

Thinking in Systems – Addressing Core Challenges to Community Well-Being

Worksheet

The community challenge I'd like to address today is:

Empathy Questions

1. How do the people encountering the challenge feel about it? Why is that? Do they agree it's a challenge?
2. What are your hunches about the challenge? (surface preconceptions)
3. What is working for the people having the challenge? (start from strength)
4. What's not working for them? (identify gaps in knowledge and other resources)
5. What might I observe when I put myself into their situation?

How are people in the situation doing what they are doing? Does it require effort? Is it a negative or positive experience?

Why are they doing what they are doing in the way they are doing it?

What might be their motivation or emotions?

Interviewees

6. Who might you talk with to better understand your complex, tenacious community challenge involving humans in Park County? (List them here)

Empathy Interview Questions

7. Tell me about a time when you felt like you really struggled until you understood something. When was that? What did you learn? Who helped you?
8. Tell me about how you feel when you see someone in your community struggling with (the challenge you identified). Is there ever anything that is in the way of your connecting with them?
9. Tell me about a place where trust feels missing in your life right now. How does that feel?

Stop and reflect: How might you frame a conversation with your customers using empathetic listening. How would it differ from sympathy or compassion?

10. How might you use the Five Whys to better understand your customers?
11. Where do you anticipate difficulty?
12. How will you manage it?

Adopting an empathetic inquiry mindset, consider your challenge:

13. What do you need to know?
14. Where do you anticipate difficulty?
15. How does the challenge make you feel? Why is that? Why is that?
16. Did you surface any underlying preconceptions of your own? What about limits?

Now apply these same questions to your interviewee(s).

Systems Mapping

17. Who needs to change (not who is to blame)?
18. What are the challenges and opportunities?
19. How are we responsible?
20. What is surprising?
21. How do we see things differently?
22. What are the new insights regarding problem persistence?
23. How might we deepen awareness? Cultivate acceptance? Develop alternatives?

Create a mind map of your responses.



Now conduct at least 5-6 empathy interviews. Be sure to take careful notes and record the interview if the interviewee is comfortable with it.

After Your Empathy Interviews: Themes

Look through your notes - Which of the data you collected name strengths? Resources or resource gaps? Bottlenecks? Organize your data by these four themes.

What other themes do you hear ALL the time in your work? Did you hear any of these themes in your interviews?

- Equity and agency
- Systems and processes
- Rules and regulations
- Public perceptions
- Technology
- Access and connectedness
- How stuff gets done
- At nonprofits: leadership and volunteers
- In the community: friends, family, community leaders
- Funding

Actors, Factors and Issues

24. Actors: Who is involved in the challenge? Who else is part of who we are or what we do as we address it? Who is contributing in either a negative or positive manner? (List them)

25. Factors: What are the facts - positive and negative - about our community and its conditions - what, when, where, how many?

What are the “facts” everyone accepts that just aren’t true?

26. Issues: What are the behaviors, policies and beliefs driving participant actions? (We will revisit these later, so be sure to make a thorough list)

Framing Questions

Write your own framing questions

27. What contributes to the positive aspect of the challenge?

28. Why have we been unable to change (a core condition of the challenge)?

Ideation: How might we...?

29. When we interviewed stakeholders, we learned:

30. We noticed these problems or challenges:

31. We think (this) might be helpful to try:

Ideation: Turning hunches into questions

Point of View Statement

We think the problem is

The Question Framework

How might we create ways to _____ (do this) so that _____

(this happens) while considering _____ (these important things)?

To do this, we really need to figure out _____ (this), _____ (this) and

_____ (this).

The How Might We Question

How might we _____ (do this thing) to help _____
(these people) solve _____ (this problem), so that _____
(this happens)?

Part Two: Responding to the HMW by using Systems Thinking to Drive Change

1. What are the patterns of behavior that contribute to the challenge?
2. What are the underlying policies and systemic structures?
3. How might health, education, or economic stability impacting behaviors be tied to beliefs? Whose beliefs? Can you take another perspective and consider that person's beliefs? What are the mental models that define the actors, factors and issues?

Root Cause Analysis

Using the fishbone model below, draw your own fishbone and conduct a root cause analysis of the challenge you selected. List your challenge in the circle to the far right. At the top and bottom of the fishbone diagram, list 5-6 of the core themes of the challenges you identified. In the spaces beneath (or above) them, break down these components into their contributing actors, factors and issues. Identify the actors, factors. And/or issues most likely to drive other changes if they themselves are changed. How might you go about changing them?

