



# DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

Design principles and priorities identify the essentials of user needs and formulates them as the elemental operating instructions that help guide you forward in the process. Whether a behavioral change campaign or new product to be introduced, design principles set the tone, voice, and approach of whatever you are trying to create.

Design principles and priorities are simple, concise, and memorable. You will continually refine them throughout the design process as you learn more about what matters most to people.

### OBJECTIVE

Researchers use design principles and priorities as the high level essentials on which to generate ideas and build upon solutions.

### WASH-HCD CONNECTION

WASH professionals can use design principles and priorities to outline the most important elements of a WASH product or service they wish to design. When formulating and developing their ideas, design principles give form and integrity to the final solution.

### TIMING

60 - 90 minutes

### MATERIALS

- STICKY NOTES OR PAPER
- PENS OR PENCILS



## STEPS

1. **Identify the most important user needs.** Look back at your research to find the unifying elements that emerged from people's priorities and wants. These elements will likely correlate to previously uncovered themes and insights in your earlier research.

For example, an insight from a water access project might be: *Many women and girls have to make multiple trips to and from the local river to collect water for their families for one day because the amount they need is too heavy for a single trip.*

2. **Consider the core principles underpinning those unifying elements.** List the elements and form them into positive statements - these are your design principles and priorities. Identify several design principles to help inform not just what you will design, but how to go about designing it. Continuing from the same example above, two corresponding design principles for a water access solution might be:

*The solution MUST reduce the amount of time and trips a woman must take to collect water for her family.*

*The solution MUST be physically easy to use for an adult woman with the ability to walk.*

\*\*\*Note that while there is no limit to the number of design principles you can have, for most projects, it is recommended not to exceed 5-10 design principles. Too many principles will prevent teams from being able to brainstorm and prioritize ideas later on, which is why it is important to reflect on what matters most to your audience of focus.



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### Continuation

You may choose to frame your principles around the themes of desirability, feasibility and viability.

Adaptations of the three lenses include framings such as the 9-As highlighted below.

- **Desirable**
  - **Aspirational** - Solution is valuable and interesting to end users.
  - **Appropriate** - Solution is *appropriate* to the social and cultural environment.
  - **Acceptable** - Solution is aligned with knowledge and capacities of end users.
- **Feasible**
  - **Applicable** - Solution is *applicable* to the geographic or physical context
  - **Adequate** - Solution meets basic requirements related to standards and functionality.
  - **Available** - Materials and components are easily *available*.
- **Viable**
  - **Affordable** - Solution is *affordable* to consumers.
  - **Accessible** - Consumers can *access* sales points.
  - **Awareness** - Solution is *known* to consumers either through marketing or word of mouth.

### 3. Refine your Design Principles and Priorities

- a. Write design principles concisely.
- b. Check that each design principle describes just one idea.
- c. Make design principles simple; break them into smaller parts if multiple ideas are present.

### 4. Revisit your Design Principles

Although Step 3 is the last part of this activity, you will want to return frequently to your design principles and priorities.

Design principles are critical for building prototypes and testing ideas. Often, design principles won't be revealed until you try to build something and users test it.

