FOOD SYSTEMS
LEADERSHIP NETWORK

The Adaptive Food Systems Leader:
Managing Projects for Lasting Change

Creating the
Project Blueprint +
Anticipating Challenges

Project Management Course Intensive
Session #1

The Food Systems Leadership Network

A national **peer learning community** that

-- **connects** *current and emerging leaders*

-- **strengthens** *individual and collective leadership capacity, and*

-- **fosters** *collaboration across communities*

To accelerate the realization of a **just**, **equitable** and **sustainable** food system that generates good food, health, and opportunity for all!

FSLN Cultural Agreements

FOOD SYSTEMS
LEADERSHIP NETWORK

o We honor and celebrate our collective wisdom - together, we know a lot!

o We are mindful of our power, privilege, and how much space we are taking up.

o We take responsibility for impact, regardless of intent.

o We give grace to one another and approach conflict with curiosity.

o We challenge assumptions, respect our differences, and speak from our own experience.

o We honor confidentiality - lessons leave, stories stay.

o We take care of our own physical, mental, and emotional needs.

o We meet each other where we are. Showing up is enough, and listening is participating.
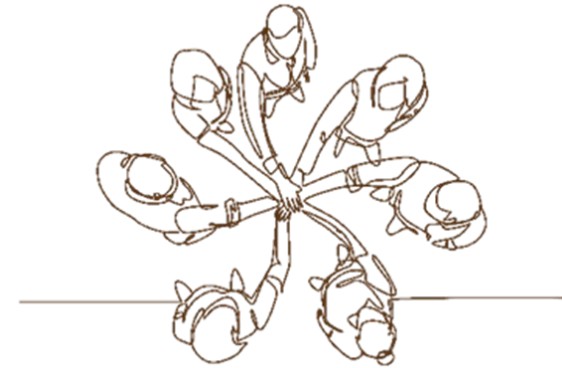
Meet Your Course Facilitators

Tina Khan, consultant
Adaptive Leadership Practitioner
Civic Engagement & Community
Development

Kolia Souza, consultant
Health Equity Advocacy
Local & Regional Food Systems
Development

Intro Breakouts

Introduce yourselves to one another and finish one of these sentences:

"When I'm working at my best I am_____."

"_____ energizes me to stay in the work when it's difficult."

"I know we're engaged in work together when we are _____."

Setting the tone for this course

Registration Survey: Tools + Resources

Category	Examples / Needs
Project Management Tools	Low/no-cost tools like Asana, QBO, Google Suite; user-friendly platforms
Templates & Frameworks	For planning, execution, collaboration, communication, reporting
Automation & Integration	Tools that sync apps and automate project workflows
CRM & Data Tools	Organizing records, tracking progress and stakeholder engagement
Communication Tools	Supporting internal communication, stakeholder alignment, and collaboration

Registration Survey: Skill-building

Skill Area	Specific Interests
Adaptive Management	Crisis response, pivoting projects, flexibility in uncertain environments
Time & Capacity Management	Prioritizing tasks, timeline planning, sustainable workload distribution
Budgeting & Funding	Budget creation, funding diversification, grant writing
Team & Volunteer Management	Motivating people, reducing burnout, volunteer-dependent project shifts
Leadership & Delegation	Managing team dynamics, creating accountability, participatory leadership styles

Registration Survey: Problem-solving

Problem Area	Examples / Challenges
Managing Complex Projects	Working with evolving goals, shifting partnerships, and multi-stakeholder teams
Organizational Structure	Clarifying workflows, responsibility mapping, reducing overload
Burnout Prevention	Navigating shifting priorities without overwhelming teams
Scalability & Sustainability	Growing impact while maintaining quality and community connection
Political/Systemic Barriers	Aligning food system work with policy change, equity, and systemic reform

Registration Survey: Extras

Theme	Summary of Responses
Gratitude and Excitement	Many participants expressed thanks and enthusiasm for the opportunity. Phrases like "excited," "thank you," and "grateful" appeared frequently.
Scheduling Conflicts	Several asked if sessions would be recorded due to potential schedule conflicts (e.g., conferences, showcases).
Interest in Learning and Growth	Participants are eager to strengthen their project management and adaptive leadership skills.
Requests for Additional Resources	Some requested conflict mediation training suggestions and insight into certification value.
Equity and Systemic Focus	A few highlighted their focus on equity, civic engagement, and food sovereignty within their work.
Professional Context	Several participants shared current roles or transitions, such as starting consultancies or planning to take the PMP exam.
Challenges Shared	Comments included staffing changes, navigating uncertainty (e.g., political shifts, funding freezes), and lack of formal PM training.

Today's Course Competencies

Part 1: Creating the Blueprint

- **Project Management components** scope, goals, timeline, budget, partners & resource allocation

- **Adaptive Leadership application** dancing between the technical & the adaptive, project diagnosis

Part 2: Anticipating Challenges

- **Project Management components** addressing bias, assessing risk, change management

- **Adaptive Leadership application** holding to purpose, raising the heat to the productive zone

Gathering the Givens

- There is enough content to go over to warrant a yearlong intensive course
- We are in politically unprecedented times, much of which we cannot predict or control
- Systems change is necessary, but we are operating in a **nonprofit industrial complex** that influences our work by (_fill in the blank_).
  - In other words, many of our systems uphold the status quo
  - If systemic, material change is the goal, some measure of the status quo must be dismantled
- Your contribution to this systems change work - at whatever scale and to whatever extent - is **CRITICAL**

Grounding Ourselves in this Experience

What it won't be…

- Technical training for project management **software**
- **People management** (i.e., volunteer/stakeholder tasks)
- A step-by-step, **how-to guide** for managing projects

What it will be…

- Introduction to **processes** to plan, manage, and organize projects
- "**Growing impact** while maintaining quality and community connection"
- Establishing a **project design framework** to contribute to sustainable change

Project Areas

PURPOSE is the _why_ that grounds our project

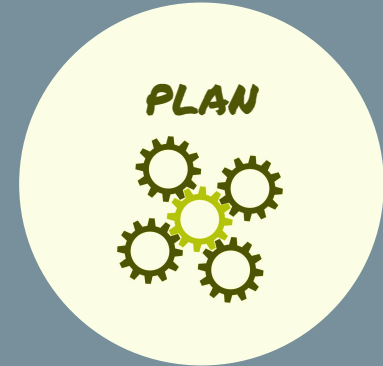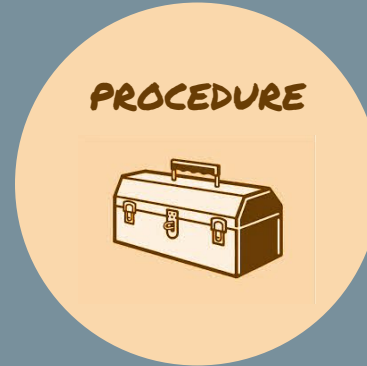>>>North star or compass for change<<<

PLAN is _what_ we ascertain is required to achieve project outcomes

>>>Processes/Frameworks for scope, goals, objectives, deliverables<<<
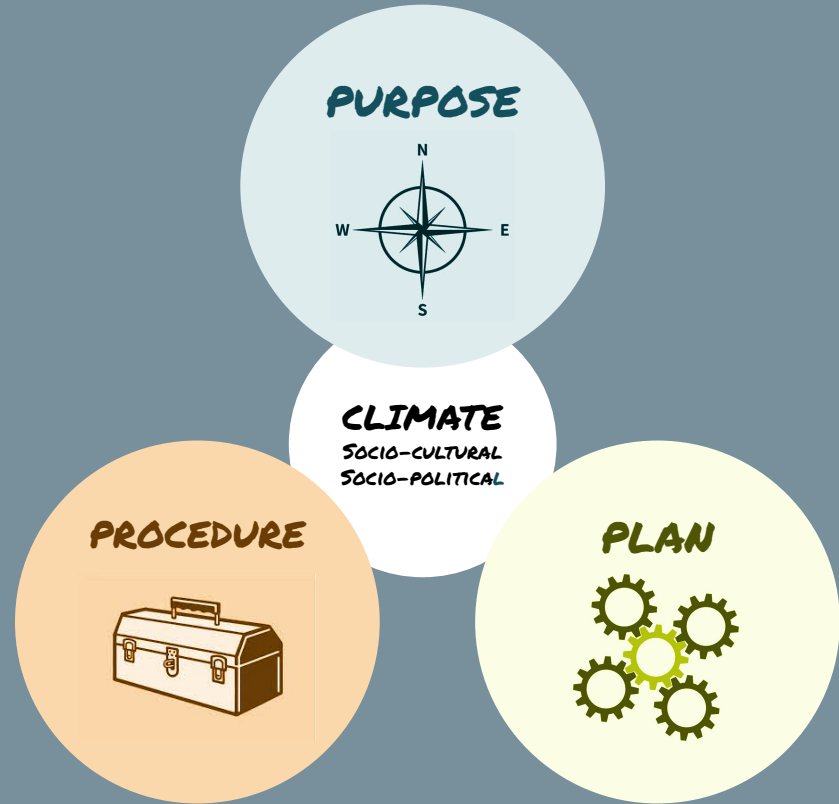
PROCEDURE is _how_ we translate the project plan to action

>>>Tools/Resources for implementation<<<

Project Management

Also takes into consideration how the _current climate (or context)_ informs our why, what, and how

PURPOSE

CLIMATE
Socio-cultural
Socio-political

PROCEDURE

PLAN

# Project ~~Management~~ Leadership Ecosystem

Creating and/or influencing the conditions under which the project (purpose, plan, and procedure) coalesces with the current climate for lasting impact by exercising leadership with a generational view (past, present, future).

Managing projects as components of building towards aspirational futures lies in adaptive leadership.
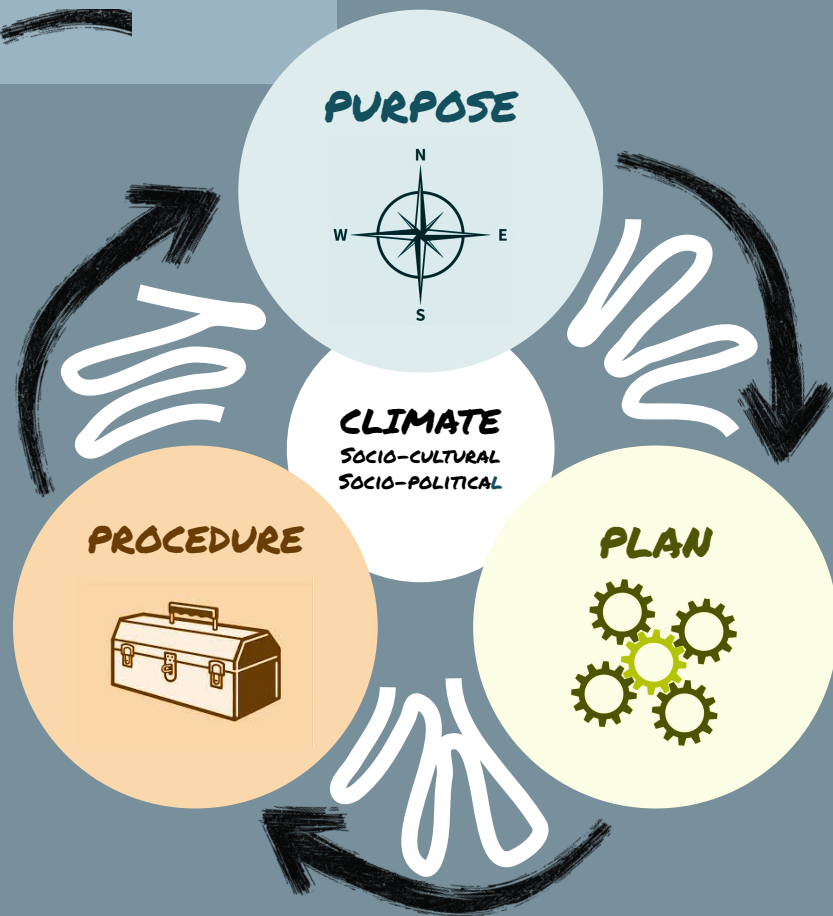
Creating the Project Blueprint

What is Project Management?

IN THEORY

> "The application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet project requirements."

IN REALITY

6 C's of Project Management

Consistency   Clarity   Collaboration   Continuity   Capability   Communication

Tracklify. (2021 Aug 9). "What is project management framework and which suits you best?" [BLOG]
Retrieved from https://tracklify.com/blog/what-is-project-management-framework/
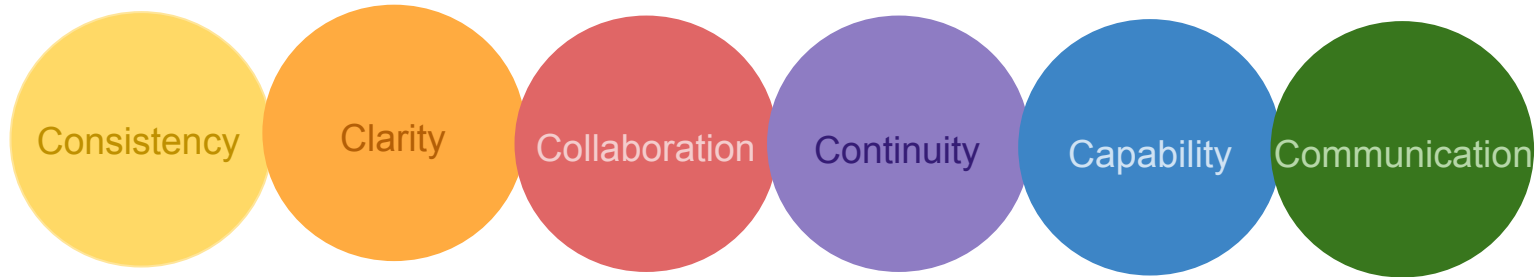
Project Scope

The project lifecycle

STAGE 1
Initiation
What is required
to put the project
into action?

STAGE 2
Planning
Who will be involved?
What will be the
milestones?
How will success
be measured? What
are the risks?

STAGE 3
Execution
What is getting
done?

STAGE 4
Management
How is progress?
What information
or data is there
to report?

STAGE 5
Review
What went well in
the project? What
didn't go well?
How can the process
be improved?

ICONS: ALEXDNDZ/ADOBE STOCK

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Chai, W. (2020). "Project management framework." *Tech Target*. Retrieved from
https://www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/project-management-framework

Project Scope: SMART vs PACT Goals

S Specific	Your goal is detailed and precise	
M Measurable	You can quantify your goal	
A Attainable	Your goal is realistic	
R Relevant	Your goal aligns with your business strategy	
T Time-based	Your goal has a deadline	

P Purposeful	Your goal should have a long term effect	
A Actionable	Your goal is based on outputs you can control	
C Continuous	Consistency and continuity is key	
T Trackable	You can track your goals progress	

Ionavici, D. (2022 Jan 5). "SMART or PACT? Setting goals that work for you." *Vcita.* Retrieved from https://www.vcita.com/blog/small-business-tips/setting-goals-the-smart-or-the-pact-way

Project Scope: SMART vs PACT Goals

**SMART:
SHORT-TERM, OUTCOME-DRIVEN**

"Increase newsletter subscribers by 5,000 in 25 weeks"

- **Specific** > increase subscribers
- **Measurable** > 5,000 subscribers
- **Achievable** > within 25 weeks
- **Relevant** > to newsletter growth
- **Time-bound** > 25 weeks

P	Purposeful	Your goal should have a long term effect
A	Actionable	Your goal is based on outputs you can control
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Project Scope: SMART vs PACT Goals

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"Increase newsletter subscribers by 5,000 in 25 weeks"

- **Specific** > increase subscribers
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- **Achievable** > within 25 weeks
- **Relevant** > to newsletter growth
- **Time-bound** > 25 weeks

**PACT:
LONG-TERM, AMBITIOUS WITH CONSISTENT EFFORT**

"Publish 25 newsletters over the next 25 weeks"

- **Purposeful** > publish newsletters
- **Actionable** > publish each week
- **Continuous** > publish consistently
- **Trackable** > each newsletter published
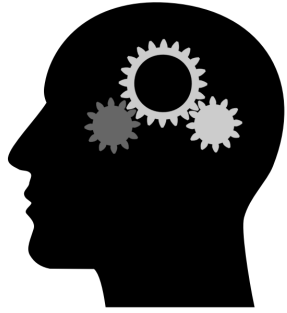
Project Scope: Deliverables + Timeline

The Technical

- Capacity (i.e., resources needed vs. resources available)
- Goals, Objectives, Scope
- Milestones/Benchmarks

The Adaptive

- Project vs. Program vs. Initiative
- Symptoms vs. Root Cause
- Orientation to the issue > organization vs. population being served

Distinguishing Technical & Adaptive Work

Technical problems live in people's heads–they're logic.

They are susceptible to facts and expertise.

Adaptive challenges live in people's hearts.

They're about our values, loyalties, and beliefs.

Progress on them requires the people with the problem to do the work → the work involves refashioning deeply held beliefs.

Distinguishing Technical and Adaptive Work

	TECHNICAL WORK	ADAPTIVE WORK
THE PROBLEM	IS CLEAR	REQUIRES LEARNING
THE SOLUTION	IS CLEAR	REQUIRES LEARNING
WHOSE WORK IS IT?	EXPERTS OR AUTHORITY	STAKEHOLDERS
TYPE OF WORK	EFFICIENT	ACT EXPERIMENTALLY
TIMELINE	ASAP	LONGER TERM
EXPECTATIONS	FIX THE PROBLEM	MAKE PROGRESS
ATTITUDE TOWARD CHALLENGE	BEING RIGHT	BEING CURIOUS

Technical & Adaptive Elements

A new manager is asked to reorganize her department. This will mean layoffs for some, cut schedule time, new responsibilities for others, and fewer supervisors across the department. The previous manager, although well liked, was demoted for being unable to accomplish a department reorganization.

Technical:

- New org charts
- Changing offices, seating
- Creating new processes of reporting
- Creating scheduling policies
- Assigning new supervisors

These elements are important! And, far from the challenges of the complete picture

Adaptive:

- Shifting loyalties from old manager to new
- Helping staff see their part in new org. struc.
- Morale? Shrinking the department
- Disruption effect from reorganization
- Staff leaving, hiring new staff

Adaptive challenges are about values, culture, vulnerability and require us to navigate differently as there is no "fix" or "solve"

Project Scope: Partner Identification

Project Scope: Partner Identification

Step 1: Defining Your Partnership Goals

Step 2: Identifying Key Stakeholders

Step 3: Mapping Network Connections

Step 4: Resource Sharing

Step 5: Stakeholder Power Mapping

Step 6: Prioritizing Partnerships

Step 7: Developing Priority Partnerships

Step 8: Assessing Priority Partnerships

Step 9: Moving Priority Partnerships to Action

The Local & Regional Food System Partnership Planning Tool

A Guide for Nutrition Incentive & Produce Prescription Program Practitioners

Resource Prepared by
Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems

February 2023

This work is supported by Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program grant no. 2019-70030-30415/project accession no. 1020863 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

Project Scope: Budget + Resource Allocation

Information Dissemination

- Electronic communications systems (e.g., social media)
- Word-of-mouth
- Published materials
- Networks
- Outreach

Information Capture

- Vital statistics and other surveillance data
- Market analysis/forecast
- Local knowledge/social conditions
- Information technology
- Evaluation results

People

- Staff
- Volunteers
- Students/interns
- Administrative support

Relationships With

- Donors
- Policymakers
- Suppliers/labor organizations
- Faith-based institutions
- Community/civic groups
- Umbrella organizations
- Media
- General public

Expertise

- Technical experts
- Project development
- Training/capacity-building
- Management
- Marketing

Expertise (cont'd)

- Facilitation
- Convening
- Evaluation
- Negotiation
- Journalism or storytelling

Back-end Support

- Food supply
- Materials for project activities
- Events
- Funding/sponsorship
- Logistics
- Certifications
- Fiscal agency

Infrastructure

- Project location
- Transport
- Warehouses
- Shared use kitchens
- Equipment

In order to mobilize systems…

we need broader diagnosis.

Are you a problem-solving junkie?

When a problem shows up,
do you dive right in and start
working?

Even better…
Have you been rewarded professionally
and personally for your willingness and
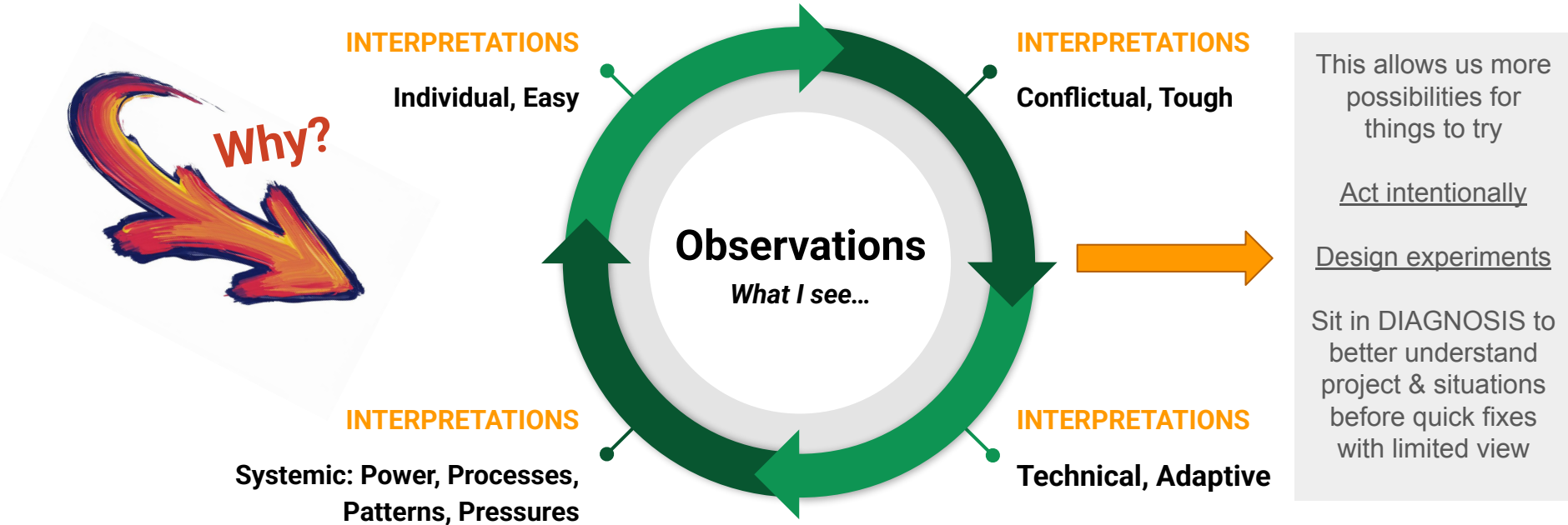ability to take problems off others and
fix them?

Why project diagnosis for systemic change?
The ability to avoid the all too-common impulse to leap into action when adaptive
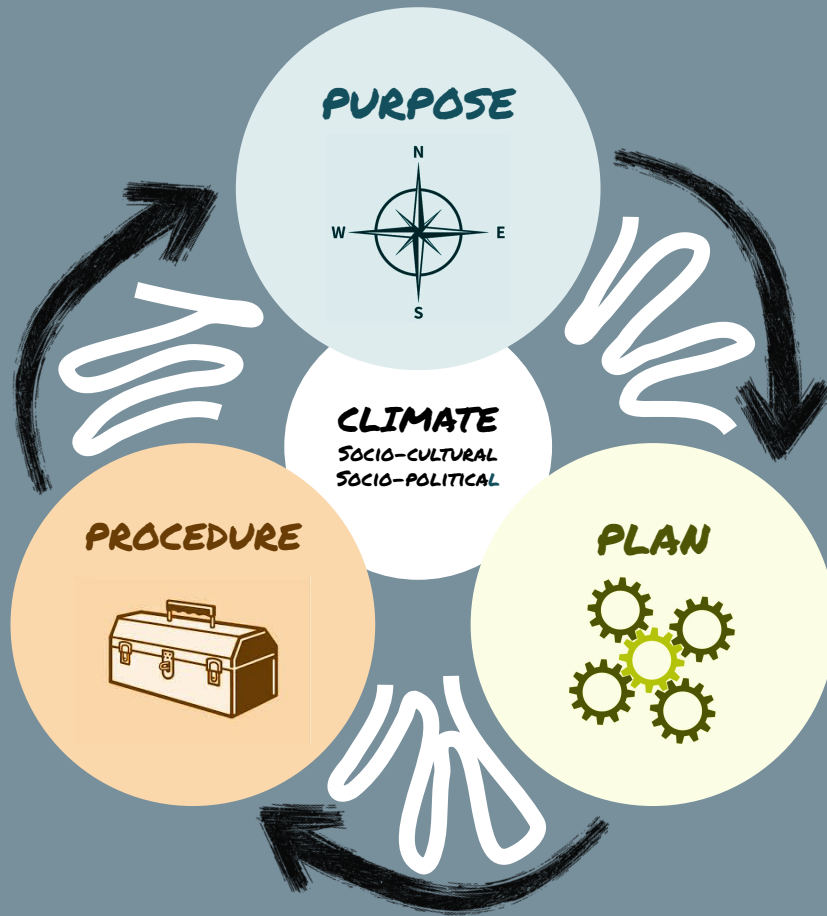challenges are present. First step is inaction–sit in diagnosis.

A Tool of Diagnosis… Making Sense of things

Why?

INTERPRETATIONS
Individual, Easy

INTERPRETATIONS
Conflictual, Tough

Observations
What I see…

INTERPRETATIONS
Systemic: Power, Processes, Patterns, Pressures

INTERPRETATIONS
Technical, Adaptive

This allows us more possibilities for things to try

Act intentionally

Design experiments

Sit in DIAGNOSIS to better understand project & situations before quick fixes with limited view

Anticipating Challenges

Burnout…The reality

Working in these adaptive spaces in communities with multiple stakeholders inherently lead us to **burnout**. It's real and valid.

- We're stretching ourselves to engage others, not just the authority, to make progress.
- We're learning exactly what the problem is and then deciding how best to proceed.
- It requires us to try things, to "experiment," testing possible ways of moving forward.

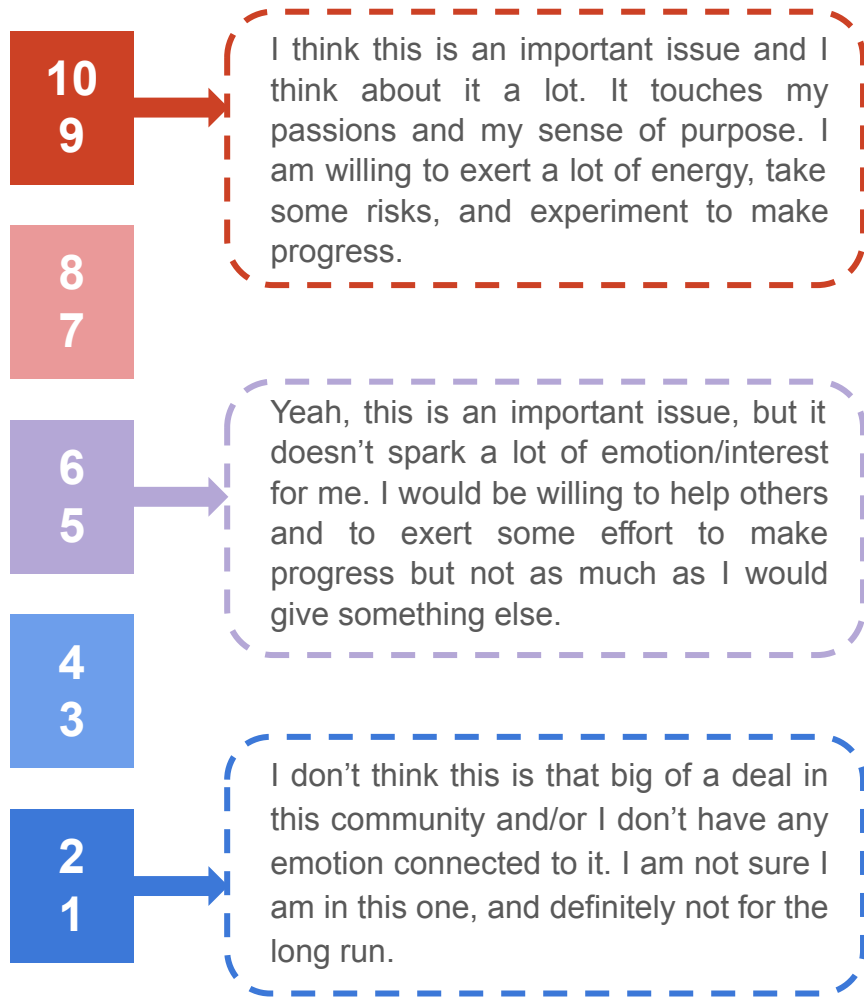**The work is in-depth; there is no quick fix.**

ACTIVITY

CARE vs. TOLERANCE

PART 1: When I really care…

Think of a specific food system issue that rates **HIGH** (9-10) for you on the scale.

Example: I really care self-determination, in particular BIPOC communities having the means to achieve and sustain food sovereignty and nutritional equity.

10
9

8
7

6
5

4
3

2
1

I think this is an important issue and I think about it a lot. It touches my passions and my sense of purpose. I am willing to exert a lot of energy, take some risks, and experiment to make progress.

Yeah, this is an important issue, but it doesn't spark a lot of emotion/interest for me. I would be willing to help others and to exert some effort to make progress but not as much as I would give something else.

I don't think this is that big of a deal in this community and/or I don't have any emotion connected to it. I am not sure I am in this one, and definitely not for the long run.

PART 1: When I really care…what is my tolerance for the mess?

1. Find your Group # in the Google Doc (using the Document Tab function is fastest).
2. Write your issue for Part 1 in red and include your initials.
3. Place your initials on the chart in red according to your level of tolerance for the five conditions.

Uncertainty	Ambiguity	Conflict	Risk	Disappointment
HIGH (10)	HIGH (10)	HIGH (10)	HIGH (10)	HIGH (10)
LOW (1)	LOW (1)	LOW (1)	LOW (1)	LOW (1)

PART 2: When I don't care so much…

Looking at your peers' issues from Part 1, identify an issue that rates **VERY LOW OR LOW** (1-4) for you on the scale.

If you can't identify one from your peers, identify a food system issue of very low or low importance to you.

Example: I don't feel strongly about composting food waste. It's a good thing, but not my priority.

10 9

I think this is an important issue and I think about it a lot. It touches my passions and my sense of purpose. I am willing to exert a lot of energy, take some risks, and experiment to make progress.

8 7

6 5

Yeah, this is an important issue, but it doesn't spark a lot of emotion/interest for me. I would be willing to help others and to exert some effort to make progress but not as much as I would give something else.

4 3

2 1

I don't think this is that big of a deal in this community and/or I don't have any emotion connected to it. I am not sure I am in this one, and definitely not for the long run.

PART 2: When I don't care so much…what is my tolerance for the mess?

1. Find your Group # in the Google Doc (using the Document Tab function is fastest).
2. Copy/paste or write your issue for Part 2 in blue and include your initials.
3. Place your initials on the chart in blue according to your level of tolerance for the five conditions.

Uncertainty	Ambiguity	Conflict	Risk	Disappointment
HIGH (10)	HIGH (10)	HIGH (10)	HIGH (10)	HIGH (10)
↕	↕	↕	↕	↕
LOW (1)	LOW (1)	LOW (1)	LOW (1)	LOW (1)

Discussion

1. What did you learn about yourself from this activity?
2. What "aha's" did you have listening to others?
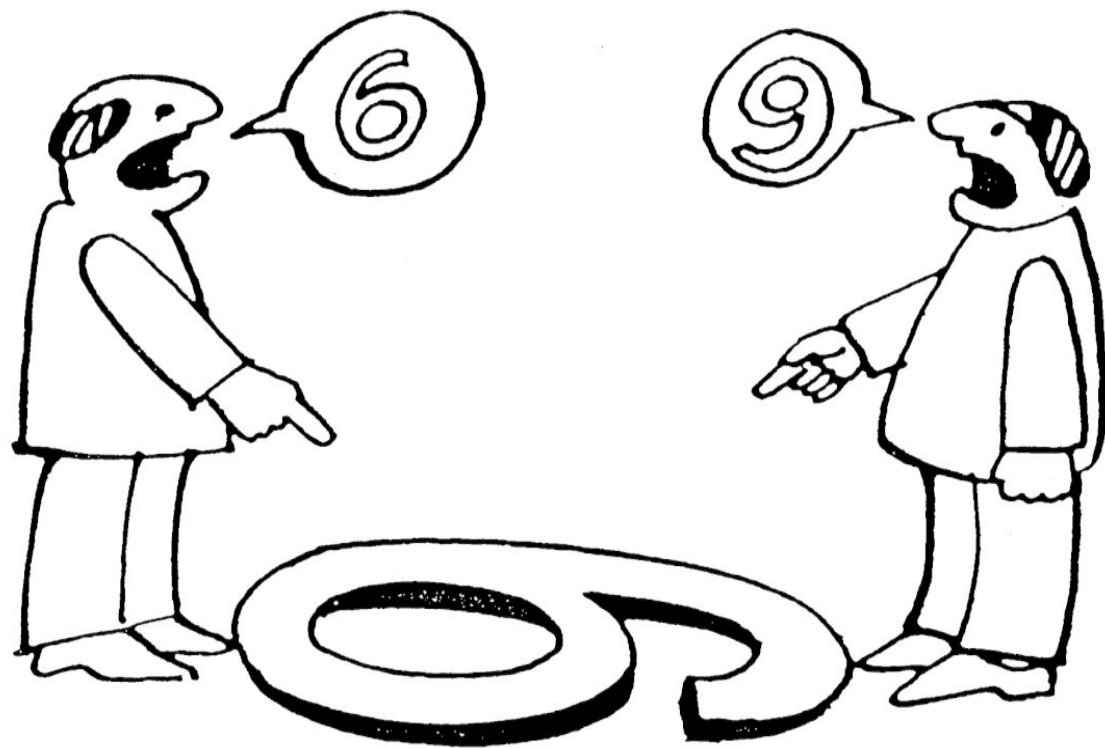3. How would you translate these insights to project management?
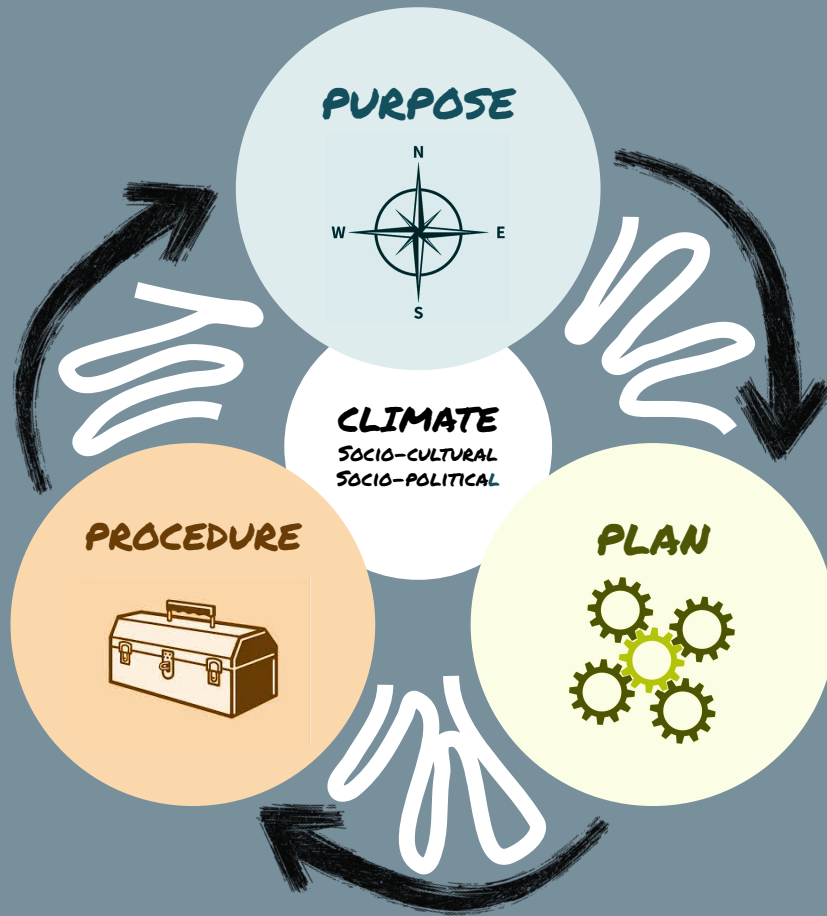
Recognizing Bias

Unconscious bias refers to a bias that we are unaware of, and which happens outside of our control. It is a bias that happens automatically and is triggered by our brain making quick judgments and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences.

Conscious (Explicit) bias refers to the attitudes and beliefs we have about a person or group on a conscious level. Expressions of explicit bias occur as a result of deliberate thought.

Types of Bias

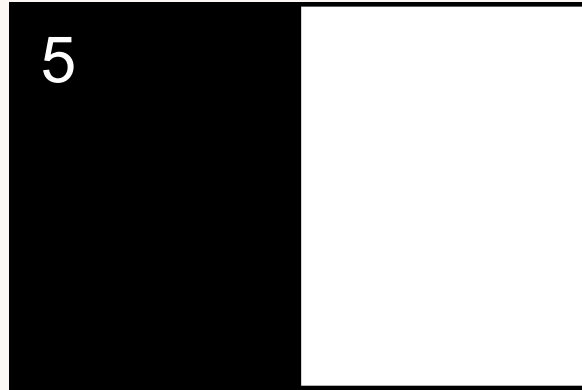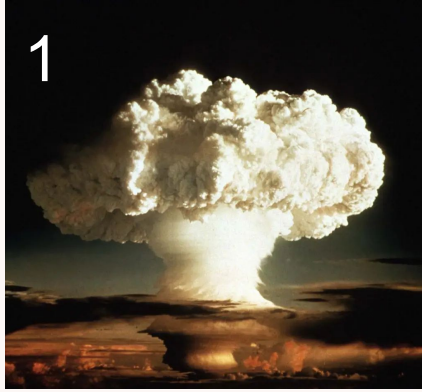**Affinity Bias:** the tendency to warm up to people like ourselves.

Halo Effect: the tendency to think everything about a person is good because you like that person.

Perception Bias: the tendency to form stereotypes and assumptions about certain groups that make it impossible to make an objective judgement about members of those groups.
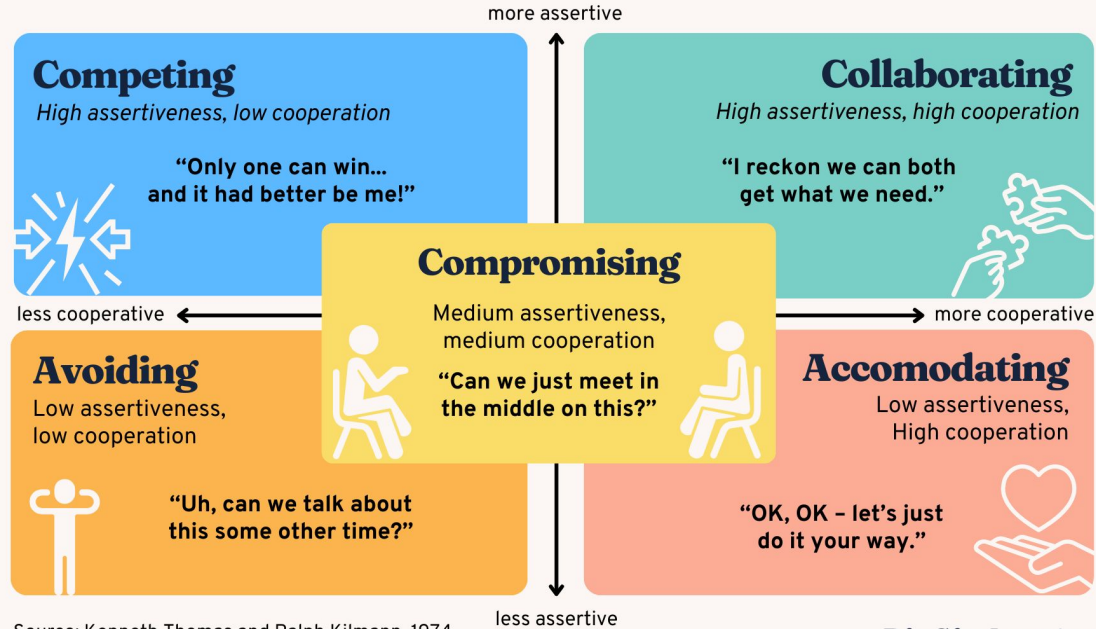
Confirmation Bias: the tendency for people to seek information that confirms pre-existing beliefs and assumptions.

Groupthink: bias which occurs when people try too hard to fit into a particular group by mimicking others or holding back thoughts and opinions. This causes them to lose part of their identities and causes organizations to lose out on creativity and innovation.

How do you see conflict?

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Model

more assertive

Competing
High assertiveness, low cooperation

"Only one can win...
and it had better be me!"

Collaborating
High assertiveness, high cooperation

"I reckon we can both
get what we need."

less cooperative

Compromising
Medium assertiveness,
medium cooperation

"Can we just meet in
the middle on this?"

more cooperative

Avoiding
Low assertiveness,
low cooperation

"Uh, can we talk about
this some other time?"

Accomodating
Low assertiveness,
High cooperation

"OK, OK – let's just
do it your way."

less assertive

Source: Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann, 1974

BiteSize Learning

Thomas, K. W., & Kilmann, R. H. (1974). Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI)
Retrieved from https://www.bitesizelearning.co.uk/resources/thomas-kilmann-conflict-model
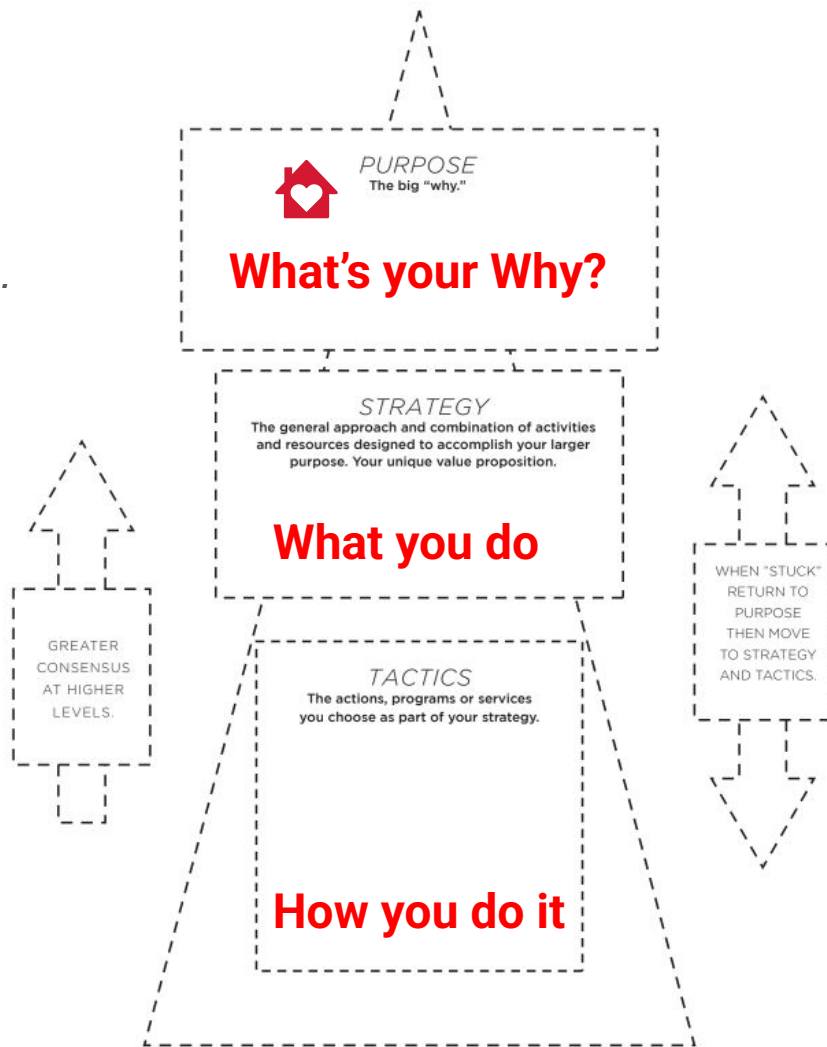
Hold to Purpose

Centering on Purpose doesn't mean consensus or agreeing about everything.

How we know purpose is alive in our organization…

- Divergent stakeholders unite behind one vision; it's articulated

- Common language emerges across the organization

- You celebrate success & failures

- Multiple talents are leveraged to make more progress

PURPOSE
The big "why."

What's your Why?

STRATEGY
The general approach and combination of activities and resources designed to accomplish your larger purpose. Your unique value proposition.

What you do

GREATER CONSENSUS AT HIGHER LEVELS.

TACTICS
The actions, programs or services you choose as part of your strategy.

WHEN "STUCK" RETURN TO PURPOSE THEN MOVE TO STRATEGY AND TACTICS.

How you do it

Quiet Reflection

Choose 2-3 questions below and journal/reflect.

- Who shares your purpose…how do you know?

- How clear are others about your purpose, is it crystal clear?

- What's negotiable, what's not (strategies/tactics related to purpose)

- What are YOU willing to let go of to make progress?

- What reorients you to purpose?

- What's getting in the way?

Heat is disturbance, complexity, conflict, and the discomfort that comes with loss, risk, hard questions, multiple interpretations, and experimentation.

Raising the heat means doing something big or small to compel people to act – to make it more uncomfortable not to address the issue than to live with the issue.
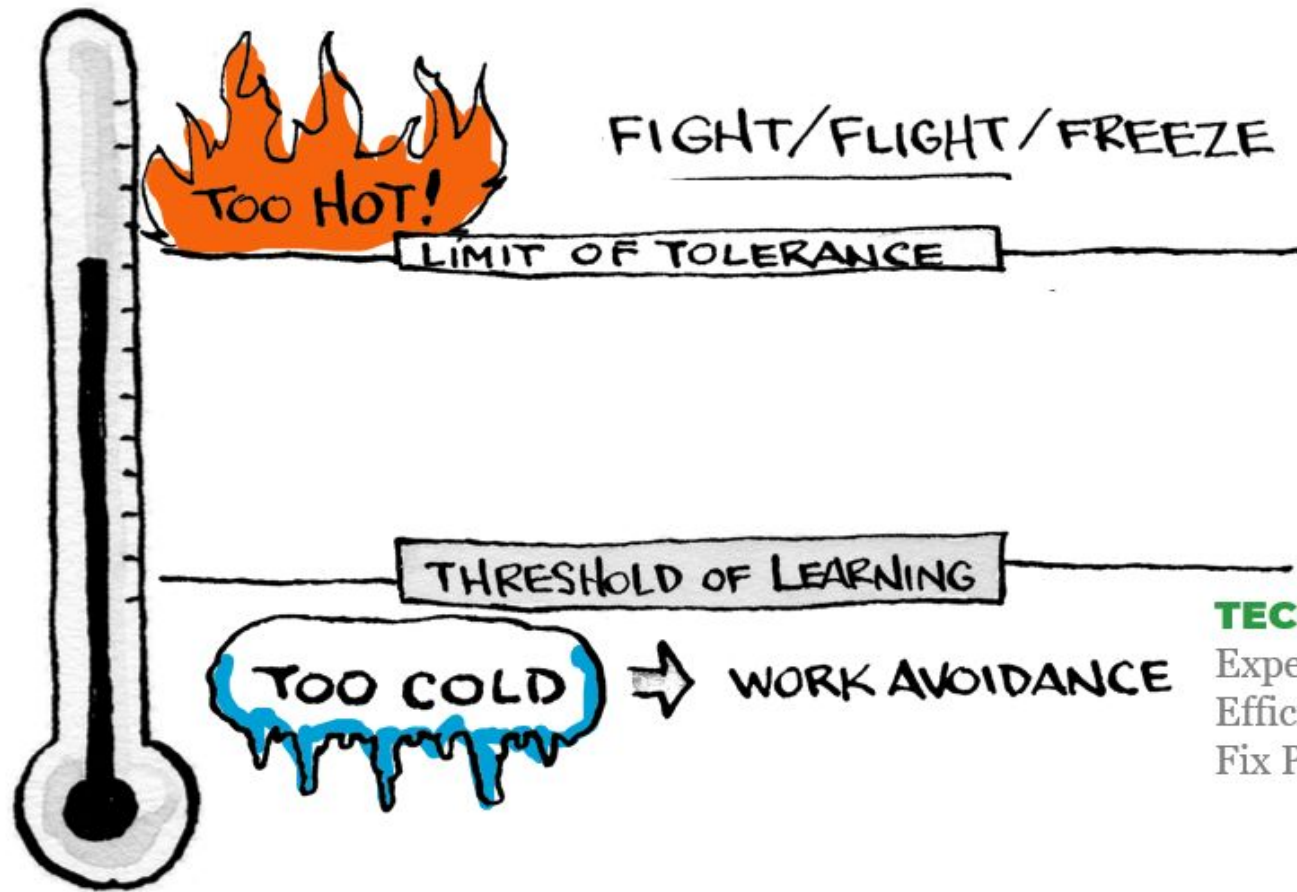
adaptive leadership productive zone of disequilibrium
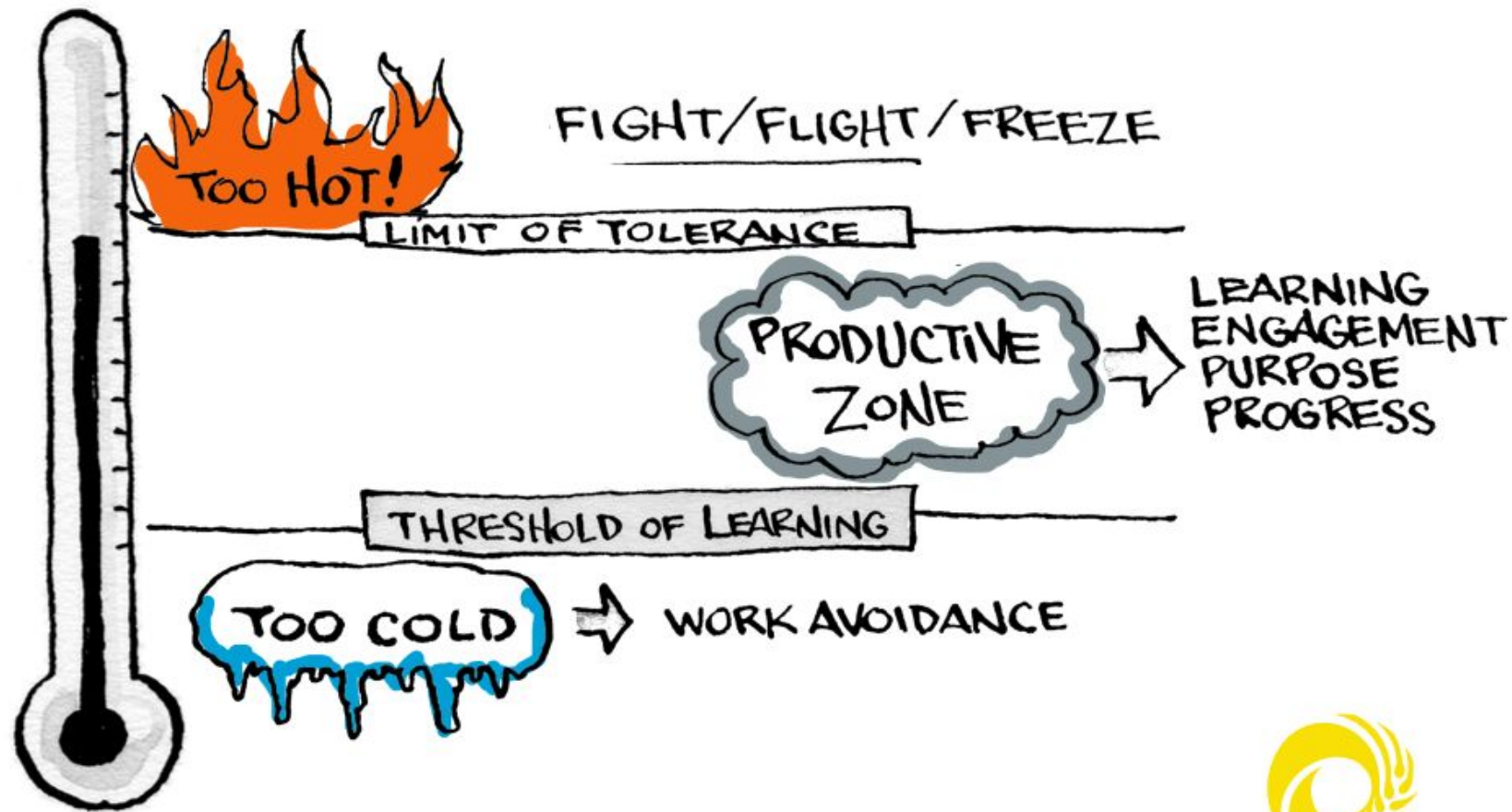
What are indicators the heat is **too low**?

We're in work avoidance.

Knowing when to raise the heat

You are the only one doing the work.

An elephant in the room isn't being talked about (only in private).

You aren't satisfied with the rate of progress.

You and others are disengaging from something you care about.

Important questions aren't being addressed.

Some folks are staying silent while others do all the work.

Possible ways to get into the productive zone

Say what others won't.

Create structures and assign responsibilities.

Disrupt norms.

Articulate the obvious.

Ask powerful questions.

Make tough interpretations.

Raising the **heat** means doing something big or small to compel people to act...
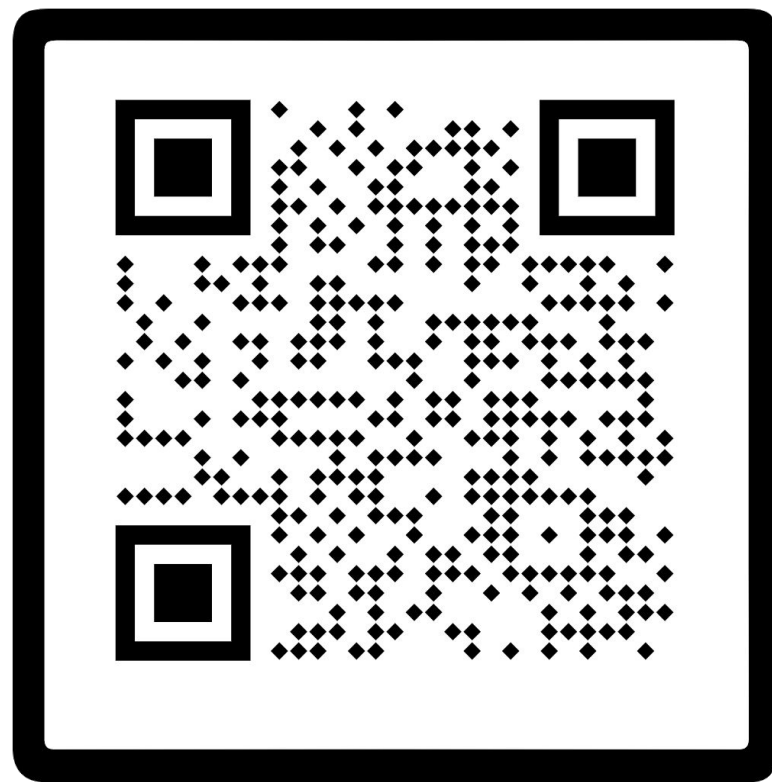
To make it more uncomfortable *not* to address the issue than to live with the issue.

Risk Assessment & Change Management
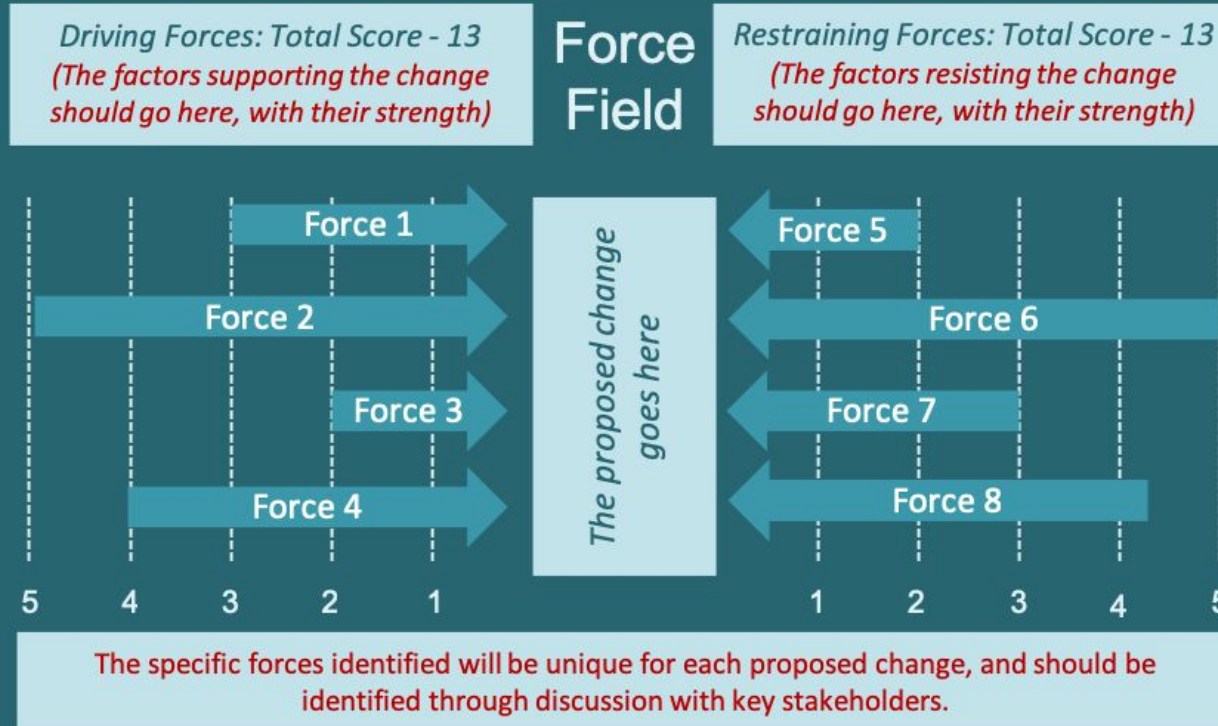
The World of Work Project. (n.d.). Force field analysis: Will a change succeed?. Retrieved from
https://worldofwork.io/2019/03/force-field-analysis/

Reflection

Evaluation

Scan me!

Recap: Resources Shared

Tools + Templates

- Mapping SMART vs. PACT Goals
- The Local & Regional Food System Partnership Planning Tool
- Smartsheet timeline templates
- Smartsheet budget templates
- Force Field Analysis Interactive Tool

Free: Microsoft 365 Create

Paid: MindTools (leadership tools)

Processes + Exercises

- Distinguishing Technical & Adaptive Work
- Sensemaking: Observations & Interpretations
- Care vs. Tolerance Scale
- Hold to Purpose
- Zone of Productivity: Raising the Heat