

4. REDESIGN THE SYSTEM

1. GET THE SYSTEM IN THE ROOM

Shared Measurement Systems
 Has the group identified a common way of measuring success and assessing progress?

The Compelling Challenge
 Has the group articulated a common challenge that it wants to work on together?

The Engagement Process
 Has the group defined a collaborative process for engagement to address the challenge?

The Guiding Team
 Is there a guiding team who wants to take responsibility for the success of the whole system? Have the key roles been defined and filled: co-convening leadership, key stakeholders, content experts, process facilitator(s)?

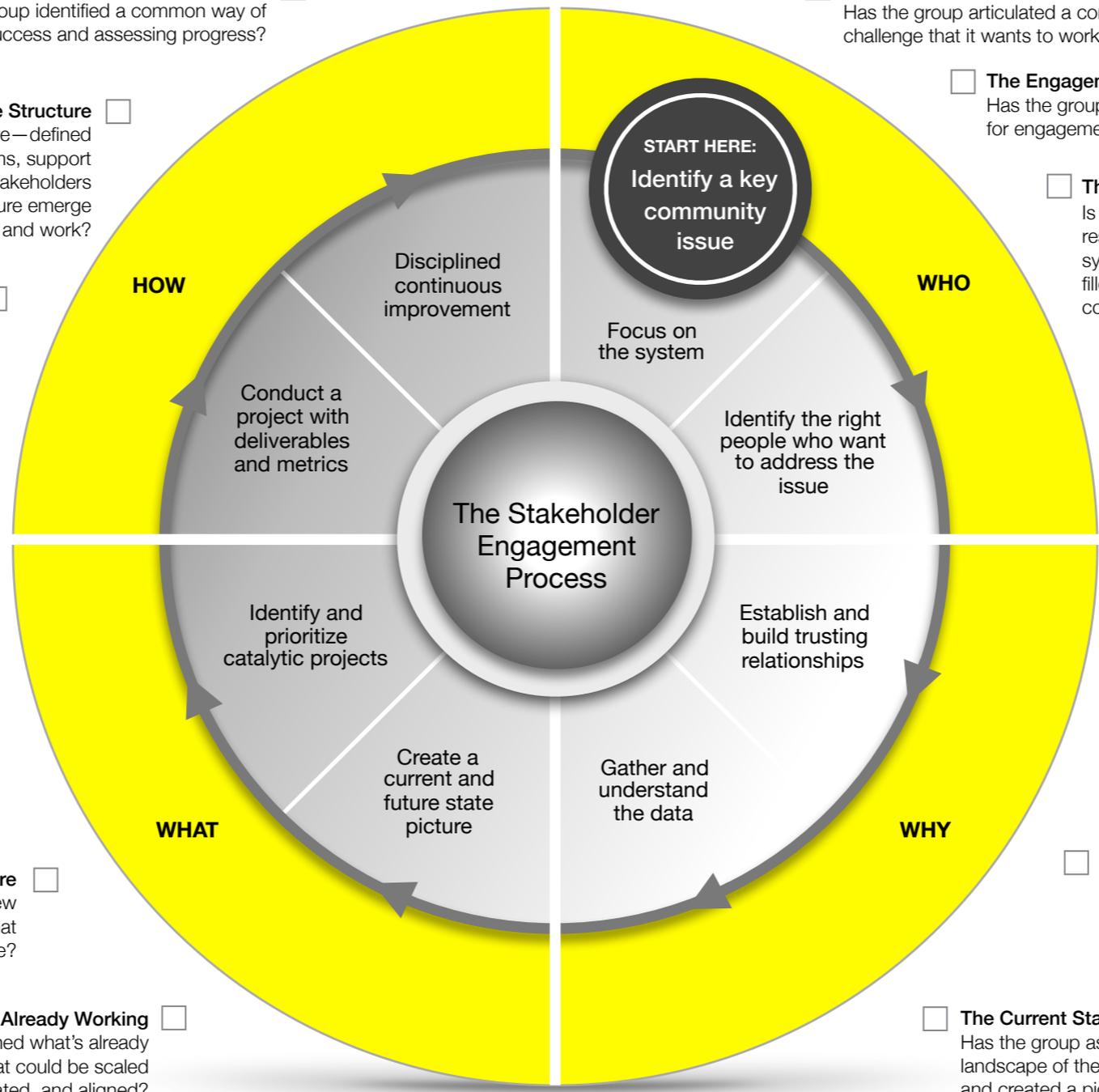
The Key Stakeholders
 Have the key stakeholders been identified? Have the key relationships been mapped out and made visible to all stakeholders? Is there a strategy for levels of engagement?

2. HELP PEOPLE SEE THE SYSTEM

The Shared Outcomes
 Have the stakeholders defined the shared outcomes they expect to achieve and the strengths and capacities they bring to the table?

The Information and Data
 Has the group gathered and shared information and data about the challenge? Do they have a shared understanding about the information?

The Current State
 Has the group assessed the current landscape of the existing work underway and created a picture of the system as it is today—the “system on a page”?



The Collaborative Structure
 What is the structure for the collaborative—defined customers, guiding team, working teams, support organizations, etc.? Are all of the stakeholders aware of the structure? Did the structure emerge from the context, relationships, and work?

A Common Agenda
 Has the group developed a coordinated and aligned work plan, including resources, that visually depicts how the shared outcomes will come to be realized?

3. CO-CREATE SOLUTIONS TOGETHER

Mutually Reinforcing Actions
 Is there a portfolio of projects that offer a combination of substantive short-term wins, as well as more ambitious, long-term systemic strategies that may not show impact for several years?

Co-Creating the Future
 Has the group identified and prioritized a few high-level things they could do together that no single organization could do alone?

What's Already Working
 Has the group determined what's already working well in the system that could be scaled up, connected, coordinated, and aligned?

THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS is both a way of thinking and a defined way of working together. It creates a kind of “community operating system” that guides and shapes a conversation among a diverse group of stakeholders and provides a common language and a common approach that enables people to collectively address problems at a whole-systems level.

PRINCIPLES: A WAY OF THINKING

Systemness: It’s a systems thing, not a single thing.

A social system is made up of the interrelated components of people and groups organized around a clearly defined purpose or goal. Making the parts of a system better doesn’t guarantee that the system as a whole will be better. What truly matters is how the parts interact with one another. Yet it is our normal preference to “solve” problems by improving the parts, rather than to reform and redesign the system itself. By redesigning a system, it’s possible to “dissolve” a problem by changing the underlying conditions that caused it in the first place.

Relationships: Transforming a system is about transforming relationships.

A system is a set of relationships. The “system” is the way we work together. Transforming a system is ultimately about transforming relationships among people who shape the system. It’s everyone’s responsibility to understand how these relationships work and how they can be judiciously balanced and shaped over time to fundamentally change the way people work together.

Process: Redesigning a system is a social process; the process is the solution.

Transforming a system requires a well-structured approach for building trusting relationships through which stakeholders can develop a shared understanding of the system and develop a shared commitment to co-create solutions together. A disciplined stakeholder engagement process is both a way of thinking and a defined way of working together. It creates a kind of “community operating system” that guides and shapes a conversation among a diverse group of stakeholders and provides a common language and a common approach that enables people to collectively address problems at a whole-systems level.

Leadership: Complex systems demand a different approach to leadership.

Systems are composed of both parts and the interrelationships among them, and each of these aspects must be tended to in very different ways. Accordingly, complex systems are best served by two complementary styles of leadership that act in concert. Organizational leadership works on improving the parts of a system (efficiency). Collective leadership works on developing the relatedness of the whole toward the essential purpose of the system (effectiveness). And because complex systems cannot be controlled, there must be a willingness to take responsibility for the well-being of the whole by operating in service, rather than in control.

How do the four principles relate to and complement one another?

How do you solve a complex social problem?

↳ You dissolve it by redesigning the underlying system that’s causing the problem.

How do you redesign a system?

↳ By transforming relationships among those people who shape the system.

How do you transform relationships?

↳ Through well-structured processes that help people work together in new ways.

What kind of leadership is needed?

↳ Complex systems demand two complementary styles of leadership that act in concert: organizational leadership (efficiency of the parts) and collective leadership (effectiveness of the whole)

PRACTICES: A WAY OF WORKING TOGETHER

Focus on the System

- Dissolve a complex social problem by redesigning the underlying system causing the problem in the first place
- Name, define, and scope the system
- Identify the essential purpose or aim of the system

Who: Get the System in the Room

- Form a guiding team whose collective leadership will ensure the effectiveness of the whole system
- Define and agree upon the process of engagement and the timeline for working together
- Start with the “who”: Identify and map the stakeholder relationships that most shape the system. Use the map to convene the stakeholders over time and “get the system in the room.”

Why: Help People to See the System

- Next, create a shared understanding of the system by asking “why.” Ask the group: Why is the system currently producing the outcomes that it is?
- Collect information from the stakeholders about the work that is underway (primary information), as well as the existing data about the current state of the system (secondary data)
- Create a current state picture so people can “see” the system

What: Co-Create Solutions Together

- Move to the “what” by asking: What are the system-level things we could co-create together that no one organization could do alone? What outcomes should the system be producing?
- Identify and prioritize a few catalytic “system redesign” projects

How: Redesign the System by Changing Ways of Working Together

- Come full-circle by considering the “how.” Ask: How will we coordinate the work? How can we change the way we work together? How will success be measured? How can our work together be sustained?

Repeat: Continuously Improve the Work and the Process Itself

- Repeat the process. In the spirit of continuous improvement, prepare to unfold the stages of the process again by examining what went well and what needs further work. Notice how the process provides a disciplined way of having a collective conversation that evolves along with the system itself; it simultaneously shapes both the beliefs and the behaviors of the stakeholders within the system.