

Design It For Us

Product Testing: 2026 Pilot

Innovator Circle
by **DESIGN IT FOR US**

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WHAT IS THE INNOVATOR CIRCLE?

The [Innovator Circle](#) is a first-of-its-kind community empowering innovators who are building human-centered competitors that challenge Big Tech's dominance. It brings together founders and builders who understand that safety, privacy, and human well-being are not tradeoffs; they're good business. The Innovator Circle is powered by Design It For Us and deeply integrated into our youth-led movement for tech accountability. By joining forces with Design It For Us, Innovators, founders, and youth leaders will champion pro-human products, build public power, and drive cultural demand for better products to thrive

PRODUCT TESTING OVERVIEW

Design It For Us works to support greater competition in the tech ecosystem and foster innovation that upholds the rights of young people online. To achieve this, we offer members of our [Innovator Circle](#) the unique opportunity to have their products tested and receive valuable feedback directly from young people.

Our product testing initiative creates a bridge between innovators and the young people who use their products. By establishing avenues for users to provide direct feedback, we help designers better understand how to build products that support the rights and wellbeing of young people, as guided by our [Designed For Us Rubric](#). Developed by our coalition, this rubric is a rights-based framework to evaluate digital products and their impact on youth users.

Additionally, through product testing, coalition members are able to build relationships with designers and founders, strengthen their ability to develop critical feedback, and gain a sense of agency in the future of technology.

PRODUCT TESTING PILOT

In June 2026, we ran our first product testing initiative, evaluating [Tribela](#) and [Sparkable](#) – two alternative social platforms in Design It For Us' Innovator Circle, built with safety and privacy at their core. Over two weeks, product testers engaged with both apps, developed thoughtful feedback, and spoke directly with the founders to share their insights.

Product testers engaged with these apps just as they would on any social media platform — including creating accounts, posting, reacting to content, and spending time on the app daily. Their feedback draws on their lived experience growing up online, and considers both their personal preferences as well as DIFU's Designed For Us Rubric.

WHAT KIND OF FEEDBACK DID OUR COALITION OFFER THE INNOVATORS?

"The main insight I shared with the innovator was the importance of messaging and how that can influence a user's experience on the app. Especially if your audience is younger, it's crucial that you craft your messaging alongside the target user so it comes across as authentic."

- Ally P., Design It For Us member

"I believe one of the most important insights I shared was my concern about the toxic positivity that can be inherent in the site's design. While a more positive social media would be great, we still have to deal with the issues of the real world, which are not always feel-good."

- Aiden M., Design It For Us member

"The product is wonderfully simple, but it currently lacks a social spark. I told the innovator that without that community feel, it is hard to stay connected. Adding features like shared spaces or direct interactions will keep users coming back."

- Stephanie A., Design It For Us member

INNOVATOR IMPACT

Through product testing with Design It For Us, Innovator Circle members told us they:

Gained insight into how young people engage with and view their product

[Through feedback, we learned] “having more control over the experience/the feed would be truly valuable innovation.”

- Vardon Hamdiu, Sparkable

“Walking testers through the platform, demonstrating key features, and observing how they interacted with the product provided insights that would have been difficult to gain otherwise.”

- Natalie Boll, Tribela

Identified opportunities to improve usability, accessibility, and overall user experience, and tested new features and concepts before broader rollout

“Two areas that stood out were the language used throughout the platform, particularly moderation-related messages such as ‘your content is being reviewed,’ and the daily affirmations feature. Testers provided useful feedback on how these messages and features were perceived and how they affected the overall user experience.”

- Natalie Boll, Tribela

“Testers’ feedback reinforced our new approach of focusing on prosocial reactions and user control first, and then adding bridging-based ranking.”

- Vardon Hamdiu, Sparkable

Incorporated changes to ensure their products better meet the needs of young users

“We have already begun updating some of the platform language based on the feedback received. Our goal is to make moderation messages clearer, more user-friendly, and better aligned with the overall experience we want to create.”

- Natalie Boll, Tribela

"[We are] reprioritizing user control as the most important feature to work on." Additionally, we are "adding [a] top-right X button to click away content, with an optional short follow-up questionnaire to add info about why you clicked it away. Clicks on the X button will serve as [a] negative signal for the bridging-based ranking later."

- Vardon Hamdiu, Sparkable

Connected with a coalition of young people to continue building products that ensure the safety and wellbeing of young users

"Testers were engaged, thoughtful, and honest in their feedback, which helped validate several aspects of the platform while identifying areas for improvement."

- Natalie Boll, Tribela

"Speaking with Vardon, he acknowledged my concerns, and we discussed ways to expand the [pro-social reaction buttons] and invite meaningful discussions under contentious topics."

- Aiden M., Design It For Us member

YOUTH IMPACT

Through product testing with Design It For Us, coalition members told us they:

Gained a sense of agency in shaping the future of technology

"Getting the opportunity to provide feedback and actually see those insights be implemented gave me a sense of agency that I hadn't experienced before. It gave me a lot of hope for the future of tech innovation and reminded me how important it is to truly center your user in product design."

- Ally P., Design It For Us member

"The product testing session made me feel less alone in my experience with these products and also made me feel inspired knowing that someone was trying to change it. I also felt like I was being a part of the change, giving me a sense of urgency and hope."

- Samantha S., Design It For Us member

"[Participating in product testing] really changed how I view tech design. I used to think apps just came fully formed, but now I feel a real sense of agency. It showed me that user input is exactly how we prevent technology from feeling isolated and cold."

- Stephanie A., Design It For Us member

Learned that healthier tech isn't just possible, it's already here

"[Product testing] made me realize that it is possible to make healthier social media, since we don't have to be complacent with current design features. Just because an app has been a staple for so long doesn't mean we can't change it up."

- Aiden M., Design It For Us member

Connected directly with the designers and innovators driving change

"Participating in product testing was cool because I got to...hear the stories of the innovators, which was very touching and helped me see how widespread the effects of social media really are."

- Tanvi N., Design It For Us member

CONCLUSION:

Through product testing, Design It For Us provides innovators the opportunity to gain thoughtful, critical feedback to improve the safety, privacy, usability, and connectivity of their products. Simultaneously, product testing offers young people the ability to provide feedback to the very designers building emerging technology, directly in service of a better digital future.

Design It For Us is continuing to expand our product testing initiative, helping create the conditions for alternative social media platforms to thrive.

To get involved or learn more about Product Testing, reach out to info@designitforus.org.

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