

Starting the project:

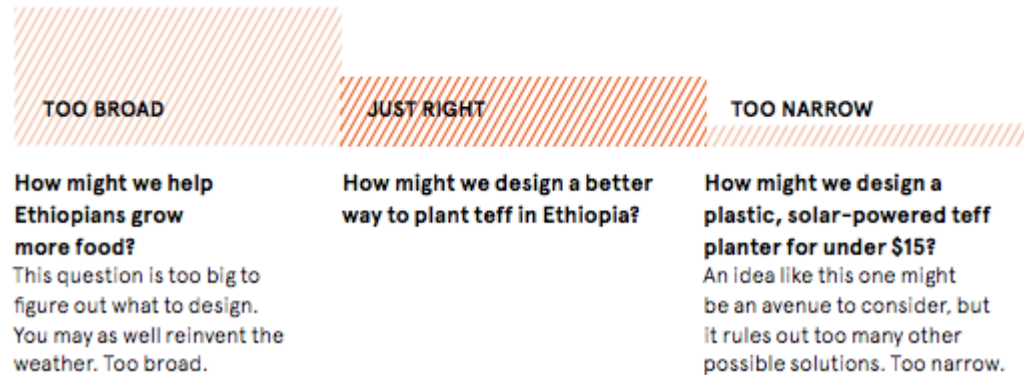
Be specific

- Frame your design challenge:
 - “How might we....?”
- Ask yourselves:
 - A) Is your question focused on ultimate impact?
 - B) Does the question allow for a variety of solutions?
 - C) Does the question take into account context and constraints?

How Might We Design a Better Way to Plant Teff in Ethiopia?

Teff is a vastly important grain in Ethiopia, but its seeds are miniscule and it's been planted in the same way for thousands of years. In a yearlong project, IDEO.org was engaged to figure out how to plant teff efficiently and quickly while taking into account different soil types and terrain. The brief also told us that we'd have to design a method that was inexpensive, easy to use, and could be built and repaired in Ethiopia.

Ask The Right Question



HERE'S WHY THE QUESTION SATISFIES OUR CRITERIA

A. Is the question focused on ultimate impact?

Yes. The project is focused on one crop and in one place, and we're doing it to improve farmers' livelihoods.

B. Does the question allow for a variety of solutions?

Yes. The question doesn't suggest a particular way of planting teff. Though we suspected that we'd design a planting device, we could also have designed a behavior change campaign, or a new planting strategy for extension workers to teach.

C. Does the question take into account context and constraints?

Yes. Knowing that we had to design for the whole of Ethiopia meant that we'd need to contend with hard earth as well as mud. Knowing that designing around small seed size was important, as well as understanding the constraints of building and working in Ethiopia.

How Might We Help Teens In Lusaka Take Control Of Their Reproductive Health?

A sexual health non-profit with clinics all over the world engaged IDEO.org for an initial 14-week project to help achieve a variety of goals in Lusaka, Zambia. They wanted to make youth more proactive about their sexual health. This included preventing unwanted pregnancies, quelling the spread of STIs, and reducing the stigma and prevailing myths around contraception.

Ask The Right Question



How might we end unwanted pregnancy?
This question is massive, and though it does allow for a huge variety of solutions, how do you know where to start? With parents, teens, teachers, the public health system? Too broad.

How might we help teens in Lusaka take control of their reproductive health?

How might we get Zambian teens to use condoms?
This one is too narrow because it focuses on one type of contraception. What if IUDs, the pill, or abstinence are actually better more effective solutions for Zambian teens? Too narrow.

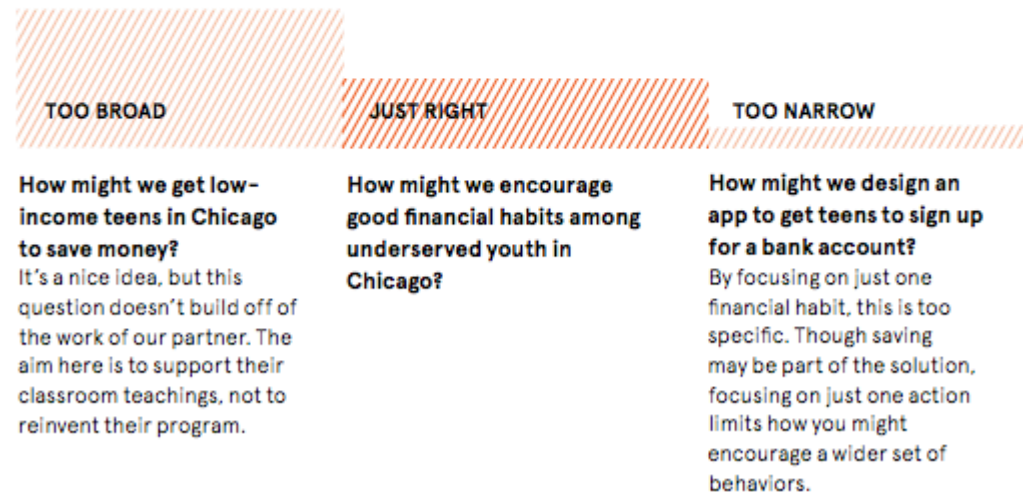
HERE'S WHY THE QUESTION SATISFIES OUR CRITERIA

- A. Is the question focused on ultimate impact?**
Yes. The question is framed around a clearly stated end goal, helping teens take control of their reproductive health. A key element of the question is that it does not specify how the impact will occur, which brings us to our next criteria.
- B. Does the question allow for a variety of solutions?**
Yes. Possible solutions might include a communications campaign, a service experience, a mobile tool, a physical space, or even an interaction. Because the organization has clinics, staff, and local know-how, we know that we could execute a variety of different solutions. Understanding what your partners can do brings us to our next criteria.
- C. Does the question take into account context and constraints?**
Yes. We know immediately who we are designing for, teens in Lusaka. We also know about the organization's capacity—because they work across the sexual health field, they could implement a number of potential solutions.

How Might We Encourage Good Financial Habits Among Underserved Youth In Chicago?

For this project, IDEO.org had six weeks to design a tool to support the work of a Chicago-based nonprofit working to educate low-income teens around financial literacy. Though the program had success in the classroom, they wanted a digital tool that would reinforce their teachings when students were out in the world.

Ask The Right Question



HERE'S WHY THE QUESTION SATISFIES OUR CRITERIA

A. Is the question focused on ultimate impact?

Yes. The question clearly states that the goal is to build good financial habits among a particular group of people in a particular place.

B. Does the question allow for a variety of solutions?

Yes. We could have designed a website, an app, a game, or even a social network, all of which could encourage good habits. And the tool itself could focus on a variety of behaviors like saving, applying for credit, budgeting, and more.

C. Does the question take into account context and constraints?

Yes. Right away we knew we were working with low-income teens in Chicago. We also knew that the tool has to be digital and support students when they're out of the classroom. We wanted to be able to use the tool within the next six months, so we had to be able to build it quickly.