Designing for Wiser Action

Remember the practice of **Aphei**:

" **It is kind to ask for help.
A person who cannot ask for help cannot be trusted.** "

- Nuu-chah-nulth tribal wisdom

What is the purpose?

The Designing for Wiser Action process was created to give practitioners an opportunity to ask for help and the rest of us an opportunity to practice both design and generosity. This process demonstrates the power of co-creation through diversity of perspectives and working from a basis of clear purpose.

The process enables practitioners to get support and wise advice about the concrete outcomes needed and for participants to put their learnings about participatory leadership and its methods to work on real life events.

About the process

Practitioners are invited to call a project or piece of work they are responsible for and invite others to contribute to the thinking and design of actions that will bring it to life.

Practitioners find powerful insights and solutions through the exploration of questions that clarify:
What is the need? What is the purpose? Who is the group? What methods will most support the group into wise action? What kind of harvest will serve this wise action and demonstrate its impact?

Who does this process best serve?

Designing for Wiser Action is about finding the clarity we need to progress real work. Therefore it is important the practitioners calling for help with their projects do so with the following criteria in mind:

- I - the project caller - have decided and am committed to follow this through
- I have mandate or some beginning level of mandate to do it - from within me and from decision makers in my system to put this in motion
- I am ready to ask for and receive help from others as we practice co-designing
- The project should incorporate a participatory/engagement process which takes place in the next 12 months
- The project should include at least one single meeting or be part of a longer strategic process
- The project should be of benefit to more people than just the project caller themselves

Stages of the process   (allow 3-4 hours for this entire process)

1. Make an invitation to those who want to be project callers (At least 1-2 days prior to the process being hosted)

Invitation is made to people so they can ask for help to design the process they want to host. Work with those who want to step in to get clear about their intention. This process needs a concrete project to work with, rather than a vague intention that is still being shaped. The project needs to be happening from one day to one year in the future.

Remember - Ensure callers are invited at least the night before the process will be hosted.

2. Introduce Designing for Wiser Action (10 minutes)

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Tip: You might want to show the InCommons video on community conversations: **vimeo.com/40679035** or something similar to help frame how this work can travel into communities and build capacity, as one example of why it is important to be skilful.

Three conditions for self-organising – a powerful triangle

Clarity of need and purpose is the invisible leader…
Clarity creates a natural centre for the work. As a caller, become as clear as possible. The clearer you are, the more others can help you. At the very least, callers will be hosting a process to find clarity of purpose.

Respectful relationships
Being in a good relationship with yourself and with others will enable you to enjoy and benefit from the diversity of others.
It does not mean that you have to agree on everything - but even if you disagree you can still be in respectful relationship and focus on getting the work done.

Acting more wisely for the world
Good work should always yields real results. The Hopi Indians ask "Will it grown corn for the people?". What are your actions going to create that will be useful for your world?

3. Introduce the projects (Depending on number of callers spend 10-15 minutes)

Gather the callers in a circle at the centre of the group. Ask each of the callers to introduce their project briefly for 2 minutes. Each of the callers then stands in the room and others go to join them. Remind the group this is a time to practice generosity, so share themselves for even numbers – next time could be their turn!

4. Introduce the process (5 minutes)

Show the harvesting templates and step through the questions the groups will be working with.

Tip: Suggest the groups use Post-It-Notes on the template because their perspectives might change throughout the process and you will need to be able to move things around.

5. Group Work – Project design (90 minutes minimum)

- Each group will move to its own table or room.
- Begin with the caller introducing the project briefly (NB: warn the callers not to spend so much time on this, it is now time to work on it!)
- Work together reviewing the calling question and sharing wise advice, insights, ideas and ask questions if needed to clarify the purpose and need.
- All group members co-create by populating the template with ideas on Post It notes

6. Peer Coaching (20 minutes)

- Bring the whole group together for instruction on the peer coaching session.
- The caller asks for a volunteer member to stay with them to harvest input from peer coaches.
- Group members are invited to extend their generosity by moving to another caller's group for peer coaching.
- The caller will explain their project design to the peer group.
- Callers then listen without response or conversation to the questions, feedback and suggestions of the peer coaches (if necessary the caller can turn their chair away to enable listening).

7. Group Work – Sharpening design (20-30 minutes)

- Original groups then re-convene for a period of integration, refining and sharpening of their project design.

8. Report back (10-20 minutes)

- Finally the whole group gathers in circle again, with project callers in the centre.
- Project callers report back in response to two questions:
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  - Project callers report back in response to two questions:

Notes for Hosts

Process timing – optimal timing is 3-4 hours
- Introducing the process/hearing from the callers/forming groups around the callers (30 min)
- Working in teams supporting the callers on their projects (1.5 hours min)
- Peer coaching (20 min = 8 - 10 min caller presents the work to date, coaches listening/8 – 10 min coaches giving feedback
- Return to teams and integrate (20 – 30 min)
- Return to full group and report back (10 – 20 min depending on the number of callers)

If more time is available here are some additional possibilities:

- Two peer coaching rounds, alternating teams
- Time for the callers to reflect alone following peer coaching session

Roles

- One or two **Hosts**: Introduce the process to the group, host the callers into clarity prior to the process (and you may need to challenge them to name a concrete project with a clear purpose), and host the full group process
- **Project Caller**: Is the person who wants helps on becoming clear and crafting focus, design and practice in action, applied to a particular event or events.
- **Co-designers**: Are the people who help with the first brush strokes of co-creating design. This is a practice of generosity.
- **Full group**: Work with all elements from our practice in a practical way, so they all manifest in the process being designed and make Art of Hosting as helpful as possible and easier to grasp.

Resource team: If there are more seasoned hosts and a good sized group of participants, they may want to act as a resource team, and bumble-bee between teams to give additional support.

Tools to get the work done

1. Guiding Questions

The guiding questions guide the work of the harvest. These questions find their foundations in the Chaordic stepping stones then include additional quesitons necessary to build clarity in the context of the work. Foundational questions include:

- What is the need this work is in response to?
- What is the purpose of this work?
- What is the powerful question that will serve as a reference point for this work?
- Who needs to be involved as core team, partners, and stakeholders?
- What is the structure of the work in preparation, during and after the project?
- What is the tangible and intangible harvest?
- What are the insights, challenges, unanswered questions, help needed, next steps?

2. Harvesting template, Post It notes and markers

Harvest templates can take any form that is meaningful to the context. Large, colourful templates create a great space to work on. Some examples of templates from previous Designing for Wiser Action sessions are as follows:
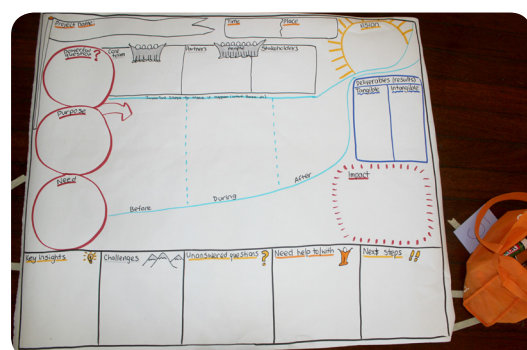
3. A good work space

Create a work space that is spacious, light, airy, spacious, connected to nature. Give groups as much space as possible to work without disturbing each other.
If you have limitations with the environment, do the best you can….