

Design Thinking Toolkit: A Practical Guide for Everyone

Empowering Beginners, Professionals, and Career-Switchers to Innovate
with Confidence

1. Introduction

Welcome to the Design Thinking Toolkit! This guide is designed to help you understand, apply, and benefit from the principles of Design Thinking—whether you are new to the concept, a seasoned professional, or considering a career change. The toolkit is curated to be simple, actionable, and relevant across industries and roles.

1.1 What Does This Toolkit Include?

- **Step-by-step guides** for each phase of Design Thinking
- **Templates** for brainstorming, user research, and prototyping
- **Real-world examples** to illustrate key concepts
- **Tips and best practices** for successful implementation
- **Reflection prompts** to help you adapt and grow your skills

1.2 Who Is This Toolkit For?

- **Beginners** – If you’re new to Design Thinking, this toolkit breaks down concepts into clear, manageable steps.
- **Professionals** – Enhance your current processes and solve challenges in creative, structured ways.
- **Career-Switchers** – Transition smoothly by learning a sought-after, versatile problem-solving approach.

1.3 How to Use This Toolkit Effectively

- **Start small:** Pick a simple project or problem to practice the steps.
- **Follow the process:** Move through each stage, even if it feels unfamiliar at first.
- **Be open-minded:** Embrace empathy and creativity; there are no “wrong” ideas in the early phases.
- **Reflect and adapt:** Use feedback and learning prompts to refine your approach.

- **Collaborate:** Design Thinking thrives on teamwork-invite others to join you.

2. Quick Overview: What Is Design Thinking?

Design Thinking is a problem-solving methodology grounded in empathy and creativity. It emphasizes understanding the needs and experiences of the people you are designing for, encouraging you to put yourself in their shoes and uncover insights that traditional approaches might overlook.

2.1 Human-Centered Approach Explained

- **Empathy at the Core:** Design Thinking starts with a deep empathy for users. For example, instead of just analyzing sales data, a product team might observe customers using their app, listen to their frustrations, and interview them about their daily routines.
- **Iterative Process:** It relies on prototyping and testing ideas quickly to learn what works best, making room for “failure” as a source of learning and refinement.
- **Collaboration:** The process brings together cross-functional teams, often including designers, engineers, marketers, and end users, to harness diverse perspectives.

By keeping the user's needs front and center, Design Thinking uncovers innovative solutions that are both practical and desirable.

2.2 The Design Thinking Five Steps

While Design Thinking can be adapted for different contexts, it commonly unfolds in five main steps:

1. **Empathize:** Learn about your users through observation, engagement, and immersing yourself in their experiences.
2. *Example:* Interview patients in a hospital to understand their anxieties and needs.
3. **Define:** Clearly articulate the problem to be solved, based on user insights.

4. *Example:* "Patients feel anxious because they do not know what to expect during treatment."
5. **Ideate:** Brainstorm a wide range of creative solutions. Quantity matters-no idea is too wild at this stage.
6. *Example:* Generate ideas like a virtual reality tour of the hospital, an illustrated patient guide, or a buddy system for new patients.
7. **Prototype:** Build simple versions of selected ideas so you can test them quickly and cheaply.
8. *Example:* Create a mock-up of the illustrated guide or a basic virtual reality demo.
9. **Test:** Share prototypes with users to gather feedback and refine them.
10. *Example:* Give the guide to patients, observe their reactions, and tweak it based on their suggestions.

These steps are not always linear-teams often loop back and repeat stages as they learn and iterate.

2.3 When to Use Design Thinking

- **Projects:** When the challenge is complex and requires fresh, innovative solutions.
- *Example:* Creating a new onboarding process for remote employees.
- **Business Strategy:** To reimagine services, enter new markets, or improve customer experience.
- *Example:* A bank using Design Thinking to design a more inclusive set of financial products for underserved communities.
- **Product Development:** For building products that truly resonate with users.

- *Example:* Developing a wearable device by engaging teenagers in the design process to ensure usability and appeal.

Design Thinking is especially valuable when there is uncertainty about the problem or the best solution. By focusing on user needs and rapid experimentation, teams can create products, services, and strategies that stand out in today's changing world.

3. Essential Skills You Need

Design Thinking is a blend of mindset, method, and skill. To apply it effectively-whether you're crafting a new product, improving a service, or solving a workplace challenge-you'll need to develop several key abilities. These skills help you understand people deeply, think creatively, test ideas quickly, and collaborate with confidence.

Below is a detailed breakdown of the most essential skills for anyone practising Design Thinking:

1. Empathy & User Research

Empathy is the foundation of Design Thinking. It helps you understand people-not just what they say, but what they feel, believe, and struggle with. Strong empathy leads to solutions that truly matter.

What this skill includes:

- Conducting user interviews, ethnographic research, shadowing, and observations
- Asking open-ended questions that uncover hidden needs
- Understanding user emotions, motivations, and behaviors
- Seeing the problem from the user's point of view, not the organization's

Why it matters:

Empathy reduces assumptions. It ensures your ideas are rooted in real insights instead of guesses.

Example:

Before designing a new banking app, you watch customers try the current version and uncover that the biggest issue isn't navigation-it's anxiety around financial decisions.

2. Problem Framing (Define Phase)

Great solutions come from clearly understanding the right problem. Problem framing takes all your research and condenses it into a meaningful, actionable challenge.

What this skill includes:

- Synthesizing research findings
- Identifying root causes (not symptoms)
- Crafting precise problem statements or POV (Point of View) statements
- Turning insights into clear “How Might We...” opportunity questions

Why it matters:

A well-defined problem saves teams time, money, and effort. It ensures everyone is solving the same issue.

Example:

Instead of “We need a better checkout page,” the reframed problem becomes:

“Online shoppers abandon their cart because the checkout process feels complicated and insecure.”

3. Ideation & Creativity

Ideation is where possibilities open up. At this stage, creativity matters more than correctness.

What this skill includes:

- Generating a high volume of ideas quickly
- Using structured brainstorming tools (Crazy 8s, SCAMPER, mind maps)
- Combining and remixing ideas from the team
- Challenging assumptions and exploring unconventional solutions

Why it matters:

The best ideas often emerge after the uncomfortable, “wild” ideas-creativity leads to breakthroughs.

Example:

If redesigning public transport, ideas might range from “smart bus stops” to “voice-guided accessibility support” to “dynamic crowd dashboards.”

4. Prototyping

Prototypes make ideas real. They're not final products but quick experiments that help you learn faster.

What this skill includes:

- Creating low-fidelity mockups (paper sketches, clickable wireframes, storyboards)
- Building only what's essential for testing
- Iterating rapidly based on new insights
- Exploring multiple versions before choosing one

Why it matters:

Prototypes let you test assumptions early, reducing risk and saving time.

Example:

You sketch five homepage layouts on paper instead of jumping into high-fidelity UI design. Users pick the one that feels more intuitive.

5. Testing & Iteration

Testing helps validate your assumptions and discover what needs improvement.

Iteration turns feedback into better solutions.

What this skill includes:

- Planning and facilitating usability tests
- Capturing qualitative and quantitative feedback
- Observing emotional responses and behavior patterns
- Making improvements based on insights

Why it matters:

Testing protects you from building the wrong solution. Iteration ensures ideas evolve to match real user needs.

Example:

Users struggle to find a button in your prototype. You switch its position, test again, and users find it instantly-proof your change worked.

6. Collaboration & Communication

Design Thinking thrives on teamwork. When people from different backgrounds come together, ideas become richer and more innovative.

What this skill includes:

- Facilitating ideation and feedback sessions
- Communicating ideas visually and verbally
- Working across roles (design, engineering, business, marketing)
- Navigating conflicts and building consensus

Why it matters:

Great solutions don't come from individuals-they come from diverse perspectives.

Example:

A healthcare redesign project might involve nurses, patients, doctors, administrators, and designers. Collaboration brings every viewpoint to the table.

7. Systems Thinking (Advanced but Valuable)

Systems thinking helps you understand how various parts of a product or service interact with each other.

What this skill includes:

- Seeing patterns instead of isolated issues
- Mapping processes and customer journeys
- Understanding long-term consequences of decisions
- Balancing user needs with business feasibility

Why it matters:

Design Thinking solutions often fail when they ignore the bigger system they operate in.

Example:

Improving hospital check-in doesn't just affect patients-it also impacts nurses, IT staff, billing, and scheduling.

8. Facilitation Skills (Especially for Career Growth)

Many design thinking jobs require guiding people through the process.

What this skill includes:

- Running workshops
- Encouraging participation from quiet team members
- Managing discussions
- Keeping groups aligned and energized

Why it matters:

Great facilitators turn any team into a high-performing problem-solving group.

9. Curiosity & Mindset for Experimentation

Design Thinkers often ask "Why?" and "What if?" more than others.

What this skill includes:

- Challenging assumptions
- Staying open to surprises
- Being comfortable with ambiguity
- Learning from failure instead of avoiding it

Why it matters:

Curiosity drives innovation. Experimentation brings ideas to life.

4. Step-by-Step Design Thinking Worksheets

To help you put Design Thinking into action, this toolkit offers a suite of practical worksheets and templates tailored to each stage of the process. These resources are designed to guide you, whether you're working independently or collaborating with a team. Below you'll find an overview of each worksheet, with examples of how they can be used to move your project forward.

1. Empathise

- **User Interview Template:** Structure your conversations with users by listing key questions and space for notes. For example, you might ask: "Can you describe a recent challenge you faced with our product?" and record insights on pain points.
- **Empathy Map Worksheet:** Visualize what users say, think, do, and feel. This helps you identify patterns in user behavior and motivation. Example: Fill in the map with direct quotes, observed actions, and emotional cues from interview transcripts.

2. Define

- **Problem Statement Template:** Clearly articulate the core challenge based on user research. Example: "Users need a quicker way to access frequently used features because the current navigation is too complex."
- **Point-of-View Worksheet:** Frame the problem from the user's perspective, helping to narrow the focus. Example: "A busy parent needs a way to order groceries online effortlessly, so they can save time and reduce stress."

3. Ideate

- **Brainstorming Prompts:** Stimulate creative thinking with open-ended questions and "what if" scenarios. For instance, "What if ordering was voice-activated?"

- **‘Crazy 8s’ Ideation Sheet:** Push the team to sketch eight distinct ideas in eight minutes, encouraging quantity and variety. Example: Rapidly sketch eight different layouts for a mobile app homepage.

4. Prototype

- **Low-Fidelity Prototype Checklist:** Ensure your mockup is simple, functional, and ready for feedback. Example items: “Are core functions present?” “Can the user complete the main task?”
- **Storyboard Template:** Map out the steps a user will take when interacting with your solution using a series of sketches. Example: Illustrate the process of logging in, searching for products, and completing a purchase.

5. Test

- **Usability Testing Checklist:** Prepare for user tests by confirming logistics, scripting scenarios, and capturing metrics. Example: “Is the prototype functional?” “Are clear instructions provided?”
- **Feedback Capture Grid:** Organize user feedback into categories: what worked, what didn’t, questions, and ideas for improvement. Example: After a test session, fill out the grid with direct comments and suggestions.

Using these worksheets, individuals and teams can systematically work through each phase of Design Thinking, ensuring structure, clarity, and creativity at every step. By documenting your process and insights, you’ll be better equipped to iterate, collaborate, and ultimately deliver solutions that truly meet user needs.

5. Design Thinking Examples (Real-World)

Design thinking has been embraced by organizations across industries to tackle challenging problems with a user-centered mindset. Here are a few real-world examples illustrating how this approach leads to innovative and effective solutions:

Case 1: Airbnb-Transforming the Guest Experience

- **Challenge:** In its early days, Airbnb struggled with low booking rates and user trust issues. The founders realized that many listings lacked quality photos, which discouraged bookings.
- **Design Thinking Solution:** Using empathy-driven research, Airbnb's team spoke directly with hosts and guests to understand their needs. They identified that better visuals would help guests connect emotionally with listings.
- **Implementation:** The team began offering professional photography to hosts and redesigned the website to prioritize high-quality images. This rapid prototyping and testing cycle dramatically improved the booking rate.
- **Outcome:** Bookings increased, user trust improved, and the company built a stronger brand reputation rooted in understanding customer needs.

Case 2: Bank of America-“Keep the Change” Program

- **Challenge:** Many customers found it difficult to save money consistently. Bank of America wanted to promote better saving habits, especially among casual savers.
- **Design Thinking Solution:** The team conducted in-depth interviews and observations with customers to uncover pain points. By empathizing with users, they recognized that saving needed to be easy and almost invisible.
- **Implementation:** They developed the “Keep the Change” program, which rounds up every debit card purchase to the next dollar and transfers the difference to the user's savings account.

- **Outcome:** The program proved wildly popular, leading to increased customer engagement and billions of dollars saved collectively.

Case 3: IBM-Enterprise Design Thinking for Agile Teams

- **Challenge:** IBM needed to modernize the way its teams approached complex client problems and collaborated across disciplines.
- **Design Thinking Solution:** IBM launched its “Enterprise Design Thinking” initiative, training thousands of employees in the methodology. The focus was on empathy, rapid ideation, cross-functional collaboration, and continuous user feedback.
- **Implementation:** Teams began using journey maps, empathy maps, and iterative prototyping in their work with clients worldwide.
- **Outcome:** The approach led to faster problem-solving, higher client satisfaction, and a culture that values creativity and user focus.

These cases demonstrate that design thinking is not just theory-it is a practical, repeatable approach to solving real challenges. By centering on user needs, prototyping quickly, and learning through feedback, organizations can drive meaningful change and innovation.

6. Career Paths in Design Thinking (Quick Guide)

Design thinking expertise is increasingly recognized across industries, opening up a variety of career paths for creative problem-solvers. Whether you're starting out, seeking advancement, or aspiring to leadership, design thinking skills can propel your journey. Here's a quick guide to the main roles and the skills needed at each stage:

6.1 Entry-Level Roles

- **Design Thinking Facilitator (Junior):** Supports workshops, helps teams use design thinking tools, and assists with user research.
- **User Experience (UX) Research Assistant:** Gathers data through interviews, surveys, and observations to inform design decisions.
- **Innovation Associate:** Contributes ideas in brainstorming sessions, builds low-fidelity prototypes, and documents findings.

Examples: As a Design Thinking Facilitator, you might help set up empathy mapping exercises or organize feedback sessions. As a UX Research Assistant, you could conduct user interviews and compile insights for the team.

Key Skills for Entry-level:

- Empathy and active listening
- Basic user research techniques
- Collaboration and communication
- Willingness to learn and adapt

6.2 Mid-Level Roles

- **Product Designer:** Leads ideation sessions, creates wireframes and prototypes, and iterates based on user feedback.

- **Service Designer:** Maps user journeys and touchpoints, improves service systems, and manages stakeholder relationships.
- **Design Thinking Consultant:** Facilitates workshops, coaches teams, and develops customized design thinking strategies for organizations.

Examples: As a Product Designer, you may run “Crazy 8s” ideation exercises or develop storyboards for new digital products. As a Design Thinking Consultant, you could guide a company through defining its problem statement and prototyping solutions.

Key Skills for Mid-level:

- Advanced prototyping and testing techniques
- Problem framing and ideation
- Workshop facilitation
- Stakeholder management

6.3 Senior Roles

- **Design Lead/Head of Design:** Shapes design vision, oversees multiple projects, and mentors junior staff.
- **Innovation Director:** Drives strategic innovation initiatives, aligns design thinking with business strategy, and champions a user-centered culture.
- **Chief Experience Officer (CXO):** Integrates design thinking into organizational processes, ensuring customer experience is central to strategy and operations.

Examples: As a Design Lead, you’ll coach teams on empathy and ideation, and review final prototypes before launch. An Innovation Director may lead cross-functional teams to embed design thinking in product development, while a CXO sets the overall vision for user experience across all channels.

Key Skills for Senior-level:

- Strategic thinking and vision-setting

- Organizational leadership and influence
- Advanced collaboration across departments
- Expertise in scaling design thinking methodologies

Whether you're beginning your journey or aiming for the top, each stage builds on previous experience, with empathy, creativity, and collaboration at the core. By developing these skills, you'll be equipped to lead change and foster innovation wherever your career takes you.

7. Portfolio-Building Tips

Creating a compelling design thinking portfolio is essential for showcasing your skills, mindset, and impact to potential employers or collaborators. Unlike traditional design portfolios that focus mainly on visual outcomes, a design thinking portfolio emphasizes your process, problem-solving journey, and the value you delivered. Here's how to make your portfolio stand out:

7.1 What to Include in a Design Thinking Portfolio

- **Project Overviews:** Brief introductions to each project-context, your role, and the team.
- **Problem Statements:** Clearly define the challenges you addressed. For example, “How might we reduce waiting times in hospital emergency rooms?”
- **User Research & Empathy:** Showcase user interviews, empathy maps, or insights gathered. Include photos of field notes or quotes from real users.
- **Ideation Process:** Display brainstorming sessions, sketches, and how you generated and selected ideas.
- **Prototyping & Testing:** Share photos or screenshots of prototypes (digital or physical), test plans, and feedback received.
- **Iteration:** Highlight how you refined your solutions based on testing and user feedback. This could be shown through version comparisons or annotated changes.
- **Results & Impact:** Provide measurable outcomes where possible (e.g., “Reduced onboarding time by 30% after redesign”).
- **Collaboration:** Mention cross-functional teamwork and your contributions to group projects.

7.2 How to Present Your Process

- **Visual Storytelling:** Use a mix of visuals-journey maps, storyboards, and wireframes-alongside concise text. Let images complement the narrative.
- **Step-by-Step Narratives:** Walk viewers through your process, from identifying user needs to tested solution. Use section headings like “Empathize,” “Define,” “Ideate,” “Prototype,” and “Test.”
- **Reflect on Learnings:** Add short reflections on what you learned from each project. For example: “This project taught me the value of rapid prototyping to get user feedback early.”
- **Interactive Elements (if digital):** Consider clickable prototypes or video walkthroughs to bring your work to life.

For example, instead of just showing a finished app interface, include a storyboard showing how you mapped out the user journey, photos of your initial paper sketches, and a quick summary of user feedback that led you to iterate on specific features.

7.3 Before/After Case Breakdown Template

Use this template to clearly show the transformation and impact of your work:

- **Project Name & Time Frame:** e.g., “Hospital Check-In Redesign, Spring 2023”
- **Challenge (Before):** Describe the initial problem or pain point, such as “Long wait times and frustrated patients at check-in.”
- **Process:** Briefly outline steps-research, ideation, prototyping, and testing.
- **Solution (After):** Summarize the final outcome-for example, “Introduced self-service kiosks, reducing average check-in time from 15 to 5 minutes.”
- **Visuals:** Side-by-side comparison images (old vs. new interface, journey map evolution, etc.).
- **Impact & Reflection:** Note measurable results and what you learned.

By thoughtfully organizing your portfolio using these elements, you'll demonstrate not only your design thinking expertise, but also your ability to communicate, collaborate, and deliver results-qualities that set top candidates apart.

8. Job-Ready Templates

Landing a role in design thinking requires documents that not only showcase your skills, but also communicate your ability to empathize, solve problems, and collaborate. Use these templates and tips to present yourself as a standout candidate-whether you're applying for jobs, networking, or updating your professional brand online.

8.1 Resume Highlights for Design Thinking Roles

- **Professional Summary:**
 - Empathetic problem solver with hands-on experience in user research, ideation, prototyping, and iterative testing.
 - Proven track record of delivering user-centered solutions in cross-functional teams.
- **Key Skills:**
 - Empathy Mapping
 - User Interviews
 - Brainstorming & Ideation
 - Low-Fidelity Prototyping
 - Usability Testing & Feedback
 - Collaboration & Facilitation
- **Relevant Experience (Sample Bullets):**
 - Led a team to redesign a mobile banking app using design thinking, resulting in a 25% increase in user satisfaction.
 - Conducted over 15 user interviews and synthesized findings into actionable insights for product development.

- Facilitated ideation workshops, generating over 40 concepts for new healthcare solutions.

8.2 Cover Letter Starter

Dear [Hiring Manager],

I am excited to apply for the [Role Title] position at [Company Name]. My approach to problem-solving is deeply rooted in design thinking—a process that starts with empathizing with users and ends with solutions tailored to their needs. During my recent project at [Previous Company], I led a multidisciplinary team through user research, prototyping, and testing, which resulted in measurable improvements for our clients. I look forward to bringing my collaborative mindset and creative energy to your team.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

8.3 LinkedIn “About” Section Example

Design thinking enthusiast with a passion for creating intuitive, human-centered experiences. I thrive at the intersection of empathy, creativity, and strategy—applying user research, rapid prototyping, and iterative improvement to solve complex challenges. My background includes leading cross-functional teams and delivering transformative results across healthcare, fintech, and education. Let’s connect to explore innovative solutions together.

Keywords for ATS Optimization

- Design Thinking
- User-Centered Design
- Empathy Mapping
- Prototyping
- User Research

- Ideation
- Usability Testing
- Iterative Development
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Cross-Functional Collaboration

Incorporate these keywords naturally throughout your documents to improve visibility in applicant tracking systems and increase your chances of landing interviews for roles where design thinking is valued.

9. Bonus Tools & Checklists

To strengthen your design thinking practice and streamline your workflow, this toolkit also includes a selection of bonus tools and checklists. These resources can help you organize ideas, clarify project priorities, and ensure you're staying aligned with stakeholders and users throughout the process. Below are some of the key bonus materials included, each with a description and example of how to use them effectively:

9.1 Problem Prioritization Matrix

- **What it is:** A visual tool for assessing multiple problems or challenges based on factors like impact and feasibility.
- **How to use:** List all the problems facing your project or team. Place each on a matrix with axes such as "Impact" versus "Effort Required."
- **Example:** During a product redesign, the team uses the matrix to rank potential features for improvement. Quick wins (high impact, low effort) are prioritized first, while more ambitious changes are scheduled for later phases.

9.2 Stakeholder Mapping Template

- **What it is:** A template for identifying all individuals or groups with an interest in your project, and understanding their influence and needs.
- **How to use:** Draw a map placing stakeholders (such as users, clients, team members, sponsors) according to their level of influence and interest. Note any specific needs or concerns.
- **Example:** A healthcare startup creates a map to keep track of patient advocates, physicians, funders, and tech partners, ensuring communication strategies are tailored to each group.

9.3 Journey Map Blank Template

- **What it is:** A framework for mapping out a user's experience step by step, from initial contact to final outcome.

- **How to use:** Fill in the steps your target user takes when interacting with your product or service, noting their emotions, questions, and potential pain points at each stage.
- **Example:** When revamping a public transit app, designers build a journey map to chart a commuter's path from home to work, spotting where confusion or frustration may occur and brainstorming targeted improvements.

9.4 Facilitation Checklist

- **What it is:** A step-by-step list to help facilitators plan and run effective design thinking sessions.
- **How to use:** Before your workshop, review the checklist to ensure you've prepared materials, defined objectives, set the agenda, and established ground rules. During the session, use it to stay on track and encourage participation from all attendees.
- **Example:** Before a brainstorming workshop, a facilitator consults the checklist to confirm room setup, printouts of templates, and activities that promote inclusion-helping the team generate creative, actionable ideas.

These bonus tools and checklists are designed to be flexible and adaptable for any project. Use them as needed to boost clarity, collaboration, and creativity throughout your design thinking journey.

Conclusion

Design Thinking isn't just a method-it's a mindset that empowers anyone to understand people more deeply, solve problems more creatively, and build solutions that genuinely matter. Whether you're a beginner experimenting with your first empathy map, a professional strengthening your product or business strategy, or a career-switcher exploring a new path, the steps in this toolkit give you everything you need to get started with confidence.

By using the worksheets, practising the five stages, building your portfolio, and applying real-world techniques, you'll develop the skills to collaborate effectively, think innovatively, and bring ideas to life. Remember: Design Thinking is iterative-every project, test, and lesson makes you stronger.

Your journey starts with curiosity. Keep learning, keep experimenting, and keep designing solutions that make a difference.

CERTIFIED DESIGN THINKING PROFESSIONAL

Certified Design Thinking Professional Elevate Creativity and Innovation with Human-Centered Design



ABOUT GSDC CERTIFICATION



LIFETIME VALIDITY

GSDC Certification is an globally accredited certification with lifetime validity.



EBOOK

Extensive and exclusive Ebook created by world's experts to help you with understanding core concepts.



CREATED BY EXPERTS

GSDC certifications are created and authored by world's leading experts in the field.



LEARNING MATERIALS

Get access to learning materials such as videos, ebooks, templates, and practice exams, which will help you clear the certification exam.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Demonstrate understanding of the design thinking process and principles
- Showcase proficiency in applying design thinking methodologies
- Assess empathy and needs identification skills

Enroll now with the code **LEARN20** To avail **20%** discount

Enroll Now



www.gsdccouncil.org