

THE CHAORDIC STEPPING STONES – AN EFFECTIVE PLANNING PROCESS DESIGN

The chaordic stepping stones outline a clear path to follow for meeting planning. These steps are intended to create generative structures, structures that allow us to create together, without stifling creativity and the emergence of new ideas and new ways of doing things.

These steps allow us to create steps rooted in real need that are sustainable for the community they serve and the people working within them. These steps can be used both as a planning tool and to help understand what you are discovering about an organization, community or initiative



In designing an initiative, we use these stepping stones in order. Think of them nested one within the other. You cannot build the next one until the previous one is in place.

The Stepping Stones

Each of these stepping stones is activated by asking key questions. As we design our work together we will select from these questions (or design others) to help us explore each stone as we lay it in place.



Need

The need is the compelling reason for doing anything. Sensing the need is the first step to designing a meeting, organizational structure or change initiative that is relevant. The need is outside of our work: it is the thing that is served by the work you are doing.

Purpose

From the need flows the purpose. Purpose statements are clear and compelling and they guide us in doing our best possible work.

Principles

Principles of cooperation help us to know how we will work together. It is very important that these principles be simple, co-owned and well understood. These are not principles that are platitudes or that lie on a page somewhere. They are crisp statements of how we

agree to operate together so that over the long term we can sustain the relationships that make this work possible.

People

Once the need and the purpose are in the place and we have agreed on our principles of co-operation, we can begin to identify the people that are involved in our work. Mapping the network helps us to see who is in this work for us and who will have an interest in what we are doing.

Concept

As we move to a more concrete idea of what our structures are, we begin to explore the concepts that will be useful. This is a high level look at the shape of our endeavour. For example, if our need was to design a way to cross a body of water, we could choose a bridge, a causeway or a ferry. The concept is important, because it gives form to very different structures for doing our work.

In our work together we might explore here the different kinds of structures including circles and networks and really understand what these are, how they operate, how they are embedded with various contexts and cultures and what implications each has for our work.

Limiting beliefs

So much of what we do when we organize ourselves is based on unquestioned models of behaviour. These patterns can be helpful but they can also limit us in fulfilling our true potential. We cannot create innovation in the world using old models and approaches. It pays to examine ways in which we assume work gets done in order to discover the new ways that might serve work with new results. Engaging in this work together brings us into a co-creative working relationship, where we can help each other into new and powerful ways of working together, alleviating the fear and anxiety of the unknown.

Structure

Once the concept has been chosen, it is time to create the structure that will channel our resources. It is in these conversations that we make decisions about the resources of the group: time, money, energy, commitment, and attention.

Practice

The ongoing practice within the structures we build is important. This is the world of to do lists, conference calls and email exchanges. The invitation here is to practice working with one another in alignment with the designs we have created.

Harvest

There is no point in doing work in the world unless we plan to harvest the fruits of our labours. Harvesting includes making meaning of our work, telling the story and feeding forward our results so that they have the desired impacts in the world.

It is very important to note that harvesting is an activity that needs to be planned up front, in the spirit of “we are not planning a meeting, we are planning a harvest.”