



# The Story of The Sandlot

Our Journey through the Innovation Pipeline



the incubator hub by  
Healthy Teen Network





# OUR INNOVATION JOURNEY



## The Sandlot

This is the story of our innovation journey through the Healthy Teen Network Incubator Hub pipeline.

September 2024  
- June 2025



# INTRODUCING...



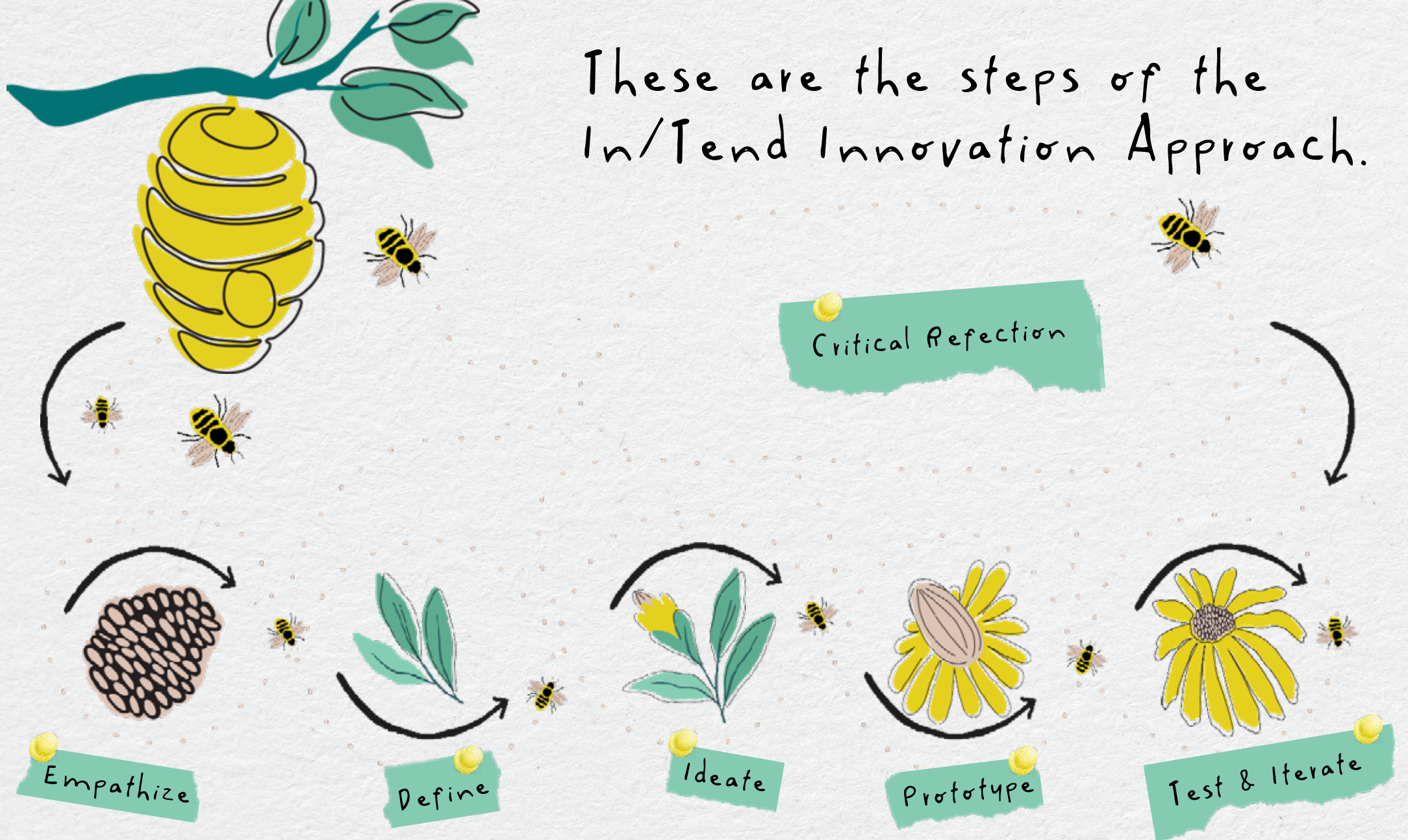
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Zapata



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Pintor Carnagey



These are the steps of the In/Tend Innovation Approach.





Initially, our challenge was...

Addressing misinformation online and a lack of reliable and safe information, as well as supporting emotional learning

Empathize

1

Experience

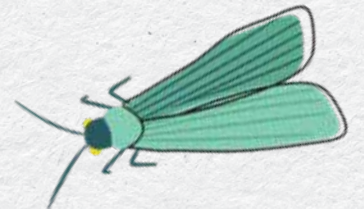
We conducted analogous, or similar, experiences to gain insights.

We wanted to empathize with the experience of young people wanting to fit in, find community, and be with friends. We wanted to share the experience of "knowing this thing/place is potentially harmful/problematic but still wanting to belong."

We found inspiration and fresh ideas in different contexts and situations.



Church of Scientology Visit, Austin, TX



# Our end users are...



Parents and caregivers of 8–15-year-olds who use or want to begin using social media platforms (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat)

"Yeah, it's pretty annoying to see, especially when you read the comments and notice how many people agree, but it doesn't really hurt me."

"Social media scares me because it can get really dark really fast...but I also get happy from it. It's where my friends are."

"I dread the day comes when she will want to create her own [social media]. This is less about the dangers and more about the effects on mental health. I hope when the time comes, she will have enough boundaries to not become consumed by it."

"Adults are too judgmental and dramatic about social media."

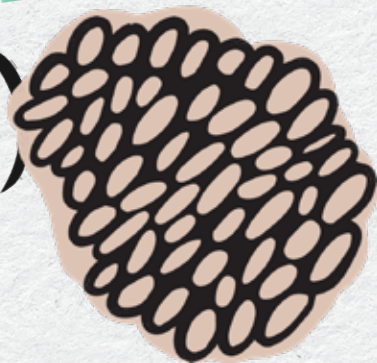
"It wouldn't really make sense to talk to my mom about online stuff because she doesn't get it."

We also interviewed beneficiaries and experts (they bring valuable perspectives), such as:

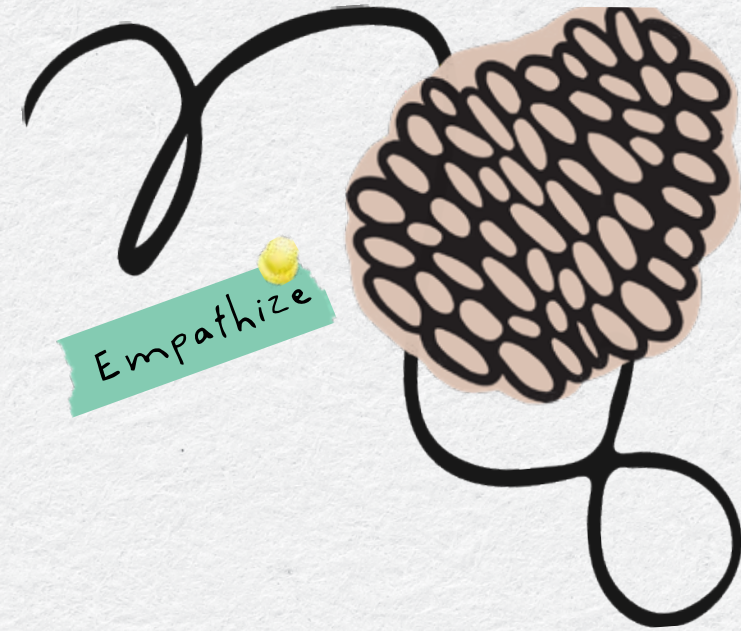
- young people
- family members
- schools, educators
- community organizations
- social media platforms
- youth-supporting professionals
- mental health professionals
- law enforcement professionals

Empathize

# We learned more about our end users.



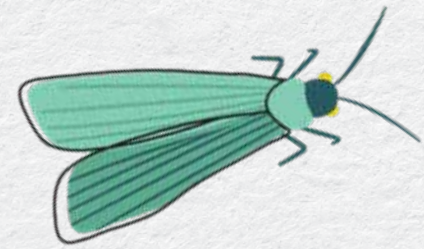
By talking with people, we learned more about our **end users' needs**.



24 young people

3 stakeholders

32 parents/care providers



We took the stories, mixed in some data, and uncovered the learnings that **mattered most to form our insights.**

15–17-year-olds use social media because they want to be where their friends are, even if it 'brain rots' and is 'problematic.'

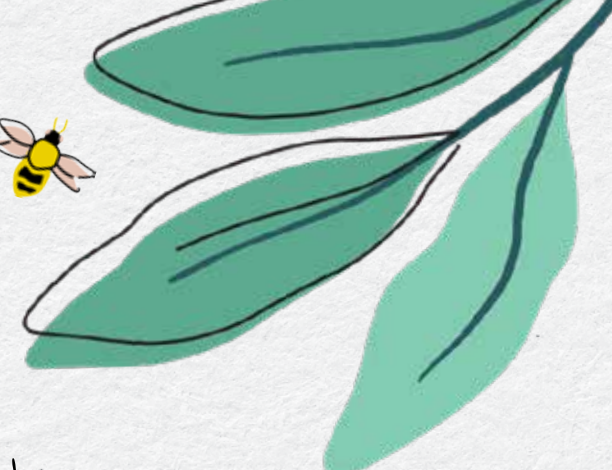
Young people would be more willing to talk to parents about the problematic/ stressful parts of the internet if parents were less judgmental and more familiar with internet culture.

Parents reluctantly allow their children to be on social media because they want them to have an outlet to engage with their friends despite the risks from negative content and interactions.

Parents worry about more than misinformation: peer direct messages, digital drama, and screen time are proving just as hard to manage.



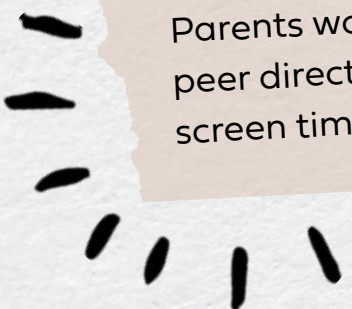
Define



Based on what we learned, we **refined our challenge**, which is summarized by our question:



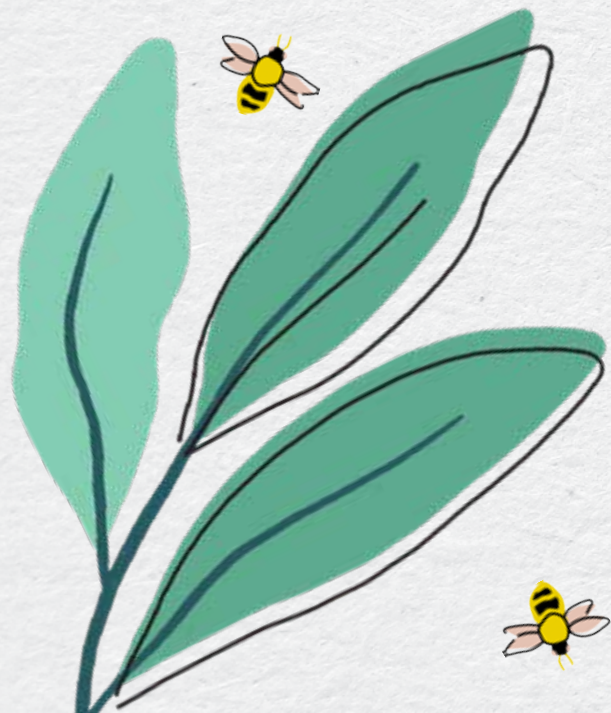
**How might we** equip parents and caregivers of 8–15-year-olds to build stronger connections with their children by having open, skill-building conversations about safer and more balanced social media and device use?



We drafted an initial logic model, identifying our goal, inputs, outputs, and activities.

Define

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes - Impact		
			Short	Medium	Long
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Expert Team</b> A core team of three award-winning, transformative sexuality educators with deep experience in youth empowerment, intersectionality, media literacy, and gender justice.</li> <li><b>Funding</b> A \$90,000 grant from In Tenet, supporting research, prototype development, youth engagement, and design iteration.</li> <li><b>Youth Participation</b> A cohort of 22 young people (ages 15-18) committed to participating in interviews and focus groups to co-design the innovation. <b>Additional resources needed</b></li> <li><b>UX/UI Designer</b>: To digitize card-based tools into an accessible, gamified app interface.</li> <li><b>App Developer or Studio</b>: To build a mobile app MVP (iOS/Android).</li> <li><b>Evaluation Specialist</b>: To assess impact and user outcomes.</li> <li><b>Partnerships</b>: With schools, youth orgs, or mental health services to pilot the intervention.</li> <li><b>Communications &amp; Outreach Support</b>: To promote the innovation and reach broader youth users.</li> <li><b>Prototyping Materials</b>: Initial physical prototypes in the form of cards that teach algorithms, awareness, digital values, and communication strategies — with the intention to evolve this into a mobile app.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular meetings with coach</li> <li>Media trainings</li> <li>In-person trainings</li> <li>Develop and refine challenge &amp; shifter</li> <li>Synthesize publicly available research/data or social media impact on young people and bring concerning messages</li> <li>Deliver innovation pitches and recruit youth people &amp; the organizations that support them.</li> <li>Facilitate focus groups and interviews to collect user feedback/experience data (Ensure that the innovation reflects youth experiences and challenges in digital spaces particularly misinformation, cyberbullying, and toxic dogmings.)</li> <li>Facilitate and observe prototype interaction</li> <li>Develop literature and digital tools based on the insights from youth feedback, including user needs and eventually a mobile app. (Addresses the need for media literacy and emotional resilience in navigating online spaces with an emphasis on critical thinking and digital spaces with an emphasis on critical thinking and digital literacy)</li> <li>Develop a mobile app based on feedback and the research from the prototype work. The app will provide resources for digital wellness, emotional regulation, and peer-to-peer support, including interactive games and educational activities. (Coordination Needed: App development, designers, content creation, and the research team to ensure accessibility and relevance.)</li> <li>Launch promotional campaigns to raise awareness about the tool, its benefits, and how it can help youth thrive in digital spaces. (Coordination Needed: Marketing and communications teams for outreach to schools, youth organizations, and parent networks.)</li> <li><b>Partnerships/Needs-to-Be Met Activities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach and App Development: Partnering with app developers and digital safety experts.</li> <li>Youth-Centered Organizations: To provide guidance on youth engagement and mental health.</li> <li>Schools &amp; Community Centers: To facilitate workshops and peer programming.</li> <li>Mental Health Professionals: For training and support materials that align with evidence-based practices.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 youth-led co-design focus groups facilitated with 22 youth participants across age ranges 8-21</li> <li>22 youth insight profiles developed, reflecting experiences with online harm, digital coping, and identity expression</li> <li>summary report of key themes, challenges, and opportunities identified through qualitative data</li> <li><b>Needed (pre and post-participation)</b> assessments from youth and adult allies to evaluate perceived skill shifts and emotional engagement</li> <li>3-4 physical prototype cards (interactive, media literacy &amp; emotional wellness tools)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Scaling Awareness and Personal Agency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth recognizes and reflects on their personal values and digital boundaries</li> <li>Increased awareness of misinformation, harmful content, and algorithmic manipulation</li> <li>Development of emotional regulation skills and stress management in digital interactions</li> <li>Basic skills in communicating online assertively when encountering toxicity or misinformation</li> <li>Increased feelings of digital safety and support through peer and adult allies</li> </ul>	<p><b>Practicing Skills and Leading Peers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth confidently challenge harmful narratives and disinformation in their social circles</li> <li>Improved capacity to navigate difficult conversations and engage in empathy-driven dialogue</li> <li>Stronger connections between mental wellness and online behaviors</li> <li>Emergence of youth as digital role models and peer educators within their communities</li> <li>Strengthened identity formation with a focus on bodily autonomy, gender equity, and inclusion</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cultural Shift Toward a Healthier Digital Connection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth communities are equipped to self-advocate, self-protect in digital spaces</li> <li>Reductions in internalized misogyny, body shame, and gender-based stereotypes</li> <li>Normalized conversations about media literacy, consent, and gender equality in both online and offline spaces</li> <li>Stronger youth-led movements challenging harmful ideologies and creating inclusive, respectful digital cultures</li> <li>Contributions to a generation that upholds equity, critical thinking, and holistic digital wellness as core values</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assumptions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people feel harmed by negative/toxic content online</li> <li>Young people use social media to build/expand self-esteem</li> <li>Young people would prefer an app to a card game</li> <li>Working with youth takes longer to achieve outcomes</li> <li>The project is going to cost more money than we have</li> <li>Youth voices will get us the results/outcome that best serves positive youth outcomes</li> </ul>	<p><b>External Factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal funding freeze via EIC</li> <li>Youth partner schedule</li> <li>Fear of stigma against sexuality education</li> <li>Lack of funding to continue sustainably (especially into mobile app development)</li> <li>Young people might not identify online toxicity as harm even if the data tells us otherwise</li> </ul>				



We generated many ideas.

Tools that foster talks & connection in families, such as...

- card game
- conversation deck
- social media prep tool kit
- conversation starter chat bot
- interactive subscription box

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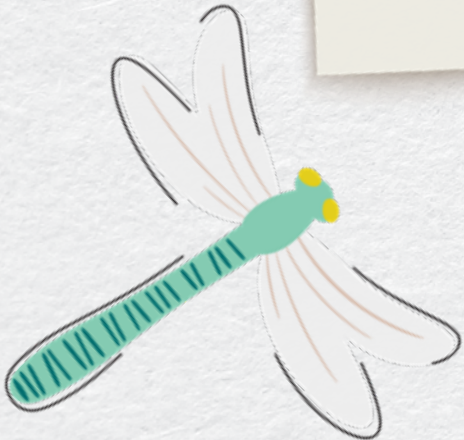
Ideas

We selected ideas to test.

scenario-based conversation card deck

interactive website with community hub

Ideate

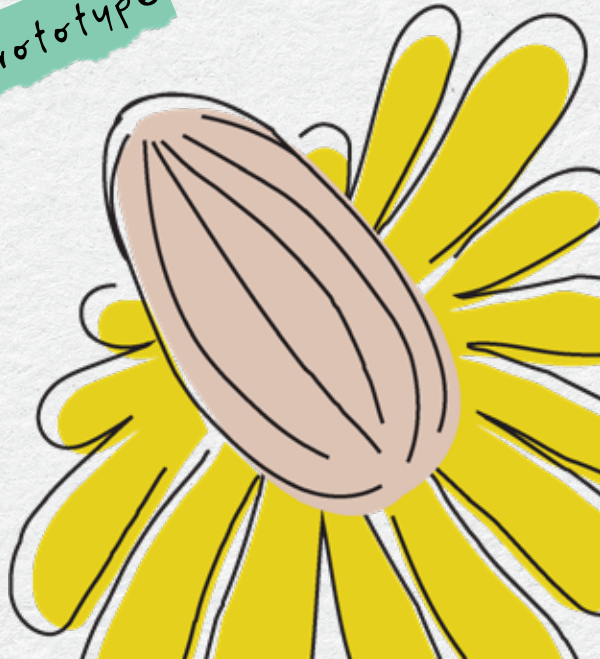


We brought our ideas to life.



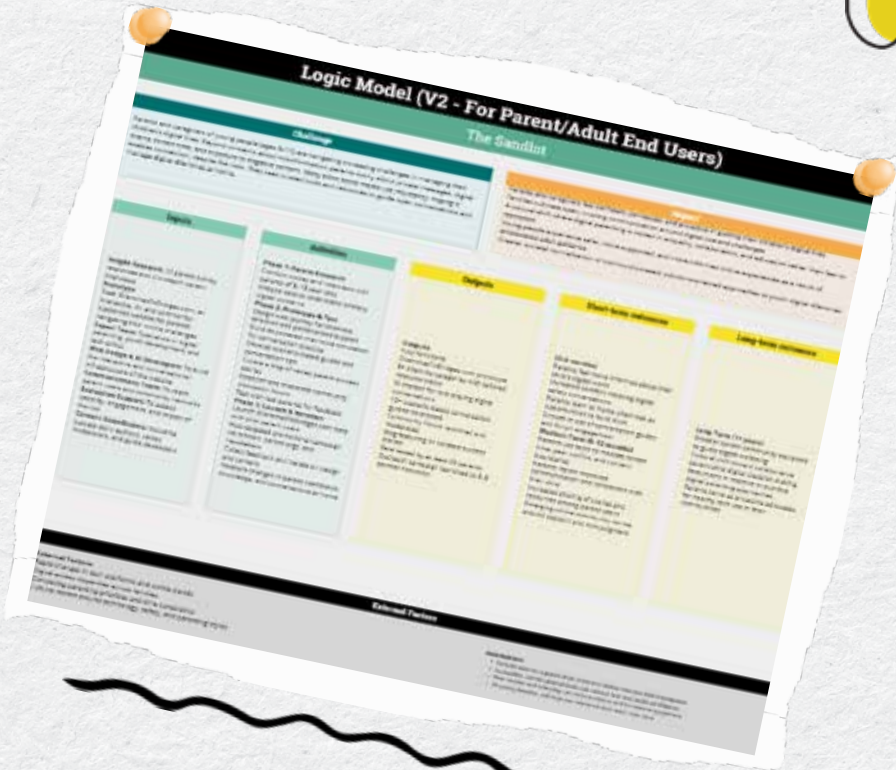
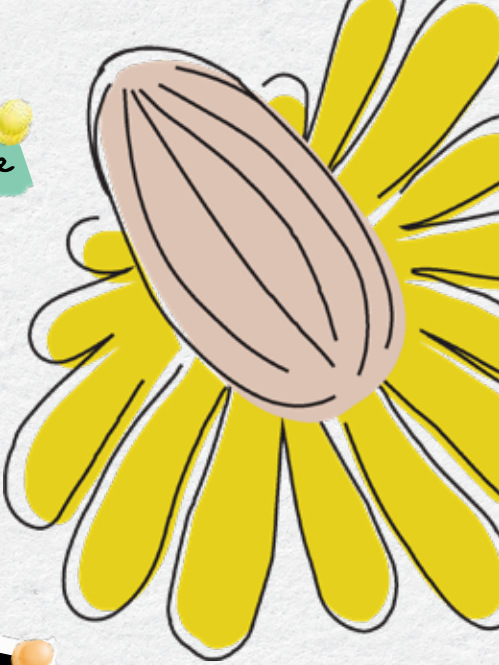
prototype created

Prototype



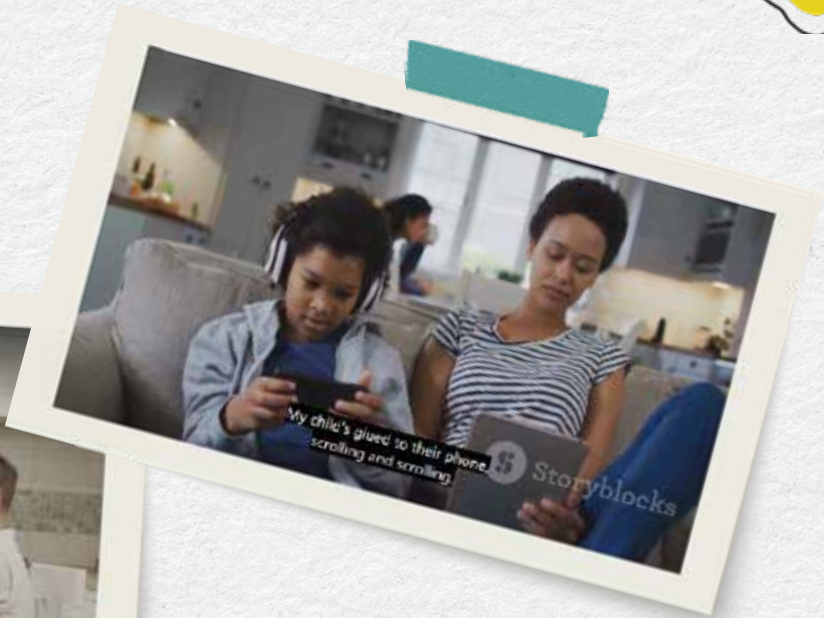
Based on our journey so far,  
we revised our logic model.

Prototype



We tested the prototypes with 3 end users and learned what worked and what needed tweaking.

Test & Iterate





We're excited for our next steps!




We are taking a 6-month break. In that time, we hope to rest, reflect, and recover.


Remixing with new team members building off this idea or throwing it off a cliff.

9-12 month: participate in an incubator to continue building and testing our innovation—further prototyping the website with real parents/families





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In/Tend is a vibrant ecosystem of dreamers, doers, and change-makers who push the boundaries of imagination in adolescent health.