

## Lead By Doing: The Lab's Designers in Residence Program

May 2021 - March 2022

The Education Design Lab's Designers in Residence program is an 11-month opportunity for leaders to collaborate with the Lab in co-creating the future role of colleges in their communities.

The 2021 cohort will bring together a design team of 10 visionary thinkers and doers from postsecondary institutions to evolve and strengthen the role of colleges to be regional change agents to close the economic and racial opportunity gap. ecosystem collaboratives.



### A Call to Action

The Lab's Designers in Residence program is being launched in response to the urgent need for a new paradigm driven by higher ed institutions to align their respective regions toward a new "school to work" economy. As we speak, billions of dollars are being invested by companies hoping to win parts of the race, shifting us all toward a skills-based economy (e.g. artificial intelligence, precision data skills assessment, virtual reality training environments). The current COVID-19 crisis, the massive unemployment and displacement that has resulted, and the historic inequities in our labor market underscore the need for urgency to drive the learnings for how colleges and universities can shorten the horizon to skill-based employment while putting learners on the path toward credential attainment.

As a studio team working within the Lab's interdisciplinary design setting, the Designers in Residence will co-create a vision that centers the needs of their learners within this new economy, and provide the start of a roadmap for other institutions and innovators seeking to build and scale this ideal system. Designers in Residence will build off of learning from and collaborate with practitioners, leaders, and experts from the Lab's ongoing initiatives including [BRIDGES Rural](#) and the [Community College Growth Engine Fund](#).

### The program has two distinct goals:

- 1. Provide an opportunity for leaders to co-design the next iteration of their existing regional ecosystem collaboratives**, aimed at centering learners and aligning K-12, higher education, economic development, and workforce development systems to close economic and opportunity gaps. Even the most nimble efforts require continuous improvement and constant iteration, especially in a post-COVID context.
- 2. Establish a national network of leading thinkers and doers from postsecondaries to probe and map key barriers in the way of greater ecosystem alignment and identify the critical levers** that can enable higher ed institutions to serve as economic drivers in their communities.

## The Designers in Residence Program At-a-Glance

The Lab's Designers in Residence program provides higher ed leaders an opportunity to work alongside the Lab in driving a national discourse on the need for a new higher ed model. Over the course of 11 months (May 2021 - March 2022), Designers in Residence will collectively investigate the role of colleges as regional catalysts, identify and explore critical areas of inquiry specific to their context, and build the start of a roadmap to build and scale this new vision for higher ed.

The program will bring together 10 post-secondary leaders from across the country that are engaged in the development of regional ecosystem collaboratives in service of their learners and community. This future-focused community of practice will serve as a braintrust for informed practices that gives Designers in Residence the tools and resources to assess and interrogate their existing ecosystem initiative, co-design and test new ideas to further accelerate their efforts, and provide critical thought leadership in their community and at a national level. Under the expertise and learner- and employer-centered process of the Lab, Designers in Residence will participate in studio team sessions, manage stakeholder interviews, consult with learners from their community, and write a short brief on their work to be edited, visually designed, published and disseminated by the Lab.

Designers in Residence will be guided by a Lab Advisory Board and will receive insights from a core group of subject matter experts relevant to their work.

### **The Design Question and Areas of Inquiry**

At the start of the program, Designers in Residence will interrogate, iterate, and align on a guiding design question that will be the central theme of the program.

**How might we (postsecondary leaders and our institutions) strengthen and evolve our leadership role to better drive regional ecosystem alignment efforts?**

Designers in Residence will work together to build the ideal system. As this collective vision becomes clear, each Designer will choose a critical area of inquiry (AOI) to deep dive on—in short, each Designer's area of inquiry will make up the parts of that new system. We imagine areas of inquiry may focus on data, leadership infrastructure, learner engagement, sustainability, evolving models, aligning funding, public policy, or narrative change (Designers in Residence may identify an area of inquiry outside of this list).

### **What is a regional ecosystem collaborative?**

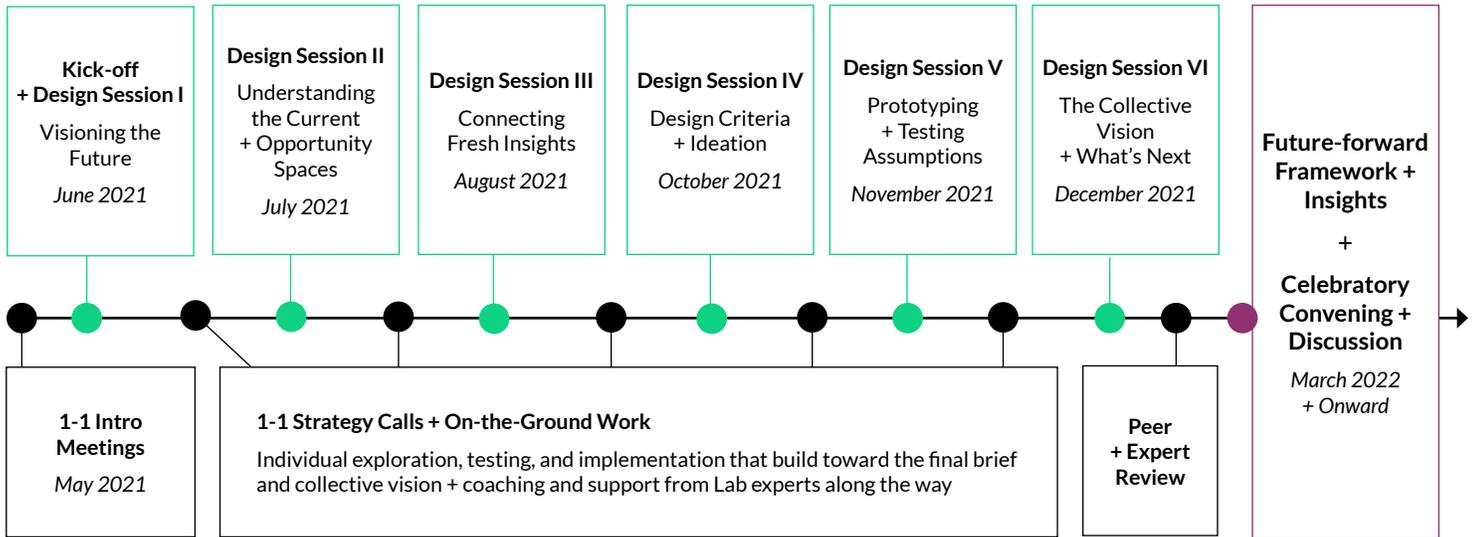
At the Lab, we define regional ecosystem collaboratives as regionally-focused, inter-industry partnerships with centralized infrastructure, a shared agenda, consistent communication, and alignment across participating partners (adapted from Stanford Social Innovation Review on Collective Impact). They may take the form of establishing an intermediary nonprofit to a cross-system coalition to a government funded initiative or a philanthropically-driven partnership.

### **What does it mean to be a thought leader?**

The Lab seeks to engage leaders who are the go-to people at their institution or system driving cross-cutting regional initiatives that seek to address economic mobility, college access, or employment opportunity gaps. They are trusted sources who move and inspire people with innovative ideas. They are systems thinkers who turn ideas into reality, and know and show how to replicate their success. The resulting work of the Lab's Designers in Residence during this program will support in equipping others to replicate and scale their ideas into sustainable change, not just in one organization, but in an industry, niche, or across an entire ecosystem.

# The Residency Year

May 2021 - March 2022



## What will Designers in Residence do throughout the program?

### Design Team Sessions:

train in the Lab's human-centered design methodology, convene to build a collective vision, iterate and test new strategies for their initiatives, and identify fresh insights

### 1-1 Strategy Calls:

support from the Lab team to provide back-end support and offer strategic perspectives relevant to each Designer's area of inquiry

### Author a Brief:

write a brief on their work, informed by the Designer's area of inquiry, that entails analysis and new learnings from the program

### Peer + Expert Review:

review the work of their peers and receive feedback from the Lab's Advisory Board and guiding subject matter experts

### Amplify their Work:

opportunities to speak at and participate in Lab convenings and speak on and write additional thought leadership (podcasts, webinars, panels, op-eds, blogs, etc)

### Optional: Access to Ongoing Lab Initiatives:

opportunities to participate in and join convenings and working sessions for BRIDGES Rural and the Community College Growth Engine Fund



## The Cohort

The Lab will select 10 leaders from post-secondary institutions who are the go-to people at their institution or system driving cross-cutting regional initiatives that seek to address economic mobility, college access, or employment opportunity gaps. Leaders must have a proven track-record for understanding and centering the needs of their community and for successfully developing, implementing, and scaling programs with evidence of equitable outcomes for New Majority Learners and learners most excluded and minoritized. Leaders must have demonstrated proactive engagement and collaboration with employers, workforce development agencies, nonprofits, gov, and intermediaries, in addition to K-12 education and other local learning providers. Designers in Residence should be well positioned within their university to drive change. And, Designers should have demonstrated ability to reach across institutional silos to achieve the best outcomes for their learners.

The strongest and most impactful design team will be made up of leaders from diverse disciplines, regions, perspectives, individual identities, and levels of experience.

## Outcomes + Impact

- 10 postsecondary leaders trained in the Lab's human-centered process
- 10 regional ecosystem collaboratives evolved to best meet the current and future needs of their communities
- A braintrust of leaders to drive, scale, and sustain a national vision for a revitalized role of higher ed
- A framework in regional ecosystem collaboration that centers shifts born out of COVID-19 pandemic and the equity movement
- Insight briefs, tools, recommendations, and assessments for institutions seeking to participate in or lead regional initiatives
- A landscape overview and visionary model for a resilient, equitable, skills-based economy that highlights the roles across stakeholders working towards collective impact
- A sustaining community of practice for institutions and stakeholders outside of the program to join and test, iterate, and implement the Designer's new strategies
- Strengthened and intentionalized "design channels" between postsecondary institutions, learners, K-12 education, employers, and other relevant stakeholders that act as resilient infrastructure for mobilizing in light of urgent community needs

## Background

The Education Design Lab is a nonprofit national leader in designing and testing new models for post-secondary education that respond to the changing needs of both learners and employers. The Lab specializes in designing equity-focused solutions that make credentials more relevant, portable, and affordable for learners, and in delivering innovation thinking to the institutions that are best placed to serve learners faced with opportunity gaps in access, engagement, attainment, and employment. This program is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and views expressed by the program do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the foundation.

### Learn more about the Lab + our work:

Get an inside look on our on-the-ground work—delivered right to your mailbox.

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[eddesignlab.org/designersinresidence](https://eddesignlab.org/designersinresidence)

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