WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BUILD HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES WHERE ALL CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES CAN THRIVE?

Collaboration beyond business as usual.

raising places

Raising Places catalyzes local momentum for cross-sector collaboration, engaging diverse partners to build healthier communities where all children and their families can thrive. Up to six communities from across the country will participate in a nine-month, lab-based process, exploring the intersection of two important perspectives: what it takes to create better communities and what it takes to support better childhoods. Local leaders will work to bring these perspectives together to develop actionable, practical solutions to pressing community challenges.

GGS hosted a workshop series in Chicago that aimed to generate ideas for increasing parent engagement in neighborhood schools. Our labs brought together parents and people working in philanthropy, business, education and community development to ideate around shared goals.

CHALLENGE

Limits on shared ownership

Leaders focused on better childhoods and leaders focused on better communities are each working on critical aspects of creating strong foundations for kids. However, while their goals are often aligned, they rarely find themselves around the same table speaking the same language or working toward the same metrics.

APPROACH

Intentionally diverse perspectives

By framing the challenge broadly, we invite leaders to join a team with a wider range of disciplines than typically work together. This ensures that the right people for any given project are no more than a few degrees away. And by creating a common language around the research and design process, we level set the team to share their knowledge, but put aside their assumptions.

We partnered with a hospital in Minneapolis to improve services for medically complex, hard-to-reach patients. By meeting people in their homes and neighborhoods, and joining them for doctors' appointments, we learned firsthand how the current system could better support their health.

CHALLENGE

Community engagement: too little, too late

Many methods of engaging residents, such as surveys and focus groups, ask participants for their feedback on ideas that were created without them. This practice confines community members to a predetermined set of choices. What's more, that feedback is disproportionately swayed by the small group of individuals who happened to show up that day.

APPROACH

Research as relationship-building

In human-centered design, research is about meeting people where they are: both physically (by observing and interacting in their context) and emotionally (by inviting residents to lead open-ended conversations). By setting up this type of partnership, residents are empowered to not only share their challenges, but also generate ideas and create solutions.

Working with a local elementary school, the GGS team designed a new food service model to encourage students to eat more healthful lunches. We prototyped, tested and repeated until we had a concept—serving food in courses—that garnered both anecdotal and behavioral results.

CHALLENGE

Moving straight from plans to pilots

Once an idea has traction in the boardroom, resources are typically deployed toward testing it in the "real world." However, pilots often carry the undue burden of emotional attachment: people want them to succeed. Without an iterative process of scaling up, pilots are commonly derailed by small un-anticipated barriers.

APPROACH

Rapid cycles of iteration

Prototyping is a process of creating the quickest and cheapest tangible version of an idea, mocking that idea up to gather feedback from intended users, and getting feedback repeatedly over a number of days or weeks. This iterative approach allows a concept to flex and adapt to accommodate a wide variety of potential roadblocks on the journey to implementation.

Greater Good Studio is a design firm focused on social impact and the organizing facilitator of Raising Places. Our mission is to use the process and principles of human-centered design to improve quality of life for all people.

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QUESTIONS

THOUGHTS + IDEAS: