



Intractable problems; roadmaps to impact

Collaborative Problem-Solving on Camp Scholarships

Overview

A community foundation's camp scholarship program lacked consistency and transparency in its highly-subjective and prone-to-human-error award-making process.

With a very tight timeline and a wide variety of stakeholders, I came in to create a robust, equitable process that not only served the foundation's needs but harmonized with the scholarship programs offered at the camps themselves.

Variables Affecting Design

We recruited a working committee of ten people representing different camps, community professionals, and parents of camp-age children. We asked committees to participate in three 75-90 minute meetings during the weekday, which focused design choices in a number of ways:

- a. Hybrid meetings (online/in-person) activated the positives of face-to-face meetings while keeping flexibility for those who couldn't leave their workplaces during the day
- b. At the outset, I outlined a roadmap of what committee members were committing to: three well-defined and productive meetings
- c. We needed a workable plan at the end of the third meeting; which meant members needed to complete a significant amount of work between meetings so the committees were the most productive

What clients have said

Robin was an excellent facilitator, helping frame the conversation for participants, yet allowing them to reach their own conclusions. Equally important, she created a welcoming and accepting atmosphere where participants could openly discuss challenges and search for real solutions.



1. Baseline Knowledge

To make the best use of the meetings, I prepared materials for members to read before the first session, including scholarship historical financial information, community perceptions about the scholarships, and our project's specific, measurable goals.

I also prepared a brief video talking through the important points of the preview materials and clearly outlining what to expect in the first meeting.

2. Define Scope of Work

In the first meeting we took the stated project goals and analyzed the important points from the preview materials, challenges we needed to overcome in order to achieve the project goals, and processes to help us work effectively. By the end of the meeting, the group had coalesced into a working team.

3. Prioritize

In the second meeting, we reviewed more data and had a robust conversation to consider which families to prioritize in the scholarship process. I ran a series of votes through Mentimeter, with discussion between each round of voting, until the group felt it had come to consensus. Three critical themes emerged: consistency, transparency, and communication.

4. Implement

To prepare for the third and final meeting, I ran a detailed analysis of how different policy decisions would create different outcomes in scholarship awards. These results, along with the narrative discussion on consistency, transparency, and communication, were sent to committee members to review.

5. Validate Equitable Process

At the final meeting, committee members discussed each section of the proposal in detail, weighing options for each variable.

In smaller discussion groups, members examined the three principles of consistency, transparency, and communication and developed and presented analysis to the group.

Using 1-2-4-All, the committee provided final comments on all aspects of the complex program, ensuring it adhered to their chosen priorities while meeting the project's goals.

A final discussion and voting process led to the committee fully affirming the new process, to be implemented during the next summer's scholarship awards.