PART I

Why Design Thinking?
CHAPTER ONE
Catalyzing a Conversation for Change

We live in a world of increasingly wicked problems. Nowhere are they more evident than in the social sector. Whether we look at private or public efforts, across sectors like health care, education, and transportation, at the global or local level, organizations of all sizes and stripes struggle with thorny issues:

- stakeholders who can’t even agree on the problem, much less the solution;
- employees who are reluctant to change behaviors and take risks, who are often rewarded for compliance rather than performance;
- decision makers who have too much data, but little of the kind they need;
- leaders who are more likely to have short tenures and whose every move is scrutinized by funders, politicians, bureaucrats, and the media; and
- users of their services—students, patients, customers, citizens—whose expectations are sometimes rising as fast as resources to meet them are declining.

And to face this scenario, would-be innovators are armed with an outmoded tool kit premised on predictability and control, optimized for solving tame problems, in a world that offers fewer and fewer of them. Our goal in this book is to offer a new set of tools—ones better suited to the complexity and messiness of the challenges that social sector innovators face. Standing still is no more an option in the social sector than it is in the for-profit world. Innovation is an imperative.

In facing challenges both obviously large (fighting hunger and poverty, encouraging sustainability) and seemingly smaller (getting invoices paid on time, increasing blood donations, decreasing hospi-
Design Thinking for the Greater Good

Design thinking has the potential to bring something new to the conversation. They are bringing together people who want to solve a tough problem—not hold another meeting—in a world where forming a committee can be seen to count as action.

Design thinking is being used today in organizations as diverse as charitable foundations, social innovation start-ups, global corporations, national governments, and elementary schools. It has been adopted by entrepreneurs, corporate executives, city managers, and kindergarten teachers alike. In just a small sample of the stories we will discuss in this book, we see it helping impoverished farmers adopt new practices in Mexico, keeping at-risk California teenagers in school, reducing the frequency of mental health emergencies in Australia, and helping manufacturers and government regulators in Washington find common ground on medical device standards. Across these vastly different problems and sectors, design thinking provides a common thread. Maybe we could even call it a movement.

The shift under way seems to us, in fact, much like the one that created the quality movement. In the same way that the arrival of Total Quality Management (TQM) revolutionized the way organizations thought about quality, design thinking has the potential to revolutionize the way we think about and practice innovation.

Let’s take a quick look at the quality parallel. TQM had a transformational impact and drove a paradigm shift (not a term to be used lightly) about quality, from the old quality assurance mindset (scholars call this Quality I) to a completely different conception of what quality meant and whose job it was (Quality II). In Quality I, quality was seen as the domain of a small group of experts. In Quality II, quality became everybody’s job, and TQM made that possible.

WHAT IS DESIGN THINKING?

Design thinking is a problem-solving approach with a unique set of qualities: it is human centered, possibility driven, option focused, and iterative.

*Human centered* is always where we start—with real people, not demographic segments. Design thinking emphasizes the importance of deep exploration into the lives and problems of the people whose lives we want to improve *before* we start generating solutions. It uses market research methodologies that are qualitative and empathetic. It is enthusiastic about the potential to reframe our definition of the problem and engage stakeholders in co-creation.

Design thinking is also *possibility driven*. We ask the question “What if anything were possible?” as we begin to create ideas. We focus on generating *multiple options* and avoid putting all our eggs in one particular solution basket. Because we are guessing about our stakeholders’ needs and wants, we also expect to be wrong sometimes. So we want to put multiple irons in the fire and let our stakeholders tell us which work for them. We want to manage a *portfolio* of new ideas.

Finally, the process is *iterative*. It conducts cycles of real-world experiments to refine ideas, rather than running analyses using historical data. We don’t expect to get it right the first time—we expect to iterate our way to success.
by providing a language and tool kit for solving quality problems, which everybody could learn. TQM *democratized* quality.

That same kind of revolutionary shift is under way today in innovation. Innovation I, the old paradigm, looks a lot like quality assurance. It is isolated in experts and senior leaders, decoupled from the everyday work of the organization. In Innovation I, innovation is about big breakthroughs done by special people. Design in the Innovation I world is mostly about aesthetics or technology.

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The shift from Innovation I to Innovation II.

We are seeing the emergence of Innovation II, the democratizing of innovation. In this world, we are all responsible for innovation. Even the term itself has a new meaning. Innovation isn’t only—or even mostly—about big breakthroughs; it is about improving value for the stakeholders we serve. And everybody in an organization has a role to play. It is not that we no longer care about big, disruptive innovations or that we don’t still need expert innovators and designers—it is just that we acknowledge two truths: first, it is often impossible to tell early in the life of an innovation just how big or small it will someday be; and, second, many small things can add up to something big.
What Is in the Way?

It is easy for us to say that “everybody designs,” but we know from our research that the reality of successfully democratizing design will be harder than it sounds. A series of things must happen for it to work.

First, we have to successfully engage a broader, more diverse set of stakeholders in the innovation conversation. A wealth of academic research testifies that difference provides the fuel for innovation. In interacting with and learning from people who are different from ourselves, we come to see new possibilities. But the same difference that fuels innovation also breeds conflict and mistrust. Tapping into the potential contribution that diversity represents can be especially difficult in the social sector, where differences can run deep and come with embedded values attached. Difference can quickly feel personal and threatening.

We have all been in conversations that made a situation worse instead of better because people with strong opinions disagreed. How do we ensure that our conversations don’t descend into arguments that push us farther apart instead of closer together in agreeing on solutions to critical problems? Even more elemental, how do we decide who to invite into the conversation in the first place? The answer is not “Everybody” for all issues—it is the right set of people for that particular issue. Even when we succeed in identifying the appropriate stakeholders, how do we encourage them to join the conversation? What if they have difficulty participating or communicating their needs—if they are disabled, poor, or sick, for instance? Or what if they are reluctant or fearful to join in? In part 2, we’ll look at the variety of ways social sector organizations are successfully addressing these questions.

Then, assuming we can get the right parties into the conversation, how do we keep their different worldviews from paralyzing progress? How do we help people escape the prison of their own perspective? As we think about generating solutions, how do we avoid focusing on the wrong problems or issues? How do we see together what none of us see separately? With so many options, how do we drill down to what really matters? Increasingly the big challenges we face in the social sector happen at the systems level. How do we get the parts of the system to talk to each other? How do we avoid a “build it and they will come” mentality?
As we move from designing to implementing, we face another intimidating set of challenges. What if the people we need to impact are afraid of change? Or what if we lack the organizational capabilities to successfully implement the new idea in practice?

All of these challenges to doing work that achieves a greater good—engaging a broader group of voices, achieving alignment and consensus, finding workable solutions that people will actually adopt—must be surmounted to make a reality of the idea that we are all innovators at heart.

That’s why we wrote this book.

We saw people tackling problems both large and small. In Peru, a country with one of the lowest blood donation rates in Latin America, a group of MBA students worked with the Red Cross to figure out why and what to do about it. In Cape Town, South Africa, city managers teamed with designers to address the challenges of refugee camps. In Istanbul, Turkey, a young manager who worked in vendor invoice processing for the city—inspired by a college class she was taking and a professor who encouraged his students to be agents of change—tackled bureaucracy and inertia to improve the process. And those are just a few of the stories that didn’t make it into this book!

**Catalyzing a Conversation for Change across Difference**

One discovery we made as we listened to these stories was the way in which design thinking was creating improved outcomes by providing the tools and process to foster a better conversation across difference. Sometimes those differences were within organizations themselves—across functional silos or different levels. Other times they were across different types of organizations, like government regulators and businesses, or were about differing stakeholder needs and trade-offs. They often turned out to be about local versus global, and even sometimes about science versus traditional values.

Design thinking’s greatest gift, we came away believing, was to provide a social technology that channeled conversations into more productive arenas and provided guardrails that made it feel safe for the individuals involved to talk about and work across their differences. It helped them find higher-order solutions that were better than what anyone brought into the room in the first place, solutions that made a difference in their stakeholders’ lives.
In part 2 of this book, we will look at a collection of stories that examine in depth how design thinking accomplishes this and addresses exactly those challenges to the greater good that we described earlier: engaging a broader group of voices, achieving alignment and consensus, and finding workable solutions that people will actually adopt.

At the US Department of Health and Human Services, the Ignite Accelerator program is democratizing innovation by inviting frontline employees throughout the country to tackle opportunities for innovation that they see in their own backyards, and building their creative confidence that they can succeed.

At the Kingwood Trust in the United Kingdom, we’ll find an organization that has succeeded in bringing new voices into the conversation by reworking traditional design tools to include in the innovation process the adults with autism they serve, along with their support staff.

The medical staff at Monash Medical Centre will show us how they have brought together clinicians from across specialties and helped them align their differing views to achieve consensus on changes both small (increasing hand washing) and large (redesigning their outpatient psychiatric clinic).

In Washington, DC, the US Food and Drug Administration will offer an example of how to use design thinking to turn adversarial debates into dialogues.

In Ireland, we will observe a community beset by economic problems and depopulation that is using design thinking tools to have a community-wide conversation about solutions, not just problems, aiming to strengthen the economy on the Ring of Kerry and provide opportunities for young people to stay.

At United Cerebral Palsy, we will drop in on a series of traveling innovation labs that aim to create a supply chain connecting entrepreneurs with engineers, people with cerebral palsy and their caregivers, and design students, to search for opportunities to improve the lives of people with a range of disabilities.

At the Community Transportation Association of America, we see the power of localized decision making that uses design thinking as a backbone to foster grassroots problem identification and solving to address the transportation difficulties faced by low-income workers.

In Mexico, indigent farmers and scientists come together to improve crop yields and income, using design thinking methods to both honor tradition and encourage adoption of advances in farming practice.
The Transportation Security Administration demonstrates how technology can make us more human and, in the most risk-averse of circumstances, advance innovation and trust.

Finally, Children’s Health System of Texas takes a deep look at the challenges of achieving population health and wellness in Dallas and teaches us how to enlist uncommon partners to assess and build the capabilities to meet the needs that design thinking has surfaced.

In part 3, we focus on what it takes to make design thinking a reality in organizations today. In this part, we take a deep dive into our own methodology, which focuses on asking four simple but critical questions as we enter the innovation space: **What is?**, **What if?**, **What wows?**, and **What works?** We illustrate the process in step-by-step detail by accompanying a group of educators at Gateway College and Career Academy in Riverside, California, as they use design thinking to reduce the dropout rate of at-risk teenagers.

We conclude the book with a look at how organizations can work to foster and spread the capacity for innovation beyond individual projects and teams. Though our research focus was to dig deeply into the actual approaches and experiences of social sector innovators—to be able to talk in detail about the specifics of how and why they incorporated design thinking into their work, the challenges they faced, and the successes (and sometimes failures) they experienced—we also, along the way, gained some insights into a higher-level how: how the organizations they worked within were facilitating—or stymieing—their efforts. We saw no one-size-fits-all approach being followed as they reached toward Innovation II mindsets and behaviors. Each organization seemed to follow its own path. This diversity of roadmaps is itself consistent with design thinking—responding to the particular personalities, preferences, and needs of its leadership and the nature of the challenges they face. And though we don’t advocate any “right” path or model, some general insights did emerge around the value of creating an organizational infrastructure for team formation, capability development and coaching, access to stakeholders, and resources for experimentation. We will see evidence of these in our stories in part 2.

Another higher-level observation emerged about the direction from which these changes emanated. In most of our stories, innovation activities do have a single starting point, but they do not align with the normal juxtaposition of “top down” versus “bottom up.” Instead, they underline the important role each person can play in the reality of diffusing a design thinking capability throughout an organiza-
tion. We observe small experiments at the front line, unleashing employee resourcefulness, while additions to organizational structure such as innovation labs and tournaments illustrate management’s commitment and provide cover and resources for grassroots efforts by employees interested in trying something new.

We see the combination of a loosely linked, almost viral movement by frontline and middle management innovation champions, supported by training and programmatic resources provided by senior leadership, as a highly effective approach. Arianne Miller, managing director of the Lab@OPM today, captured this interplay between top-down and grassroots movements when she reflected on the importance, but also the limitations, of top-down management:

> It’s like a garden: somebody has to plant it—prepare the ground and scatter the seeds. But if you only look at what happens aboveground, you miss the point. The health of a garden is about the strength of the root system. Sure, you can stick a vase of beautifully blooming flowers in the ground and it looks great for a while, and then you wonder why it dies.

Throughout this book, we will meet a wide variety of social sector innovators—hard at work both above- and belowground—who have inspired us. We hope they inspire you!
PART II

The Stories
THE CHALLENGE TO THE GREATER GOOD

The idea that everyone in an organization is invited to innovate may be intimidating, rather than empowering, to those who don’t think they have the capabilities or permission to succeed at it. How do we encourage and support people to join design conversations, to step into uncertainty and ambiguity—especially staffers who don’t believe themselves capable? The Georges among us, especially, schooled in bureaucracy and anxious to avoid error, may have ideas and enthusiasm but not know where to begin.

DESIGN THINKING’S CONTRIBUTION

Having worked with thousands of people new to design, at every level, in all kinds of organizations, we believe inspiring creative confidence is one of design thinking’s greatest gifts. In every organization, employees are waiting for the invitation to use their knowledge to generate better value for those they serve. Using design thinking’s structured processes to empower frontline staff—to give employees permission to act and the tools to act wisely at the local level—is the mission of the Ignite Accelerator program at the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Ignite offers decision makers training in design thinking and Lean tools, along with mentoring, financial support, and visibility, to build the creative confidence of all employees in the agency and enable them to tackle opportunities for innovation that upper management simply cannot see.
CHAPTER FOUR
Including New Voices at the Kingwood Trust

THE CHALLENGE TO THE GREATER GOOD
One prominent theme in these stories is the inclusion of more voices—particularly those excluded in the past—in innovation conversations. Traditionally, experts in fields such as healthcare, education, and government have designed for people in need. How can they design with them, instead? And what if the stakeholders we want to include are reluctant or have difficulty participating in typical ways?

DESIGN THINKING’S CONTRIBUTION
Design thinking provides opportunities to invite those previously excluded into innovation conversations, even those who have difficulty communicating their needs. In the United Kingdom, the Kingwood Trust is committed to such inclusion, reworking traditional design tools to accomplish it: inviting the adults with autism they support, along with their families and support staff, into the design of their homes, outdoor spaces, and daily activities of life. Beginning by reframing the nature of the opportunity, Kingwood has developed creative ways to allow even those who don’t use written or spoken language to participate in creating the designs that impact their lives.
THE CHALLENGE TO THE GREATER GOOD

Challenges in the social sector often live at the systems level. Yet organizations are often collections of siloed specialists who find it difficult to talk across their differences. How do specialists who control different pieces of a system come together to take action on critical problems? Nowhere is this dilemma more apparent than in health care, where the complexities of the system and deep-seated differences can stymie urgently needed organizational reforms.

DESIGN THINKING’S CONTRIBUTION

Imagining a new future together across difference starts with seeing today in a new way. Design thinking brings potent tools to drive this kind of alignment around What is at a systems level. The medical staff at Australia’s Monash Medical Centre demonstrate how human-centered design can help clinical specialists with differing perspectives align on what matters most. As a university medical center in an urban area, Monash faces many woes characteristic of health care institutions today, from the macro—an aging population, lengthening hospital stays, increased reporting requirements—to the micro—the difficulty of getting people to wash their hands. At Monash, these troubles were exacerbated by critical internal challenges around staff engagement, low levels of patient satisfaction, and turnover of the entire senior staff. As part of a multipronged effort that combines design thinking with systems thinking and operations research, clinicians at Monash are mastering design thinking methodologies and working together to make the entire institution more innovative and patient centered.
CHAPTER SIX

Turning Debate into Dialogue at the US Food and Drug Administration

THE CHALLENGE TO THE GREATER GOOD

Creating change in the social sector often involves more than just achieving more effective collaboration across differences within the organization; it requires engaging multiple organizations with differing missions and perspectives to work together as well. How do we ensure that conversations don’t deteriorate into arguments that push these stakeholders farther apart instead of closer together? Assuming we can get the right parties into dialogue and conversation, how do we keep their different worldviews from paralyzing progress? Productive conversation across organizations can be difficult to achieve. Add in a highly politicized climate and potentially controversial topics and you have the makings of adversarial relationships.

DESIGN THINKING’S CONTRIBUTION

Avoiding divisive debates and encouraging dialogue across difference is a strength of design thinking, as this story from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) illustrates. Because of the nature of regulations limiting engagement with the public, federal agencies often hold public meetings to communicate with their diverse constituencies. Often, participants formulate their messages prior to the meeting, based on already-entrenched positions. In this sequential model, there is little listening and interaction. Human-centered design, as the FDA discovered, provides a process for ensuring that organizations engage in deeper, truly interactive discussions that produce greater possibilities for alignment and higher-order solutions.
THE CHALLENGE TO THE GREATER GOOD

We have looked at challenges that cross the boundaries of individual organizations. But what if the challenges lay within a community? Without the structure of specific roles and responsibilities, how can the conversation be orchestrated? The construction of community conversations has a long history of experimentation with different approaches. Despite significant effort, results have been mixed for some of the reasons we have already discussed—entrenched interests, conversations that go nowhere, and lack of local ownership of solutions—with the result that outcomes fail to materialize as momentum is lost.

DESIGN THINKING’S CONTRIBUTION

Design thinking can offer more than just a structured process for facilitating better team and organizational conversations; it can be scaled to foster and sustain a community-wide conversation that challenges participants to move beyond analyzing problems to generating solutions that can be shared and tested. Coupling design thinking with a process called a charrette, the Institute without Boundaries (IwB) in Toronto, Canada, teamed with the citizens of Iveragh—a beautiful Irish region on the Ring of Kerry that is beset with problems of unemployment and depopulation—to create a community-wide conversation that helped to imagine new possibilities in ways that pushed beyond good intentions to make them tangible and testable.
CHAPTER EIGHT
Connecting—and Disconnecting—the Pieces
at United Cerebral Palsy

THE CHALLENGE TO THE GREATER GOOD
How do you facilitate bringing together those who have needs with those who can potentially meet those needs, and help these groups to work together to accomplish some greater good? Can you galvanize different stakeholders, who have differing needs and inputs but need each other’s resources, to work together to generate new solutions? And can you win the support of your organization’s key stakeholders to accommodate such a strategy?

DESIGN THINKING’S CONTRIBUTION
Innovation in the social sector often requires building connections across what, in business, we would call the supply chain. Design thinking can offer a methodology for initiating these connections and architecting the networks capable of both generating new ideas and translating them into reality. In this story, United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) explores expanding its mission beyond seeking donations and offering services, aiming to foster the connections needed to invent and incubate new products. Taking a design approach, they created Innovation Labs—traveling design thinking events that invited people with all kinds of disabilities, caregivers, engineers, entrepreneurs, and design students to improve the quality of life of those with disabilities. Then, unfortunately, the real world intervened.
THE CHALLENGE TO THE GREATER GOOD

“Think globally, act locally” is a phrase that we have come to accept as an almost universal truth. But what if it’s not always true? Mandated top-down solutions to deep-seated community problems often fail to take into account critical dimensions of the problem that only local knowledge reveals. What if thinking, as well as acting, locally is better? In this story, we see the power of local thinking about a tough issue: the transportation needs of low-income workers.

DESIGN THINKING’S CONTRIBUTION

Rather than defining a problem centrally and recommending implementation of broad initiatives, design thinking offers diverse community-based players the opportunity to jointly frame problems and form solutions rooted in the unique circumstances of their communities. The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) used design thinking as a guiding structure to empower local partners. Over a year, the association’s educators led seven local teams through the process together—sharing insights and observations as they went and creating the best of both worlds: local problem definition and solutions and shared learning.
THE CHALLENGE TO THE GREATER GOOD

“Build it and they will come” is an innovation philosophy that is probably as old as humankind. While producing some outstanding products, it often subjugates the human experience to technological possibilities and regularly produces products, services, and strategies that no one wants. Nowhere is this more evident than in the world of technology-driven innovation. How do we blend human needs and technological possibilities?

DESIGN THINKING’S CONTRIBUTION

Technology-driven and user-driven innovation might appear to anchor opposite ends of the innovation spectrum. But what does innovation look like if these two forces work together? Few organizations today face thornier challenges than the US Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Established to safeguard America’s transportation system after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, TSA’s airport policies and procedures have raised the ire of travelers.

Despite the seemingly inevitable trade-offs between heightened security and passenger checkpoint flow, TSA’s commitment to create a more user-centered, behavioral form of security is impressive. Their leadership in fusing technology, design thinking, and Agile-styled methodologies goes beyond the goal of creating a smoother and safer travel experience. It aims to build an alliance between security officers and the traveling public, and to put a human face on the often maligned agency.
CHAPTER ELEVEN
Making Innovation Safe at MasAgro

THE CHALLENGE TO THE GREATER GOOD

What if stakeholders targeted by a design effort are afraid or reluctant to change? Often, especially in the social sector, working toward a greater good involves inducing people to alter their behaviors—to adopt healthier lifestyles, prepare more carefully for air travel, or stay in high school instead of dropping out. But innovators, who are advocates for change, regularly underestimate human resistance to it and are surprised when their obviously “superior” solutions fail to be embraced by stakeholders. Deferring consideration of the challenges of inducing humans to change their behaviors is tempting—especially among the Geoffreys of the world—but yields predictably negative consequences.

DESIGN THINKING’S CONTRIBUTION

Design thinking insists that we construct a clear and compelling case for an altered future as part of the process, not as an afterthought, and provides powerful tools, like prototyping, co-creation, and experimentation, to accomplish this, as the story of MasAgro illustrates. MasAgro is a partnership between the Mexican government and agricultural groups that works with local farming communities to bridge the gap between farmers and research scientists and to encourage the adoption of sustainable modern agricultural methods. But subsistence farmers’ entire livelihoods can rely on each year’s crop, and they are understandably loath to risk abandoning tried-and-true traditional methods for new ones, even ones aimed at raising their income. MasAgro uses respected community leaders and local hubs to create compelling prototypes and experiments that demonstrate results. They offer testimony to design thinking’s ability to reassure stakeholders reluctant to embrace new ideas.
THE CHALLENGE TO THE GREATER GOOD

Too often, innovators create breakthrough solutions that organizations are incapable of successfully implementing. Even great ethnographic research that produces an understanding of stakeholder needs and generates appropriate solutions goes nowhere if an organization lacks the will, strategies, and capabilities to successfully execute new ideas. Design and strategy are not the same thing. Strategy reminds us who we serve and builds the capabilities to make it happen. Design tells us how to serve them, and the insights from design thinking inform the question of what capabilities to build. How do we tie design thinking that analyzes users’ needs to the strategic process that steers organizations toward new futures and business models?

DESIGN THINKING’S CONTRIBUTION

Design thinking can do more than increase the potential of individual offerings and conversations to create value; it can drive fundamental changes in strategy. When Children’s Health System of Texas identified the need for a new business strategy to address the worsening quality of life for children in North Texas, the hospital embarked on a multiyear customer-centered design thinking program that caused leadership to examine and rethink the fundamentals of their entire business model. Partnering with the Business Innovation Factory (BIF), Children’s Health integrated design thinking with the hospital’s strategic process to assess and build the capabilities to deliver a transformational new approach to health care that focused on facilitating family wellness rather than on providing individual medical care.
PART III

Moving into Action: Bringing Design Thinking to Your Organization
In the ten years that we have been teaching design thinking, we have worked with individuals from many backgrounds—elementary school teachers, MBA students, doctors and nurses, NASA scientists, business managers, accountants, and leaders from the government and nonprofit worlds. Many came with serious doubts about their ability to think creatively and lead innovation in their organizations. They believed that, without support from wonderful design experts like those we have met in our stories—like Kingwood consultant Colum Lowe at BEING, or Eli MacLaren at BIF, or CTAA’s Peer Insight team—they could not introduce and practice design thinking in their organizations. But our experience working with people new to design tells a different story: we all have these abilities within us, waiting for an invitation to show up!

Remember Ken Skodacek at the FDA, Marliza Rivera at Whiteriver Indian Hospital, and Dr. Don Campbell at Monash? None of these inspiring innovation leaders had any formal training in design. What they had was a passion for exploration and learning, and the courage to try.

In part 2, each of the ten organizations we met chose a combination of tools to suit its purpose. Some emphasized exploration tools like journey mapping, personas, or jobs to be done. Others focused on testing tools like assumption surfacing and learning launches. Nearly all used visualization, ethnographic interviewing, and prototyping. They often gave differing attention to the four questions—some emphasized the exploration of stakeholder needs, asking What is? and What if?, while others focused on testing solutions, asking What wows? and What works?

The organizational paths they chose were equally varied. Some established innovation labs, ran workshops, and offered mentoring. Others worked with consultants, universi-
ties, or other outside partners. Nearly all offered some kind of training in design thinking—though their specific approaches were as varied as the partners they worked with.

The richness of this variety is both stimulating and intimidating. So many tools and methods, so little time. For the novice, and especially for the Georges among us, raised in an Innovation I world, the array of choices can seem bewildering. Where to even begin? What tools to use and questions to answer?

In answering this, we think back to Carolyn Jeskey’s advice to her CTAA partners: keep it simple. Learning a new approach—especially one as different as design thinking seems—can be intimidating. Success requires support and structure. Fortunately, the support we need can come from the process itself.

In this section, our focus is on helping you to take learnings from the inspiring stories in part 2 and make design thinking work for you. In these final chapters, we will look at one more story of a group of innovators hard at work making their own small slice of the world a better place. This story, however, differs from the stories in part 2. In this story, we will tag along, step by step, on the journey of a group of dedicated educators, Joan Wells and her team at Gateway College and Career Academy (GCCA), as they work through their challenge, using a comprehensive design thinking method we have developed at Darden.

Our experience teaching people who are new to design tells us that using this kind of detailed end-to-end process to guide learners’ initial design thinking efforts significantly aids in developing mastery. Structure and specificity reassures and motivates those practicing design thinking methods for the first time. It helps them see where they are headed and teaches them how to transition successfully between the exploration, idea generation, and testing phases.
As discussed in part 1, the design thinking method we use focuses on four simple questions: **What is?**, **What if?**, **What wows?**, and **What works?** In our design thinking tool kit, these questions are accompanied by fifteen specific steps that lead innovators through the process as they seek answers.

Once innovators get comfortable with design thinking's methods, tools, and mindsets, they mix and match the steps, emphasizing some and skipping others, and pick and choose among the variety of tools offered. As design thinking becomes more natural and intuitive, they adapt our process to fit the needs of their specific projects. But, in the beginning, those learning design thinking benefit from a systematic approach. The four-question, fifteen-step methodology creates an educational environment in which the ambiguity of the innovation space feels (and is) more manageable. The process reassures team members that it is safe to convene new kinds of conversations.
In the next two chapters, we will follow the educators at GCCA as they tackle their very first design thinking challenge: how to reduce the dropout rate. The GCCA team utilized the four-question process in its entirety and captured each step in a set of templates provided in *The Designing for Growth Field Book*—and generously offered to share them with you. Their work is an excellent example of the design thinking process in motion.

Armed with nothing more than an online course to teach them how and a commitment to improving the experience of their students, they successfully introduced design thinking to GCCA. In chapters 13 and 14, they share not only the process and the works in progress they created along the way but also their emotional journey.