Dear Friends of Design Impact,

This year we decided to do something a little different and go a little deeper. Instead of a lengthy annual report, we are including two things: a short snapshot of the last year, and more importantly, the story of our impact over the last three years.

If you know us, you know we strive to make the world a more creative and inclusive place. Part of living out these values with authenticity requires us to take a step back and evaluate the actual impact of our work, warts and all. It’s easy to design things that look shiny or sound good. But we know lasting change requires us to look beyond “solutions” and embark on the longer, harder work of changing organizational and societal mindsets and actions.

So we took some time—a lot of time—and went back to our partners over the last three years to ask: Has your organization become more creative and inclusive? Do your community members feel more empowered? Has the needle moved on the issue we tried to address together?

We are excited to share the answers to those questions here, along with our evolving thinking on how we can do better. Visit our website at d-impact.org to learn what kind of difference we are making and what kind of challenges still lie ahead.

It’s clear that we have a lot of work to do, especially in today’s socially and politically divisive climate. If you are already a supporter, thank you for walking the walk with us. If you are new to Design Impact, and are passionate about designing a better world for all of us, please consider making a donation today at d-impact.org/engage.

Let’s work smarter than ever,

ANNUAL LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
2015-2016 YEAR IN REVIEW

PROJECT SPOTLIGHTS
This year, we continued to build on the project work we’ve done and moved into new sectors including food access and government.

TESTING IDEAS
We worked with teens in rural, urban and suburban neighborhoods to increase summertime food access, then prototyped two ideas: Culinary Camp, a series of cooking classes, and Unpack’d, a mobile lunch program that traveled to kids without access to summer meal sites. The prototypes enabled our partners to distribute over 500 meals this summer.

TEACHING NEW TOOLS
We celebrated three years of Studio C, our free nonprofit project incubator. This year we held two 12-week sessions to connect 27 nonprofits with space, training and tools to develop new programs and services for the social sector.

CHANGING CULTURE
We focused on building the capacity of Nashville’s government officials working on key challenges facing their city. After eight weeks, all four teams reported that the program deepened their commitment to civic and social change.

GROWING OUR WORK

51 total projects/engagements
This year, DI worked across 10 different social sectors from health and wellness to philanthropy and government innovation.

- Education: 13
- Philanthropy: 10
- Community Development: 9
- Workforce Development: 6
- Health: 5
- Social Enterprise: 1
- Food Access: 3
- Government: 2
- Social Services (General): 2

“ If I were to measure the impact of your work I would measure it in the smiles you brought to families, the tears shed because finally someone listened and the hugs given because you made our families feel special. Our families are invisible to those who have no vision. Keep up the great work and once again thank you.”

Anita Brentley, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center
THANK YOU to all who already contribute to our work, financially or otherwise. Now, more than ever, we feel compelled to action. Together, the possibilities are endless!

2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

FINANCIALS

69% REVENUE INCREASE
between FY2014 to FY2015, from $542,828 to $917,182

2015 $917,182

654 leaders equipped
These leaders represent 59 different organizations. They learned new mindsets and skills (e.g. design thinking) that drive social innovation through creativity and inclusion.

1,387 people engaged
People collaborated in our work, through sharing ideas and personal stories and co-designing, implementing and testing ideas.

BUILDING OUR TEAM
Last year, our team doubled in size from a mighty team of six to a dynamic team of 12. Meet the six new faces of Design Impact.

NICKI ARMSTRONG
branding, graphic design, photography

AMY HOWTON
leadership development, social justice advocacy, women’s studies

CAITLIN BEHLE
communications, marketing, community development

MICHELLE STAwicki
branding, graphic design, facilitation

TAMAYA DENNARD
political strategy, community organizing, facilitation

DANIELA VOLLMER
industrial design, Spanish language

CREATING IMPACT

THANK YOU to all who already contribute to our work, financially or otherwise. Now, more than ever, we feel compelled to action. Together, the possibilities are endless!
IMPACT REPORT
In order to evaluate our impact, we decided to apply the design thinking process to our own organization. We asked ourselves:

How might we measure and strengthen our social impact efforts?

Part of the purpose of the program evaluation was to develop an understanding around how to measure the impact of our work and strengthen mechanisms to do just that. We included both quantitative and qualitative methods in our discovery and then synthesized learnings to identify opportunity spaces for strategic growth.

Development of outcomes

We carefully crafted outcomes that reflect DI’s theory of change and how we believe change is created. This belief or theory sheds light on what sort of changes we intend to affect as a result of our work.

Impact is in our name, so it’s crucial for us to track and understand our impact. At the end of the day, we push ourselves to learn and reflect so that we can do better next time.

For this impact report, we chose to look back at the last three years. Though we were founded in 2009, it was in 2013 that our organization made a significant pivot. We shifted our focus from India to our own region and redefined our process to tackle social problems through systems design rather than through product design. Now, three years and 122 projects later, we’re hitting “pause” to reflect on the impact we’ve made with our partners so that we might strengthen our social impact efforts.

Our theory of change served as the driver for the development of our outcomes. Drawing on evidence-based research in the fields of design, social impact, leadership development and innovation we crafted outcomes and indicators identifying both unique and shared outcomes and indicators across and within each area.

DI brings to life embedded design at the intersection of three practices:

**Creative Practice:**
Focused on design thinking but including concepts from other change processes, this practice supports individual and organizational ability to see and act on opportunities for innovation.

**Leadership Practice:**
Including understanding self, the ability to form teams, lead projects and change organizations. This practice nurtures leadership potential in all contributors to become effective change makers.

**Social Practice**
Focused on participatory design and community development, this practice ensures stakeholder inclusion and engagement toward collective action.

**Our Theory of Change: Embedded Design**

We believe that embedded design practice spreads the ability to use design within communities and organizations, generating creative space to develop new responses to complex problems. Embedded design is interested in empowering individuals and teams to become designers themselves, repeatedly applying the practice of design to create innovative, collaborative, and inclusive cultures.
These outcomes and indicators for each area of practice—creative, leadership, and social—represent various levels of change. To create sustainable change, it is critical to first change mindsets, including attitudes and beliefs, in order to shape behavior and ultimately, conditions. Too often as change-makers, we set out to change conditions first—an approach that generates band-aid solutions that fail to get at the root of the problem. The development of these multi-level outcomes will guide our practice and help us to measure both the short and long term impact we make.

Do our projects...

**CHANGE MINDSETS**

**AWARENESS**
- Learn about the creative process/design thinking
- Challenge assumptions
- Discern creative processes
- Build knowledge of social justice issues
- Appraise individual strengths and weaknesses in collaboration

**UNDERSTANDING**
- Have an open mindset
- Be open to critique
- Comprehend aspects of social justice concern or opportunity
- Understand self, strengths and opportunities for improvement

**VISION**
- Identify aspirations
- Feel inspired
- Gain greater clarity about personal path

**ATTITUDES**
- Build more self-confidence as a creative leader

**CHANGE ACTIONS**

**SKILL-BUILDING**
- Use visualization tools
- Apply storytelling
- Use branding and framing to make ideas come alive
- Empathize with others

**PARTICIPATION**
- Engage or become involved in creative practice
- Engage/become involved in civic and social change
- Increase ability to work with others towards a shared goal

**PROBLEM RESOLUTION**
- Reframe the problem
- Solve a social/civic concern

**INNOVATION**
- Explore different lenses/perspectives
- Come up with many ideas and try them
- Take risks, push boundaries
- Apply divergent and convergent thinking
- Increase willingness to try new ideas

**INCLUSION**
- Consider multiple viewpoints in decision-making
- Engage in dialogue
- Collaborate with others across difference
- Include community members in decision-making processes

**ACTIVISM/ADVOCACY**
- Build intentional action to bring about social change

**CHANGE CONDITIONS**

**EMBRACE THE CREATIVE PROCESS**
- Internalize creative and inclusive practice on organizational level
- Integrate process into organizational practice
- Use creative and inclusive processes in other contexts

**SYSTEMS**
- Change policies
- Redesign organizational changes/structure

**SOCIAL CAPITAL**
- Generate new resources through relationships
- Generate new resources developed through individual leadership development

**RESOURCES**
- Develop new sources of social/economic support

**PROBLEM RESOLUTION**
- Solve a social/civic concern
- Increase organizational/team ability to productively engage conflict
- Increase organizational/team ability to deal with challenges and change

**MEDIA**
- Reframe public discourse/create new public discourse on a topic

**INNOVATION**
- Increase courage to take action when faced with obstacles in a context of ambiguity

**POLICIES**
- Develop HR policies that align with our mission and reflect communities we serve

CREATE AN OUTCOMES-BASED MEASUREMENT TOOL TO MEASURE IMPACT.
WE MET WITH PARTNERS FROM THE LAST 3 YEARS

Our goal was to learn how our work impacted our partners’ practice on an individual, organizational and macro level. To do this, we sampled partner organizations we had worked with, selecting a diverse representation of organizations, project size and scope, and project sector.

22/36 SURVEYS COMPLETED
15/17 INTERVIEWS WITH PARTNERS
4/4 INTERVIEWS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS

WE SPOKE TO:
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Center for Creative Leadership
- Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center
- Feeding America
- Freestore Foodbank
- Ford Motor Company
- Gateway Community & Technical College
- The Greater Cincinnati Foundation
- Grantmakers for Effective Organizations
- Over-The-Rhine Community Council
- Partners for a Competitive Workforce
- Sarah Center - St. Francis Seraph Ministries
- Share Our Strength
- Sprout Insight
- United Way of Greater Cincinnati
- Greater Cincinnati STEM Collaborative

After an initial round of data collection, we wanted to dig deeper to further explore our partners’ prototyping efforts. In addition to the 15 initial partners we interviewed, we also sampled 10 organizations that completed Studio C, a 12-week project incubator for non-profits and community organizations led by DI.

7/10 ORGANIZATIONS RESPONDED
- Children’s Inc.
- Head Start - Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission
- Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center
- Starfire Council
- 4C for Children
- Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati
- Academy of World Languages Elementary School

After deep dialogue with our partners, we synthesized our learnings and identified three top strengths and two growth areas for DI. In the pages that follow, we share these findings with you, along with supporting insights and emergent opportunity spaces. Finally, in answering “so, what?”, we capture how we are taking strategic action on what we’ve learned.

WHAT WE LEARNED
Through a series of conversations with partners, we were able to reflect on the strengths of our work. For us, only after deeply exploring how we create change can we begin strategizing how we can improve our work.
OUR HIGH IMPACT AREAS

WE LEARNED THAT OUR DESIGN PROCESS CREATES SOCIAL CHANGE IN THREE MAJOR WAYS:

1. Instills new skills, tools and approaches

2. Generates high-impact outcomes through a creative and inclusive change process

3. Empowers community members as leaders
IMPACT REPORT

1 INSTILLS NEW SKILLS, TOOLS AND APPROACHES
We create social change by equipping leaders and changemakers with new ways to solve problems.

TOOLS WITH GREATEST IMPACT TO PARTNERS:
• Problem framing
• Stakeholder mapping
• Root cause analysis
• Rapid ideation
• System mapping
• Empathic interviewing

• Insight sheet collection
• Prototyping
• Growth mindset
• Community engagement
• Assumption testing

QUOTES
“The ‘How might we?’ is a powerful way to frame challenges. I have adopted it. It creates a way to work through barriers in a new way, and makes it possible to move from possibilities to action.”

“I used learnings to conduct a huge, external ideation with 40+ people. It empowered me to facilitate and feel confident in doing so.”

DI makes it safe to sit in ambiguity by providing tools to move through the process to real results. It provides tangible strategies to problem solve with diverse perspectives.”

“How have I integrated some of the strategies learned through our partnership into other areas, and are developing ways to increase others’ voice into our decision making process.”

OPPORTUNITIES
How might we strengthen our capacity to equip leaders with new skills and approaches?

STRATEGIC ACTIONS
1. Invest in leaders. Continue to invest in equipping leaders with tools after projects are over.
2. Tell stories. Track and measure partners’ growth in terms of change in mindset and actions.
3. Develop ongoing educational opportunities through diverse platforms, such as online webinars, open learning sessions and toolkits.

2 GENERATES HIGH-IMPACT OUTCOMES THROUGH A CREATIVE AND INCLUSIVE PROCESS
We create social change by taking changemakers through a process focused on empathy and creative, divergent thinking.

OUR PROCESS AT A GLANCE:
• DISCOVERY: Understand all aspects of the problem through empathic interviews, ethnographic research
• SYNTHESIS: Unpack and make sense of the data
• IDEATION: Brainstorm with community members
• PROTOTYPING: Test key ideas quickly to get honest feedback from the community
• EVALUATION: Measure and learn to improve

OPPORTUNITIES
How might we leverage the power of our process to inspire action?
How might we emphasize the impact of our process?

STRATEGIC ACTIONS
1. Refine outcomes in order to understand intended impact from the beginning. Measure outcomes throughout the project to ensure we’re actually making a difference. Create mechanism to track progress after project is complete.
2. Take time: build in more time to reflect on our process to support learning and action.
3. Keep going: strengthen our ability to engage community voice and drive sustained action.

“Taking space and time to be intentionally creative was very productive. We don’t own the creative process or the ideas, they are all the community’s.”

“DI makes it safe to sit in ambiguity by providing tools to move through the process to real results. It provides tangible strategies to problem solve with diverse perspectives.”

The process encourages [and] allows for multiple voices, and doesn’t let voices get lost. It takes in a lot of information and puts at the center voices of end users. The process has mechanisms for dreaming, thinking of new ideas, and not getting stuck.”

Kathie Maynard, University of Cincinnati

“‘How might we?’ is a powerful way to frame challenges. I have adopted it. It creates a way to work through barriers in a new way, and makes it possible to move from possibilities to action.”

“I used learnings to conduct a huge, external ideation with 40+ people. It empowered me to facilitate and feel confident in doing so.”

“We have integrated some of the strategies learned through our partnership into other areas, and are developing ways to increase others’ voice into our decision making process.”

“We tend to go with solutions we know. We never introduce multiple perspectives in such a formal way. DI’s process shows us another way.”

Kathie Maynard, University of Cincinnati

IMPACT AREA

IMPACT AREA
EMPOWERS COMMUNITY MEMBERS AS LEADERS

We create social change by advocating for and seeking opportunities to include the voices of our community in decision-making and action.

OPPORTUNITIES
How might we build and leverage our capacity to engage community members in creating lasting impact?
How might we improve our community engagement efforts, bringing them into every aspect of our organizational practice?
How might we support partners’ efforts to engage community in their organizational practice?

STRATEGIC ACTIONS
1. Strengthen what we’re already doing well: community engagement methods and approach.
2. Advocate with partners for inclusion of community members all along the way (including targeted underrepresented populations, i.e. immigrant communities).
3. Create positions of power for community members in our own practice so that we’re leading by example.
4. Explore funding streams to support community-driven action.

QUOTES
“Our organization is working not towards having our decisions reaffirmed by the community, but rather, have the community influence those decisions directly. Connection to DI has given us tools and resources to do that, and helped us in engaging deeper and more meaningful conversations along the way.”
Calista Stone, Cincinnati Works

“Because of the work with DI, now there is organizational support to engage users—I’m now able to travel to places to do outreach. We have integrated some of the strategies learned through our partnership with DI into other areas (program design, for example), and are developing ways to increase others’ voices into our decision-making processes (community focus groups, parent input, school feedback, etc).”
Kasey Mitchell, Share Our Strength

“Working with DI has helped me be a better person. DI has impacted me as an activist; it has helped me speak out to other parents who may be going through some of the same things that I am facing in life as a parent with a disabled child. Meeting different parents and doctors and workers is a beautiful thing and I love the movement DI provides.”
Keisha, community member engaged in project

“Being with you helped me get rid of that fear to speak up, and helped me feel confident about suggesting what things were necessary amongst the Hispanic community; it helped me give my community a voice.”
Reyna, DI Peer Researcher
It all started with the Greater Cincinnati Foundation and DI’s "Building Community Will" program. In 2013, we partnered with the Greater Cincinnati Foundation (GCF) to convene 10 Collective Impact backbone organizations through a capacity building program called “Building Community Will.”

Over six months, leaders, staff and volunteers from these 10 organizations learned how to apply the design process to projects that bring communities together around pressing issues. The goals of "Building Community Will" were to 1) build organizational capacity to use design thinking, and 2) create impact on the region’s respective community will programs.

Efforts paid off. Shiloh Turner, GCF’s former Vice President for Community Investment reflected on evidence she saw in changed leadership practice of those participating: "I learned to listen with humility. Empathic interviewing. Listening with different ears. Prototyping. How might we do that? Our language has totally changed! If you don’t hear “How might we?” once a day, you’ll hear it 10 times a day. It has opened up new vernacular for us that is more inclusive, more thought-provoking, more ‘let’s not focus on why we can’t do it but let’s focus more on why we can.’ So, I think just those three words have influenced us.”

Janice’s mindset shift also helped inform a broader shift in organizational practice at United Way of Greater Cincinnati (UWGC). UWGC is the primary funder of PCW and houses the organization. This close, collaborative relationship opened up the opportunity to apply what she and other colleagues had learned in working with DI. Mike Baker, Director of Community Impact at UWGC shared: “United Way started feeling more comfortable with design mindsets and replicating those processes inside our organization.”

The impact extended beyond UWGC and PCW to Gateway Community and Technical College, which housed an Advanced Manufacturing initiative, “Raise the Floor (RTF).”

One participant, Janice Urbanik, Executive Director of Partners for a Competitive Workforce (PCW), was particularly inspired by the Building Community Will program. Human-centered design sowed the seeds to a new approach for her at PCW. When asked what she learned from the program, Janice shared two key mindset shifts: empathy and problem framing. "I learned to listen with humility. Empathic interviewing. Listening with different ears. Prototyping. How might we do that? Our language has totally changed: if you don’t hear “How might we?” once a day, you’ll hear it 10 times a day. It has opened up new vernacular for us that is more inclusive, more thought-provoking, more ‘let’s not focus on why we can’t do it but let’s focus more on why we can.’ So, I think just those three words have influenced us.”

Janice’s change in mindset led to change in action and project practice. As a result, PCW transformed its approach to addressing workforce issues by encouraging their partners to co-create systems and programs. “What is next [for PCW] is more family-centered, user-centered, co-designed. Our whole mentality is a new awareness, a new priority that we’re putting on our work—I attribute a lot of that to the learnings we’ve gotten from the work we’ve done with DI. Co-creation, getting input, community voice at the table is wonderful and absolutely critical and we must have it. For true sustainability, two things have to happen.

That audience—if we’re talking about families in poverty—we have to invest in them, to build their capacity to lead the implementation of the work they helped to create. But then, for those of us who are developing programming, we need to give up the leadership (at least in part) of the implementation of it to those most affected. And that’s going to be a big cultural shift. But if the change we want is going to be truly sustainable, those two things have to happen.”

RAISE THE FLOOR’S GOALS:

- Move women out of poverty by supporting their career pathways into advanced manufacturing.
- Decrease the manufacturing labor shortage by getting more women workers in that pipeline.
Janice and colleagues at United Way secured funding through the Aspen Institute to support Raise the Floor’s adoption of a two-generational approach through human-centered design. In 2014, they reached out to DI to collaborate and a new dimension of the partnership between Design Impact, Janice Urbanik and PCW was born.

Our project team spent three months moving through a rich discovery process that involved deeply exploring the lives of women and their families in an attempt to better understand both the real and perceived barriers that prevent women from pursuing careers in advanced manufacturing.

Carissa Schutzman, Dean of Workforce Solutions and creator of Gateway’s Raise the Floor program had this to say about design thinking about its deep involvement of women throughout the process:

“Design thinking made a difference because it encompassed the experiences and opinions of the women who are currently in the Raise the Floor program as well as the women who may potentially enroll in the program. Unlike other processes that often treat members of a group as passive subjects, the design thinking approach is respectful and inclusive of the target population for the RTF program.”

STEPHANIE SEARS WAS ONE OF THOSE WOMEN.

Stephanie was looking for a change. She had recently lost her job, and while she enjoyed working in administrative positions, she realized it was not a long-term career path.

As a single mother of three children, one of whom requires expensive full-time nursing care, Stephanie was desperate to find employment in an industry where she and her family would be self-sufficient.

Stephanie enrolled into Gateway’s Raise the Floor program in spring 2015 to pursue the MSSC Certified Production Technician (CPT) Certification. We met Stephanie while she was enrolled in RTF, and asked her to share her story in order to strengthen the program. Stephanie not only shared her story, but went on to co-create concepts that were eventually prototyped.

“It made me realize that there are actually organizations and people out there that are concerned with families within their state and our nation and actually see the benefit of what could happen if those families are enriched and informed of ways they can become self-sufficient. I felt a purpose as far as being accessible to them to ask me questions. They were seeking answers, and I could help them and put things in perspective. We are making all these regulations and don’t even know the major needs of the people that would be receiving the end product. So it’s nice to see the concern there.”

Meanwhile, Stephanie completed RTF’s six credit hour course with an A, and became one of four women to pass all four industry assessments, earning the nationally recognized MSSC CPT Certification in May 2015. After completing the course, Stephanie realized that she would like to further her knowledge in the field and decided to enroll into the Manufacturing Engineering Technology program.

Because of her deep involvement in the project, Stephanie was nominated to attend the 2015 ThinkXChange forum in Aspen, Colorado through Ascend at the Aspen Institute, an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, D.C. Stephanie was selected to be part of a small group of parents from across the United States to attend the national forum on two-generation solutions for economic security and self-sufficiency. Stephanie was a lead discussant for a session on design thinking that focused on aspects of ‘Raise the Floor’.

Stephanie continues to share her experiences and engage in national advocacy with the program at a series of Ascend Postsecondary Education and Student Parents working groups in Washington D.C.
In 2015, DI partnered with Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC) to employ a design thinking approach over the course of eight months to generate innovative concepts that would support our community on its journey to become a place where all children thrive. We used a research methodology that combined Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) with an ethnographic design. This methodology served two purposes: deeply rooting insights in community voice and positioning community members as leaders in the process from the very beginning.

We invited five mothers from the two focus neighborhoods—areas experiencing increased health disparities—to join our research team as peer researchers. Together, we developed research questions, recruited participants, and collected stories. We also generated and analyzed the data together, as co-learners and co-creators. This deep level of community leadership drove intensive community engagement throughout the process, resulting in trusting relationships and community-driven concepts.

“This was eye opening to a lot of people, even if they don’t express it. There is appreciation for the level of connection needed to get there (engaging community members through all steps of the process).”
Julie Elkus, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital and Medical Center

KEY OUTCOMES FROM THE PEER RESEARCH MODEL INCLUDED:

**CITIZEN EMPOWERMENT:** Creates the space for community members to play an active role in the process of saying what needs to be known about and done in their own communities.

**DEEPER RESEARCH:** Lowers the barriers between participants and researchers—a barrier which can keep participants from sharing the kinds of deep experiences that drive relevant design.

**UNHEARD VOICES:** Leverages community insider knowledge about and connections to often excluded populations that our partner organizations may struggle to engage.

**IMPROVED OUTCOMES:** Ensures that we generate culturally relevant solutions that are therefore able to achieve the outcomes they seek.

“Being with you helped me get rid of that fear to speak up, and helped me feel confident about suggesting what things were necessary amongst the Hispanic community; it helped me give my community a voice.”
Reyna, Peer Researcher and Price Hill resident

“To know that people actually listened to me made a world of difference. Today showed me I matter and my ideas count.”
Community Member; Avondale Resident

“I am a mother—yes I was a peer researcher. I also work to survive. I work two jobs. I share myself at every meeting: my views, my life, my story. Yet to hear others, to allow others to share their story, it brings the purpose of this effort to a higher level.”
Valerie, Peer Researcher; Price Hill resident

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES AS LEADERS

BASED ON OUR WORK WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND PEER RESEARCHERS, WE KNOW THERE IS SIGNIFICANT IMPACT IN AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP. FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION VALIDATE THIS BELIEF AND WILL INFORM OUR ONGOING EFFORTS TO ENGAGE AND EMPOWER COMMUNITY LEADERS.
GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

OUR PARTNERS HAD TWO RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTINUED GROWTH:

1. Push for prototypes

2. Create impact beyond projects
OPPORTUNITIES
How might we ensure all projects move towards prototyping with clear, measurable outcomes?

STRATEGIC ACTIONS
1. Push our partners. Strongly advocate for prototyping throughout the process from proposal to the conclusion of the project.
2. Follow up. Identify and implement a system to follow up and track project development and prototyping.
3. Gauge capacity. When selecting partnerships/projects, ask: Do you really have ties/capacity to support concepts in the community? Test feasibility for implementation.
4. Build organizational capacity to support prototyping (i.e. prototyping coaching). Identify and invest in few team members to develop expertise.

QUOTES
“It’s been amazing to have doctors there... to share with them our dreams and hopes for our communities and to have them be able to participate with people in the community. They say we hear you, we’re going to do this. My only thing is I want to see things being done. They’ve heard so much about what we want and what we need for our communities and families but yet I still haven’t seen any changes to improve anything we’ve been speaking on.” Valerie, DI Peer Researcher and Price Hill resident

“It would be helpful to think through contingency plans with partners to support prototyping, asking ‘what if this...?’ throughout the process. Question partners’ assumptions about landscape, needs, problem framing, etc.”

“Process and work with DI has informed personal and grant choices, but the work needs to come to fruition. The community needs to understand and experience the importance of the prototyping/action phase.” Partners often have to wait to begin prototypes until they receive the necessary funding.
Partners want ongoing support, learning and community to sustain change efforts.

**OPPORTUNITIES**
How might we increase measured impact on the social problems we invest in with partners? 
How might we continue to share learnings to inform social action, beyond the completion of our formal partnerships?

**STRATEGIC ACTIONS**
1. **Track development.** Create and institute a system to follow up and track project development and prototyping (look into Salesforce).
2. **Build community.** Develop a community of practice with partners to extend shared learning and action beyond and across project work.
3. **Measure.** Develop and implement measures of evaluation to determine outcomes, post-project completion.
4. **Stick around.** Develop mechanisms to support partners’ ongoing learning, such as online toolkits and programming.

**QUOTES**
“Find opportunities for us to continue to work together versus transactional. I definitely see opportunities to work together in the future but the relationship is on the wane, to be honest, because we haven’t been engaged in an ongoing way.”
*Lyndon Rego, Center for Creative Leadership*

“DI is about ‘teaching people to fish’ and creating distinct capacity... I’m very interested in staying engaged.”
*Kasey Mitchell, Share our Strength*

“It’s hard to track and understand where impact comes from—it takes 7-10 years to see it. That’s the challenge—to pinpoint where it’s coming from. All the small things add up to big things. Changing mindsets is the first step.”
*Lisa Mills, Sprout Insight*

*GROWTH AREA*
It was an open and honest process and I am thankful that collaborating on the prototypes made our work easier. Since then, our relationships and partnerships have kept growing.”
*Brittany Corde, Partners for a Competitive Workforce*
Of our partners we engaged in this evaluation, over half moved to prototyping.

53% 
HAVE MOVED ON TO PROTOTYPING

31% 
ARE WAITING TO MOVE TO PROTOTYPING

13% 
DID NOT MOVE TO PROTOTYPING

13% 
PROTOTYPING DID NOT APPLY

We learned that there are two critical factors that determine whether an innovation sees the light of day, post-engagement with DI: change in organizational leadership and lack of sufficient funding. This prompted us to critically reflect on the broader landscape that informs our work. Questions emerged leading us to wonder, Why are non-profits engaged as partners if there is limited investment in moving to action through prototyping? How might we actively work against maintaining status quo and ensure that our work moves the needle? How might we support and advocate for partners to move to prototyping? How might we leverage the aspects of the process we can influence to generate most possible impact?

We also uncovered a tension inherent in the innovation space: how do we invite leaders to be courageous risk-takers and also expect them to measure impact? These can be competing expectations in the social sector where measuring impact often feels daunting and is under-resourced. The nature of prototyping is to encourage small, low-fidelity action steps that will lead to larger, scalable action down the road. As we continue to build capacity around measuring impact and supporting partners’ social change efforts, we must be ready to reconcile these truths. It will take time, patience, and loving accountability to track and measure sustained social impact.

Our learning inspired new, hard questions for us as we began to consider how we can push for prototyping and action. It helped us to reflect on a project that successfully moved to prototyping to understand what went well and why so that we can apply that learning to our work moving forward.

Earlier, we featured the story of Raise the Floor (RTF), a job training program that incorporates a two-generation approach to increase women’s employment in advanced manufacturing. In part because of the deep alignment in mindset among the partner team—including funder (UWGC) and organizational partner (Partners for Competitive Workforce)—that project yielded strong prototypes that moved to implementation with measured outcomes.

**THE PROTOTYPES:**

1. **Program Blueprint and the Study Cube**
   Life management tools that allow both parents and children to set academic, financial and household goals, look forward to mutual celebratory moments and develop contingency plans for future emergencies.

2. **Peer Supports**
   An ongoing system of peer meetings that deepen and expand relationships and resources among a cohort of women in the Raise the Floor program.

3. **My Emergency Fund**
   A fund to help women stay on track. Through a simple qualification process, women can immediately access small amounts of funds to address or prevent crises that are often disruptors of success (i.e. flat tire, heat bill, need for food).

4. **The Advocate’s Toolkit**
   A collection of easy-to-use and relevant tools that frontline workers (e.g. teachers, social workers, career advocates) can use to communicate about the sector.

5. **The Family Camp**
   Offers condensed summer coursework for parents working towards certifications in advanced manufacturing, coupled with an academically enriched STEM camp for children.
Significantly, RTF could evidence outcomes from these prototypes including:

- **400% increase in student enrollment** from 16 women (January 2015) to 77 women (summer 2016)
- **285% increase in students using support services**
  - Increase to 100+ engaged community partners that resulted in:
    - more than 10 academic scholarships for Raise the Floor participants
    - services such as quality childcare, educational workshops, laptops for Raise the Floor participants
    - A childcare assistance match to replenish funds for the support services grant. These partnerships have also allowed for allocation of financial support, soft skills training and mental health support.
  - Increased retention rate by addressing every day challenges
  - Empowered students to step into leadership roles
    - One student attended the 2015 ThinkXChange forum in Aspen, Colorado through Ascend
    - Decrease the manufacturing labor shortage by getting more women workers in that pipeline.
  - at the Aspen Institute as a lead discussant for a session on design thinking that focused on aspects of ‘Raise the Floor.’
  - Stephanie continues to share her experiences with the program at a series of Ascend Postsecondary Education and Student Parents working groups in Washington D.C.

After grant funding ended in 2016, RTF used these prototyping outcomes to successfully institutionalize the initiative. RTF was able to fund a full-time program coordinator position. Furthermore, these prototyping outcomes have been critical in securing additional programming resources, strengthening partner support, and serving as a testament to their commitment to making sustained impact in this area of advanced manufacturing. Ongoing education will be critical as RTF continues to work toward their long-term goals of:

1. Moving women out of poverty through supporting their career pathways into advanced manufacturing
2. Increasing the impact this initiative is having in securing employment for these women.

This story reinforces the value of starting with change in mindsets as a first step in changing actions and ultimately, conditions. In this case, both key funder (United Way of Greater Cincinnati) and partner organization (Janice Urbanik, Partners for a Competitive Workforce) demonstrated shared capacity and mindset from the onset of the program. Their deep buy-in and commitment to the project proved invaluable, in terms of secured funding and overall strategic leadership. Additionally, their investment in evaluation paid off in sustaining the work and ensuring that the programs and services continue. Ongoing evaluation will help drive future efforts to ensure that we’re making sustained social impact on the issues to which RTF is so committed.
CONCLUSION

Now more than ever, we are compelled to do better in our social change efforts. This evaluation serves as a mirror that we can hold up to our practice to ensure just that—we do better. As changemakers, maintaining status quo is simply not acceptable. By looking in the mirror, we learned that our top strengths include: instilling new skills, tools and approaches, generating high-impact outcomes through a creative and inclusive change process, and empowering community members as leaders.

Growth opportunities include pushing for prototyping and creating impact beyond projects. Leveraging our strengths and investing in our growth opportunities will deepen and sustain the impact we make together, as we design for an equitable world.

DONATE

Developing this report allowed us to understand the impact we have on the communities we serve. Help make more of an impact: donate today. Visit d-impact.org/engage.

THANK YOU

Our ability to make an impact is based on our partnerships with courageous leaders who are committed to creating change. Thank you to each and every community member, organizational leader, front-line worker, philanthropist, and government official who has joined in our efforts along the way. Together, we truly believe we are building a movement for sustained social impact.

We have work to do.