

ARKANSAS MATERNAL HEALTH COMMUNITY HACKATHON

Community-led design for reproductive justice in Arkansas

A free, public one-day event for forming connections that build community-led solutions to address the maternal health crisis in Arkansas

Bree McMahon, Assistant Professor of Graphic Design, University of Arkansas

Alison Place, Assistant Professor of Graphic Design, University of Arkansas



PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Addressing the Maternal Health Crisis in Arkansas

While the maternal mortality rate in the United States continues to rise, maternal health in Arkansas is uniquely in crisis. Data shows the state faces major inequities related to access to quality care and resources.

As designers, we sought to use our position to bring our community together and start a conversation about this significant issue.

The Maternal Health Community Hackathon was held in May of 2023. This free, one-day event brought participants from across the state together. We prioritized designing a comfortable space that would meet a variety of needs.



imagine a future where
every person in Arkansas
can have a safe, dignified
pregnancy & birth



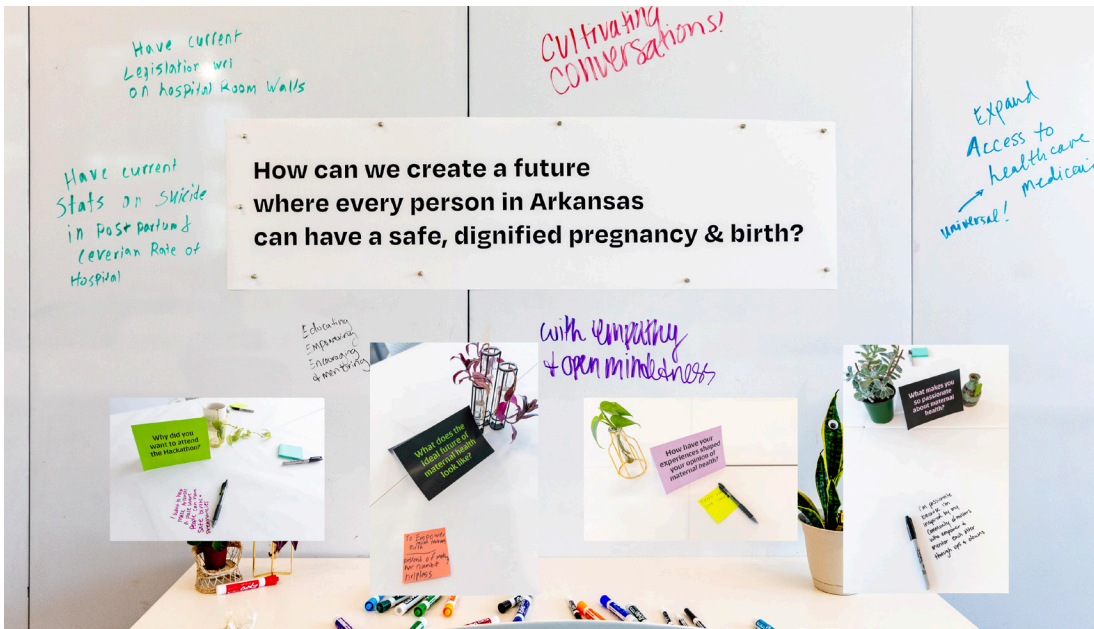


EVENT + PROGRAMMING

Planning and facilitating an event for practitioners, parents and designers with a wide range of experiences and specializations

Nearly 100 people registered for the event, and 72 of them attended. Attendees included parents of all genders, birth workers, nurses, doctors, midwives, doulas, public health experts, legal experts, policymakers, journalists, designers and artists. Funding was provided to cover travel and lodging for attendees who came from other areas of the state.

Programming was focused on framing the maternal health crisis and encouraging conversation. The day's events included two keynote speakers and an advocacy session on how to talk to legislators about maternal health.



EVENT + PROGRAMMING

Planning and facilitating an event for practitioners, parents and designers with a wide range of experiences and specializations

In addition to speakers and sessions, we also screened a documentary by Every Mother Counts, a national organization devoted to maternal health. Another space was dedicated to resources and tabling with local organizations. Many participants used this space for networking. A yoga session was held in the morning and the event included free childcare.

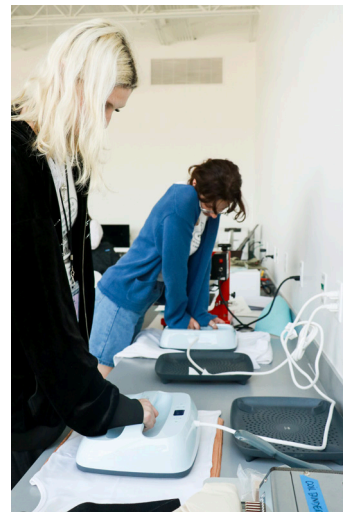




COLLABORATIONS

Creating opportunities for designers to bring clarity to complexity

A highlight of the event was the collaborations that formed supported by various activities and an on-site makerspace. We encouraged participants to form teams to address specific problems related to maternal and infant health. Volunteer designers worked with a number of different practitioners and organizations to help them develop strategy to address goals.





OUTCOMES

Looking toward the future and cultivating lasting connections

We were overwhelmed by the positive feedback we received following this event. Participants found it incredibly meaningful simply to be provided a supported space to work and be together. Many requested that the event be held annually. We are looking forward to growing our relationships with the community and continue developing participatory design opportunities concerned with the complex and uphill battle toward reproductive justice in the South.

We also produced a short documentary about the Hackathon, which can be viewed by clicking the link below:

[Click to view documentary](#)

