



Beyond Access: Designing for Belonging

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Reimagining Access to Sport, Recreation & Leisure Project





Background

- Project: Reimagining Access to Sport, Recreation and Leisure for Equity-Owed Residents
- What's the purpose? To increase sport, recreation and leisure access and inclusion among equity-owed low-income NB residents.
- How are we funded? Government NB (GNB) Economic & Social Inclusion Crown Corporation, GNB Sport & Recreation Branch, community grants and research grants, UNB in kind and financial resources.
- Who's leading this work? : All In Agency (human centred/system design firm), Dr. Oncescu & undergraduate/graduate students.
- Who's involved?: 20 different provincial sport, recreation, health, education and poverty reduction stakeholders, two regional service commissions, and several equity-owed residents.

Background Research

- Literature Review: enabling & constraining factors
- Promising practices: social inclusion
- Developed poverty reduction stakeholder map
- Developed SRL asset map

Community Relationship Building & Engagement

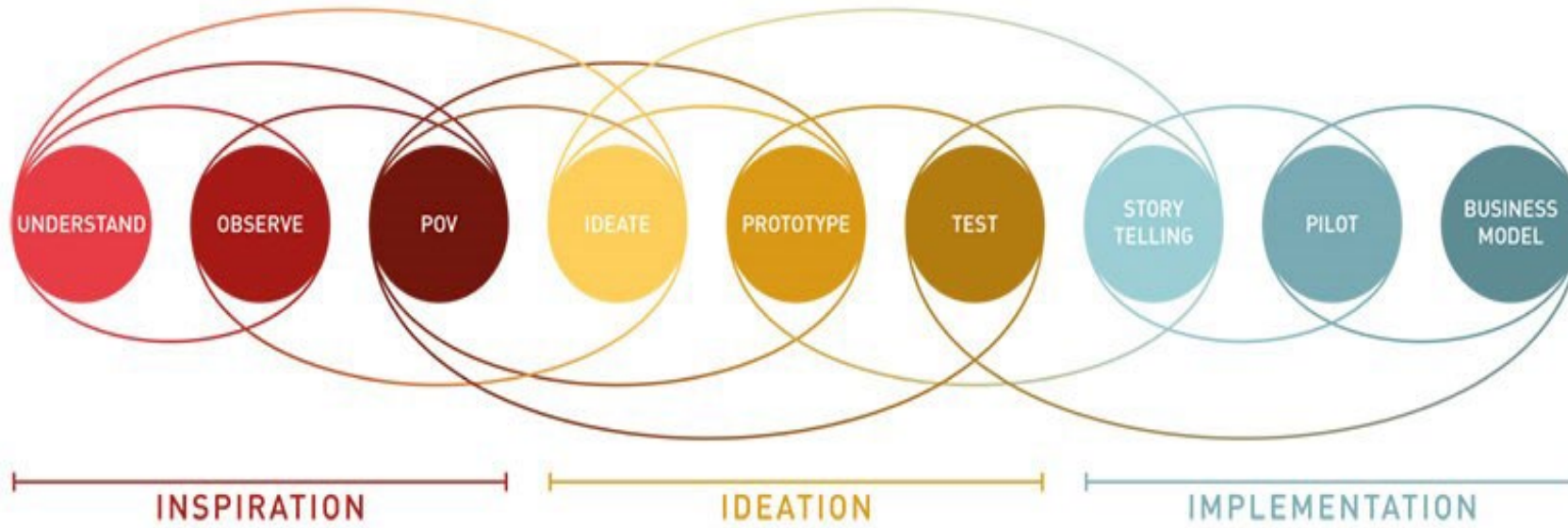
- Identified 90 poverty reduction stakeholders.
- Contacted 44 in RSC 2 and interviewed 16
- Contacted 46 in RSC 10 and interviewed 27.
- Located and connected with 13 community connectors across both RSC.
- Engaged with 60 SRL stakeholders for a 1-day workshop

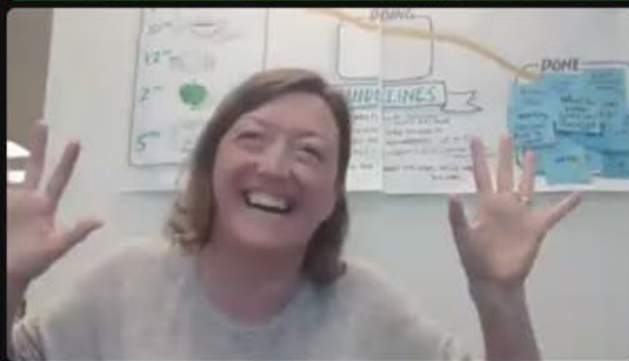
Design Process

- 6-week design series
- 5 Equity owed residents
- 1 Community connector

System Shifters Prototype

THE DESIGN THINKING PROCESS





POV—Point of View

1. Who is facing this problem?
2. What are the signals that indicates this is a problem?
3. When and where (i.e. conditions or circumstances) does this problem occur?
4. Why do we thinking this problem is occurring?


All those living in poverty or low income : newcomers, neurodivergent and rural populations

lack of involvement and isolation from SRL activities.

Any time and place

because

physical and financial barriers to access and feelings of isolation, guilt or lack of social inclusion around SRL because it is impossible to thrive when you are just surviving.



Our Problem Framing Process...

We started with...How might we reimagine access to sport, recreation and leisure activities and supports for equity deserving communities in rural and smaller centres?

Turned to this...How might we create a sense of belonging in sports, recreation and leisure that creates dignified access to sports, recreation and leisure for equity owed communities in rural and smaller centres?

Shame, trauma, discrimination and stigmatization are social and emotional experiences connected to living in poverty or with low incomes that prevent SRL participation. And yet, most of our access provisions within SRL sectors only address the **objective experience** of poverty, which is lack of financial and material resources.

SRL's attempts to include equity-deserving residents end up **reinforcing** shame, trauma, discrimination and stigmatization because they design "**othering**" into their provisions. It becomes **us vs them**.



Othering

- The process of **'othering'** is a **disempowering** one that ignores the importance of understanding diversity.
- 'Other' is not only a discriminatory label, but it is a **discriminatory process** that has been referred to as discursive discrimination (discrimination carried out through language).
- Within this context, 'other' and 'othering' has been utilized in a **negative** sense to identify those **labelled as being different from, lesser than, those in power**, the societal gatekeepers and enforcers of sociocultural norms and values.
- Othering is **exclusionary**.
- To be 'othered' is to be identified as being **different from the norm, from those in power** who are socially acceptable.



Root of the Issue

Prioritization of revenue generation, which leads to...

- SRL norms and belonging being dictated by White, cis-gender, able bodied, middle-upper class residents (dominant tier) values and resources (i.e. transportation, money, social networks, knowledge).
- The creation of a two-tier system:
 - For those who can afford to be there all the time and anytime (dominant)
 - For those who can't or only get partial access (non-dominant)
- SRL is seen as a luxury, and you have to “earn” access to them.

Unintentional & Subtle Ways We Other

What does the prioritization of dominant tier in SRL look and feel like for the non-dominant tier?

- Free and low-cost programming being event based, i.e. one off vs programmatic with leadership/instructor guidance; this type of support creates a second-class experience for equity-owed residents when compared to user fee programming that comes with access to instructors, coaches, ongoing participation, skill development, and access to facilities. The message this sends is that “I don’t deserve better.”
 - Limited access to facilities based on “free” or low-cost access hours; this means equity-owed citizens are only welcome on some days to participate in certain activities (free swim or skate only). This sends the message, “This space is not for me.”
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- Only subsidizing organized sport and recreation opportunities while disregarding other leisure activities such as arts/culture and outdoor; this diminishes opportunities to strengthen diversity and self-expression as equity-owed residents can only participate in what the dominant tier values. Ultimately, telling equity-owed residents, “I’m not valued.”
 - Proving low-income status for financial assistance; this creates shame and causes stigmatization. This sends the message, “I’m not good enough.”

Unintentional & Subtle Ways We Other

What does the prioritization of dominant tier in SRL look and feel like for the non-dominant tier?

- Surveillance of participation for financially assisted participants; this creates a narrative that, “I can’t be trusted.”
 - Time intensive programming; this sends the message that, “I don’t fit in and these activities are not meant for me.”
 - Hidden access fees/behind closed doors; this sends the message that equity-owed residents “Are not welcome.”
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- Lack of diversity in programming, staff, and board membership; this sends the message that Whiteness and able bodies are the norm as differences of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, and ability are denied visibility.
 - Complicated financial forms and rigid payment options; this sends the message that “I don’t deserve to participate but have to earn it.”

Hear

- “You will have to get an account and complete these forms online”
- “We can’t help with that”
- “You will need to provide proof of income before getting the subsidy”
- There’s no money for your kids.

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- “I don’t think this is for me”
 - “I just want my kids to have fun”
 - Decides not to participate for fear of injury.
 - “I’m uncomfortable”
 - “They are all looking at me”



Feel

- Guilty for prioritizing needs/interests or “indulging”
- Like all eyes are on me/ feeling out of place
- Getting here is not worth the hassle
- Shame
- I don’t belong here.

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- Impatient front line staff
 - Judgmental looks
 - High fees (\$\$\$)
 - Regulars with ‘better’ equipment
 - Eye rolling

Say/Do

See



Not Belonging

These “othering” design features in SRL create conditions where people don’t feel they belong, which leads to...

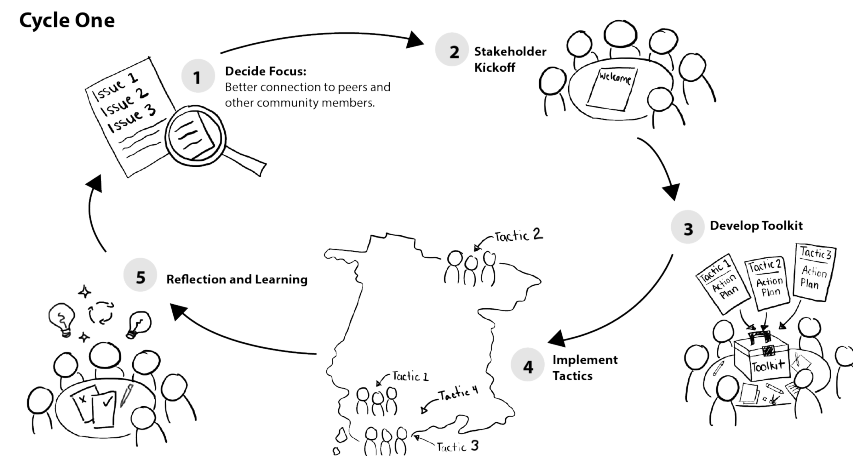
- Equity-owed residents being unaware, ineligible, uninvited, and unwelcomed.
- Equity-owed residents feeling guilty
"I shouldn't play because I have mouths to feed and bills to pay."
- Equity-owed residents feeling fear of public shame and judgement
"I don't deserve to play because I haven't earned it."

System Shifters Prototype

The System Shifters concept creates opportunities to advocate for more inclusive and accessible SRL services, resources, programs and policies by working with a collective of equity-owned individuals/groups and community SRL and allied practitioners.

Purpose is to shift the SRL system by providers and equity-owned residents co-creating new ideas to implement in communities to address barriers and cultivate a sense of belonging and dignified access to SRL.

How. Equity-owned and SRL & allied providers will work side by side to co-create and implement small experiments called, community tactics, within the community. These experiments will serve as tangible initiatives to address the identified barriers to participation and increase our understanding of how best to create conditions for residents to co-lead system change efforts in collaboration with the sector.

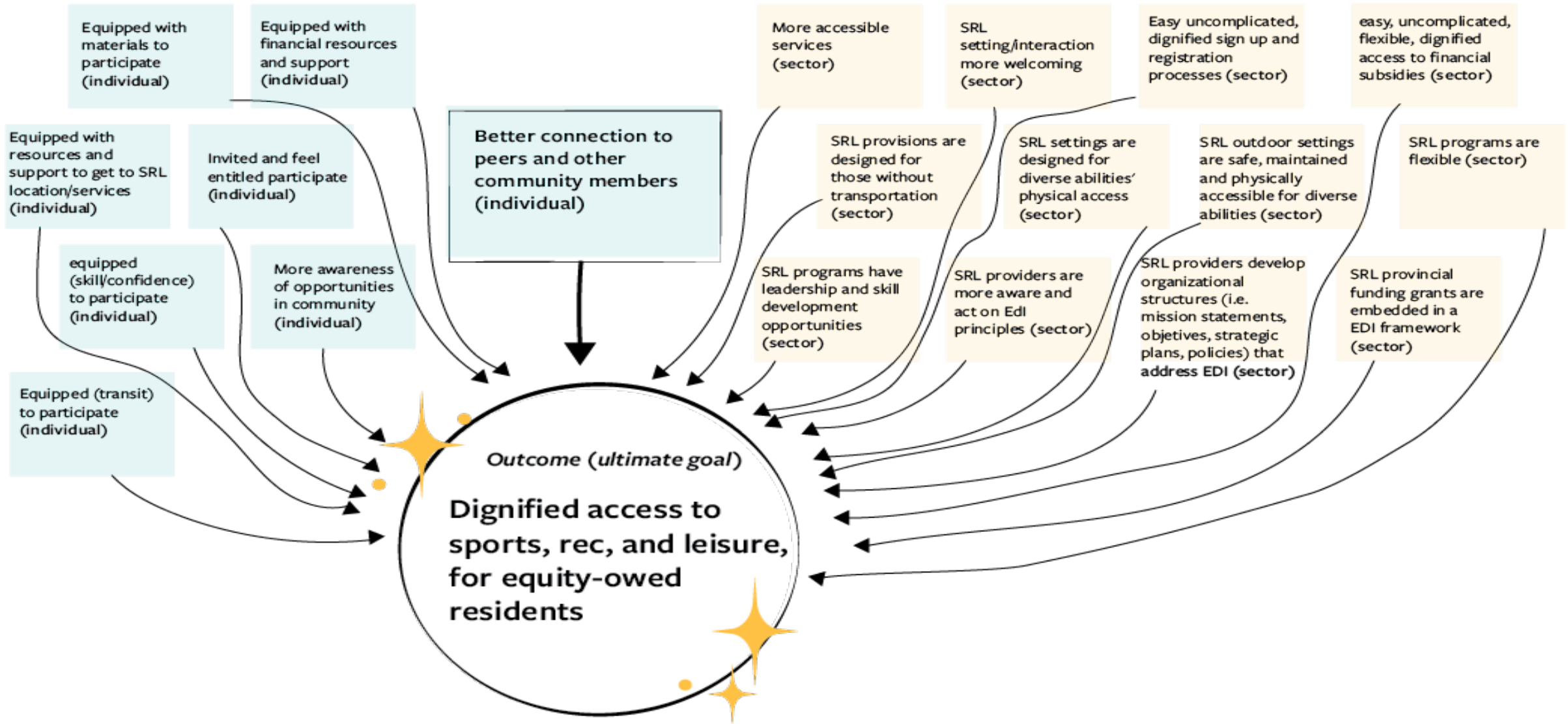




System Shifters Intended Outcomes

- Reimagining access to sport, recreation, and leisure aims to create a sense of belonging and dignified access to sport, recreation and leisure for equity-owed people of NB. To achieve this aim, we are going to test the System Shifters with these intended outcomes:
- Create a model to cultivate collaborative relationships between equity-owed residents and SRL and allied community practitioners to work together to create social change in the community.
- Increase SRL and allied community practitioners' and decision-makers' awareness of the oppression, trauma, discrimination and social and economic inequities equity-owed residents experience that prevent participation in SRL.
- Support SRL and allied practitioners' knowledge, skills, and capacity to address systemic barriers found in SRL delivery systems.
- Co-create and evaluate a series of new inclusive and access provisions in RSC 2 and 10.

Outcomes (long-term)



Designing 4 Belonging

In our project, designing for belonging meant we needed each community tactic to have the following design features:

- Welcoming environment and experience.
- Peer-to-peer connections were facilitated.
- Addressing barriers in dignified ways.
- Inclusion was facilitated through different forms of engagement: participation, encouragement, and curiosity.



	Trail Feedback	Skate & Social
What was the issue being address?	Equity-owed residents often lack participation in community feedback/planning on public outdoor recreation infrastructure.	Equity-owed families often lack access to skate equipment, facilities and programming to support skating skill development.
What was the community tactic?	A place game activity to increase equity-owed residents' participation in outdoor SRL infrastructure.	A family skate night and social event at the local arena.
What was the purpose?	1) Create opportunities for equity-owed residents to provide feedback on outdoor SRL infrastructure.	1) Offer a low-commitment learn-to-skate activity 2) To reduce barriers to accessing skate equipment and facilities.
Who co-designed?	Town recreation director, town clerk, town youth coordinator, equity-owed resident, and RASRL research design team.	School community coordinator, equity-owed resident, RASRL research-design team.

	Heron Bay/Ugpi'ganjig Info Sharing	Outdoor Playboxes
What was the issue being address?	Ugpi'ganjig Elders did not feel welcome in the local recreation centre, and lacked information on programs available to them.	Newcomers to rural NB can struggle to access and engage in outdoor recreation opportunities due to a lack of knowledge and access to equipment.
What was the community tactic?	A bus trip for Ugpi'ganjig First Nations Elders, bringing Elders to the local recreation centre for a knowledge-sharing experience.	A playbox launch and social to bring together the community.
What was the purpose?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To learn about the SRL opportunities available for Elders at the Recreaplex, 2) To create a welcoming environment, 3) To foster connections between recreation staff and the Elders. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To reduce equipment barriers to participation in SRL, 2) To facilitate unstructured outdoor play,
Who co-designed?	Equity-owed resident, recreation centre director & staff, RASRL research-design team.	Equity-owed resident, YMCA coordinator, RASRL research-design team, municipal recreation coordinator, and community cultural organization.

Impact of the Co-Design Experience: Providers & Future Work

Providers gained...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity. Increased awareness of the diversity in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy. Hearing their lived experience and their story helped deepen providers understanding of the issues they face. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness. Increase awareness of how many people in community are struggling.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship building. Helped build trust between providers and equity-owed communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence. Co-design supported practitioners' confidence when trying new access provisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing Stereotypes. Broke down myths and stereotypes staff have of equity-owed residents.
Future Work...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships. Increase partnerships with equity-owed community groups and allied stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach. Change communication and build relationships through outreach. 	Representation. Consider equity-owed representation on boards and through employment.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning. Increase staff training and capacity building for EDI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback. Find ways to gather input from equity-owed communities and allied stakeholders. 	Accommodations. Adapt instruction and programming.

What we wanted to know & how we know it.

Did the tactic impact equity-owned residents' sense of belonging and foster dignified access?

Program evaluation survey:
Exploring if residents felt welcomed, included, and connected to other people.

How did the implementation impact a sense of belonging and dignified access?

Interviews, field & participant observations: Identifying constraining and enabling factors that impacted successful implementation (communication, registration, transportation, facility access, equipment needs, volunteers, on-site interactions, etc.).

How did the co-design of community tactics impact equity-owned residents

Interviews & field observations:
Exploring their motivation for participation, their experience working with SRL providers and stakeholders, the benefits and learnings they received, and changes they'd make for the future co-designed tactics.

How did the co-design of community tactics impact SRL providers?

Interviews & field observations:
Exploring their motivation for participation, their experience working with equity-owned residents, the benefits and learnings they received, and changes they'd make for the future co-designed tactics.

Impact of the Co-design Experience:
Residents

What they experienced..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe environment for sharing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power to make decisions.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling heard and understood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative, creative problem-solving process.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with different people in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being respected, valued.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of belonging
What they gained...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-cultural understanding of diverse residents' lived experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New skills to support community.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connections and relationships through engagement with SRL providers and allied stakeholders (social capital) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New social relationships

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Benefits of System Shifters & Co-Designing

	For SRL Organizations ...	Fore Equity-Owed Residents ...
Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy. Important for building empathy and understanding of the lived experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy. Creates a new avenue for advocacy.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness. Bring awareness and understanding to the complexities of poverty and the unlevel playing field. It gets community talking about the issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building. Creates opportunities to utilize equity-owed residents' skills and talents.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of belonging. Creates belonging being part of something bigger than one's self
Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved provisions. Designing programs and systems to reduce barriers. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning. Helps staff and organizations learn how to design and deliver programs that are accessible and inclusive. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship building. Bridge the gap between equity-owed residents and providers. 	

Difference in the Co-Design Experience

	With Providers	Without Providers
Providers were...	Hands-on—weekly meetings, face-to-face meetings, consistent communication Supportive Encouraging	Hands off—Limited contact via email communication only. Disengaged Disconnected
Responsibilities were...	Shared between resident, provider and other stakeholders.	Offloaded—to the resident and other stakeholders.
Commitment was...	Reliable—consistent and committed.	Unreliable—uncommittable (volunteers & providers) and inconsistent.
Approach was...	Accommodating—flexible, supportive, encouraging.	Closed off—challenging to reach, not accommodating, not helpful.
Providers made the resident feel...	Valued—supported, respected, and connected.	Undervalued—a burden, a bother.
Overall experience was...	Relational	Transactional

What We've Learned So Far...

- Difference between relational and transactional approaches to access and inclusion.
 - SRL provider's engagement is centred on relational and learning vs economical and transactional.
 - Implementation of community tactics was more successful with providers that participated in the entire co-design process.
- Dignified access.
 - The access provisions don't cause shame or harm and provide quality experiences, support and encouragement that respects diversity and individuals.
- Power dynamics & empowerment.
 - Equity-owed residents were treated as experts in their lived experience and provided power to make decisions in the co-design process; this has motivated and empowered equity-owed residents.

What We've Learned So Far...

- “Opened my eyes”: Deepening awareness and actions
 - SRL providers learned and saw barriers they were unaware of before the co-design process; this deepened their empathy and understanding.
- Relationships are key.
 - Equity-owed residents communicated and recruited participants in all community tactics.
 - Providers that intentionally built relationships with equity-owed residents learned more and supported more successful tactics.
- It's a journey that takes time, courage, curiosity and compassion.



Questions & Contact Info

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