

## Human-Centered Design

Human-Centered Design isn't just a methodology - it's a *mindset shift*. Before teams can design for people, they must learn to truly *see* people: their assumptions, their blind spots, and the invisible filters that shape every interaction.

We set the foundation for Human-Centered Design with our unique “Power of Perception” experience. This simple but powerful experiential activity demonstrates - literally - that we all “view the world through our own lens”, and challenges participants to examine their lens, and be open to how others view the world.

With this unique foundation, the case for Human-Centered Design stops being theoretical and becomes *personal*. We then guide participants through a practical, reality-driven training to help them see more clearly, listen more deeply, design more intentionally, and deliver solutions that actually work for the humans they serve.

**Training Outlines:** The outlines below represent two levels of HCD learning designed to meet participants where they are:

- **HCD 101** provides a practical, accessible introduction to Human-Centered Design - ideal for teams new to the concepts or looking to build a shared foundation.
- **HCD 202** is an advanced experience for those ready to go deeper - moving from awareness to application, and from individual practice to organizational culture change.
- Both programs can be tailored specifically to the context and priorities of the client organization.

### Human-Centered Design (HCD) 101

*Standard Full-Day Format*

#### **Module 1: What Is Human-Centered Design?** (30 min)

- Definition and core principles: empathy, iteration, co-creation
- HCD vs. traditional top-down program/project design
- The Power of Perception: Examining our “lens” and appreciating how others view the world
- Why it matters in international development contexts — the gap between intent and impact
- Brief case examples from development finance (health, infrastructure, small business)

#### **Module 2: Knowing Your “Human” — Stakeholder Empathy** (45 min)

- Who are your stakeholders? (Beneficiaries, private sector partners, host-country counterparts, co-investors)
- Tools: persona development, empathy mapping, journey mapping

- **Development-specific lens:** Balancing development impact with investor/private sector needs
- **Activity:** Build a stakeholder persona for a relevant scenario (e.g., a small business owner in a target market, or a local financial institution partner)

### **Module 3: Problem Framing** (30 min)

- The danger of solving the wrong problem
- “How Might We” framing technique
- Reframing assumptions: from what we want to invest in to what communities actually need
- Connection to Impact Quotient (IQ) framework and development impact assessment

### **Module 4: Ideation & Creative Problem-Solving** (45 min)

- Divergent vs. convergent thinking
- Brainstorming techniques (brainwriting, SCAMPER, worst possible idea)
- Rapid concept development
- **Activity:** Ideation sprint on a relevant challenge (e.g., energy access, women’s economic empowerment, supply chain resilience)

### **Module 5: Prototyping & Testing** (45 min)

- The “fail fast, learn faster” mindset
- Low-fidelity prototyping in a policy/finance context (prototypes, concept pitches, pilot structures)
- Feedback loops: gathering and incorporating input from intended beneficiaries and partners
- Application: How HCD thinking applies to project due diligence and design phases

### **Module 6: Applying HCD in Your Work** (30–45 min)

- HCD across portfolio sectors: energy, healthcare, infrastructure, agribusiness, small business
- Navigating constraints: risk tolerance, country restrictions, private sector timelines
- Integrating HCD into existing processes (application review, portfolio monitoring, etc.)
- Team commitments: “One HCD habit I’ll try in the next 30 days”

### **Optional Add-On: Leadership & Organizational Culture** (30 min)

- HCD as a leadership mindset, not just a project tool
- Building a team culture that supports curiosity, iteration, and feedback
- How leaders can model HCD behaviors in day-to-day decision-making

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### **Notes**

- This course can be abbreviated to a 4-hour half-day to cover core content only, or to focus on specific high-priority topics.
- To maximize relevance, activities can be built around real and/or simulated scenarios that reflect the specific context of the client organization.
- This course can be delivered in-person or virtually. Breakout rooms work well for the activity-based modules.

## **Training Outline: Human-Centered Design (HCD) 202**

*Standard Full-Day Format*

### **Module 1: From Empathy to Insight — Going Deeper with Research** (60 min)

- The Power of Perception: Examining our “lens” and appreciating how others view the world
- Moving beyond surface-level stakeholder interviews: probing assumptions, uncovering latent needs
- Advanced research methods: ethnographic observation, shadowing, co-design sessions
- Synthesizing data into actionable insights (affinity mapping, insight statements)
- **Development lens:** Conducting meaningful beneficiary research across cultural and geographic contexts
- **Activity:** Reframe a real or simulated organization project brief using deep-dive research findings

### **Module 2: Systems Thinking & Complexity** (60 min)

- Seeing the full system: stakeholders, incentives, power dynamics, feedback loops
- Tools: systems maps, iceberg model, causal loop diagrams
- Recognizing unintended consequences before they happen
- **Development lens:** Mapping the ecosystem around a development finance investment (government, private sector, community, environment)
- **Activity:** Build a systems map for an organization portfolio sector scenario

### **Module 3: Co-Design — Bringing Stakeholders Into the Room** (60 min)

- What co-design actually means (vs. consultation theater)
- Facilitating participatory design sessions with diverse, non-expert groups
- Power and voice: ensuring marginalized stakeholders aren't drowned out
- **Development lens:** Women's economic empowerment (2X Initiative) and inclusive design
- **Activity:** Facilitate a mini co-design session in small groups

— *Lunch Break* —

### **Module 4: Assumption Testing & Rapid Experimentation** (60 min)

- Identifying and ranking assumptions by risk and unknowability
- Designing experiments to test critical assumptions before full investment
- Minimum viable pilots in a development finance context
- When to pivot, persist, or kill a concept
- **Development lens:** Connecting assumption testing to the Impact Quotient (IQ) framework and project due diligence

### **Module 5: Measuring What Matters** (45 min)

- Shifting from output metrics to outcome and impact metrics

- Human-centered M&E: who defines success, and how?
- Building feedback mechanisms that actually reach the people you're serving
- **Development lens:** Lifecycle impact tracking — from project approval through portfolio monitoring
- **Activity:** Redesign a standard project success metric using HCD principles

### **Module 6: Designing for Scale & Sustainability** (45 min)

- Why solutions that work in pilots often fail at scale — and how HCD prevents that
- Designing with the handoff in mind: local ownership, capacity, and buy-in
- The tension between speed-to-scale and fidelity to user needs
- **Development lens:** Private sector sustainability requirements and development impact — designing so both hold

### **Module 7: HCD Leadership — Embedding a Design Culture** (45 min)

- What it takes to lead a team that practices HCD consistently
- Overcoming institutional resistance: risk aversion, procurement cycles, hierarchical decision-making
- Building psychological safety for iteration and “productive failure”
- **Development lens:** Championing HCD within a federal agency culture — working with, not around, existing structures
- **Activity:** Personal action planning — “My HCD Leadership Commitment”

### **Closing Integration: Case Clinic** (30 min)

- Small groups present a real or simulated organization challenge worked throughout the day
- Peer feedback using an HCD lens
- Whole-group debrief: key shifts in thinking from 101 → 202

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### **Notes**

- Full day: ~7 hours of content with breaks
- Each module builds on the prior; not designed to be modular/standalone
- Best delivered with a real organization project or challenge as the through-line for activities
- May be delivered in-person or virtually; in-person recommended for co-design modules