ABOUT THE PROJECT

PROJECT GOALS
The goal of this project has been to understand how the HCD process is best applied to deliver the greatest impact and what was aimed at answering some key questions. We wanted to hear from proponents, users and critics who have had a wide range of experiences with the hope of isolating the factors that tend to lead to success, and the risks and barriers met along the way.

Specifically we wanted to:

Help define “quality” in the HCD space as understood by donors, implementers, and practitioners.

Provide a framework to lay out essential steps and inputs for successful HCD programs.

Provide documentation of current best practices to help audiences (e.g., donors, etc.) understand and advocate for quality approaches.

Highlight innovative methods and tactics within those approaches.

WHAT WE DID
To do this we conducted candid, open-ended interviews with a wide variety of donors, implementing partners, and HCD practitioners. The following represents a prioritized synthesis of the biggest potential pitfalls and collected wisdom for avoiding them, as well as thoughts on the future and the still untapped potential for what HCD could mean for the social impact space.

HOW WE CHOSE WHERE TO FOCUS
The following represents an outline of the HCD process as applied in many projects in global health and development. Not all steps will be applicable for all projects. These pain points and focus areas represent the biggest risks to HCD achieving its full impact. These areas are based on 45 individual interviews conducted with donors, implementing partners and HCD practitioners with experience applying HCD to global health and development challenges. The interviews were conducted from July 2017 through October 2017.

In the following sections, each focus area will be broken down into risks and barriers paired with strategies for mitigating them.

We will iterate and add to this growing collection of tips and best practices.
# 1.) PROPOSAL & PROJECT SETUP

Many of the issues which undermine the effectiveness of HCD work have their roots in the planning and kickoff phases. This section will cover best practices on how to lay the groundwork for a successful HCD project, including: setting clear and realistic goals, negotiating necessary boundaries, and ensuring that the right people and perspectives are fully represented in the early stages of project planning.

## HCD Process

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<th>Process</th>
<th>BARRIERS &amp; RISKS</th>
<th>HOW TO MITIGATE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Develop project goals</td>
<td>Unclear goals &amp; expectations</td>
<td>Set realistic expectations &amp; appropriate goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choose HCD</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Create RFP</td>
<td>There is a tendency to over-hype the applicability of, and expectations for HCD, and under-hype the amount of work HCD projects require.</td>
<td>Aim for flexibility, but be clear on boundaries</td>
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<td>Build Consortums</td>
<td>Rigid, long-term scheduling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vet Proposals</td>
<td>The exploratory and iterative nature of HCD is hard to reconcile with detailed long-term planning. Frank discussions around boundaries and deliverable expectations need to happen early on.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finalize Budget &amp; Schedule</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kickoff Project</td>
<td>Not incorporating subject matter expertise</td>
<td>Gather the right people to provide necessary context</td>
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<td>Stakeholder Interviews</td>
<td>Poor collaboration</td>
<td>Establish openness to questioning assumptions on both sides</td>
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Fielding is not yet defined in the HCD process.
2.) TURNING INSIGHTS INTO INTERVENTIONS

A common bottleneck in the process comes after insights are uncovered through research and it’s time to figure out what to do next. The process is labor intensive—requiring design expertise and significant time from teams. It’s also an unfamiliar process for many teams; requiring significant communication and explanation. If HCD teams go dark during this process, it results in a lot of anxiety from donors and implementing partners.

BARRIERS & RISKS

Lack of process transparency & inconsistent communication

When HCD teams “go dark” it causes significant anxiety to stakeholders outside the HCD team. Stakeholders need detailed documentation and frequent updates to be able to explain and advocate for the work during and after the project.

Overwhelmed and under-resourced country offices

Country offices aren’t always given enough background information or hours to successfully manage/participate in HCD activities. It’s also risky to participate if resources and performance indicators don’t support HCD goals.

Losing track of feasibility and sustainability

It can sometimes seem like designing clever solutions is prioritized over designing ones that are feasible to implement and can be sustained long-term.

HOW TO MITIGATE

Avoid the “black box” effect

Ensure the right resources & performance measures are in place

Revisit feasibility and resource allocation as interventions take shape
3.) IMPACT & SCALING

While many who have been on HCD project teams believe in HCD and have witnessed the impact the work can have when done well, it can be difficult to express the unique benefits through traditional measurement, and difficult to encourage and equip others to pick up existing HCD insights, especially if they haven’t experienced it first hand. Both of these factors limit the impact and the scalability of HCD programs.

### BARRIERS & RISKS

- **Measurement fails to capture behavioral change**
  - The existing measures used to communicate ROI are often too focused on simple uptake measures to capture behavioral change. This and other meaningful HCD impacts can get lost in translation.

- **Deliverables aren’t easy for outside audiences to pick up & understand**
  - Insights are shared, but aren’t used to develop new designs.

### HOW TO MITIGATE

- **Build a more robust picture of impact**
- **Tailor deliverables for specific audiences**
- **Plan for and incentivize re-using insights**

While much HCD research exists and is open to be shared, audiences may not know where to find it, and don’t often have the resources, expertise or desire to use insights developed by other firms.