

# Protocol for Defining Leadership Roles in Design in a Research-Practice Partnership

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When partnerships engage in design work, it is important to define clear roles and responsibilities for each participant in the process. A participant's role should draw on their strengths, as well as on the respect they command within the team. The existing lines of authority with each organization should be considered as well.

## Design Activities that Need Leaders

There are many important activities in design work that need people who can lead them. Here are a few:

- Recruiting participants to join a design team
- Applying techniques to develop empathy for people implementing an innovation
- Defining design principles
- Clarifying problems to be solved and identifying possible roadblocks to implementation
- Identifying a range of possible solutions
- Managing tensions and conflict on the team
- Soliciting and summarizing input continuously / feedback on how design is going (pull up from agile development some language)
- Facilitating co-design process
- Developing the actual innovation (e.g., curriculum development)
- Managing a production timeline
- Implementing an innovation when it is new

## Steps to Assigning Leadership Roles to People

A partnership's leadership team can follow these steps to assign roles like the ones above to individuals:

### 1. *Take stock of participants' strengths.*

What are the strengths of people relative to the tasks that need to be done?

What strengths do people want to develop, and what roles can they grow into?

Which people are likely to work well together?

What expertise needs to be added to the team, given the work ahead and who is available?

Are there resources to add team members?

### 2. *Consider how others regard individuals*

Who is likely to have recognized status as an expert in an area and have credibility as an authorized leader of the team as a whole?

Do people with recognized status have authority within their own organization to allocate their own time for a leadership role?

### 3. *Establish some norms for how roles will be coordinated*

Identify lines of formal authority

Set expectations regarding communication and reporting that are important to respect in the design work.

### 4. *Assign roles based on analysis in Steps 1-3.*