

Reigniting Innovation Culture at Dementia Care Startup Tembo Health

[Tembo Health](#), an AgeTech Collaborative™ from AARP portfolio company, experienced rapid growth in its early years that led to a shift in strategy. With this evolution came cultural friction, where innovation began to feel siloed and limited to certain teams. Concerned that this was stifling creativity and new ideas, Tembo Health engaged the [AgeTech Collaborative](#) Design Thinking team to reinvigorate its culture of innovation and empower staff at all levels to contribute to future-forward thinking.



1

Gauging Staff Perceptions

The Design Thinking team started by fielding an anonymous survey to understand how staff perceived innovation at Tembo Health and to surface potential challenges. While employees generally viewed the company as moderately innovative, hierarchy and unclear processes were cited as common obstacles to moving ideas forward.

2

Shaping a Targeted Workshop

Based on the survey findings, the team developed a 5-hour in-person training workshop focused on aligning participants around a shared definition of innovation and introducing practical mindsets and behaviors that support creative thinking across roles.

3

Introducing Core Innovation Behaviors



FRESHNESS

Seeking new internal and external stimuli to disrupt thinking and help inspire new ideas



GREENHOUSING

Nurturing others' ideas to help them grow until they are ready to be judged



EMPATHY

Relating to and understanding the people you are creating for, their needs, and what drives their decisions



SIGNALING

Setting clear expectations around the intent of the session and the required mindset, either expansive (open-minded) or reductive (evaluative)

4

Applying Tools Through Hands-On Exercises

Through hands-on activities, role playing and case studies, participants were introduced to a suite of tools designed to support the innovation framework and reinforce the behaviors introduced during the session.

Outcomes

The training helped spark early shifts in how innovation was discussed and practiced across the Tembo Health team. Participants began using a shared language around innovation and demonstrated greater awareness of behaviors that support creative thinking. The session laid the groundwork for ongoing culture change by introducing practical tools and mindsets that staff could apply in their day-to-day work.