

Design Research Planning Part 1: Key Dimensions

Consider how to creatively and rigorously research your project. In addition to engaging with the people impact, you also need to ground yourself in the systems and context that impact peoples' experiences.

TOPICS

What related topics can you research? These might be existing models, evidence-based or best practices, principles, or other frameworks.

PROCESSES & POLICIES

What processes and policies are part of your project's context?

TECHNOLOGY & INFRASTRUCTURE

What tools, both digital and physical, are used in your project area? Who can show you how they interact/use them?

ENVIRONMENT

Where do the activities related to your project take place? Draw them out.

ECONOMICS

What are the financial aspects of your project?
What metrics might be important as you learn?

ECOSYSTEM INFLUENCES

What happenings in the local community might influence how your project is designed and executed? These might be local regulations, business and social trends, etc.

Design Research Planning Part 2: Unique Perspectives

Whose experiences do we need to better understand and/or learn from? When we first ask this question, we tend to think of the people whose connections to the issue are obvious or who would be easy to reach out to. This exercise will help you identify people who may offer a less often heard or divergent perspective.

THE EASY

It's fine to start out by talking to some people with whom you are comfortable, who are easier to get a hold of, and with whom the conversations might feel lower stress. List out their names.

Colleagues working on the issue:

Established advisory groups:

THE OBVIOUS

Then there are the people who you know you should talk to, such as the clients and other users, the leadership who have influence over the project's sustainability, and experts who know a lot about the issue at large.

Clients or other people directly impacted:

Decisionmakers:

Subject matter experts:

THE INTERESTING!

And then there are people whose names you may not know yet. These stakeholders might relate to the project directly or indirectly, from within or outside your organization, in a primary/secondary/tertiary role.

Local Organizers:
Community members and organizations that drive change via *grassroots* efforts.

System Influencers:
Policymakers, business owners, or officials who drive change via *systems or market* levers.

Outliers: People who have had extreme experiences with the service or engage with it in unusual ways.

Formers: People who were involved in the experience and are now more removed (e.g. alumni, ex-clients and staff).

Other people bringing divergent or diverse perspectives. This could include people who don't currently use services often, or might have challenges accessing services (e.g. language or mobility needs, a demanding work schedule, etc.).