



COLABS PRESENTS

Systems Collaboration Learning Guide

Your starter guide for cross-sector collaboration

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About This Learning Guide

As society faces more complex challenges, no single actor has a monopoly of ideas. There is a greater appreciation for cross-sector collaboration that builds upon the strengths of various collaborators. In Singapore, strengthening cross-sector collaboration and deepening partnerships are key objectives of forward-looking nation-wide initiatives, from Singapore Together (SG Together) to the ongoing Forward Singapore exercise.

However, collaboration isn't easy. Complexity grows when we collaborate with partners from different backgrounds and worldviews. From aligning on objectives to managing risk appetites across collaborators, there are numerous factors that can make or break a collaboration.

These are some of the discoveries from our Systems Collaboration Learning Lab, a 6-month learning series aiming to build collaborative muscles for parties involved in cross-sector collaboration in Singapore. We capture the key insights and collective wisdom from the 23 public and people sector participants in this Systems Collaboration Learning Guide.

Learn when to and when not to collaborate. Demystify collaboration by breaking it down into individual building blocks. Get a glimpse of how different sectors approach collaboration differently. Complementing this guide is the DIY Collaboration Toolkit which has all the templates you need to jumpstart your collaboration process.

There is no single way of doing a collaboration. The more you practise, the better you become in appreciating the finer nuances of this art. We hope this Guide will be a friendly companion to help you figure things along.

All the best!

CONTEXT
Systems Approach Helps Us Make Sense of Complex Issues

What are Complex Societal Issues?

In today's VUCAH world, we are surrounded by complex societal issues. While there is no single definition to them, these generally refer to issues that:

- Cut across multiple different domains
- Involve many stakeholders in society
- Are connected to many other inter-related issues and challenges

PLANNING FOR COLLABORATIVE ACTION | ALIGN | ESTABLISHING SHARED VISION & ALIGNMENT

Tool #7: Commitment Map

WHAT

- Following the Shared Vision, the Commitment Map facilitates deeper discussions on the benefits by each collaborator

WHY

- Makes explicit each stakeholder's motivation surrounding the collaboration
- While not a legal instrument, the document gauge the level of commitment across the

HOW

- Use the Commitment Map Template provided
- Start by sharing what everyone is willing to contribute, to make the collaboration a success

PLANNING FOR COLLABORATIVE ACTION | LEARN | MAP THE SYSTEM

Tool #3: Participatory Systems Map

WHAT:

- A **Participatory Systems Map** explores the interconnected web of causes and effects in the identified complex system
- **Leverage points** are the critical high-yield points in the Map that gives the greatest return to the system, produce ripple effects on other areas of the map, and potentially shift the needle on the complex issue.

WHY:

- The systems map allows all stakeholders to build on each others' views, identify blindspots, and co-create a richer and more holistic picture of their reality
- The most critical leverage points often uncover the root causes, and translate into opportunity areas for further action

HOW:

- **Decide on the focal problem**
 "Why, often despite our best efforts, have we been unable to achieve a certain goal or solve a particular problem?"
- **Invite views from different stakeholders**
 "What are the root causes and effects of each key variable/issues?"
- **Identify Leverage Points**
 Look out for key nodes with the most numbers of connections, and discuss which leverage points to prioritize to create the greatest impact on the system

Visualising the causes and effects encourages stakeholders to openly discuss the root cause instead of only addressing the symptoms.

THE INS & OUTS OF COLLABORATION

- Collaboration Is Not The Only Option
- Where Are We On The Collaboration Spectrum?
- Involving Stakeholders In The Co-creation Process





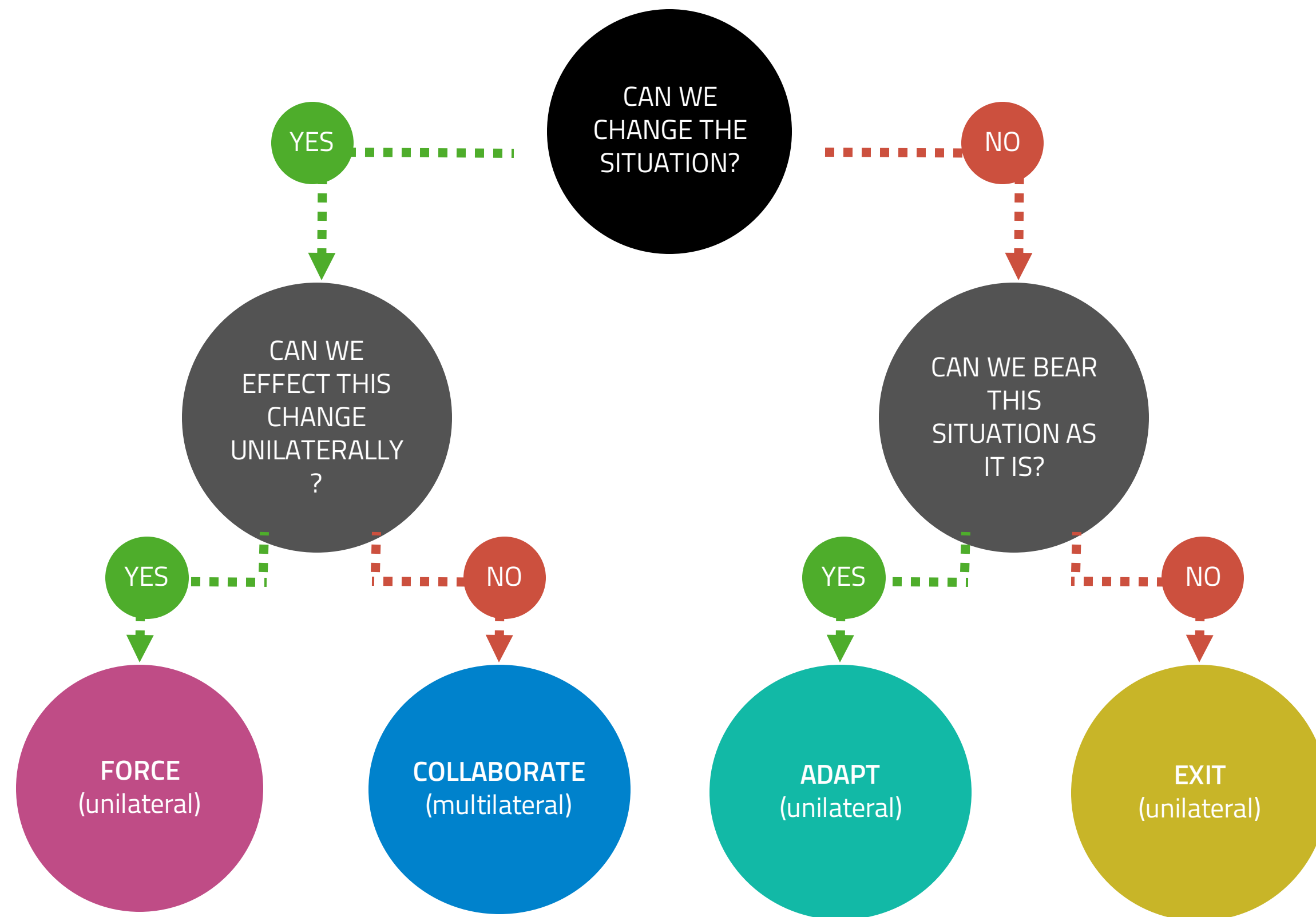
COLLABORATION

: from Latin *com-* "with" + *laborare* "to labor", "to work"

: the process of two or more people, entities or organisations working together to complete a task or achieve a goal.

WHEN NOT TO COLLABORATE

Collaboration Is Not the Only Option



Source: <https://www.strategy-business.com/collaboration>

“We can’t work out how to collaborate until we understand when to collaborate... Collaboration is not always our best option” (Kahane, 2018, p. 11), emphasis in original)

Do We Really Need To Collaborate?

In most cases, the intent to collaborate comes about in response to a situation that arises, that represents a break to the status quo. It might be an emergent threat or opportunity in the ecosystem, a new player, a change in direction.

In these instances, consider using this decision tree to guide you down various potential paths. Choose to collaborate when, and only when, we want to change the situation, and think that the only way to do so is by working with others.

Collaboration Is Always A Trade-off

PROS:

- Presents the opportunity to find a more effective solution together, and have a larger and more sustained impact on the existing situation

CONS:

- Can be time-consuming without generating immediate payoffs
- Does not guarantee that each organisation ‘wins’ and gets what they want
- Does not imply that all parties are able to compromise and come to an amicable agreement

WHEN TO COLLABORATE

Where Are We on the Collaboration Spectrum?

Low level of alignment & integration between stakeholders

High level of alignment & integration between stakeholders

Compete	Co-exist	Communicate	Cooperate	Coordinate	Collaborate	Integrate
Competition for clients, resources, partners, public attention	No systematic connection between agencies	Inter-agency information sharing (e.g. networking)	As needed, often informal interactions on discrete activities or projects	Organisations systematically adjust and align work with each other for greater outcomes	Longer-term interaction based on shared mission, goals; shared decision-makers and resources	Fully integrated programme, planning, funding, resources
Opportunity-focused	Awareness of others	Shared information & learning	Shared program or service	Shared program or service focus	Shared program or systems focus	Integrated outcomes — Programs or systems focus

Many organisations collaborate between these degrees

Increasing Investment, Risk, & Benefits



Before jumping into collaboration as the default mode of working together, we should carefully decide what form of partnership best meets your project needs, resources, and desired objectives.

The word 'collaboration' can be interpreted in several ways based on Tamarack Institute's Collaboration Spectrum. It is a continuum of different collaborative approaches.

Collaboration sits almost at the far end of the Collaboration Spectrum and requires fairly high levels of alignment and integration between stakeholders.

Source: [Tamarack Institute](#)

WHEN TO COLLABORATE

Involving Stakeholders in the Co-Creation Processes

Once we decide that collaboration is right for us, consider whose voice we need to have in the room, how they should be engaged, and when to bring them in. In particular, the service users (or “beneficiaries”) are often left out from the collaboration process. Here are some ways we can engage them.

INVOLVING USERS FOR...

Research And Validation

Where we see this:

- Most common model
- Used in projects, initiatives and interventions that employ a base level of ethnographic research and user testing

How the engagement looks like:

- End-users engaged at the start and end for the team to learn from, build for, and test the intervention with
- Use of basic design thinking and human-centred design

Potential dynamics:

- Least amount of friction
- Project scoping and product/service development is almost exclusively done by the working team of ‘experts’



Scoping, Research, Co-creation And Validation

Where we see this:

- Rarely used at present, but ideally the standard for complex-issue collaborations

How the engagement looks like:

- Stakeholders and beneficiaries are embedded into the working team as ‘experts’ of their own condition
- They take part in the entire process of a project, from scoping, to research, co-creation, testing and validation

Potential dynamics:

- Need to be sensitive to the needs of stakeholders from a minority or marginalised community, with special needs or who are differently abled
- Need deep consideration for the operational, logistical, moral and ethical perspectives
- Possible need for special training for the core team stewarding the collaboration

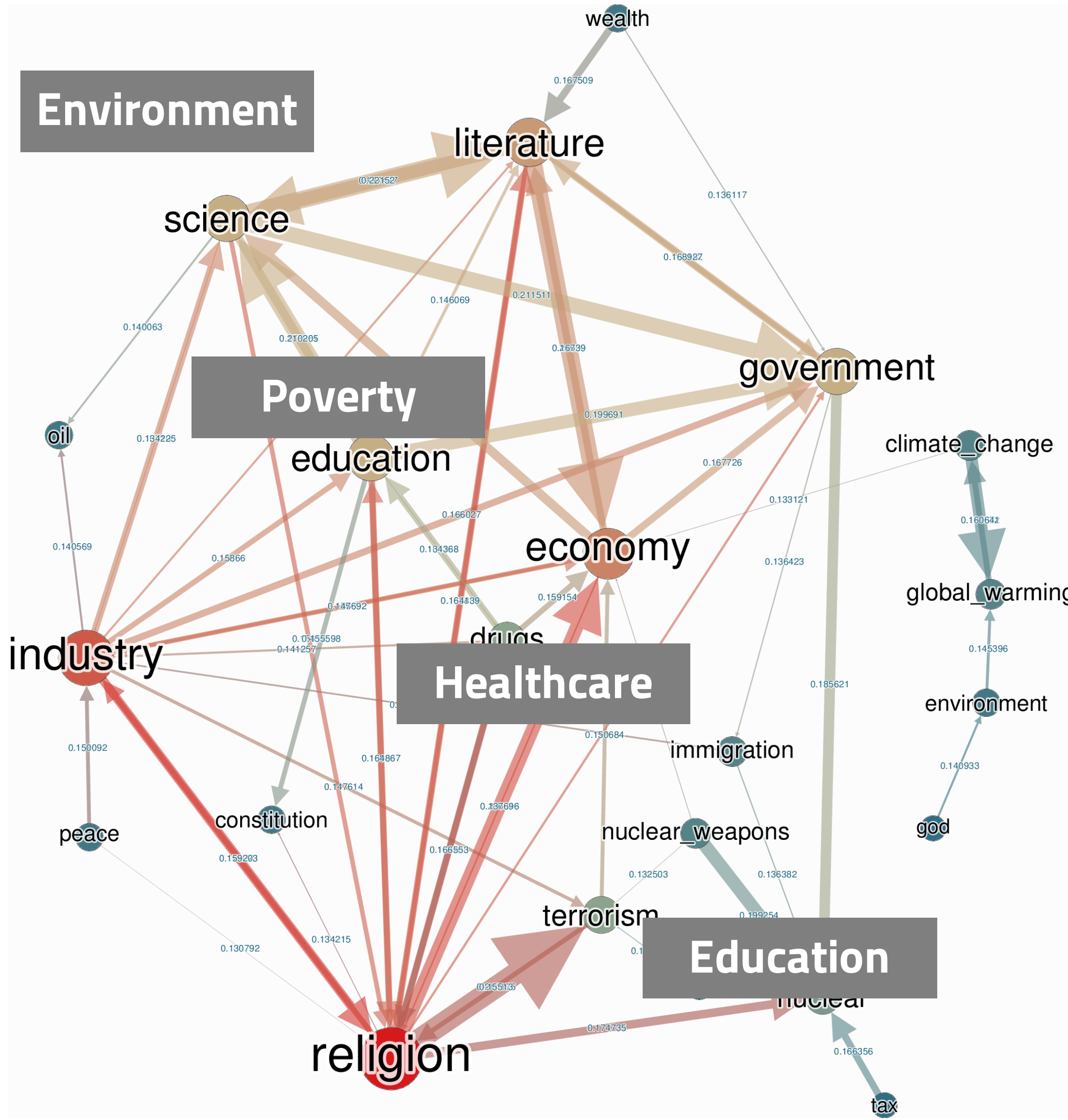


Do not neglect your end-users in the communities you serve! The earlier you involve your key stakeholders, the higher the chances of getting buy-ins and creating targeted interventions.

A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

- Systems Approach Helps Make Sense Of Complex Issues
- Systems Approach Facilitates Cross-sector Collaboration
- Challenges In Systems Collaboration
- Colabs As A Form Of Collaboration





Source: <http://home.uchicago.edu/~ishanu/statisticalcausality.html#n>

CONTEXT

Systems Approach Helps Us Make Sense of Complex Issues

What Are Complex Societal Issues?

In today's VUCAH (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous and Hyperconnected) world, we are surrounded by complex societal issues. While there is no single definition to them, these generally refer to issues that:

- Cut across multiple different domains
- Affect many stakeholders in society
- Are connected to many other inter-related issues and challenges
- Display non-linear cause-and-effect relationships
- Involve many different, even opposing, forces at play—including policies, initiatives, infrastructure, organisations pushing for different agendas
- Constantly changing and evolving; throwing new and unforeseen variables

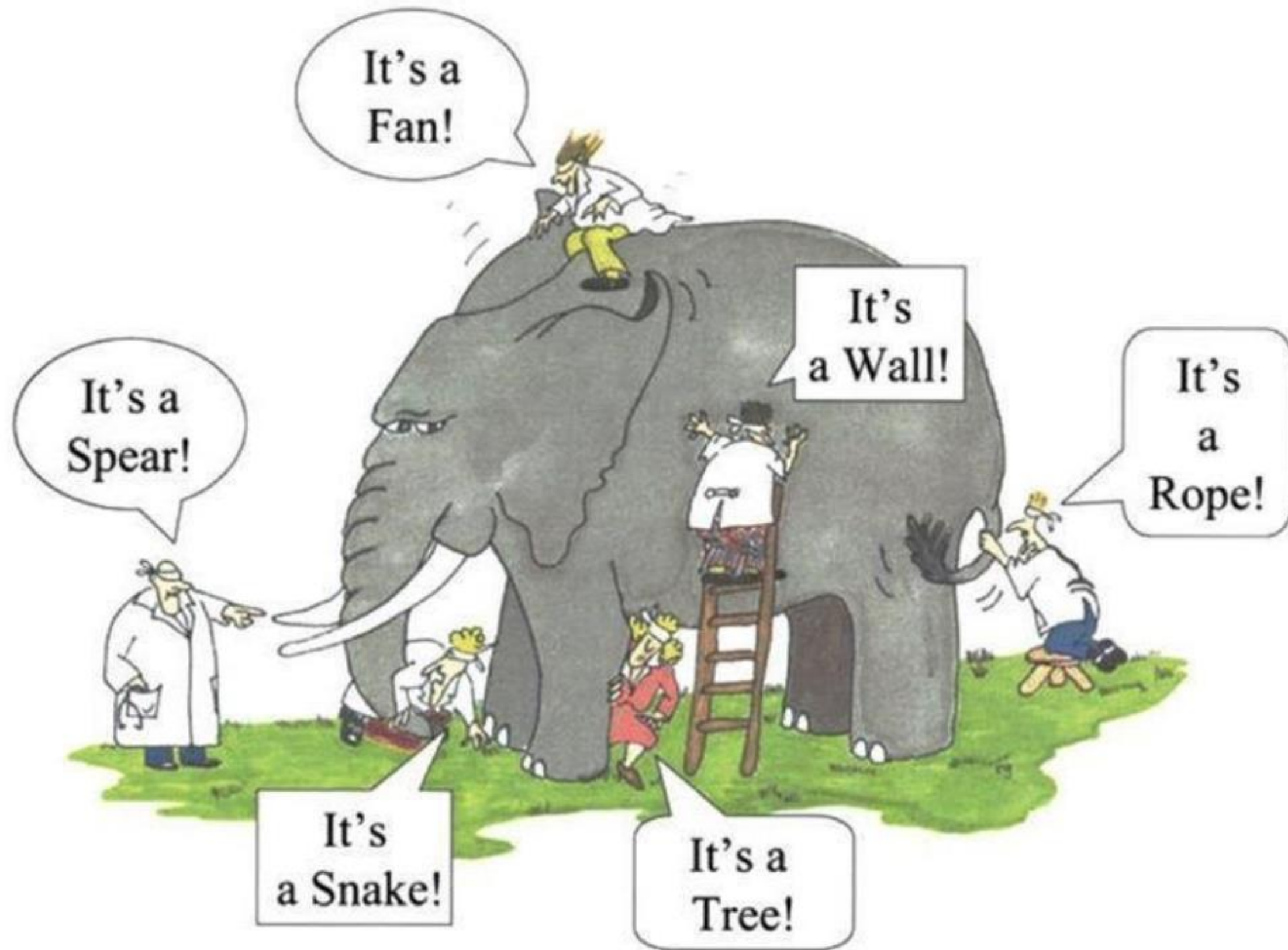
What Is Systems Thinking?

Systems thinking is "the ability and practice of examining the whole rather than focusing on isolated problems" (Senge, 1994. The Fifth Discipline.)

When we look at complex issues like Healthcare and Poverty from a systems lens, we begin to appreciate the interconnections of what previously seemed to be standalone issues. Each issue is typically a cause or effect of another issue that might seem distantly related. This also applies to actors and stakeholders within the ecosystem.

Systems tools and frameworks help us make sense of complex issues, by:

- Recognising patterns that keep us stuck in a vicious cycle or immobilised due to opposing forces
- Identifying leverages to come unstuck, develop a virtuous cycle, and build a generative system
- Mapping the positionality of stakeholders vis-à-vis each other, tracing their interdependencies, and pre-empting potential conflicts of interest
- Appreciating the systems' whole complexity to begin envisioning its potential improvements



Systems Collaboration is like the story of 'the blind men and elephant' where our individual perceptions can lead to miscommunication and conflict. They assume that they are all interacting with the *whole* elephant. However, they do not see that they are interacting with one piece of something bigger and more complex.



CONTEXT

Systems Approach Facilitates Cross-Sector Collaboration

What Is Cross-sector Collaboration

Systems thinking, when applied to collaboration, gives rise to a cross-sector, multi-stakeholder collaboration. As its name suggests, this simply refers to a more broad-based collaboration that involves multiple stakeholders who variously impact, and are impacted by, the complex issue.

Why Cross-Sector Collaboration

- Grow the body of knowledge from multiple perspectives for a more holistic understanding of the complex issue
- Pool knowledge, connections and resources for a more impactful collaboration
- Reduce strain on capacities within each organisation
- Increase chances of adoption of ecosystem-wide solutions, especially industry standards, policies, frameworks and best practices

Key Principles

- Be comprehensive: Draw the widest possible range of stakeholders to be comprehensive; be sure to include marginalised actors and go beyond the "usual suspects"
- Include end-users: Their lived experience and direct ground insight make them the ultimate experts
- All are equal: Pre-empt potential stakeholder competition and opposition by bringing them together as *equals* into a neutral collaborative space
- Collaborative intent: Seeing each other as potential allies and collaborators opens the path towards collective sense-making and systems-level actions

Challenges in Systems Collaboration

More decision makers. More diverse stakeholder interest. More potentially clashing norms and processes. Here are some of the ugly truths of systems collaboration, and how we might respond to them.

Short-term Thinking & Chasing Immediate Results

What causes it

- Pressure to 'do something' and demonstrate quick results

What it looks like

- Superficial quick fixes to plug the gap
- Going for 'obvious' low-hanging fruits
- Fragmented solution that may not fully meet the system's needs

How to respond

- Be prepared to constantly remind collaborators of the big picture
- Demonstrate (through systems maps) how the long-term, system initiative promises greater impact that can move the needle

Solutions Made For, Not With, Users

What causes it

- Collaborators do not fully understand the nuances of issues as they are experienced on the ground
- Privileging quantitative datasets over qualitative user research

What it looks like

- Root cause misdiagnosis
- Solutions are disconnected with the situation on the ground
- Unused interventions (programs/products/services)

How to respond

- Involve end-users as early as possible in co-creation process

Collaborators' Conflicts Of Interest

What causes it

- Natural consequence of diversity

What it looks like

- Different collaboration norms and approaches
- Different objectives, expectations and desired end results

How to respond

- Acknowledge and agree on potential tension points upfront
- Secure a strong commitment to collaborate for the greater good
- Agree on an overarching vision and identify the lowest common denominator that the conflicting stakeholders can agree on

Lack Of Structure, Accountability, And Commitment

What causes it

- Different levels of commitment (time and resources)
- Different objectives, mindsets, processes and systems

What it looks like

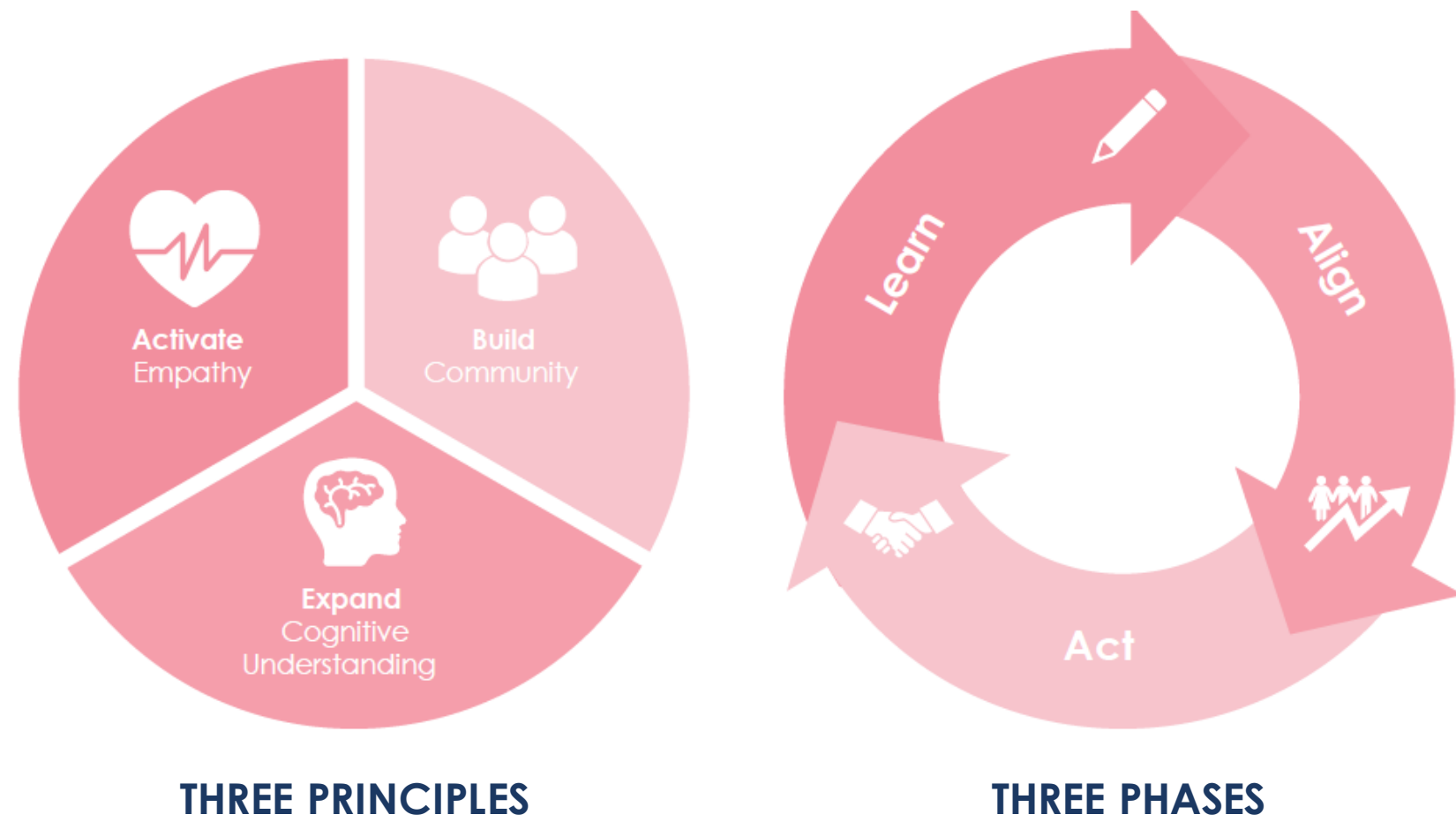
- 'Ghosting' or sleeping partners
- Ineffectual discussions, lack of progress

How to respond

- Clarify role and responsibilities upfront, preferably formalized through a written document for common reference
- Secure commitment from each stakeholder—both at the Principal/Executive and the working level



Colabs as a Form of Collaboration



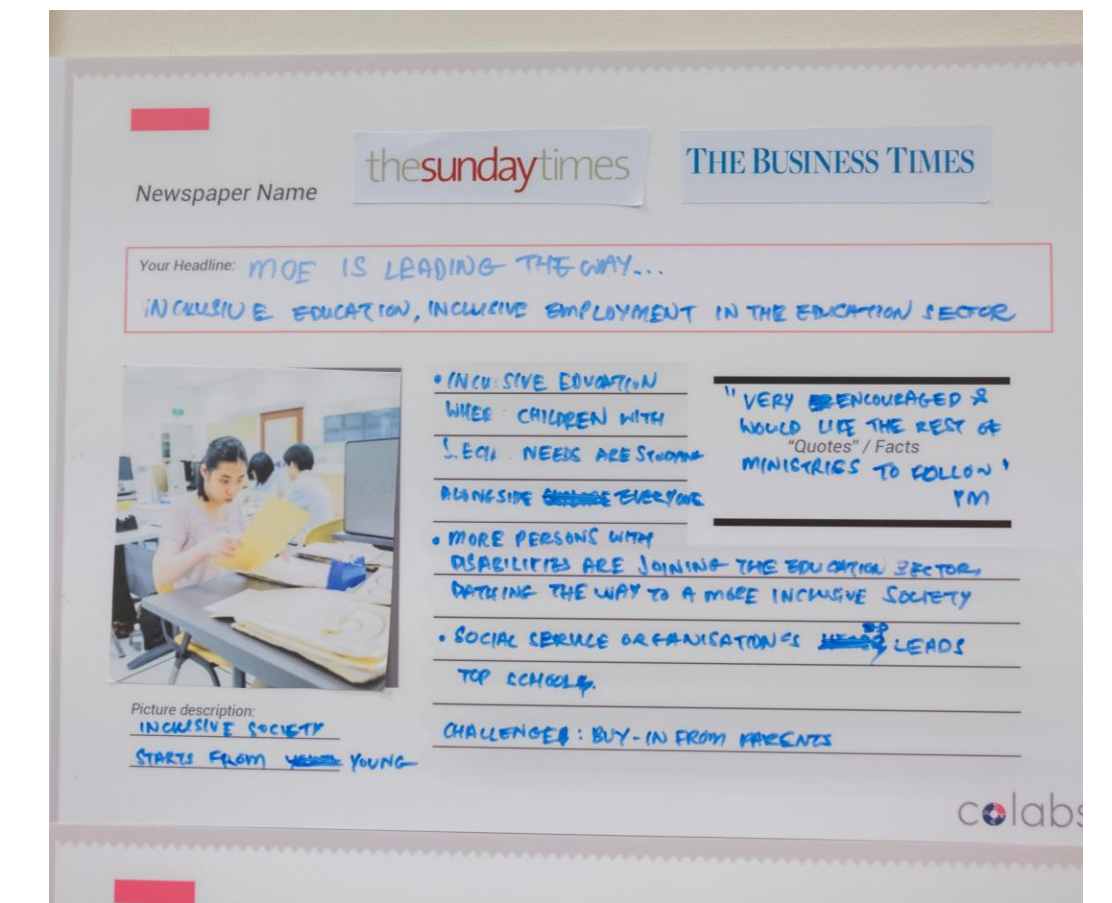
A Neutral Middle Ground

Colabs is an initiative by NVPC to provide a collaborative platform that brings multiple stakeholders together to explore complex issues, identify pain points and opportunities in the system, and create collaborative action for sustained impact.

Colabs uses the Systems and Futures Thinking approach to understand and break down the fragmented landscape of a social issue. By bringing people from different sectors and end-users into the room, it enables us to hear from diverse perspectives and experiences to give a holistic picture.

Learn, Align, Act

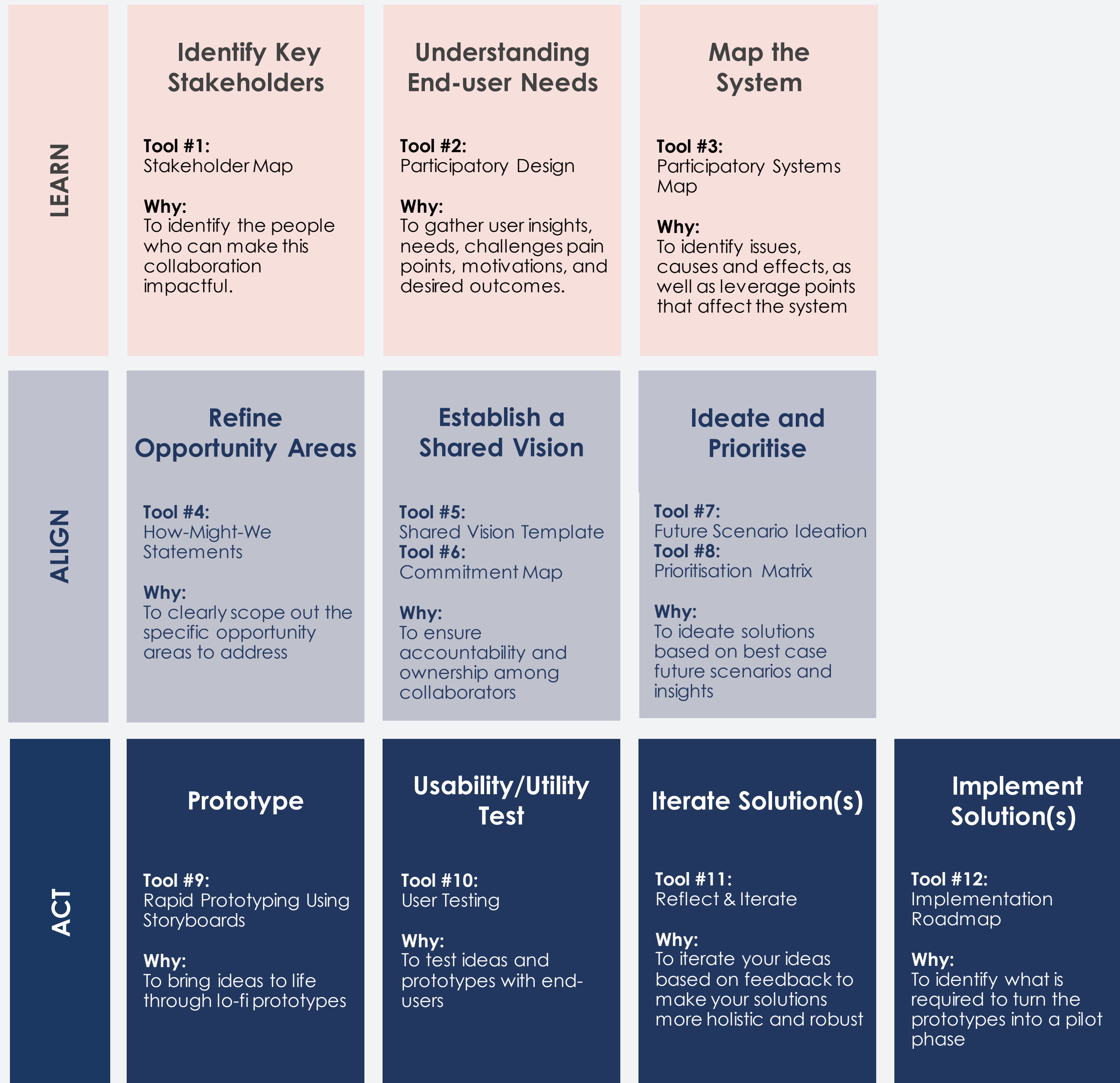
Rather than 'forcing' an action plan or defining workgroups from the outset, the Colabs model focuses on the journey of common learning and discovery. Colabs also believes that sustainable collaborative impact comes from seeding empathy, engaging cognitively, and building community. A community which co-owns the question and journeys together, naturally co-owns the solution.



PLANNING FOR COLLABORATIVE ACTION

- Overview Of The Collaboration Process





PLANNING FOR COLLABORATIVE ACTION

Overview of the Collaboration Process

There is no single way to 'do' collaboration. That said, the most impactful collaborations seem to follow a certain formula and flow.

Distilling the collective wisdom from our Learning Lab series, we offer this Collaboration Process Map. It is an intuitive, iterative flow that brings together the best practices from the systems, design and futures thinking.

Try them out and give your next collaborative project a leg up!



BONUS: Be sure to try out the suggested tools on our DIY Collaboration Toolkit board in the [Appendix!](#)

LEARN

Identify Key Stakeholders

Tool #1:
Stakeholder Map

Why:
To identify the people that can make this collaboration impactful.

Understanding End-user Needs

Tool #2:
Participatory Design

Why:
To gather user insights, needs, challenges pain points, motivations, and desired outcomes.

Map the System

Tool #3:
Participatory Systems Map

Why:
To identify issues, causes and effects, as well as leverage points that affect the system

LEARN: Hearing From The Source, And Hearing Widely

This section focuses on deep and broad-based Learning.

In our 'blind men and elephant' metaphor, this is the stage where all the blind men come together for the first time. They had lived in their own realities so far and became an expert in their respective views of the elephant. Now, they must adopt a learning mindset.

To make this stage a success, all collaborators need to be willing to cast aside their 'expertise' and be open to be challenged and confronted by new perspectives. It is helpful to set the ground rule of *equality*—that every voice is equal because all of us hold a piece of the puzzle. The only 'real expert' here is the community being served. They are the 'first among equals,' and we start the collaboration by inviting their realities to form the cornerstone of our process.

Even so, other individuals' learnings and ground perspectives should not be dismissed. The Systems Map brings together every collaborator's version of reality and traces the causality and connection among the various forces. The iterative Validation process further helps in identifying leverage points, opportunity areas and gaps within the system.





Why Start With Learning?



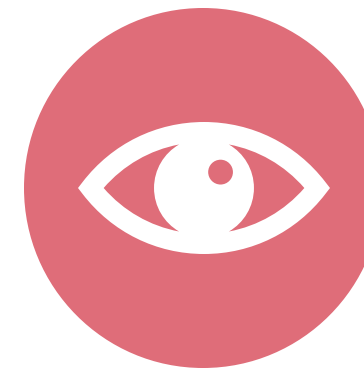
We get a rich understanding of various collaborators'...

- challenges
- frustrations
- motivations
- desired outcomes



We can clearly scope and align at the outset on...

- strategic objectives
- intended outcomes of the collaboration



We can accurately identify...

- expertise
- resources
- collaboration stakeholders to engage with to tackle the complex challenge(s)



We can get buy-in from...

- end-users
- ground practitioners
- funders
- regulators

LEARN

Identify Key Stakeholders

Tool #1: Stakeholder Map

WHAT

- A stakeholder map captures all the key actors (*internal and external*) involved in service delivery, process or challenge within the complex system
- The map is divided into primary (*main interaction*), secondary (*directly affected*), and tertiary (*indirectly affected*) stakeholders

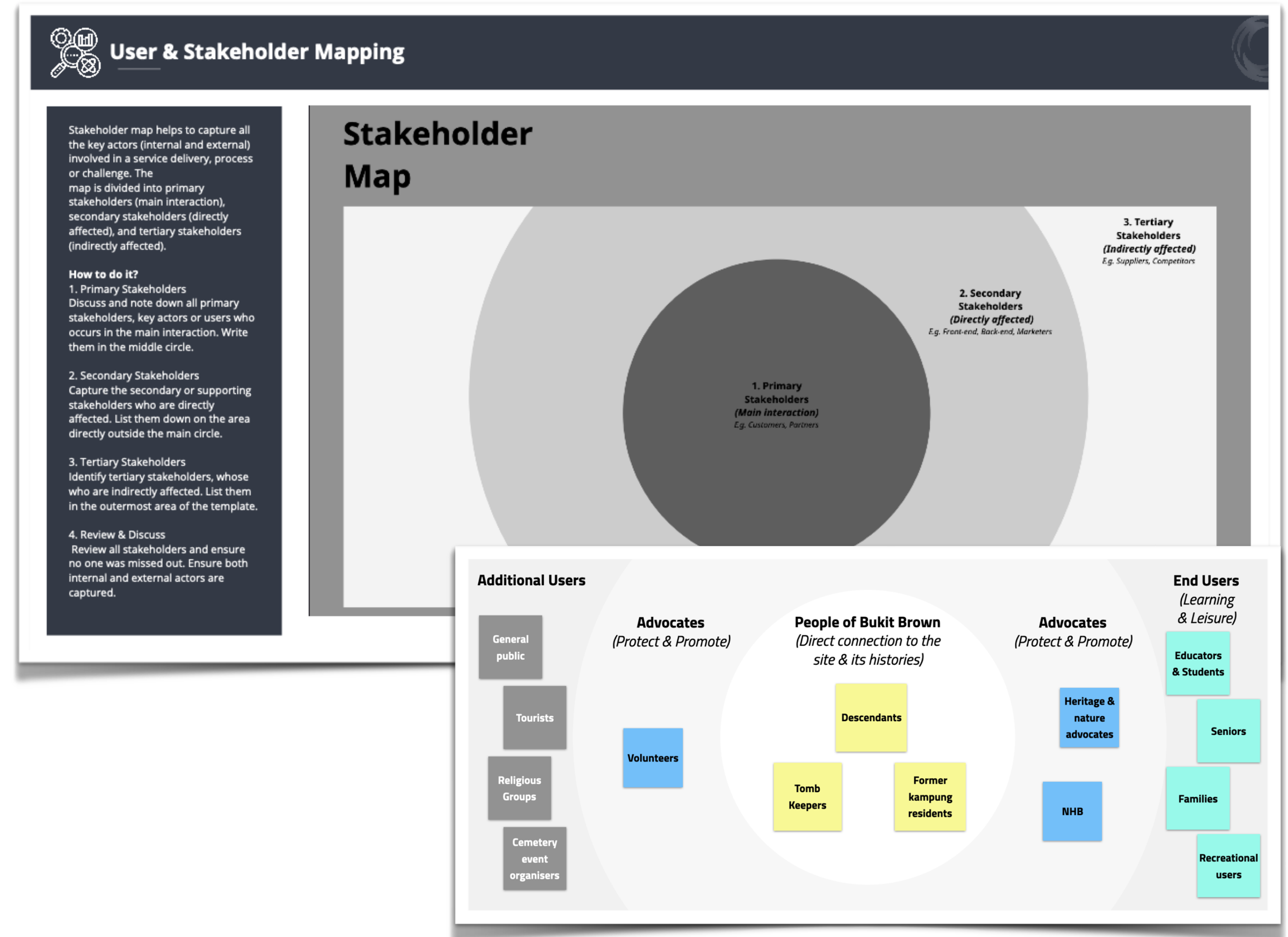
WHY

- Clarifies the roles and relationships of key actors
- Provides an overview of all stakeholders and identifies blind spots
- Map out potential supporters (e.g. sponsors) and detractors (e.g. regulatory hurdles)

HOW

- Follow the steps on the Stakeholder Mapping template in the [Appendix](#)

Engaging the end-users and stakeholders early provides the team with a grounded, user-centric lens to gain valuable feedback and insights to shape their project.



LEARN

Understanding End-user Needs

Tool #2: Participatory Design

WHAT:

- Participatory design is a creative and collaborative approach to design strategy that actively involves the relevant community throughout the design process
- End-users and key stakeholders join designers in research, ideation, and prototyping to create a solution that best meets their needs

HOW:

- Pick either one or a combination of the three approaches: OBSERVATION, ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWS, FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS
- Jot down your research notes in the template provided in [Appendix](#)



OBSERVATION

Be a “fly on the wall” and experience how users naturally act and behave in their environment



ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWS

Informal interview in users' natural settings to learn their perceptions, feelings and motivations



FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Moderate a group conversation to appreciate the diversity of responses around a topic of interest

LEARN

Map the System

Tool #3: Participatory Systems Map

WHAT:

A **Participatory Systems Map** explores the interconnected web of causes and effects in the identified complex system

- **Leverage points** are the critical high-yield points in the Map that give the greatest return to the system, produce ripple effects on other areas of the map, and potentially shift the needle on the complex issue

WHY:

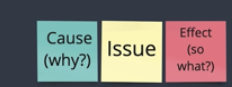
- The systems map allows all stakeholders to build on one another's views, identify blind spots, and co-create a richer and more holistic picture of their reality
- The most critical leverage points often uncover the root causes, and translate into opportunity areas for further action

HOW:

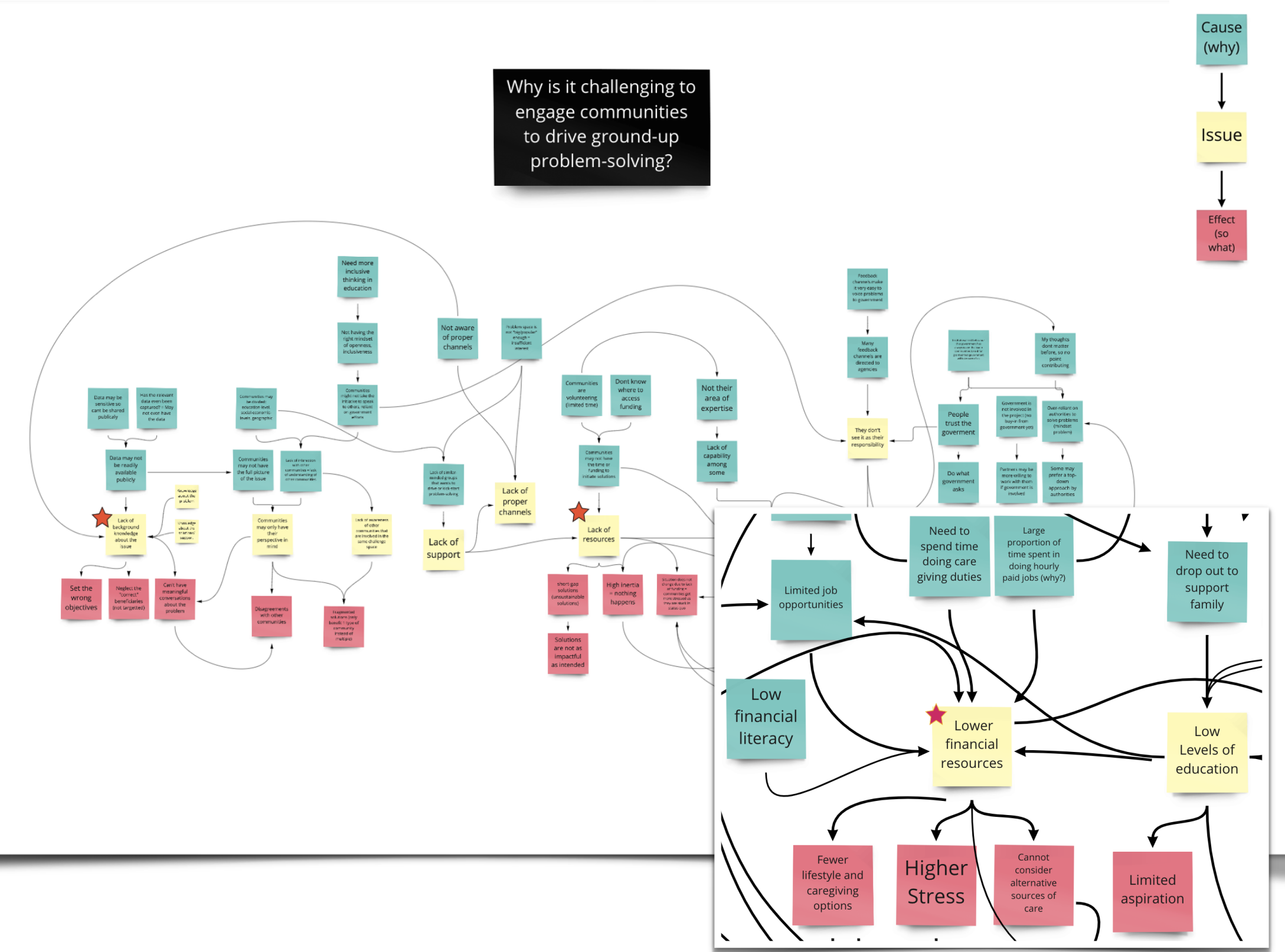
- **Decide on the focal problem**
 "Why, often despite our best efforts, have we been unable to achieve a certain goal or solve a particular problem?"
- **Invite views from different stakeholders**
 "What are the root causes and effects of each key variable/issue?"
- **Identify Leverage Points**
 Look out for key nodes with the most numbers of connections, and discuss which leverage points to prioritise, creating the greatest impact on the system


Participatory Systems Map

- How to do it?**
- 1) Define the challenge statement/focus area in the black post-it.
 - 2) Based on your team's collective knowledge and experience, list out the issues (challenges) on yellow post-its that is related to your challenge statement.
 - 3) Identify the root causes for each issue (green post-its) - Try to dig deeper into the root causes (2-3 layers deeper) by asking "why" questions.
 - 4) Based on your team's collective knowledge and experience, list out the downstream effect(s) of each issue on red post-its.
 - 5) Create a systems mapping by identifying causal relationships between different factors and variables that contribute to the problem.
 - 6) Start to draw connections (arrows) between different issues, root causes, and effects - e.g. 1 cause can lead to multiple issues, 1 issue may have multiple effects, 1 effect may lead to other issues.
 - 7) Listen to the input by other participants in your group: New variables and factors should be added into the map, with new relationships and linkages.



Why is it challenging to engage communities to drive ground-up problem-solving?



 Visualising the causes and effects encourages stakeholders to openly discuss the root cause instead of only addressing the symptoms.

ALIGN	Refine Opportunity Areas Tool #4: How-Might-We Statements Why: To clearly scope out the specific opportunity areas to address	Establish a Shared Vision Tool #5: Shared Vision Template Tool #6: Commitment Map Why: To ensure accountability and ownership among collaborators	Ideate and Prioritise Tool #7: Future Scenario Ideation Tool #8: Prioritisation Matrix Why: To ideate solutions based on best case future scenarios and insights
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ALIGN: Rallying Around A New Emergent Vision

This section focuses on building alignment.

If we do the Learn stage well, we will have a wide range of perspectives out on the table. Collaborators will start getting glimpses of the whole elephant, which will challenge their existing views.

This shift (in some cases, *overhaul*) of perspective can be both enlightening and scary. Some collaborators might react defensively, and others may push back aggressively. A few might even abandon the process altogether.

The key emphasis of Align is to co-create a clear, coherent and compelling common vision so that all collaborators feel compelled towards moving in the same direction.

Here, we shift from what was and is (through the user research), to what can be (visioning and scenarios). Tools such as How-Might-We Statements and Scenarios seek to push our boundaries beyond the present constraints, while the Prioritisation Matrix helps us to funnel them based on a common criterion of a best-case scenario.





Tool #4: How-Might-We Statements

WHAT:

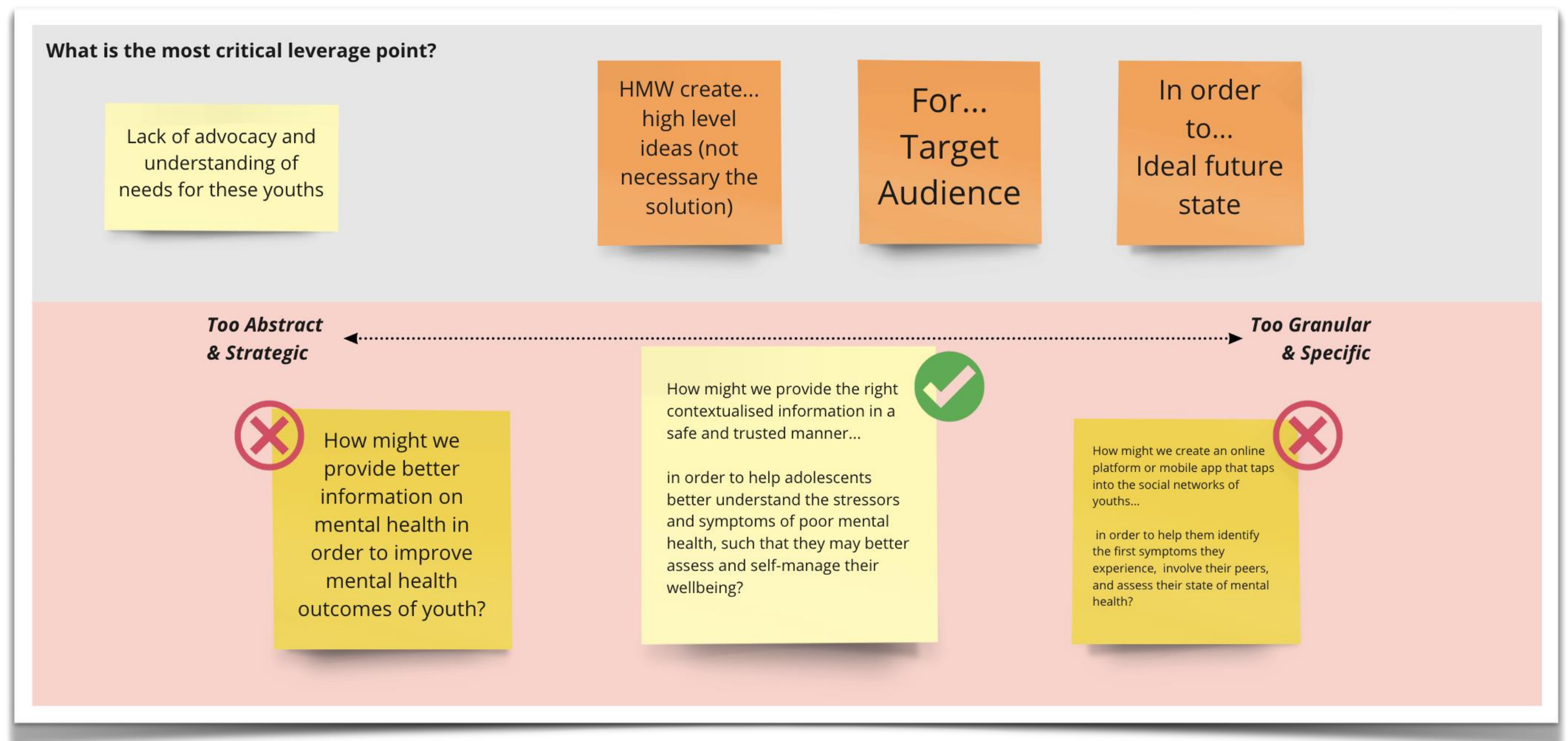
- A 'How Might We' (HMW) statement is an open question to address the current issue and the potential ideal state. They are derived from the leverage points identified in Step II

WHY

- The HMW statement helps to translate the leverage points into potential opportunity areas
- The generative nature of the question is deliberately crafted to allow for divergent ideations

HOW

- Review leverage points on the Systems Map
- Identify what actions are needed, without offering a solution "How might we..."
- Identify who the solution is for "...for..."
- Identify why this is important for the end user "...in order to..."
- String them all together
"How might we [action] for [user] in order to [importance for user]?"



The HMW statement should not be too abstract or strategic, which risks various interpretations and an unclear focal point. However, It should also not be too granular and specific that it limits innovative and fresh ideas.

ALIGN

Establish a Shared Vision

Tool #5: Shared Vision

WHAT

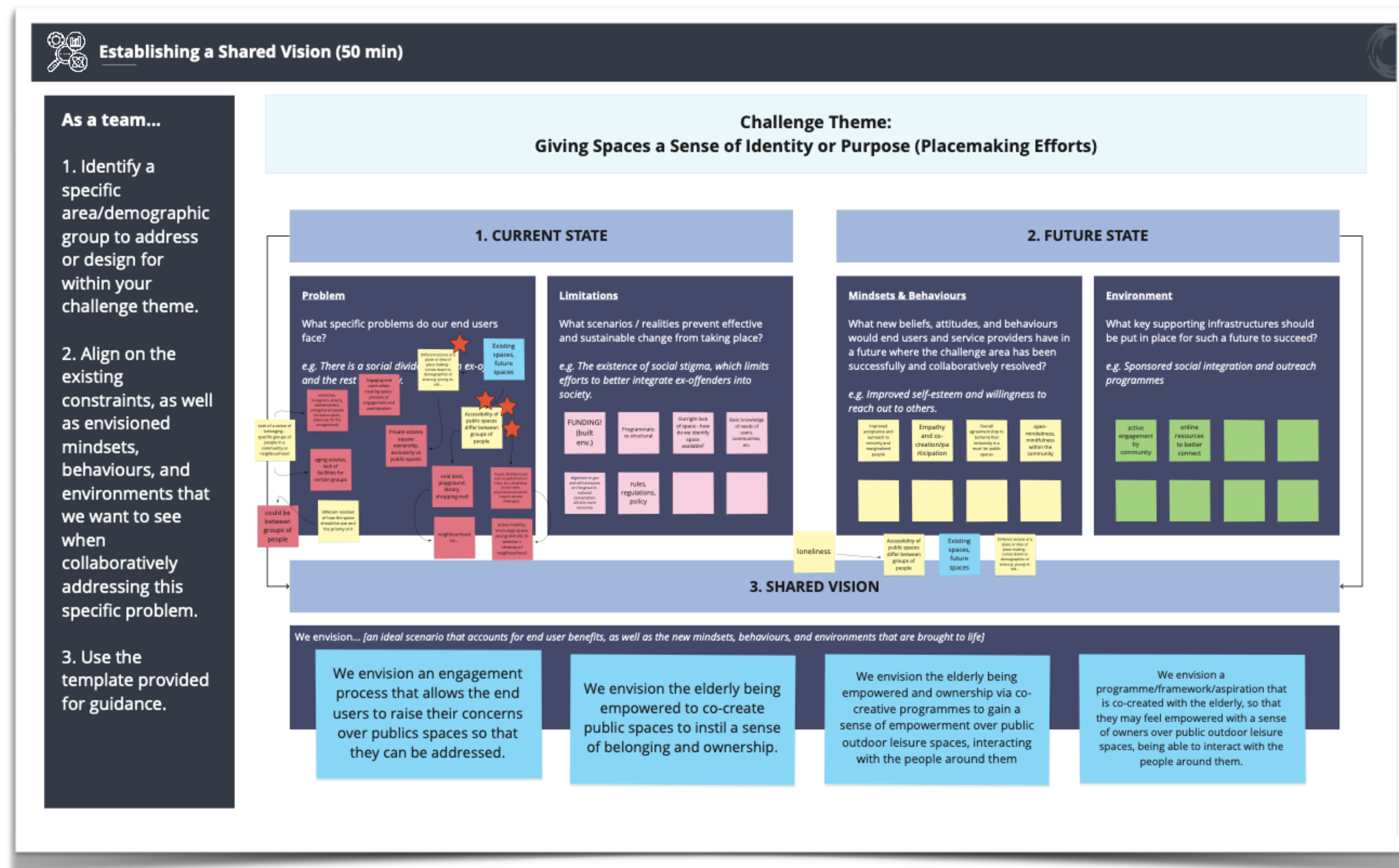
- Adapted from the Futures Thinking 3 Horizons, the template helps collaborators articulate the Current State and desired Future State, and envisions how to journey from the former to the latter

WHY

- Align on the existing constraints and envisioned mindsets, behaviours, and environments that the collaboration intends to bring about
- Articulating a high-level Shared Vision provides a 'North Star' for all collaborators to rally towards, despite their individual differences

HOW

- See the steps for the Shared Vision Template in the [Appendix](#)



ALIGN

Establish a Shared Vision

Tool #6: Commitment Map

WHAT

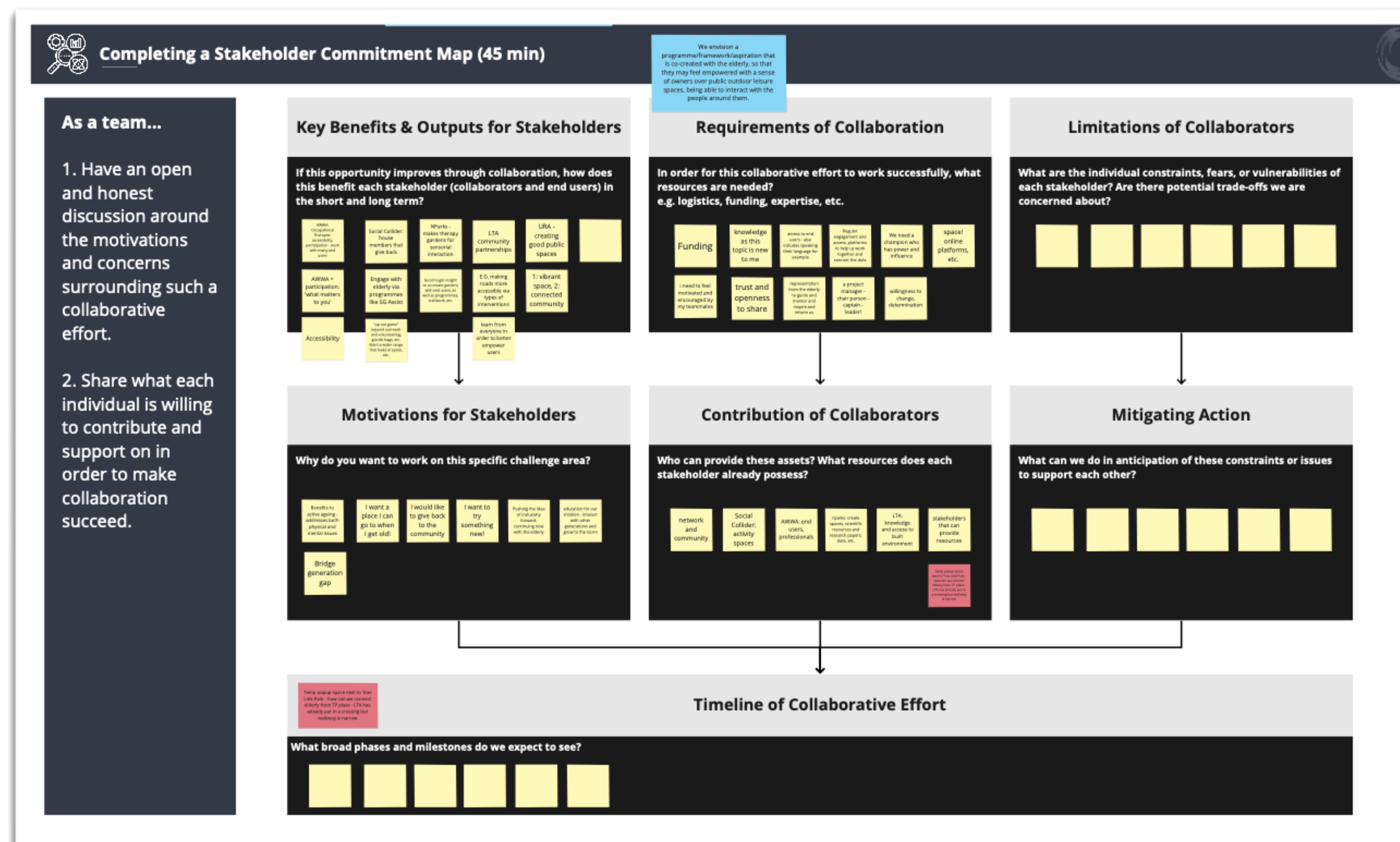
- Following the Shared Vision, the Commitment Map helps to facilitate deeper discussions on the benefits and tradeoffs faced by each collaborator

WHY

- Explicitly states each stakeholders' motivations and constraints surrounding the collaboration
- While not a legal instrument, the document helps collaborators to gauge the level of commitment across the board from the outset

HOW

- Use the Commitment Map Template provided in the [Appendix](#)
- Start by sharing what everyone is willing to contribute, and in what capacity, to make the collaboration a success





Tool #7: Future Scenarios Ideation

WHAT

- A divergent ideation exercise that builds on How-Might-We statements and What-If scenarios from the previous steps
- Provide an opportunity for collaborators to innovate and experiment with ideas to address their aspiration statement

WHY

- Future-proof their solutioning by accounting for potential changes and uncertainties ahead

HOW

Most often, this exercise is contextualised against the Best-Case scenario, with optimal future state for the collaboration

- However, it is also possible to develop contrast against three other future states—Business As Usual, Chaos, Worst Case scenarios
- Use the Future Scenarios Ideation Template provided

Future Scenario Ideation

How to do it?

1) Imagine the best case future scenario for your specific challenge area.

2) Silent brain-writing: Take 3-5 mins to list down as many ideas as possible that can make this future scenario into a reality.

3) Share your ideas with the team and build upon each other's ideas.

4) Cluster your ideas together and prioritise the best ideas that are feasible and create the most value for your intended end-users.

HMW

What if...

Best Case Scenario

1) Go for quantity
The more ideas you produce, the greater the chance for radical, new solutions.

2) Don't judge
There are no bad ideas at this stage, put criticism aside.

3) Build on ideas
Build on each other's ideas to create a better and more robust solution.

4) Change perspective
Look at the problem from different angles.

Go for quantity! Keep an open mind, build on one another's ideas and encourage fresh, new ideas. Don't be constrained by 'reality'.

ALIGN

Ideate and Prioritise

Tool #8: Prioritisation Matrix

WHAT

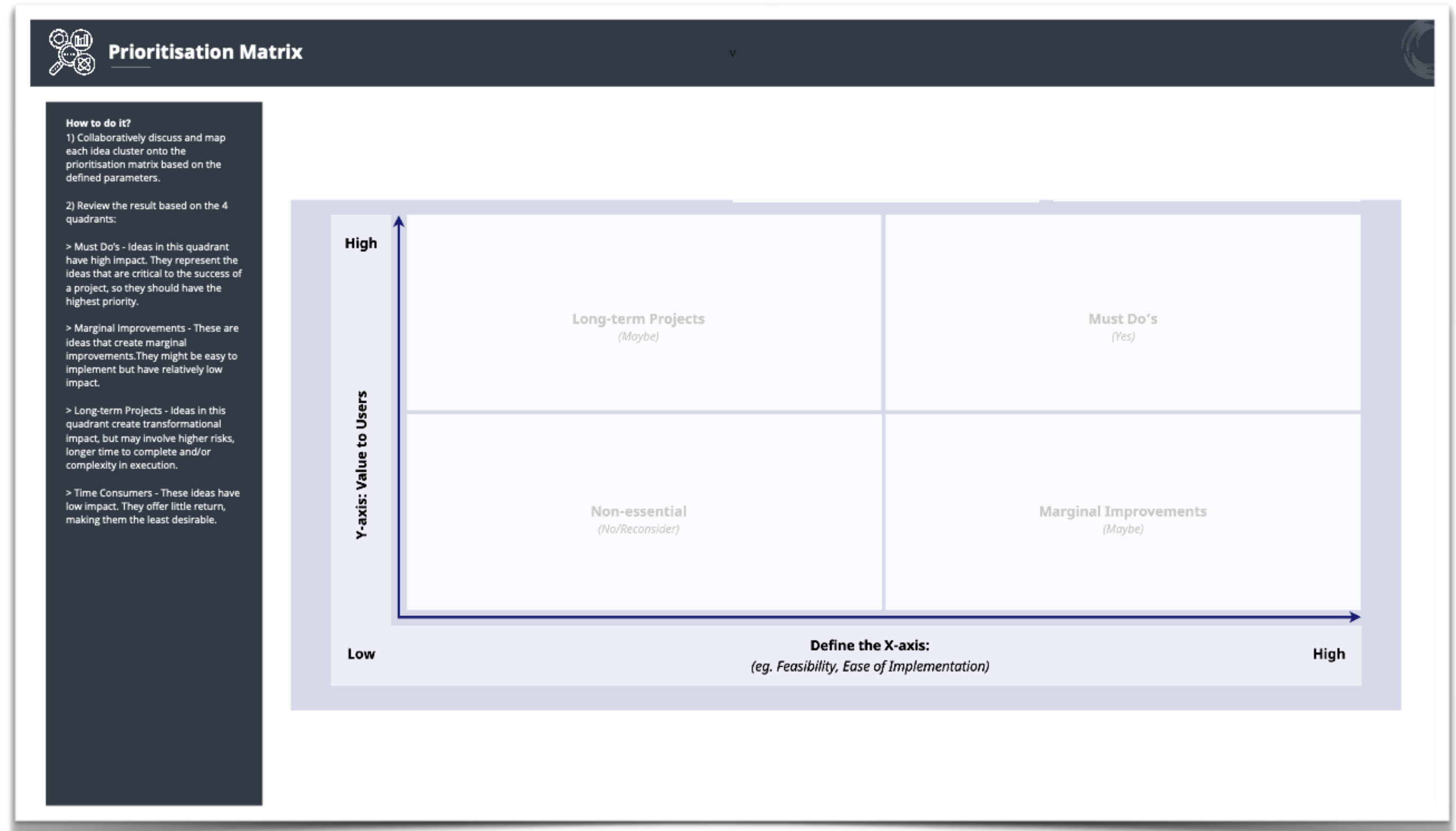
- A structured 2x2 matrix to select the most impactful ideas for prototyping

WHY

- Helps to visually prioritise a wide range of ideas using a simple pair of pre-agreed criteria

HOW

- One axis should always focus on the value created for the end-user, while the other can be customised based on the intervention. An alternative set of criteria is Urgency and Importance (Eisenhower Matrix)



ACT	Prototype Tool #9: Rapid Prototyping Using Storyboards Why: To bring ideas to life through lo-fi prototypes	Usability/Utility Test Tool #10: User Testing Why: To test ideas and prototypes with end-users	Iterate Solution(s) Tool #11: Reflect & Iterate Why: To iterate your ideas based on feedback to make your solutions more holistic and robust	Implement Solution(s) Tool #12: Implementation Roadmap Why: To identify what is required to turn the prototypes into a pilot phase
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ACT: Moving From Ideas Into Implementation

The tyres hit the road at this stage.

Collaborators tend to be impatient. Many do superficial Learn and Align steps, if at all, and move straight into piloting without testing out the ideas with the eventual users. This wastes time, effort and resources.

A misconception on prototyping is that it is expensive, and only applies to products. We propose that prototyping can be low-fidelity (think storyboards!), if it effectively captures the key features of the proposed solution. If we had secured early buy-in, there should be less pushback at this stage.

Once we obtain feedback from all relevant stakeholders, an implementation roadmap helps to further align and commit all collaborators onto a common timeline and milestones.



ACT

Prototype

Tool #9: Rapid Prototyping Using Storyboards

WHAT:

Like a comic strip, a storyboard is a set of sequential imagery with brief descriptions

- This visualised story of the 'new' user experience can take the form of images, illustrations or animations

WHY:

- The narrative process forces collaborators to think through all steps of a journey, surfacing critical details and potential loopholes that might have been missed out

HOW:

- Use the Storyboarding template provided in the [Appendix](#)

Storyboarding

HMW develop programmes for office workers and the elderly in day care homes, in order to encourage them to spend time in the park together.

historic walks

Human library concept

Sharing festival where users could barter some skills/stories like in a human library

Movie nights

How to do it?

1) Based on your best case future scenario and prioritised ideas, string those ideas into a storyboard.

2) Think holistically about the end-users' journey: How would they discover these new solutions, how would they interact with these solutions, what are the benefits created for them?

1. Senior Day Care

What is happening here?

Auntie Lin is an elderly attending Senior Day Care. She has been staying in Tanjong Pagar since her younger days.

2. Back in my days...

What is happening here?

Auntie Lin enjoys telling her stories about the old days to volunteers, to her friends, to the staff members. The volunteers and staff members got her to make a scrapbook on her life experiences in Tanjong Pagar

3. KTM

What is happening here?

She shared about how they used to take the train to visit relatives in Malaysia.

4. Tanjong Pagar market

What is happening here?

Visiting the wet market with her mother and grandmother. How it used to be in the open air.

5.

What is happening here?

At the recently launched tanjong pagar eco-playground, a human library segment was held at the "Sharing and Caring" Festival. Auntie Lin had a chance to walk through the historic walk and look at the photographs she shared in the scrapbook and snippets of her stories. Auntie Lin was one of the human books and she happily shared in greater depths her stories to whoever approached her. One of which is Richard.

6. Based on Auntie Lin's Scrapbook

What is happening here?

Richard chanced upon the Human Library segment when he was reading the Historic walk signboards on the way from his office to the MRT. He was interested to know more about the life story of Auntie Lin who lives in the area when she was younger.

7. OLD | NEW

What is happening here?

Richard was able to learn even more about the transformation of Tanjong Pagar from its early days from the sharing of Auntie Lin besides the historic walk. He is amazed and is interested to hear about the story of another human book next month - Uncle Lim.

8. 1 2 3

What is happening here?

The following month, Richard brought his children and his wife to the event. After listening to Uncle Lim's stories together with his family, his children played in the playground while he watched the movie screening with his wife.

Think of it as a show-and-tell. You don't have to be good at drawing. Stick figures and simple icons work perfectly, as long as they help to capture your ideas visually.

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ACT

Usability/Utility
Test

Tool #10: User Testing

WHAT:

User testing is the practice of testing concepts using prototypes with real users to see how they experience or interact with it in their natural setting

WHY:

- To gather feedback to improve an idea or concept

HOW:

- This step can be customised to the specific prototype
- Both qualitative (observation and subjective responses) and quantitative (collection of numbers and objective data) options can work

Use simple instructions and neutral language. Avoid jargon. Let the user experience it for themselves.

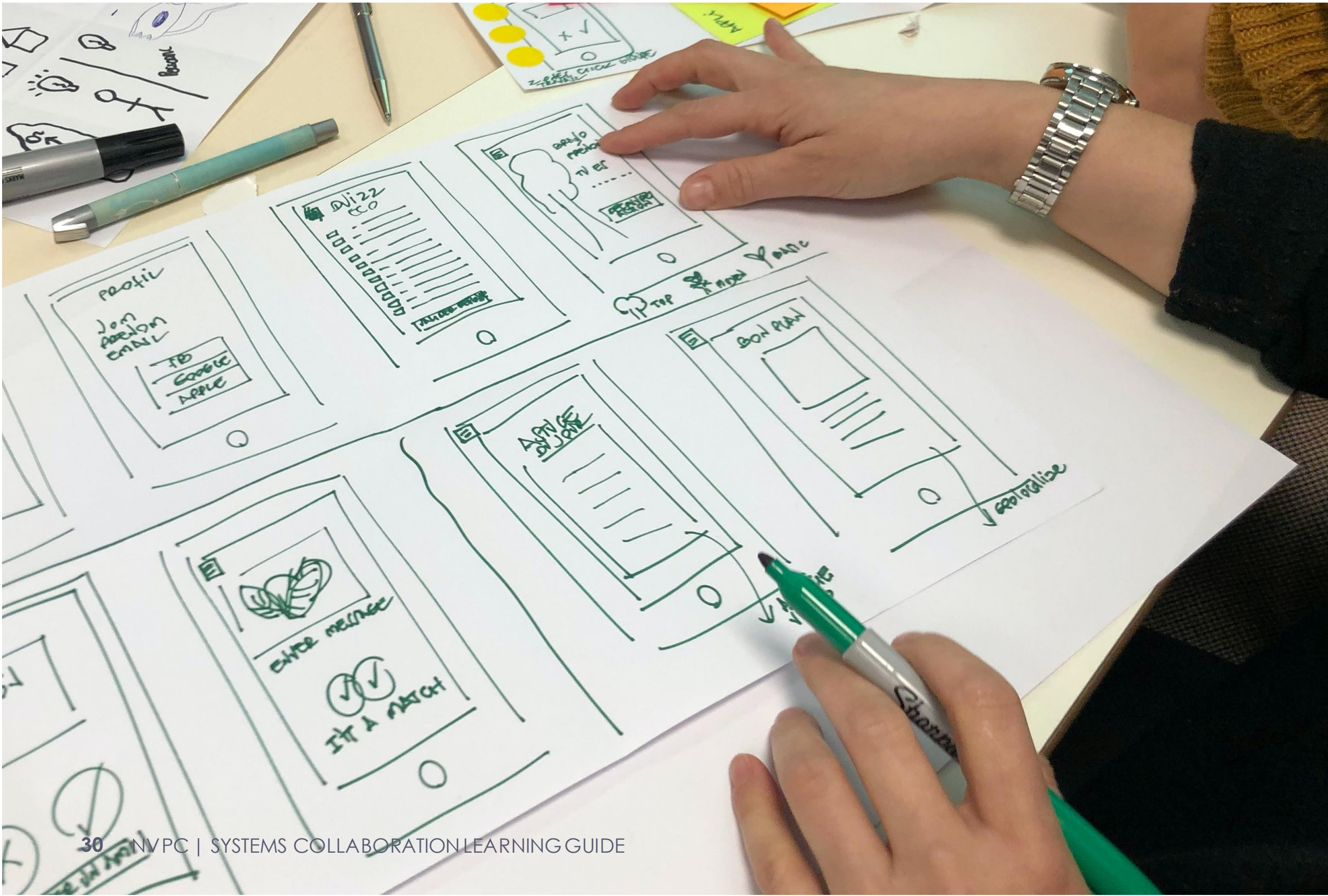


ACT Iterate Solution(s)

Tool #11: Reflect & Iterate

WHAT Reflection of progress, refinements, and improvements at every stage

WHY By having open discussions, reflection, and providing a safe space for constructive feedback, helps to build a deeper and more sustained collaboration



HOW



Set A Dedicated Time And Space

Schedule the meeting in a relaxed set-up and share the reflection questions in advance



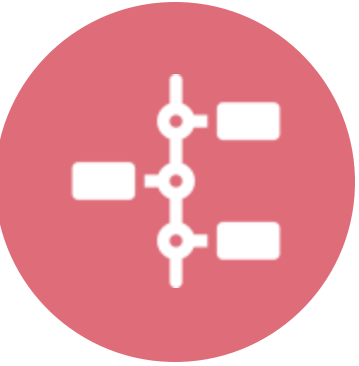
Provide Constructive Feedback

After ensuring a safe space and rules of engagement, invite each collaborator to give/receive holistic feedback



Document Discussion

Get permission to capture the responses. If appropriate, circulate the key agreements as a common reference.



Align On Next Steps

Follow up on actionable steps to strengthen the collaboration process

ACT **Implement Solution(s)**

Tool #12: Action Planning

WHAT

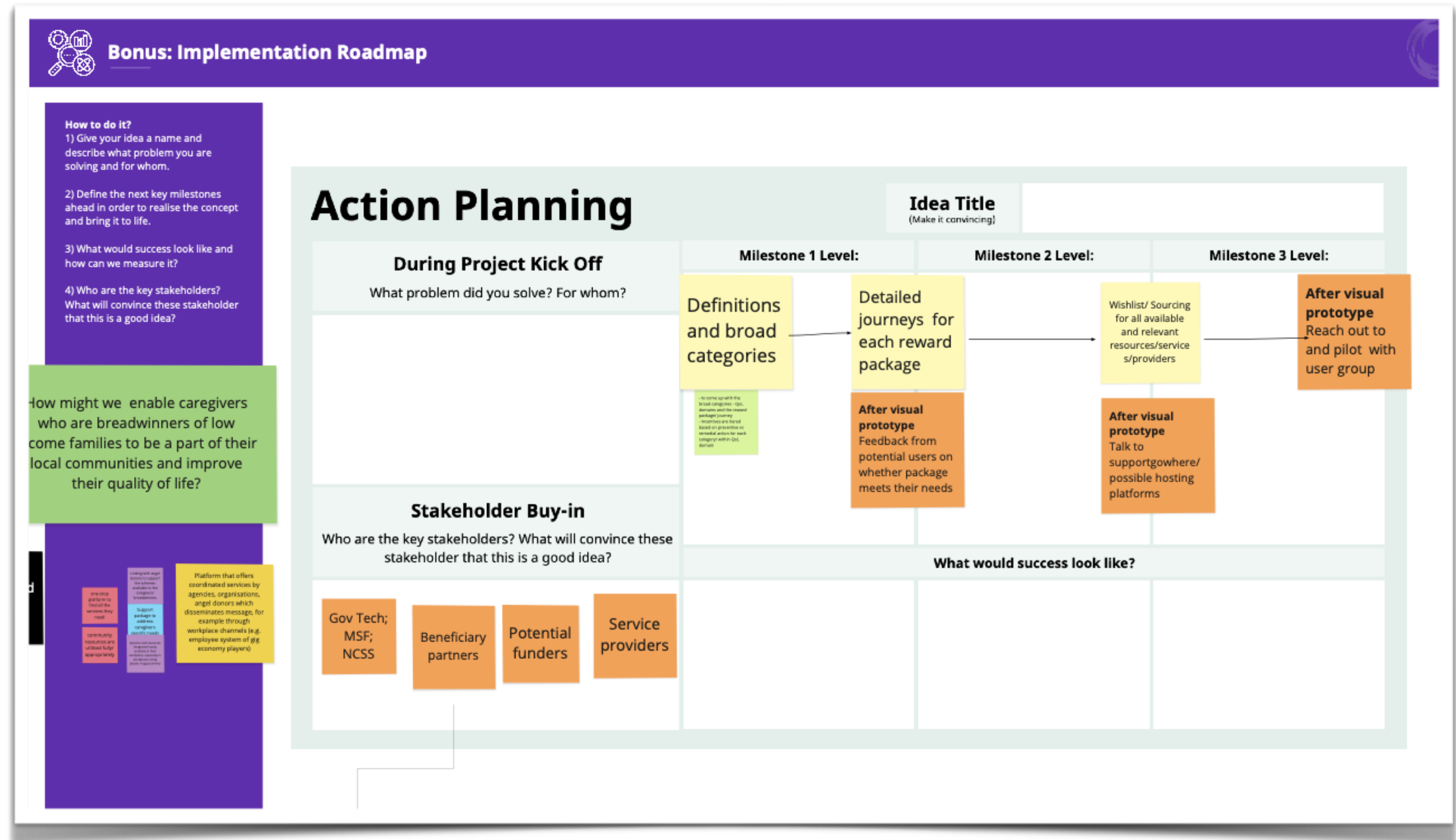
- A structured documentation of the implementation plan in a specific timeframe
- An overview of key milestones ahead, each outlining the resources needed, problems anticipated, and success measurement


WHY

- Provide clarity and commitment for all collaborators, especially in complex projects with multiple negotiations and compromises

HOW

- Use the Action Planning template provided in the [Appendix](#)



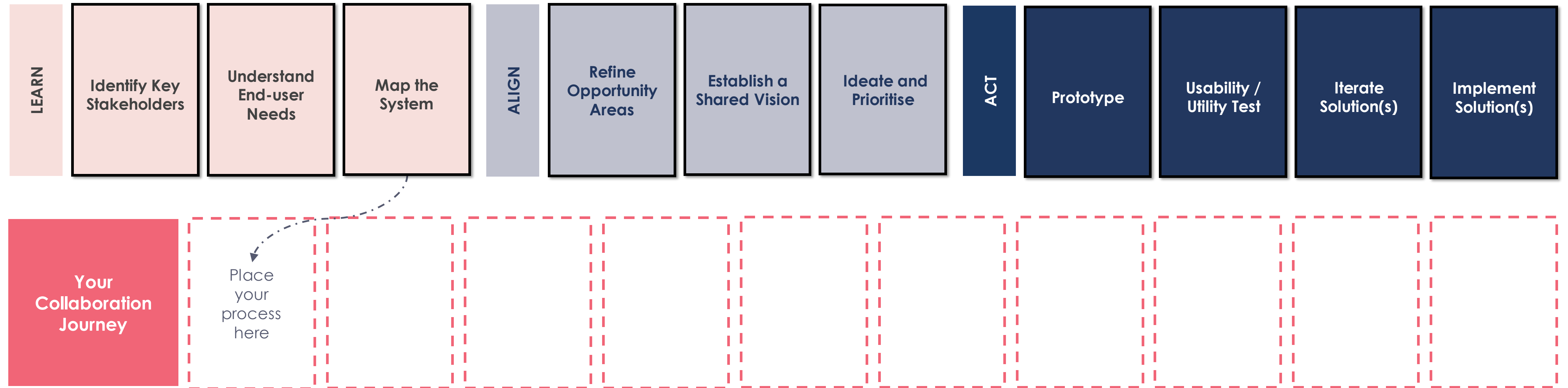
 Action Plans can be the basis of more detailed project charter or project management plans such as OKR, etc.

COLLABORATION IN DIFFERENT SECTORS

- Bridging Cross-Sectoral Differences in Collaboration
- People Sector
- Public Sector
- Food For Thought



BONUS! Build Your Own Collaboration Journey



Build Your Own (BYO) Collaboration Journey!

Use these collaboration building blocks to customise your very own collaboration journey.

The blocks can be used in a linear way, although it is rare for collaboration to progress so 'neatly'.

Mix and match the blocks, try out the tools, and co-create this collaboration with each other.

HOW:

- Start with wherever you are right now in your collaboration stage
- Find the step and tool that best meets your current need
- Move on to the next logical step to move your collaboration forward
- Feel free to move forward, turn backward, skip steps or repeat steps as needed

LEVERAGING THE COLLABORATION STRENGTHS

Bridging Cross-Sectoral Differences in Collaboration

BYO Collaboration Journey: A Public and People Sector Edition

After all that has been said and done about cross-sector collaboration, haven't we always wondered, deep down, if the different sectors are really *that* different?

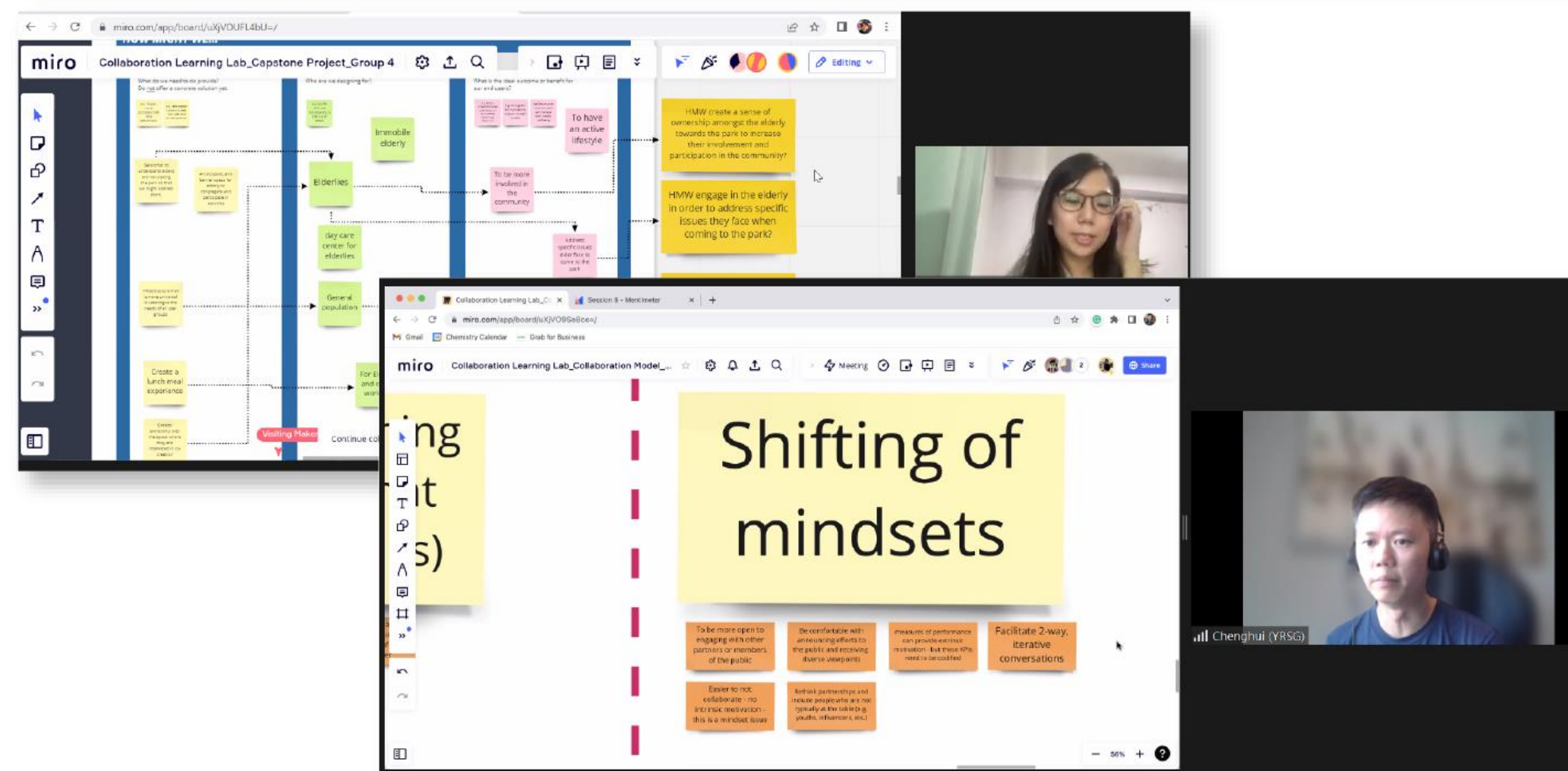
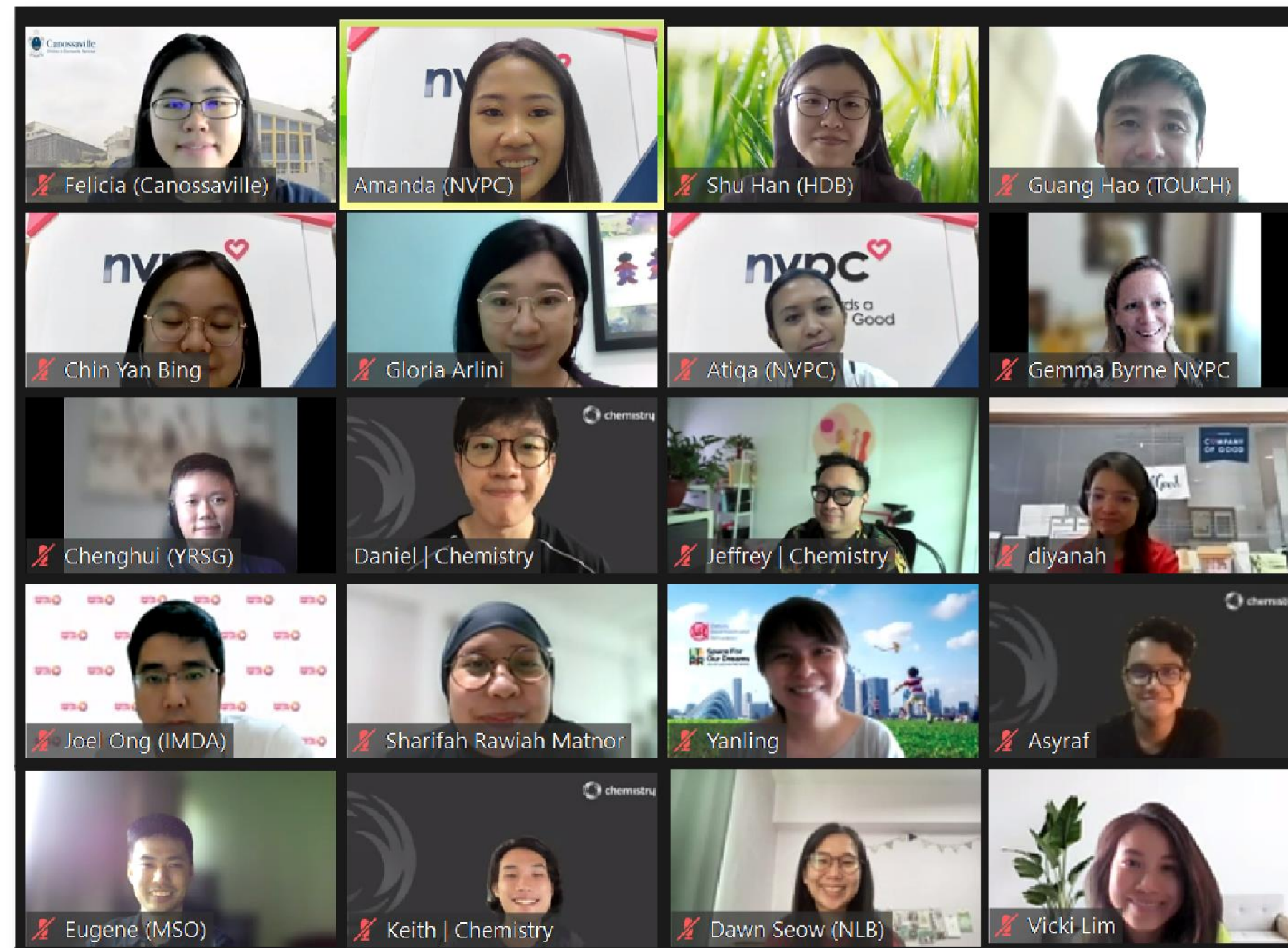
At the Learning Lab, we took advantage of the participants' diverse backgrounds to test this. The intent was to reflect on the similarities and differences in the Public and People Sectors' approaches to collaboration, with a hope to create mutual learning and understanding.

When it comes to collaboration, Public and People Sectors operate with different mindsets, objectives, processes, and norms. This points to an even greater need for cross-sector collaborators to be sensitive to each other's objectives, commitments, and constraints. To close this section, we suggest some food for thought for collaborators to consider.

The Learning Lab Exercise:

We grouped all the Public Sector agencies into one group, and the People Sector practitioners into another. We invited them to use the template and Building Blocks in page 33 to present what their typical collaboration process looks like. Participants also acknowledged that this was a work-in-progress, and a snapshot of what their sector-specific collaboration experience.

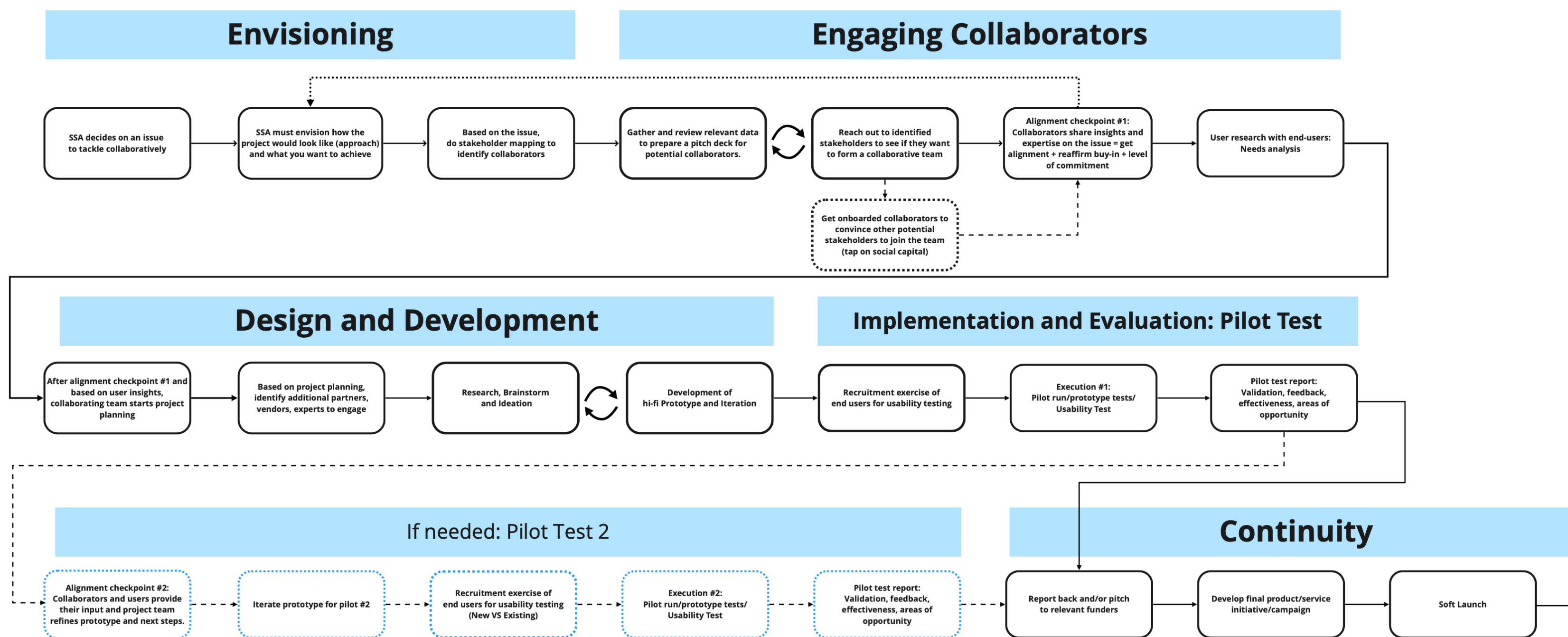
Caveating the modest participants pool and owing to the make-up of the participants from different sectors, this exercise was able to yield two distinct sector-specific approaches to collaboration.



LEVERAGING THE 3P COLLABORATION STRENGTHS

People Sector

The following is a synthesis of reflections across participants from the people sector space. They are written from a first-person narrator standpoint to capture the immediacy of the responses.



Key Features of Collaboration in the People Sector

As collaborators, we...

- Tend to assume a more passive role as members/ participants in cross-agency/cross-sector collaborations
- Often 'enter' into a collaboration process relatively late at the invitation of the project owner/initiator— typically a government agency or a larger non-profit
- Put on practitioners' hat and are often the assigned implementors for the initiatives expected to arise from the collaboration
- Are often invited to share our ground perspective in the collaborative process, such as on community sentiment and roll-out feasibility
- For collaborations arising from the government's top-line directives, it is not unusual for us to follow the lead during the 'Envisioning' stage of the collaboration for ease of getting buy-in and support

Reflection for Improvements

To succeed, we need:

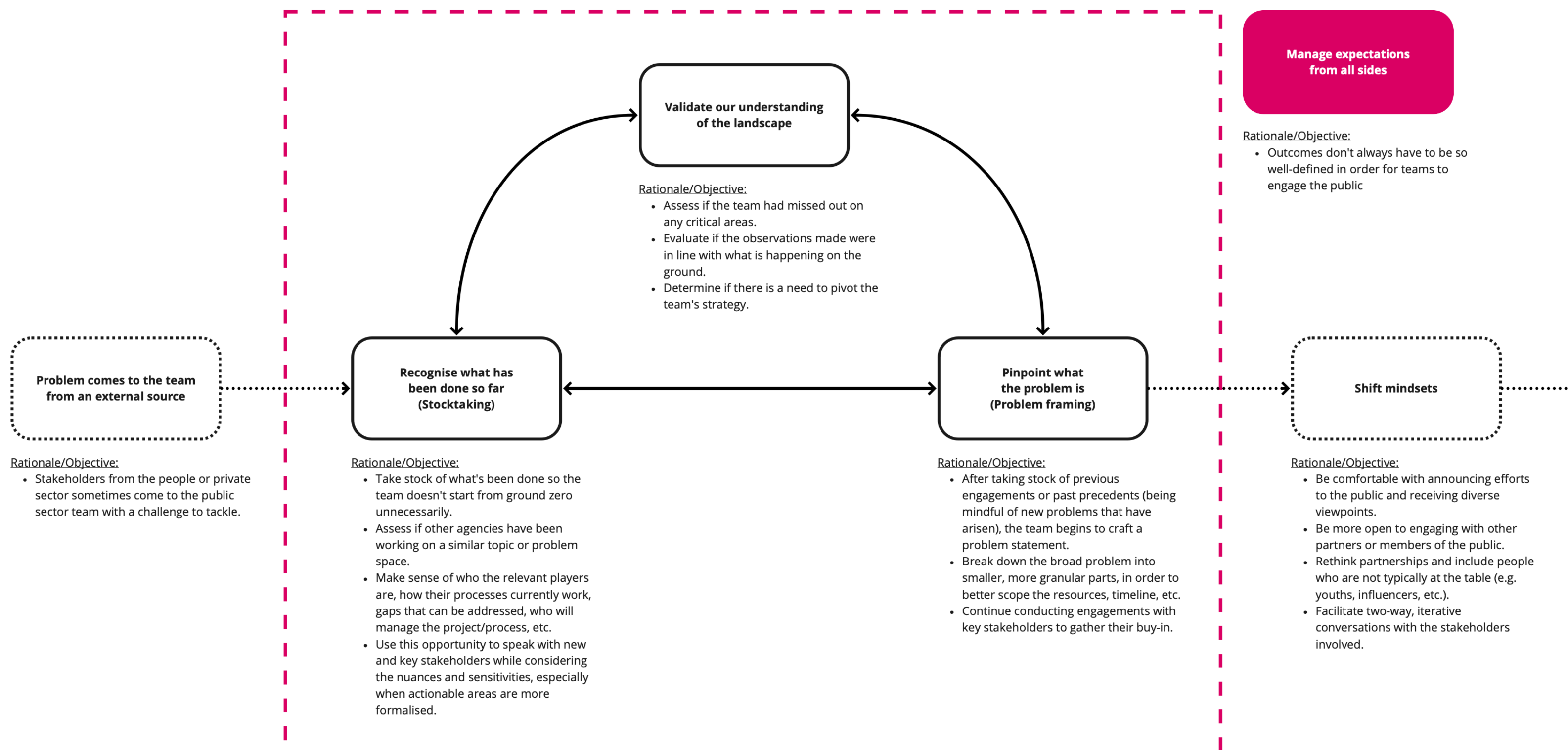
- Collaborators' commitment to the long-term sustainability of the collaboration
- Easier access to funding and resources to sustain the implementation of collaboration.

Caveat

In this map, we are assuming that we are asked to lead a collaboration project of which the problem statement/scope has been cleared with or defined by the relevant authorities. This is an ideal collaboration flow and might not be a realistic one in a typical cross-sector collaboration.

Public Sector

The following is a synthesis of reflections across participants from the public sector space. They are written from a first-person narrator standpoint to capture the immediacy of the responses.



Key Features Of Collaboration In The Public Sector

As collaborators, we...

- Typically assume the role of a project owner/initiator in a cross-agency/cross-sector collaboration, leading to an overriding sense of accountability
- Invest significant amount of time prior to the collaboration, especially in the problem framing phase
- Aim to ensure the problem/challenge statement is well-defined and accurately scoped before 'opening up' the collaboration to more partners,
- Adopt a risk-averse stance, which often deters innovation
- Tend to prefer working with 'safe' collaborators with proven track record to minimise 'surprises' or resistance
- Exercise high degree of caution in sharing data and knowledge externally, often on a 'needs' basis only.

Reflections For Improvement

To succeed, we need...

- Greater openness towards risk-taking
- Greater willingness to share data to advance knowledge sharing with collaborators, while ensuring the confidentiality of sensitive information
- Diversify collaboration partners to leverage new and different expertise in the ecosystem
- Adopt a more agile mindset to collaboration

Caveat

"We spent so much time discussing at the outset of the collaboration, that we did not manage to go into the rest of the collaboration process. The map below gives a sense of our thinking process during the Identifying Stakeholders and Understanding Needs stages."

Food For Thought

Collaboration is always a matter of managing trade-offs. In a cross-sector collaboration setting, these trade-offs become even more pronounced because of each sector's unique approach to collaboration.

Here are a few key trade-offs surfaced at the Learning Lab discussions, and the cohort's suggested solutions to shift the culture of collaboration.



Finding the right motivation for a genuine collaboration

"Do we really need to consult and collaborate on this issue? We have done extensive research and have a strong sense on what to do. It seems easier and quicker not to collaborate."

Sometimes it seems like consultation and collaboration are only to show that there is "buy-in" from the ground. It feels like the collaboration isn't genuine.



How can we have a genuine appreciation for cross-sector collaboration, instead of doing it just for the sake, or use it as a vehicle to get buy-in from the implementors or members of the public?



Consider that the public sector agencies only hold one part of the puzzle, and that research can only do so much. Consulting and collaborating widely for solutions might take longer time, but when done right, it ensures a more sustained impact, broad-based support, and actual change in the community.



Giving Clear Direction vs. Crowdsourcing Suggestions

"There are expectations that we should have good solutions. Let's not announce the initiative yet until we have fully finalised the plans. We should not confuse people, or worse, make them think we backtrack on our promises."

"There's been such a long radio silence since our last discussion. Why is it moving so slowly?"



As collaboration leads or project owners, can we allow ourselves to say 'I'm not sure' or "I don't know," and create an open space for learning and exploration for all?



Public sector agencies no longer need to have all the answers. Our society has matured to adopt more co-creative approaches to participatory governance and citizen engagement. All collaborators have equal responsibilities to co-create the objective, direction and outcome of any collaboration.



Remaining Open to Change vs. Ensuring Collaborators' Commitment

"The Steering Committee has suggested us to grow the collaboration's initial scope and objectives because of the new policy direction. I'm not sure how the rest of the collaborators will feel, but as a good Secretariat, I need to convey it."

"This seems to differ from what I signed up for. The new direction is not aligned with my priorities, but since I have committed my support, I'll just continue along until the collaboration wraps up."



How can collaboration be structured to allow for changes along the way, without compromising on collaborators' commitment when the scope changes?



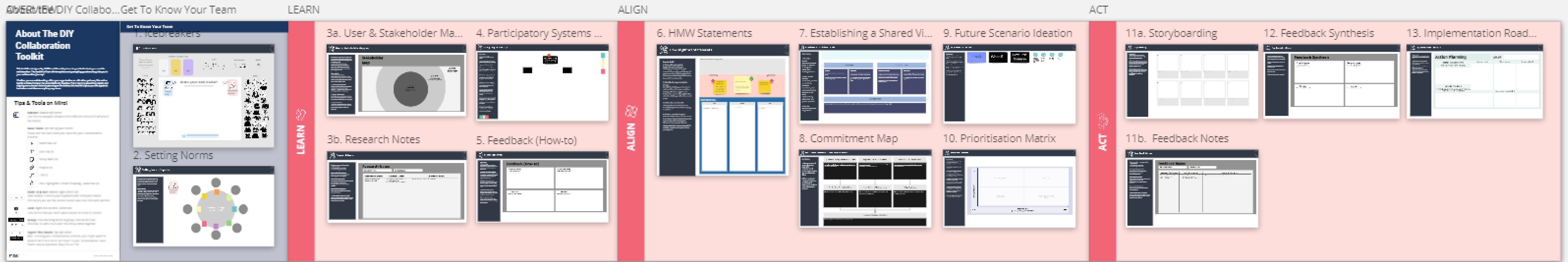
Consider doing alignment checkpoints to regularly check on the direction of the project vis-à-vis collaborators. If goals no longer align, perhaps it's better to let people go rather than having them stay despite a declining commitment.

Consider also to invite collaborators to recommit at every new phase of the collaboration—rather than doing an upfront commitment for a long-term collaboration.

APPENDIX

- DIY Collaboration Toolkit
- Acknowledgements





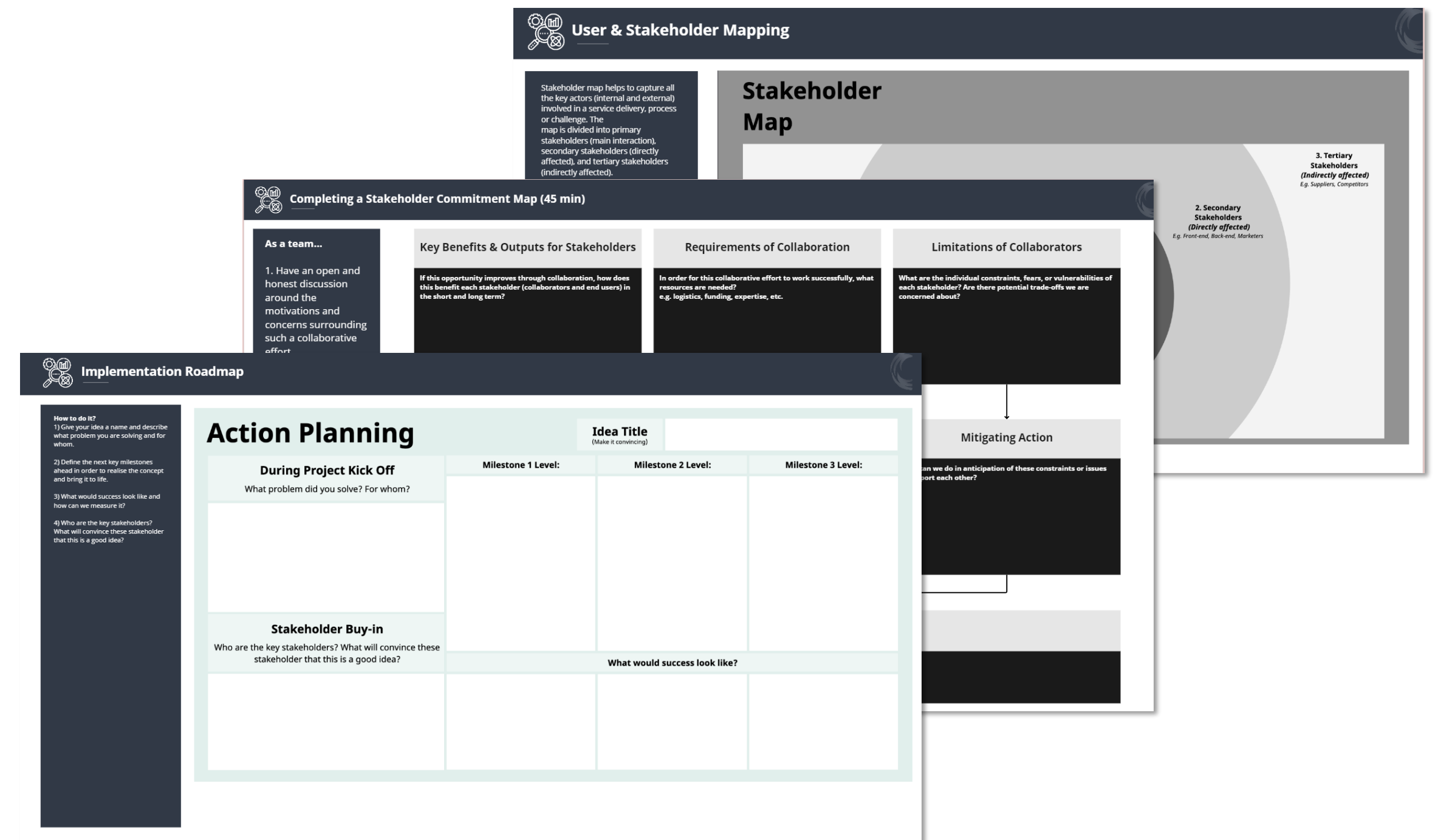
APPENDIX A

DIY Collaboration Toolkit

The DIY Collaboration Toolkit was designed together with the Chemistry Team. The tools were used throughout the Learning Lab series with participants from different sectors.

This online toolkit enables teams to work effectively together virtually, from brainstorming with digital sticky notes to planning and managing agile workflows. By digitising the tools and templates, collaborators can access the boards anytime and anywhere. This helps to promote collaborations between teams and provide a space to document and record the work for safekeeping.

[Check out the toolkit](#)



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