

Introduction

The Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) was launched by President of the United States Barack Obama as a signature effort to invest in the next generation of African leaders. The need to invest in grooming strong, results-oriented leaders comes out of the statistics: nearly 1 in 3 Africans are between the ages of 10 and 24, and approximately 60% of Africa's total population is below the age of 35.

The YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa, located at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya serves 14 countries in East and Central Africa: Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. The Center is overseen by Deloitte East Africa and is supported by a growing number of African and international partners.

Selected participants between the ages of 18 and 35 engage in innovative leadership training across three tracks of study: (1) Business and Entrepreneurship, (2) Civic Leadership, and (3) Public Management by immersing themselves in a 12-week format (three weeks of residential learning on-site at the Center in Nairobi, eight weeks of virtual distance learning via technology from your home country, and a final week on-site at the Center in Nairobi for wrap-up and presentations). During the program, participants in their chosen track are required to contribute individually and in teams to an interactive and experiential education course through project-based development and achievement.

Group Projects (Design Challenge)

As part of the participants eight weeks virtual learning, we invite organizations that are involved in the three thematic areas: Business & Entrepreneurship, Civic Leadership and Public Management to work with the participants to solve a challenge that the organization needs to overcome. We call this a Design Challenge because it needs to solve the challenge(s) that the organization is experiencing in order to adequately meet their stakeholders', clients' or customer's needs. Our participants are provided with the tools and knowledge on how to approach this Challenge during a two-day program on Design Thinking which is a Human Centered approach to innovation.

The Design Thinking program collaboratively engages program participants using the following steps: **Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test.**

Empathize is the process where program participants work to fully understand the experience of the customer. This is done through observation, interaction and immersing themselves in the users product or service experience.

Define is the process where findings from the empathy work are used to form a user point of view that will be addressed with the design.

To ideate, participants come up with several 'big ideas' to solve the customers challenge.

Prototype refers to transforming one big idea into physical form so that one can experience and interact with the proposed solution.

Testing involves trying out the prototype with the intended customer segment(s) to learn what works and what doesn't, and modifying the prototype based on feedback received until it is fully refined and ready to execute.

Below is a step by step guide on the Design Challenge Process

- a) Inter-country groups are formed within tracks (5-6 teams per track)
- b) A Design Challenge is presented during week one by a technical advisor(s) from the organization that has a challenge. This typically takes an hour and a half including the Q&A session.
- c) Contact information is provided to each team for a) the technical advisor(s) from the organization presenting the challenge and b) process advisor(s) from the Center's facilitators
- d) Groups are provide with tips by the Center's facilitators on how to approach their design challenges.
- e) Design challenges are integrated into the courses conducted during the week to build a connection between the challenges and the overall learning objectives.
- f) Groups work remotely during the eight weeks of virtual learning to conduct research and agree on the basic elements of the solution to the design challenge. They can reach out to the technical or the Center's facilitators at any time for assistance.
- g) Participants return for Week 12 and work within their teams to develop a presentation on their solution to the design challenge. Process advisors are on site to assist them in finalizing their solutions and structuring their presentations.
- h) Participants receive coaching in presentation skills.
- i) Organizations are invited to come back to the Center and analyze the teams' presentations. If they find any of them viable, they are free to engage the team(s). These presentations will normally take two hours.