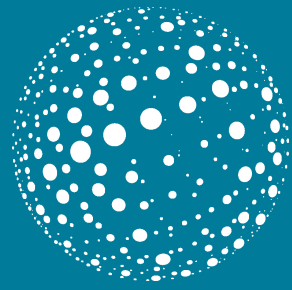


Lessons learned to better prepare



The following three lessons, gained from experience, are critical to understand to best prepare for IDEA Journeys.

Lesson 1: Communicate IDEA as business transformation

The IDEA Journey is a digital transformation accelerator that is more about business transformation than technology. While technologies are employed to deliver the solution, success depends on people gaining new mindsets and skills, and redesigning processes. We have learned that non-IT executives initially assumed the IDEA Journey to be a “tech project” and thus were more reluctant to schedule their time and give it full attention. We think this is because the word “digital” being introduced to the organization by the CIO creates a bias toward thinking it is about technology. Upon experiencing the program, CxOs realized that the program was less about technology and more about business transformation and suggested this position be clarified upfront.

One organization that participated noted that “IDEA is not just about using technology. It is about a cultural transformation of our organization, it is about building a platform so that we all work, and work together, more effectively to carry out our mission of welcoming and protecting refugees.”

To help you mitigate this technology bias, we included a few model communication emails to draw from in the appendix.

Lesson 2: Expand benefits beyond your organization

IDEA is designed to accelerate your nonprofit AND share to benefit the whole sector. During the IDEA Journey workshops we have seen nonprofits challenge themselves like never before, dreaming to exponentially accelerate mission results by 10 and 100-fold. Through imagining how to achieve these ambitious goals, many nonprofits realized that they could not achieve this alone and started inviting other nonprofits for co-creation and platform thinking. We encourage you to select challenges that have potential to be relevant to other nonprofits in order to make the solutions more efficient to operate and scale up. The following African proverb captures the benefit of collaborating on challenges: “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together”. We encourage you to dream big for the whole sector, by being beneficiary focused (consider replacing the term beneficiaries with contributors or partners), and by thinking exponential impact (10x) vs. incremental (y%). We have observed that innovation often comes from the field and is improved through diverse collaboration. It is essential to consider how the solution/platform to your challenge is going to integrate with other chapters, nonprofits, agencies, communities, and governments you work with.

Lesson 3: Commit and prepare to move fast

Like any change initiative, to be successful, the IDEA Journey requires organizational commitment to complete the program, and to work at speed because of the rapid changes encountered in the digital world that quickly make choices obsolete. Working at speed could be a challenge as we know from the Digital Nonprofit Skills™ assessment, as fast-adaptation and use of digital skills is one of the elements most lagging in our sector. The Center for the Digital Non-profit can guide you with tools that facilitate work at speed (e.g., Social Lean Canvas, 6-pager, RACI). At the minimum, it is critical to identify the following at the onset: Who will lead the IDEA in the organization, what funds can be allocated for the Design and Execution phases, what donors should be informed of the challenge, and what priority this will be in the organization.

