LOS ANGELES INNOVATION TEAM
Designmatters Fellowship
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Hi, I’m Ajay.

I am a Graduate student in the Transportation Systems and Design program with a vested interest in Social Design and Aerospace. I aspire to explore and inculcate empathy within large, complicated systems and design human experiences back in. However, this was not always true.

Prior to entering the graduate program, I had an Engineering Bachelor’s degree in Electronics and Telecommunication from India. I decided to shift my career into design soon afterwards while working freelance for a year. Like all other students in Transportation, I came here to sketch cars and make beautiful designs. But Art Center opened my eyes to a greater purpose for design. It gave me the skills to step into the shoes and understand the need of the users and I soon realized the impact design can have in people’s lives and was filled with so many questions and things to explore.

The Los Angeles Innovation Team provided me with an incredible opportunity to put these skills to use and help to bring a change.
The Innovation Team (I-team) was established in the summer of 2015 as a ‘start up’ with a grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies as part of their Innovation Teams Grant Program. Los Angeles was one of fourteen cities selected in December 2014 to participate in Bloomberg Philanthropies Innovation Teams (I-team) program. The program improves the capacity of cities to design new approaches to service delivery that improve citizens lives. The Bloomberg grants allow mayors to hire and fund Innovation Teams for up to three years. These teams function as in-house innovation consultants, moving from one mayoral priority to the next, using Bloomberg Philanthropies’ data-driven, user-centered methodology.

The Los Angeles I-team’s first priority focused on inclusive neighborhood revitalization, and resulted in the successful implementation of a portfolio of initiatives to reduce residential and business displacement and strengthen neighborhoods. The team was asked to apply the Bloomberg City Hall Innovation Methodology to develop initiatives that would help address displacement of businesses and residents and changing neighborhoods.

In addition to creating robust programs in 2016, the team has helped to advance the innovation culture across the Southern California and Western region as the pioneers of the West Coast Innovation Network and through programs they have lead with IDEO and for their work with Los Angeles’ Innovation Week. The team has also already raised over $1M from a variety of public and private sources to support their programs in year one.

The Mayor has now directed the I-team to focus on a new priority: Building a Workforce of the Future.
MEET THE TEAM

From Left to Right: Amanda Fowler, Karli Stander, Vikram Jadhav, Ajay Menon, Tanya Pineda, Amanda Dafios, Bora Shin, Alex Pudlin, Jane Chung
My experience with the L.A. I-team started a whole 2 days prior to my official joining date. I had the absolute pleasure to join them and all the other teams to the West Coast Innovation Convening in Santa Monica. Numerous teams from cities around the U.S. came together on this day to collectively grapple with the most pressing challenges facing cities around the world, and to learn from each other and other leaders about promising solutions to those challenges.

This was my very first exposure to the I-team work culture. The most meaningful takeaway was the importance of meeting with other i-teams. Meeting others who were navigating some challenges that are similar allows for an exchange of new ideas and tools for achieving our goals. It was very helpful in reinvigorating each team’s passion for what they are trying to do for their city. And for me, it also meant meeting dozens of enthusiastic new faces in a single day!

1. All the I-teams are instructed on how to participate in the empathy workshop
2. Common Brainstorming sessions
3. Feedback sessions
4. I-team members engrossed in brainstorming
5. Prototyped ideas and their description
When I first arrived at the L.A. City hall, I knew that I would be tasked with using my design and research skillset to support their ongoing project focused on enabling the Los Angeles Police Department to build a workforce to meet 21st century demand, but beyond that I wasn’t sure what to expect, having never worked in government or the public sector. I wondered how I would fit in as a designer.

Thankfully I had an amazing group of colleagues who instantly made me feel not only like a welcome member of the team, but a valued one. Everyone did their best to fill me in on what had been going on. It was a lot to take in all at once and I spent my first few weeks trying my best to absorb as much information as I could, all while adapting to city hall culture and surviving on Hot Chocolate!

It was a whirlwind of staff meetings, new faces and names, site visits, government terminology, and presentations. It took some time, but eventually I settled into the team and felt like I was finally able to keep up and understand what was going on.

1. Exterior view of the L.A. City Hall
2. The L.A. I-team working together
3. The L.A. I-team work environment
The I-Team tasked me with using my design and research skillset to support their ongoing project focused on enabling the Los Angeles Police Department to build a workforce to meet 21st century demand that is diverse, flexible, and engaged in the community it serves. The I-team had already been working together on the project for nearly four months. During that time they had met with hundreds of LAPD officers and Personnel all across the city and had compiled an extensive amount of research on the recruiting and hiring structure of the LAPD as well as their retention.

The four defined challenge areas of research were as follows:

- **RECRUITMENT**: How might we design an outreach to best attract ‘ideal’ candidates to join LAPD?
- **HIRING**: How might we design a service that provides a customer experience that meets the needs of both the ‘ideal’ candidates and the stakeholders?
- **RETENTION**: How might we develop the LAPD brand that can continue to strengthen departmental values that both the officers and candidates want to be a part of?
- **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**: How can we cultivate communities, where officers want to serve and residents want to support?
The I-team was created to provide Los Angeles with a method to address structural barriers and deliver change to Angelinos. Using Bloomberg Philanthropies’ tested, successful Innovation Delivery approach, the I-team enables the City to take ideas through development all the way to implementation and provides the Mayor with assurance in the ability to develop and implement effective solutions for the highest-priority problems.

This rigorous research process is laid out in great detail in Bloomberg’s City Hall Innovation Team Playbook. In this process, an emphasis is placed on:

- Commitment to data
- Careful exploration of what has worked before
- Space and techniques to generate new ideas
- Structured project and performance management
- Engaging internal/external partners, stakeholders, and champions

After reading the playbook, I noticed many similarities between Bloomberg’s process and that which I have been taught in Art Center. I realized that I had already acquired valuable first-hand experience in implementing a Human-Centered Design research methodology through various academic projects, which helped prepare me for the kind of work I would be doing during my Fellowship with the I-team.

I was even able to use my personal experience to help my colleagues better understand this process, which was a way of thinking and working that was totally new for some of them.
## MAINTAINING THE STAKEHOLDER LIST

My first day on the job, the team gave me the task of researching and maintaining a list of Stakeholders for the project which involved identifying and documenting the names, point of contacts, background and general demographics of various stakeholders, categorized broadly into 4 categories – Recruitment, Hiring, Retention and Community Engagement.

### LAPD Recruitment to Hire Process (Stakeholder Groups)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Stakeholders - OGD</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Description / Relation to Category</th>
<th>Primary LG - General Items</th>
<th>UG 2. Extreme 1</th>
<th>UG 2. Extreme 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting Officers from R.E.D</td>
<td>R.E.D (Recruiting and Employment Division) LAPD</td>
<td>Sgt. Cozad leads recruitment team for LAPD, works with Capt. Hamilton and Issa Mays</td>
<td>LAPD officer unit who conducts in-person recruiting and canvassing at cultural events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth from Early Recruitment Program</td>
<td>Rascal (J.O.P. (Deputy Auxiliary Police)</td>
<td>LAPD program is similar to the Cadet program, BHP is geared toward boys aged 13 through 15 years, yet girls decline after admittance as early as first grade. At the age of 13 they are encouraged to join the Cadet Program. The J.O.P. program allows children to participate in activities that instill a sense of community pride, self discipline and leadership ability in an overall positive environment. This program is supervised by Police Officers.</td>
<td>The Rascal program acts as a feeder for the Cadet Program. Children of age 8-13 years, some decline after admittance as early as 4 year old.</td>
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<td>Cadet Program (Youth Programs - Cadet)</td>
<td>Targeted to 13-20 year olds, the Cadet Leadership Academy is a life skills training program intended to help identify young people's life potential and help strengthen relationship between LAPD and LA youth. Program is 10 consecutive Saturdays.</td>
<td>Potential future Cadets who would apply to become LAPD officers. Also measure the effectiveness of the Cadet Program in motivating the youth towards community engagement and policing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Police Orientation and Preparation Program (POP)</td>
<td>Recruitment for rising 10th grade students who complete the police orientation and preparation program (POP). Students are then open to LAPD as well as other law enforcement/security fields/organizations</td>
<td>Potential police for the LAPD. Measure the effectiveness of the POP program. Data comparison between students enrolled versus LAPD recruits.</td>
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A snapshot of the stakeholder list
After creating and updating the Stakeholder List, the I-team tasked me with creating fictional user profiles that represents various stakeholders. Each profile included the name and personal info of the stakeholder, a description, goals and motives as a person, their barriers, pain-points and needs throughout the process and possible outcomes.
Participated and helped the I-team in conduct Design Workshops for brainstorming new methods and research tools for documenting our interviews, observation and research. Students from ArtCenter College of Design were invited for the workshop.

1. Ajay Menon and Karli Stander brainstorming
2. Teams presenting their findings and ideas
3. Group discussion and reflection over the ideas presented
Supported the I-team in Shadowing LAPD candidates giving their Personal Qualification Essay (PQE) and undergoing Oral Prep Seminar and Physical Ability Test (PAT) at the City of LA Personnel Department. My role was to document the process by photos, videos and taking down detailed notes and later digitizing it.

1. Personnel staff conducting Physical Ability Test
2. LAPD officers conducting the Oral Prep Seminar
3. Equipment used by the Personnel Staff
Supported the I-team by attending the Police Science and Leadership course taught in the Police Academy, Elysian Park. My role was to document the process by photos and taking down detailed notes and later digitizing it.

1. Academy students watching a video in class
2. Outside the Police Academy Classroom buildings
FOCUSED GROUP RESEARCH

Supported the I-team in conducting a focus group research with students of Pierce Community College in Woodland Hills. My role was to help my colleagues conduct various research activities, take notes and later digitize the results.

1. Students participating in Focus Group Activities
2. Bora Shin posting the answers on the wall
3. Post-its on the wall
I was especially tasked to lead the I-team in ideation and brain-storming sessions throughout my fellowship. I was responsible for coming up with numerous activity games and ideating methods to help the I-team flush out tons of ideas and concepts and later document them.
Designed various options for the Budget Cover for the year 2017-18 as a side projects which was assigned to me. I also got the exposure of working with numerous city employees in the process.
SIDE PROJECTS – DESIGNING SIGNAGE FOR STATE OF THE CITY EVENT

Designed all the direction signage for the State of the city event at the City Hall.
SIDE PROJECTS – DESIGNING AN ART INSTALLATION FOR STATE OF THE CITY EVENT

Designed an interactive Art Installation for the Mayor’s State of the City event.

1. The I-Team with the installation I designed
2. Alex Pudlin posing in front of the installation during the State of the City event
Helped the Sustainability team with updating the 2nd Annual Report design. Also became a proud member of the City Family!
Casual events like the Ice-cream event was refreshing and ice-breaking time for the I-Team, LAPD and MOBI.

1. Left to Right: Ajay Menon, Captain Hamilton, Karli Stander, Brian Buchner
2. LAPD, Personnel staff and City Employees having a casual discussion over ice-cream.
The Gender Equity Event held at the University of Southern California.

1. State of Women and Girls Address and Young Women’s Assembly
2. Goodies for the young girls laid out on the table before the event.
CONCLUSION

It was a great privilege to work and learn from such highly motivated and spirited people who aim to make the City of Los Angeles the best it can be. I am so grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with a group of intelligent and passionate people with very different skill sets than my own and work within the multiple dimensions of city government. Their enthusiasm and passion for innovation and change was contagious and it instilled in me a sense of civic pride. I had a great experience and have grown to love the people of Los Angeles.

I am walking away from this Spring realizing that government work is a uniquely positioned leverage point for doing socially impactful work unlike any other commercial, private, non-profit or social enterprise. This spring opened my eyes to the possibility of working in the civic sector and the change design thinking can bring to the table.

I will definitely miss this team and the work we were doing and I will look anxiously as they work to effect change in the City of Los Angeles.
L.A. CITY HALL FAMILY
Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

There are a great many people to thank for making my spring so professionally and personally fruitful.

Thank you to all of my amazing colleagues and friends on the Los Angeles Innovation Team and in the L.A. City Hall. Their work ethic and dedication will always be an inspiration to me in the future.

A big shout out to my M.O.B.I family:
Amanda Daflos, Karli Stander, Bora Shin, Vikram Jadhav, Alex Pudlin, Amanda Fowler, Tanya Pineda, Jane Chung, Thao Nguyen, and Araceli Garcia and the entire O-Team

Special thanks to my mentor Sarah Lidgus for all of her support and invaluable insight. Our conversations were one of the highlights of my Fellowship and really helped me get through some of the challenges I experienced.

Thanks also to Susannah Ramshaw, Dr. Marianna Amatullo, Jennifer May and the rest Designmatters and ArtCenter team for giving me this terrific opportunity to learn and grow outside of the studio walls.