

# Bringing Design Thinking to Action

Institute for Innovation and Global Engagement Conference

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## Introduction

Design thinking is a human-centered approach to problem-solving that emphasizes empathy, creativity, and iterative prototyping. It involves **empathizing** with the needs and perspectives of users, **defining** problems, **ideating** creative solutions, **prototyping** and **testing** those solutions, and iterating based on feedback.



The Global Innovation & Design internship experience provided many valuable workshop experiences, three of which highlighted certain design thinking principles. The PHSKC workshop highlighted **empathy** through empathy interviews, a SET workshop **ideating** through a creative icebreaker, and a NextGen focus group identifying areas of improvement through **testing**.

## Empathize



The empathy interview exercise in the Public Health Seattle King County workshop embodied the design thinking principle of **empathize** by understanding personal needs through reflective exploration. The “What’s in Your Wallet?” activity assigned roles—interviewer, note taker, observer, and interviewee—to highlight the importance of active and radical listening in building empathy.

## Ideate



Mechanical Engineering Capstone seniors exemplified the **ideation** phase of the design thinking process by rethinking creative ideas under time constraints. This icebreaker, the “30 Circles Exercise,” challenges students to transform a sheet of simple circles into diverse creations, from motorcycles to a house. This activity emphasized the potential of combining ideas and thinking outside the box.



## Test

The NextGen focus group exemplified the **test** phase of the design thinking process by gathering feedback on the program's strengths and areas for improvement. This feedback provided actionable insights to refine and enhance the program for future participants, aligning it more closely with their needs and aspirations.