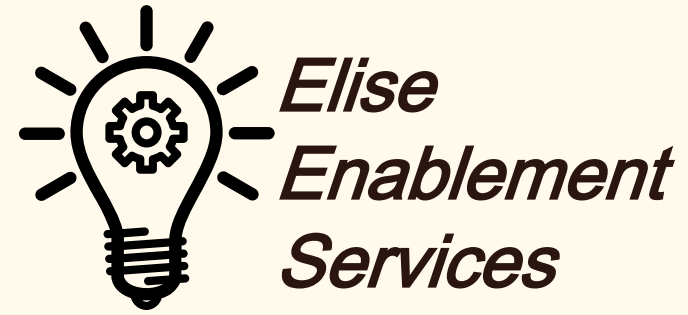




INNOVATION AND DESIGN THINKING:

TRANSFORMING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES

Presented by: Shannon Walker, M.Ed., PMP



● Agenda

- Design Thinking and Innovation Overview
- How Design Thinking is Used in Practice
- Case Study Assignment
- Debrief
- Lesson Recap
- Reflection & Closing

● Learning Objectives

- Discuss the steps of the design thinking process and its relevance to higher education.
- Identify shared institutional challenges to uncover opportunities for creative solutions.
- Model innovative strategies using brainstorming techniques to address challenges

WELCOME & SESSION GOALS



Hi, I'm Shannon

Strategic facilitator and consultant, specializing in helping organizations clarify their vision and create actionable plans.

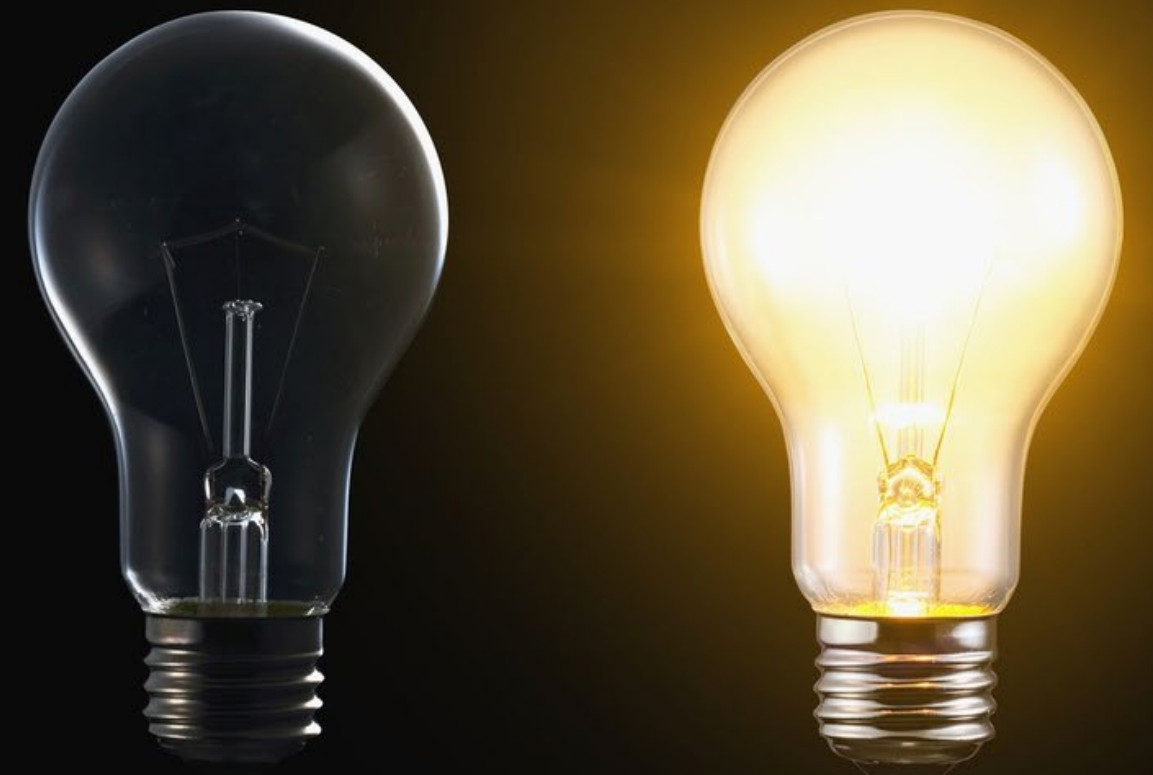
Founder of Elise Enablement Services, she brings experience from Google Cloud, EdTech, and higher education DEI and community engagement programming.

A certified PMP with an M.Ed. and Business background, plus a certification in Design Thinking from MIT Sloan, Shannon will guide you through today's workshop.



Share one word you
associate with innovation
and why?

What do you think makes a
solution truly innovative?





When all 3 dimensions align, the foundation is laid for true innovation.

3 Keys of Innovation

Innovation is the application of new ideas to create value.



Desirability - Do people want it? (People)

- Solves a real problem people care about
- Audience recognizes a need and are willing to engage to address it



Feasibility - Will the solution work? (Technical)

- Solution must work in the real world
- It has to function within existing resources and environment



Viability - Is it sustainable? (Business)

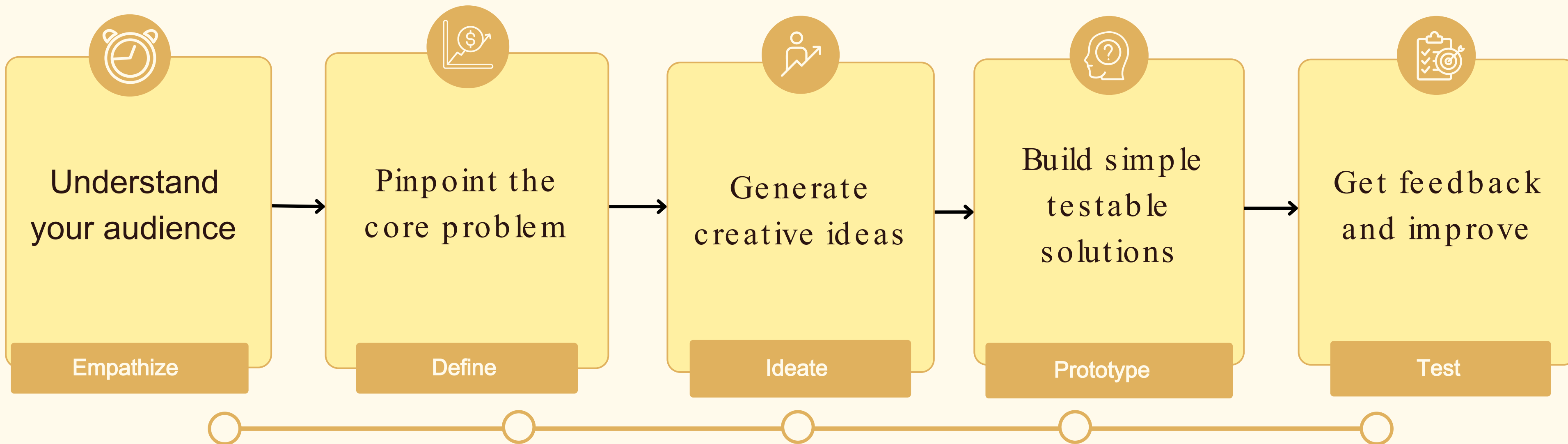
- Solution is sustainable over time
- It fits the organization's budget, goals, and mission.

Design Thinking 101

Design Thinking is a human-centered, creative problem-solving approach. It helps generate solutions by deeply understanding people's needs.

Origins: Rooted in engineering/design fields, expanded by IDEO and Stanford d.school.

Used by: Apple, Google, Whirlpool, IBM, Airbnb, and now Colleges and Universities like yourselves.



Focusing on People

Stage 1: Empathize

Deeply understand the people you're designing for through:

- Observation
- Interviews
- Reviews & Feedback

Listening without assumptions to explore the audience's experience

Example

Students and advisors are feeling frustrated with the current advising process — appointments feel rushed, guidance is inconsistent, and both parties feel unprepared. We conduct 1:1 interviews, observe sessions, and review feedback. Asking:

- What makes advising helpful or frustrating
- What resources would help students and advisors?

Stage 2: Define

Synthesizing your empathy findings into a clear problem statement or insight.:

- Compile feedback
- Identify Common Themes
- PinPoint Key Areas of Problem

Example

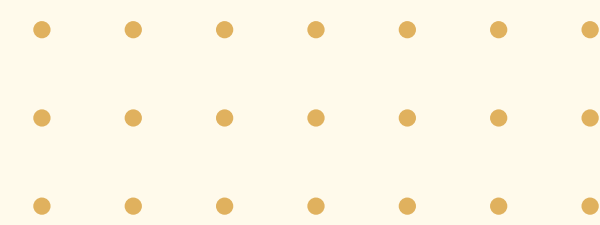
From interviews, we learn students want more clarity and personalization, and advisors want tools to reduce repetitive conversations and prep time.

Problem Statement:

- How might we improve the student advising experience to make it more personalized, efficient, and supportive for both students and advisors?

This gives a focused challenge that reflects both student and advisor needs.





Creating Solutions

Stage 3: Ideate

Generate a wide range of creative solutions without judgment.
Go for quantity before quality.

Ideating Methods:
Mind Mapping, "How Might We" Questions
Round- Robin Brainstorming, Brainwriting
Worst Idea Possible, Analogies & Metaphors , Role Storming
Silent Brainstorming

Ex:
With the problem in mind, we brainstorm ideas like:

- A digital intake form students complete before meetings
- Peer advising hours led by trained upperclassmen
- A “How to Prepare for Advising” checklist
- A dashboard to self-schedule and view FAQs
- Short videos to answer common advising questions

Encourage wild ideas—quantity first, refinement later.

Stage 4: Prototype

Narrow down to a few test ideas. Create simple versions of your ideas to explore and communicate possible solutions.

Prototyping Methods:
Sketching , Storyboarding , Paper Prototypes.
Role- Playing (Bodystorming), 3D Models, Mock - ups
User Testing, Service Blueprints (Flow Mapping), Journey Mapping

Ex.:
We create low - fidelity mockups of an advising intake form, checklist, and dashboard.

Materials:

- Google Form prototype for intake
- Printable checklist on advising prep
- Figma or Canva mock - up of an online scheduling/dashboard page

Goal: Visualize ideas quickly to share with stakeholders.

Implementing Ideas 💡

Stage 5: Test

Share prototypes with audience, gather feedback, and refine ideas based on real reactions.

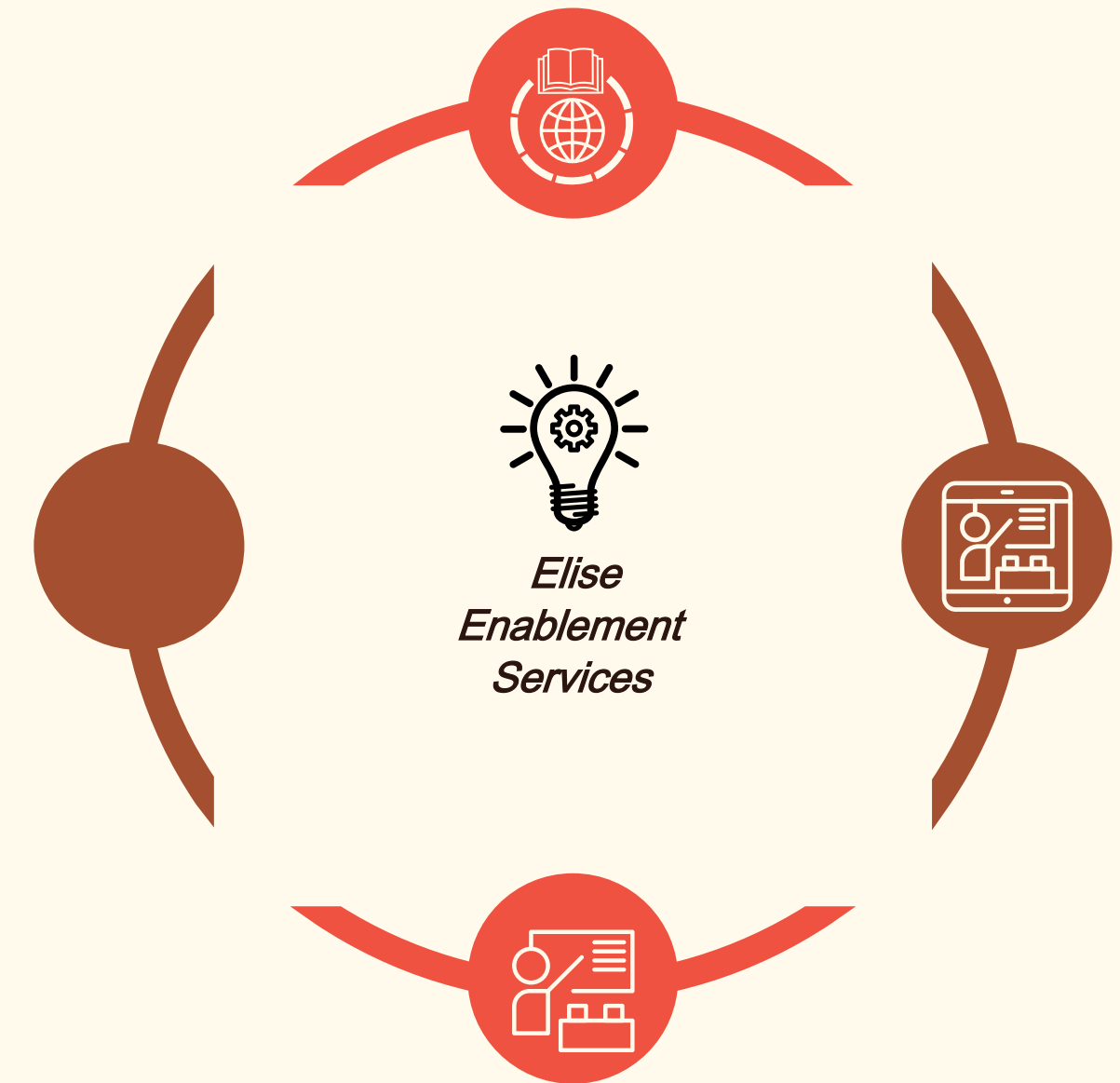
Ex:

We pilot the advising prep form and shared agendas in one department.

Feedback Received:

“Advisors found the form useful but mentioned students often forgot to fill it out in advance.”

Adjust the idea by adding automated email reminders with a direct form link 24 hours before meetings. Test again and repeat.



Discussion Dialogue Prompts:

- Which stage of Design Thinking aligns best with your institution's current approach, and which is least present?

Are You Already Using Design Thinking?



CASE STUDY: Boosting Staff Morale & Reducing Burnout

Your college's administrative and operations staff have reported increasing levels of stress, disengagement, and burnout over the past two years. Exit interviews cite unclear communication, lack of recognition, and rigid work processes. Leadership wants to explore innovative, human - centered strategies to address these concerns and boost morale without relying solely on budget increases.

Design Challenge

How might we improve the day - to - day work experience of our staff to reduce burnout and increase morale in a sustainable, inclusive way?



CASE STUDY: Boosting Staff Morale & Reducing Burnout - Instructions

In groups, follow the 5 Stages to Generate a Solution:

1. **Empathize** – Who's impacted? What are their pain points?
2. **Define** – What's the clearest problem to solve?
3. **Ideate** – Generate lots of creative possibilities.
4. **Prototype** – Sketch or describe a simple version of one idea.
5. **Test** – How might this idea be piloted on campus?

Approx. 5 minutes per stage

Consider:

- What does the staff *actually* need?
- Where might we be missing opportunities to empathize?
- What small experiments could lead to big change?

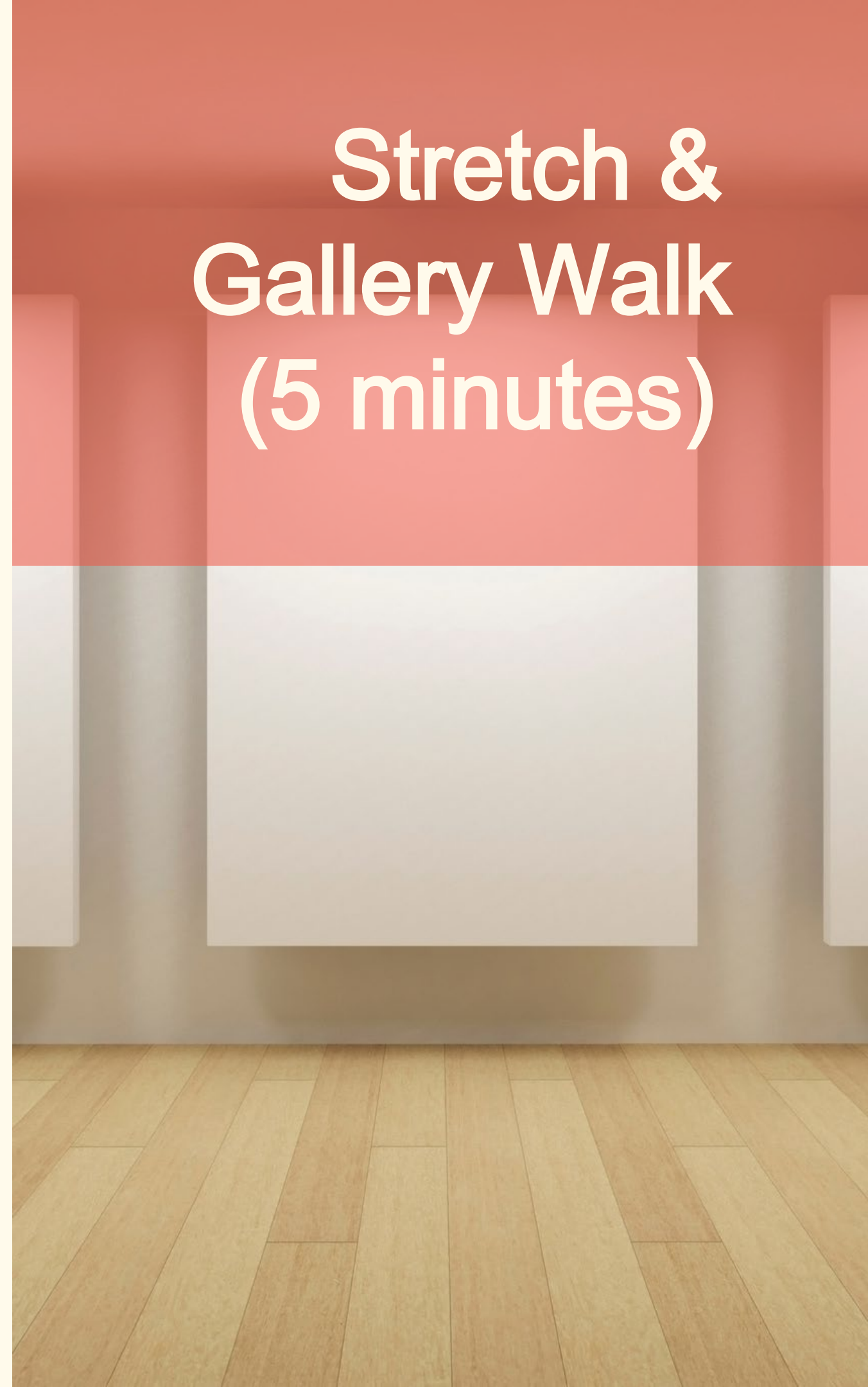


Take a quick break if you need one.

Then walk the room and look at the other teams' solutions before we share out and vote.

Posters are posted at each table station.

**Stretch &
Gallery Walk
(5 minutes)**



CASE STUDY: Boosting Staff Morale & Reducing Burnout - Group Reflections & Dot Voting

Instructions: Minimum 3 groups share voluntarily.

1. Choose 1 person to briefly share your group's solution

2. Focus on:

- The user need (your audience)
- Your big idea
- How you would test it

Dot Voting: Elevate Strong Solutions

Instructions:

After the share-out, each participant gets a set of dot stickers.

Vote for the ideas you believe are:

- *Most Desirable (highlighter sticker):* the idea people most want, that solves a real problem they care about.
- *Most Feasible (neutral sticker):* the idea that can realistically be built with existing resources.
- *Most Innovative (star sticker):* the idea that hits the sweet spot where desirability, feasibility, and viability all align.





LET'S RECAP



What did you notice across solutions?

Were there any common threads or services presented? Differences?



What surprised you?

What were your biggest revelations as you thought through problem solving?



Which idea could you try at your institution?

As you look ahead, what is 1 actionable item that you can take away from today's session?



What's your first next step?

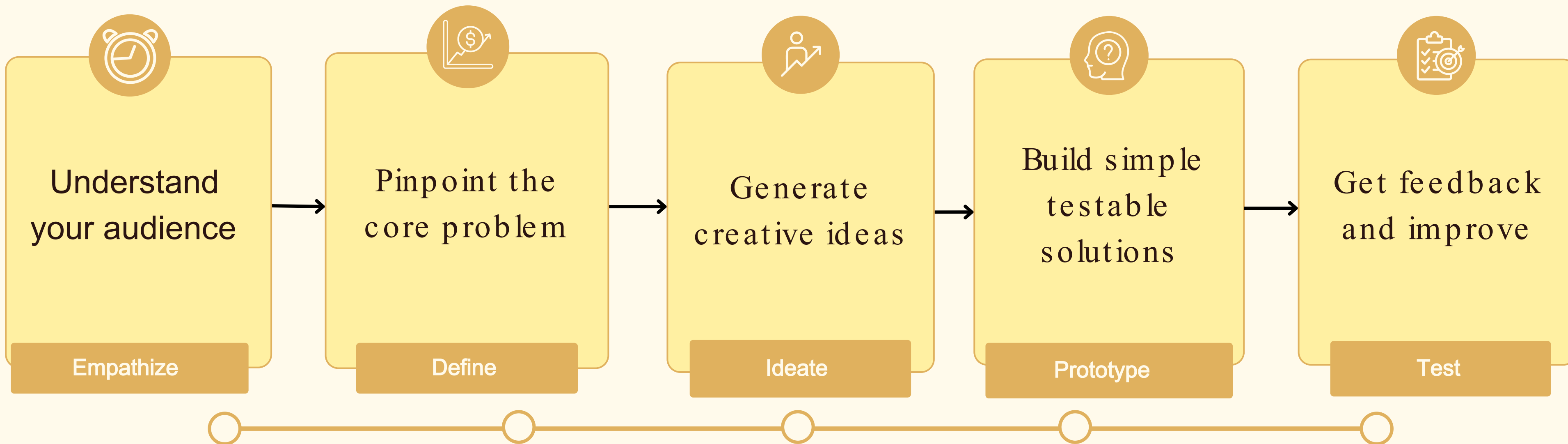
What is 1 thing from today's session that you can implement within the next 30 days into your problem solving?

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Thank You for Joining!
Scan to share your feedback.

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Or go to

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and enter this code when prompted



Contact
Shannon Walker

 shannon@eliseenablementservices.com