like to remind folks that they can type their question into the question box. And we will share those.

So the first question is, do you think it is possible to use design thinking as part of implementing an evidence-based practice? I would say that there are always elements of design thinking that can be integrated into teen pregnancy prevention work. And so even if you aren't able to integrate those elements into the specific content that you are delivering because of the evidence-based work, I think that you can examine how you might be able to use those principles in and around the evidence-based program that you're delivering.

So perhaps you're able to do some interviewing and in-depth empathy gaining with your end users prior to choosing an evidence-based program and that your interactions with them and the development of radical empathy might help you identify what evidence-based practice or program might be the best fit for them. I think you could also do testing of ideas that you have around how to implement aspects of your evidence-based program with your end users.

Or if you're thinking about changing something, have your end users be part of that discussion or decision. So even if you can't do a design thinking process from start to finish, because you are doing an evidence-based program, I think it's great to think about how you can take those principles and apply them to the work. Elise, is there anything that you would add there?

ELISE SCHUSTER: No, I don't think so. Yeah, that covers it.

SARAH AXELSON: Great. Our next question says, I may have missed it. But how is okayso being used now? Do you know who accesses the app, such as their age? And when you sign up with an email, is that what appears in the app? Elise, would you like to take these?

ELISE SCHUSTER: Yes. So one of the things that we learned when we were talking to users was that being anonymous was incredibly important to folks. And so although we did need to collect some info around age and email, what we ultimately came through the design–or through the human-centered design process was that for users, we don't have any personal information that's identifiable to the experts on the app at all.

So they pick an avatar. They pick a user name. And they get to decide what that is. And so although we do collect some of that information, none of that actually appears in the app to anyone else. And their conversations are entirely private with the experts as well.

And so that, again, really came out of our human-centered design process. And just very briefly, we've answered about 9,000 questions and have had users as young as 13, as old as 74. But the bulk of our users are 16 to 24 years old.

SARAH AXELSON: Great. Thanks so much. Our next question says, you mentioned the power of failure in human-centered design. Can you tell us about some of your failures in the process, how you learned from them, but also how you shared them with the greater field? I can go first. Or Elise, you can go first if you'd like to.

ELISE SCHUSTER: Go for it.

SARAH AXELSON: So at Power to Decide, we absolutely have learned from failures in the process in our work with Innovation Next. When we first ran our first cohort of Innovation Next, which Elise was part of, it was a much longer process, about 18 or so months depending on how you're defining start to finish.

And it was also a competitive process. So we had approximately 10 teams selected to begin that cohort. And then there was a competition aspect to receive further funding and be able to move forward in cutting down the teams to five or so. We learned a lot from that process around the ways that competition inhibited the sharing of lessons learned and collaboration amongst teams that we were hoping to see. And we also learned a lot about how long the design process takes and how we can support teams in that process.

So as a result of that, we made really significant changes to our second and third cohorts of Innovation Next. We drastically reduced the funding periods in order to provide more intensive support to our teams during those funding periods. We removed the competitive aspect that had been present in the first cohort and selected the number of teams that would be part of the entire cohort start to finish for both the second and third cohorts.

And then we also learned a lot of lessons around our implementation and teaching of human-centered design. Our workshops in the third cohort had significantly more what we call "heads-down time" for teams to be doing the work with a set of coaches who had skills in human-centered design so that each team had someone there to support them in the process and to guide them through the work that they were doing.

And I would say that we learned these things through a variety of different methods or strategies. But really, the primary way that we learned these things was by talking to our end users. And our end users for Innovation Next were our innovators.

So we were able to hear from them and learn from them about what was working and what wasn't working and how we might make improvements in those areas or how–in the language of human-centered design–how we might iterate and refine what we were delivering for them. And we're sharing those lessons learned in a variety of different ways.

We've done several different conference presentations and other workshops around human-centered design and Innovation Next, many of them, if not most of them, with our innovators as well. We also are working on some publication pieces, where we're happy to share some of those, too.

So that is a lot of information about some of the failures that we learned from as part of Innovation Next. But we're really pleased with what that taught us and how we refined and iterated and moved forward from there. And Elise, I'll let you share in terms of failures related to okayso.

ELISE SCHUSTER: Thank you. Yes. There are always many failures, I think, in this process. But one of the things that I really appreciate about the human-centered design approach is that I think you find out about them much faster than you would if you just continued on.

So in the example that I gave earlier, if we had not used this process, we would have absolutely failed in terms of how we structured our expert teams. And so we had a bit less failure on that part, I think, because we used this process. But one of the things that we had heard from users going in as we were talking to them was this piece around privacy and anonymity.

And so as we were building okayso, we had thought about trying to make it so that users could see other conversations. But we thought that the privacy piece was so important that it would be so difficult to build that that we needed to just launch with what we had. And it turned out that users really want this quite badly. And I think we overestimated how much it was important to them.

And so we're in the process right now of coming back to HCD and doing user testing and finding that, actually, users–in addition to wanting their conversations to be private, they also really want to help other people. And if they know that their story might be used to help other folks who also have questions, they're actually quite willing to share.

And so I think we really failed the first time around not doing some more exploration around that with people. Had we taken some time to do that, we would have been able to build in some initial things into the app that I think would've made a big difference when we launched. But we are doing it now. So that's what's fun–is that you get to go back and fix it.

SARAH AXELSON: The power of iteration. Thanks so much, Elise. The next questions, actually, I think are all related to one another. So I'm going to batch them together.

Those questions are, how do you build buy-in among your end users when engaging them? How do you get them to talk to you? And how did you recruit them? Elise, if you have thoughts you want to share first, I'd love to hear those. And then I can share some strategies as well.

ELISE SCHUSTER: Absolutely. We have done two separate strategies. The first is with a very ad hoc, informal strategy, which I think is the benefit of living in New York City, which is just walking up to young people in public places in warmer weather and asking them if they had a few minutes. It means that you have to chunk what you're doing into smaller pieces as opposed to being able to have someone for, say, an hour-long session.

But what we found was that many, many, many people were more than willing to give us a few minutes of their time. And so there's one of the principles of all of this–is to just get out of the building. And so I think the first couple of times you walk up to a random stranger and ask them if they have five minutes to help you with something, it feels very awkward. But then you get very used to it. So that was one of our initial strategies.

And then we also, through the Innovation Next funding and through an accelerator that we're part of, have had access to actually be able to financially compensate people. And so for those, we have tried to find folks through our networks who might be able to come in and do a more formal user testing process and receive compensation for it.

We also do surveys with our users and follow up with them over email. And they reach out. We can actually talk to them within okayso. So we can ask them questions within the app as well. So there are actually, I think, a lot of different ways to do it.

And what I found generally is that, especially, I think, with young people, they are really excited to get to feel like they are part of the process of building something. I think it's all about how we frame what we're doing. And so if we say, we really want your feedback because we believe that you're the expert in this and you know best how to create this solution and we really want to listen to you, then young people generally are pretty excited to get to participate in that.

SARAH AXELSON: Those are incredibly similar, if not the exact same, strategies that I would recommend. And I think that we've seen them work across so many of our Innovation Next teams. We have other teams who have used social media to try to recruit end users, whether that's through a Facebook ad or an Instagram ad. And we have some who have then had end users fill out a brief survey to indicate their interest in participating.

And actually, one of our teams in that survey also used the concept of extremes to have the end user self-identify where they ranked on a list of factors related to their topic. And then they assessed to what extent were those folks who were trying to be involved or wanted to be

involved–to what extent were they extreme users or mainstream users and then made choices about who to follow up with and interview from there.

We do see lots of organizations in the field that post open calls for recruitment in places where their end users are. So if that's social media or websites–for example, IDEO does that on a pretty regular basis. And then intercept interviews, as Elise mentioned, are a great tool for finding folks who are perhaps using a particular service or in a particular setting that you want to learn more about someone's experience with.

When we talk about how to engage folks in that process, as Elise mentioned, it can often be awkward at first. But we have found that people really, really enjoy talking about their own experiences and being able to have a deep conversation with someone about what they've lived through or what they've seen or what they've been part of or even what they think or feel about a particular concept.

There are a set of tools and strategies that you can also use in those interviews in order to engage folks. There are things called "card sorts" or "conversation starters" or "values clarification exercises" that all provide a strategy for how to start the conversation and get it flowing. We've also used tools like collaging or drawing something, asking an end user to draw a map for us or draw what we call a "journey map" about their experience through using a particular service.

We've actually engaged folks in immersion activities, where we go and spend time with them using a system. So for example–and this is not a teen pregnancy prevention example. But if someone were trying to learn about the transportation system, then they may not just sit with an end user and ask questions about the transportation system.

But they may say to them, can I ride the bus with you? Can I go to this particular place–and of course, only with their consent. But can I see how you experience this reality? So there are lots of different strategies to how you can recruit and engage end users in that process.

The next question is, did Innovation Next teams collaborate with each other? And how did that work? Elise, I don't know if you want to speak to the first cohort or your experience as an end user. I can share from our perspective as well what we've tried to support.

ELISE SCHUSTER: I think that initially, a lot of it was that we were all really learning together. And so it created kind of a–there was really very much a peer vibe of getting to learn from each other and seeing what other folks were trying and what was and wasn't working. And we've continued to do that to some degree.

We didn't really collaborate with each other on our actual solutions. And part of it may be that in our cohort, things were a little bit more competitive. So it maybe wasn't incentivized as much. But I can say that we as a cohort have kept in touch and have continued to share resources and ideas when we see each other or over email, et cetera.

SARAH AXELSON: Great. And I would say that from Power to Decide's side, we absolutely have tried to encourage connection and, I would say, collaboration but with the same caveat to what Elise just shared–that teams typically are not collaborating on the actual work of their innovation but are collaborating on strategies or sharing resources or connecting with one another. And we cohost an Innovation Summit each year. And so we have a portion of that time that is dedicated to having the teams connect and work with one another during that period. And so that is one opportunity for them to collaborate.

And then Innovation Next also hosts webinars and coffee chats and opportunities for them to share with one another. And we certainly welcome and try to lift up opportunities for peer sharing. As Elise mentioned, if teams learn about a particular opportunity and want to share it with others, we make that easier via communication tools as well.

So I think that we're really pleased with how the collaboration and sharing has worked. And we recognize that there are always opportunities to build and expand and increase that. And so we hope to think about how to continue to do that as well for our final cohort that's being funded right now.

Our next question is, how can HCD be used as a form of youth engagement? I think in part, this depends on what the challenge is that you're trying to address and who your end users are. If your end users are youths, then HCD is youth engagement in its truest form.

If you are involving them in the process from start to finish as an end user, you are learning from them, developing empathy for them. You're potentially cocreating your solution with them and iterating on that solution and testing that solution with them. So they truly are involved in that process from start to finish. Elise, do you have any other thoughts on that?

ELISE SCHUSTER: Yeah. I would just add that one of the things that we were able to do with the funding from Innovation Next was build a youth advisory board. Although we were also doing all of these other kinds of testing, we had a specific group of young people from across the country who we had monthly meetings with. And that was just an additional level of youth engagement that I think was also incredibly interesting to all of them.

Because in addition to getting to help us and give us ideas around okayso, we did a lot of professional development with them around the tech and health world. A lot of them were interested in going into that. Again, as Sarah said, there are lots of different ways to do this. And it really is all youth engagement. But I do think formalizing some of those relationships a little bit more does lead to some development and leadership opportunities as well.

SARAH AXELSON: There are also several organizations in the field who use human-centered design approaches specifically with youth designers. That's something that one of our Innovation Next teams did and also, as I mentioned, the other nonprofits that we work with or partner with do.

So it's always an option as well to find partners who are very intentional about having youth designers that are part of the process and training young people in human-centered design as well so that they can not only be an end user, but also be a designer and have that skill set. Our next question is for Elise. And it is, what did your app cost?

ELISE SCHUSTER: Well, I'm assuming that means what it costs for the users. I'm not sure if it means what it costs for the users or what it cost us to build it. What it cost to build it is sort of an ongoing thing, so it's a little bit hard to answer.

But in terms of what it costs for users, one of the things that we found through the human-centered design process when we were talking to folks was that it was really hard, especially for younger teens, to have anything that was a paywall in front of them. And it really was a way that they would stop accessing a service if they had to pay for it.

So through that process, we were actually able to explore potential business models and think about how to sustain ourselves. And so okayso for all of our users is free. We don't charge anything. And we're a nonprofit. And so all of the funding happens behind the scenes.

SARAH AXELSON: Thanks so much. The next question is, how do you get funders to buy into an interactive process? Funders so often only want to fund ready-to-go solutions and are resistant to failure as a process component.

And I just want to echo this question. Yes, absolutely. We understand where you're coming from and what this experience is. And I would say first that that has just been part of why we have been so appreciative of OPA's support for this process because they very intentionally set out to fund early innovation. And that was so meaningful in opening up a space for us to do this work.

That being said, we still see this struggle and understand this struggle about getting funders who are perhaps not already doing this or not familiar with it to buy into it. And I have a few different thoughts related to this. And Elise, I imagine you'll have some insight as well.

So one thing we talk about often is finding funders who are specifically looking to fund innovation. And if you looked for social impact or social innovation funders, sometimes they are willing to explore these processes in the nonprofit world versus one that would return a profit of some sort. So we try to look for innovation-focused grants and opportunities to support the work. And they are fewer than the traditional funding opportunities that we see in public health, but they are out there. And so we encourage folks to look for those.

The second thing I would say is that there is an opportunity, though certainly I don't want to suggest that it exists for everyone, to do some organizational work prior to putting in a funding opportunity announcement. And so you can think about how you might bring your organization along or on board with human-centered design and the value of it to determine whether you

could do some of the upfront research in order to inform the grant proposal that you're putting forward.

I know that comes with a cost. And I don't want to suggest that that is an opportunity for any and all organizations. But it is something to think about if resources and support are available– is how you do the human-centered design process outside of or before the funding proposal in order to inform the ready-to-go solution that a funder might want.

And then the last thing I would say is that if you aren't able to propose the human-centered design process from start to finish, then we always encourage folks to think about, how could you start incorporating some of the mindsets or tools from human-centered design so that in a future proposal you can demonstrate and show the value of that? And you can talk with the funder about, here's what we did in this past approach or this past work.

And this was really interesting because. Or we gained this really incredible insight because. Or we're so glad we did this because. And help show them what that human-centered design opportunity brought for you. And then from there, be able to push just a little bit to start moving them in that direction.

And there is a network of funders out there who are growing and learning as it relates to human-centered design and wanting to support this work in the field as well, which we're, of course, really excited to see. Elise, anything that you would add related to the funding question?

ELISE SCHUSTER: The only other thing that I would add is that I think the other area of funders that really understand this a little bit better are our tech-related funders. This maybe only applies if you do have a technology-related program or service that you want to provide. But a lot of the major tech companies–Salesforce, Facebook, Twilio, et cetera–have foundations and fund programs.

And there are also some venture capital firms that have their own funds as well that do charitable giving. And so really looking into those can be interesting because much of the tech world also operates this way. They may not call it "human-centered design." They call it "agile development." But a lot of the principles remain the same.

They tend to be a little bit more interested in earlier-stage solutions. They tend to be a little bit more interested in things that feel a little bit messy. And they're more used to that kind of risk and a risk of failure. So that would be another place to look.

SARAH AXELSON: Great. And our last question is, how do you think this process would work for an intervention that is not technology-based, like a curriculum? It seems harder to prototype. And I would say that this process actually works just as well for non-technology-based innovations.

In fact, this particular funding stream from OPA that we are part of funds two grantees, Power to Decide and Texas A&M University. And while Power to Decide is receiving funding specifically to support technology-based innovations, Texas A&M University is specifically doing programmatic innovations, like curricula or like other things that would be implemented in a curriculum-based program.

And they have seen just as much success and excitement around this approach as we have. And I'm sharing that based on conversations that I've had with them. That is not an assumption that I'm making. But it's something that I'm confident that they would say as well.

And so I would say that it works just as well regardless of the type of innovation or intervention that you are working on. There are always ways to think about, how might we use this? How might we look at this differently, which of course, is human-centered design language in and of itself.

So I'd love to thank everyone for your questions. These were really exciting and engaging questions. And we're so thrilled that you all are thinking about what this could look like for you. Again, we want to encourage you to consider how might you use human-centered design in your work. And we hope that you will move forward and be just as excited about this as we are.

Our contact information is here on this slide. Once again, on behalf of Elise and I, I would just like to say, thank you so much for talking with us today about this. And I'm going to hand it over to Lizzy from OPA, who's going to close this out. Lizzy?

ELIZABETH LAFERRIERE: Thank you, Elise and Sarah, so much. So the Office of Population Affairs currently has three open Funding Opportunity Announcements, or FOAs, for the Teen Pregnancy Prevention program that you see here, including one Tier 1 announcement regarding replication of effective programs and two separate Tier 2 announcements, one on rigorous evaluation and one on innovation networks.

Please note that we are having some technical issues with the funding announcement number, just the prefix that you see here of PA. So if you're having any trouble finding the funding opportunity, in the meantime, under the prefix of PA, please search with the prefix AH. In the meantime, you can also reach out to the same points of contact that are listed on the website if you have any questions about finding the FOA or questions about the FOA content or submission instructions.

You can also discover more about these three opportunities on the OPA website. There you'll also find information about the next couple webinars in our series, including our systems thinking webinar that's on February 27 and our youth voice and engagement webinar on March 2. So thank you so much to everyone for joining us today. And thank you again to our two speakers, Sarah and Elise. Jamie, we're now ready to conclude our session.

MODERATOR: Thank you, everybody. This will now end our webinar.