



ABLE Change

Guide to Facilitating Systemic Action Learning

Foster-Fishman & Watson
Michigan State University

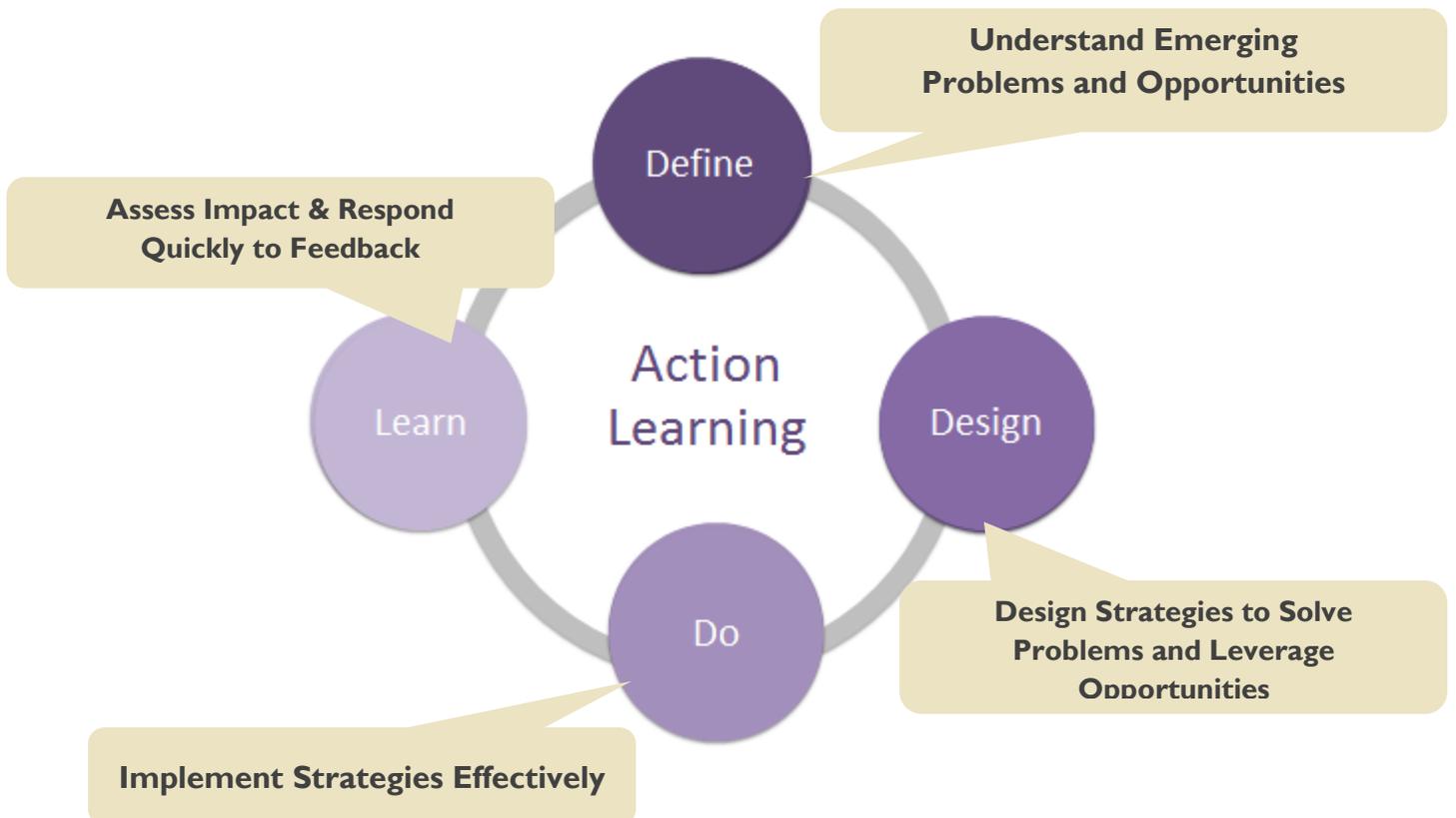
EMBED AN ACTION LEARNING PROCESS

The first step in adapting quickly is embedding action learning processes into **all meetings and conversations**. An **Action Learning Process** is an ongoing problem-solving cycle where people understand what is causing the problems they see, design innovative strategies to address those problems, carry out actions, and then learn about whether those actions made a difference in solving the problem. This process creates capa

city for effective ongoing problem solving

Major movers and shakers in the systems world say that in order to make transformative change, you need to shift the way the work is done. One key way of doing this is to create connected learning processes.

THE ACTION LEARNING PROCESS



Action Learning Process

Define –help stakeholders reveal and deeply understand the problems and opportunities they experience.

Design - Use this understanding to help stakeholders develop innovative strategies and actions to pursue systems changes.

Do – Take action to carry out strategies and continuously assess and address emerging implementation challenges.

Learn - Assess whether strategies made a difference. If strategies did not resolve problem or leverage opportunities, return to DEFINE to understand what needs to shift.

WHEN AND WHERE CAN AN ACTION LEARNING PROCESS TAKE PLACE?

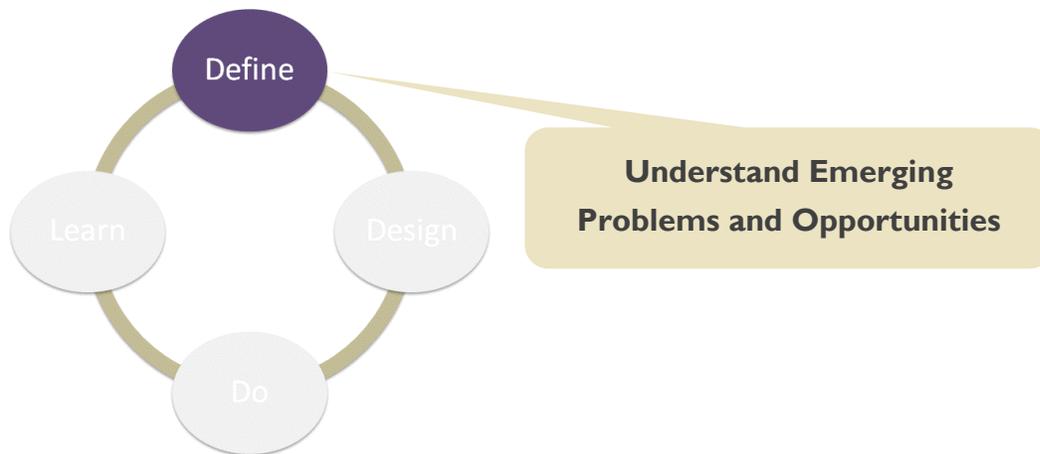
Individually

During
informal
conversations

While working
with clients

In group
meetings

In community
forums



Reveal

Ask for stories about people's current experiences with the systems change targets.

What's **working**?

What's **not working**?

Pause when problems or opportunities are mentioned.

Understand

When problems or opportunities come up, ask questions like:

Why is this happening?

What **additional information** do we need to fully understand this situation?

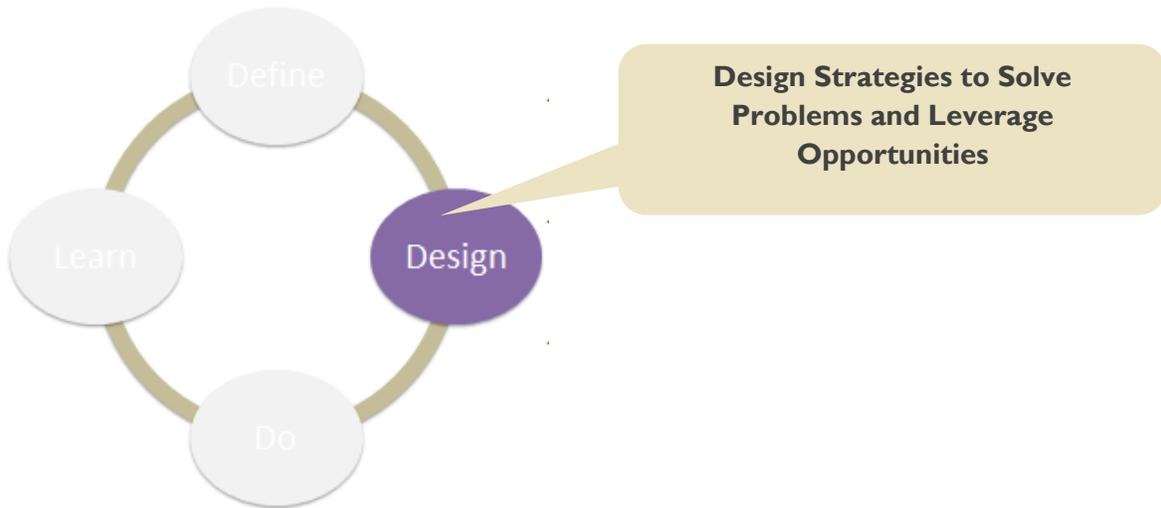
When necessary, help people create specific plans for gathering additional information.

INSIDER
TIPS

Close the loop!

- When a problem or opportunity related to the systems change targets comes up in any conversation, make sure to put it on the shared agenda
- If possible, collect more information about the situation to jumpstart the action learning discussions

Shared Agenda		
Systems Change Targets	Strategies	Agenda Items
Make early childhood health and education services easier for families to access	Simplify the process to access services across early childhood settings	<p>DEFINE</p> <p>A. System Check-in</p> <p><u>REVEAL</u> Facilitation Questions</p> <p><i>What's an example of access working this last month?</i></p> <p><i>What's an example of access <u>not</u> working this past month?</i></p> <p>B. Identifying potential challenges to clinic's new intake protocol – update from Jim</p> <p><u>REVEAL</u> Facilitation Questions</p> <p><i>Jim, what did you learn about potential problems with the clinic's intake process since our last meeting?</i></p> <p>C. Understanding access barriers - why is access difficult for families?</p> <p><u>UNDERSTAND</u> Facilitation Questions</p> <p><i>Why are families having a hard time accessing services?</i></p> <p><i>What additional information do we need to understand this situation? Who can gather this information?</i></p>



Generate Small Wins

Listen to the conversations and ask questions like:

What can we do **in the next 6 months** to address these problems?

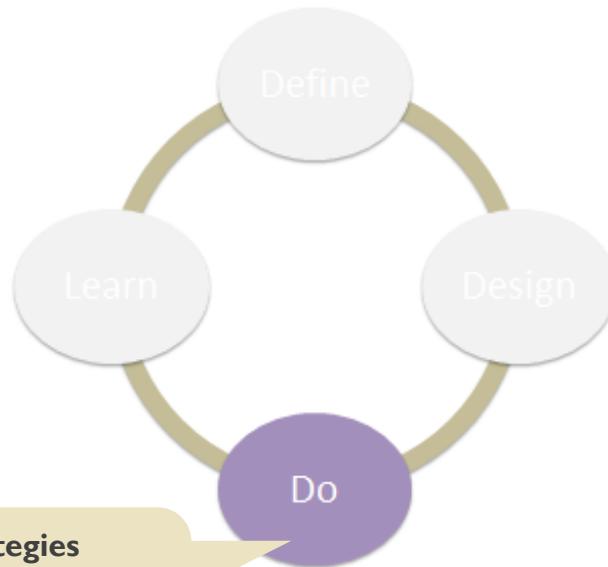
Will these actions **benefit all people equally**?

Consider Implementation

Listen to the conversation and ask questions like:

How can we make sure our actions are **implemented effectively**?

Shared Agenda		
Systems Change Targets	Strategies	Agenda Items
Make access to early childhood health and education services easier for families	Simplify the process to access services across early childhood settings	<p>DESIGN</p> <p>A. Simplifying the intake process for families trying to access services</p> <p><u>SMALL WIN Facilitation Questions</u></p> <p><i>What can we do in the next 6 months to simplify the intake processes for families?</i></p> <p><i>How can we ensure these actions will benefit all families equally?</i></p> <p><u>IMPLEMENTATION Facilitation Questions</u></p> <p><i>Readiness:</i> <i>How can we ensure professionals and families see our small win actions as <u>necessary, feasible, and beneficial</u>?</i></p> <p><i>Capacity:</i> <i>How can we ensure professionals and families have the <u>skills and knowledge</u> they need to use and benefit from our small win actions?</i></p> <p><i>Diffusion:</i> <i>How can we ensure all relevant professionals and families are actually <u>using and benefiting</u> from our small win actions?</i></p>



Implement Strategies Effectively and Support Stakeholders' Implementation Efforts

Check In: How's It Going?

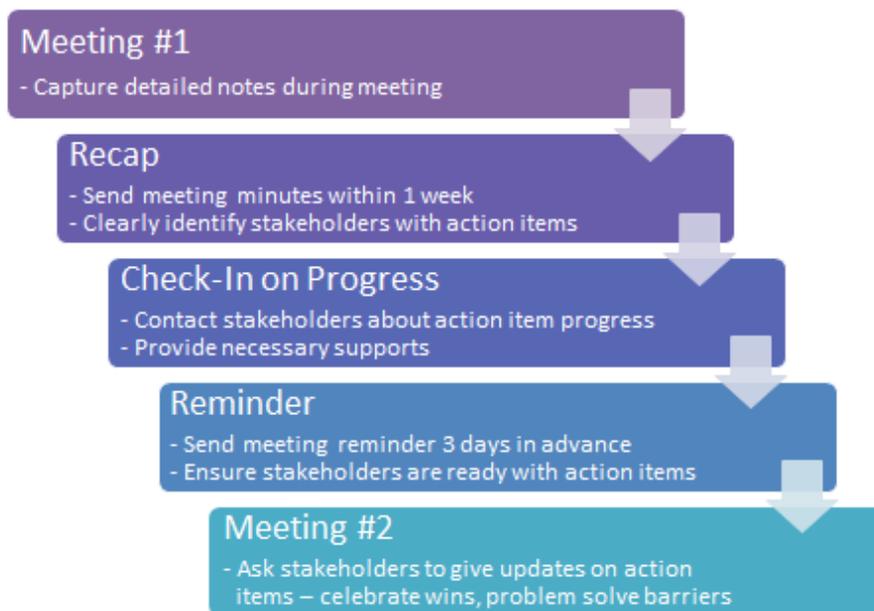
Provide reminders, technical assistance, and encouragement by asking:

How is it going?

What **barriers** are you encountering as you carry out your actions?

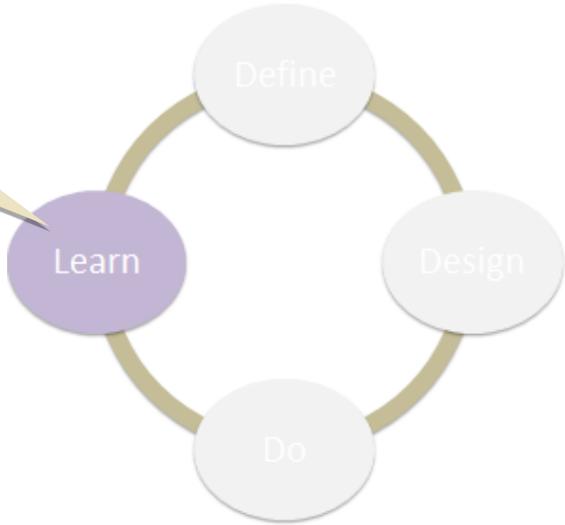
What supports do you need?

Coaching Schedule



Shared Agenda		
Systems Change Targets	Strategies	Agenda Items
Make access to early childhood health and education services easier for families	Simplify the process to access services across early childhood settings	<p>A. Progress of simplifying intake processes</p> <p>HOW'S IT GOING Facilitation Questions</p> <p><i>How's it going with simplifying the intake processes?</i></p> <p><i>Are you encountering any barriers – if so why are they happening, and how can they be addressed?</i></p> <p><i>What support do people need?</i></p> <p><i>Are you seeing any initial signs that the new intake processes are improving access?</i></p>

**Assess Impact & Respond
Quickly to Feedback**



Did We Make a Difference?

Listen to the conversations and ask questions like:

Did we **solve the problem**?

What changes **haven't we been able to make**? Why?

Do we need to **gather more information** about the problem?

System Responses

Listen to the conversation and ask questions like:

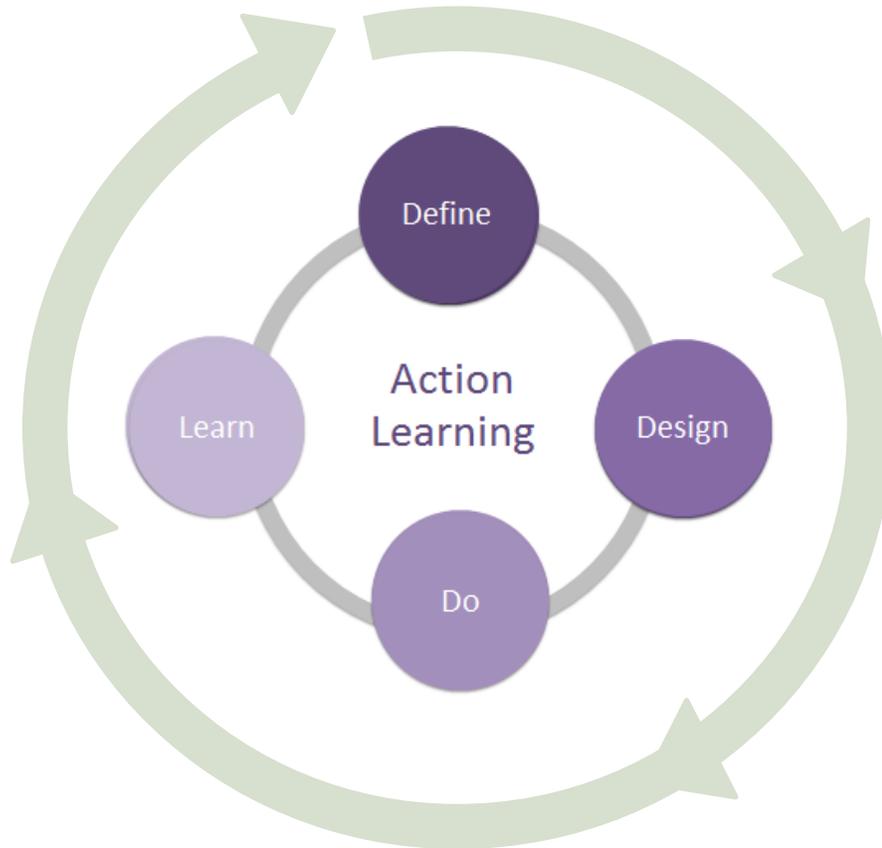
Are you seeing any **emerging opportunities** in response to our actions?
How can we **leverage these opportunities**?

Are you seeing any **emerging problems** in response to our actions?
Why are these problems happening – how can we **address them**?

Shared Agenda

Systems Change Targets	Strategies	Agenda Items
<p>Make access to early childhood health and education services easier for families</p>	<p>Simplify the process to access services across early childhood settings</p>	<p>A. Progress of simplifying intake processes</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 20px; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 15px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>DID WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE</u> <u>Facilitation Questions</u></p> <p><i>We've been using the simplified intake processes for a few months now, and everyone's been talking with families about whether this has made it easier to access services. What have you learned? Has the new intake process made it easier for families to access services?</i></p> <p><i>If not, what is getting in the way? How can we address these barriers?</i></p> <p><i>Do we need to learn more about what's getting in the way of access?</i></p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 20px; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 15px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>SYSTEM RESPONSE</u> <u>Facilitation Questions</u></p> <p><i>Are you seeing any new opportunities emerging in response to the new intake processes? How can we take advantage of these opportunities?</i></p> <p><i>Are you seeing any new problems emerging in response to the new intake processes? Why are these problems emerging, and how can we address them?</i></p> </div>

Remember, the Action Learning Cycle is iterative. If you are using this process correctly, you will visit each of the steps over and over again as you move around the circle.



What can you do in your community to ensure that the action learning process promotes shared accountability and collective action?



More tools and materials to support embedding an action learning process are available online: <http://systemexchange.msu.edu/ablechangeonline>

WEAVING

The next step required to adapt quickly is to ensure weaving of ongoing learning and action. **Weaving** creates information feedback loops that help improve decision making and system responsiveness. It also aligns ongoing action and learning to maximize impact and avoid interference.

Weaving occurs

- During and Across Action Team Meetings
- During Informal Conversations

Weaving Benefits

- Real time sharing of insights and inquiries
- Opportunity to build trust across stakeholder groups

Weaving Requirements

- All stakeholders must be ready and able to fully participate AND value multiple perspectives
- The Weaver must be a skilled facilitator

INSIDER TIPS

Weaving Trick

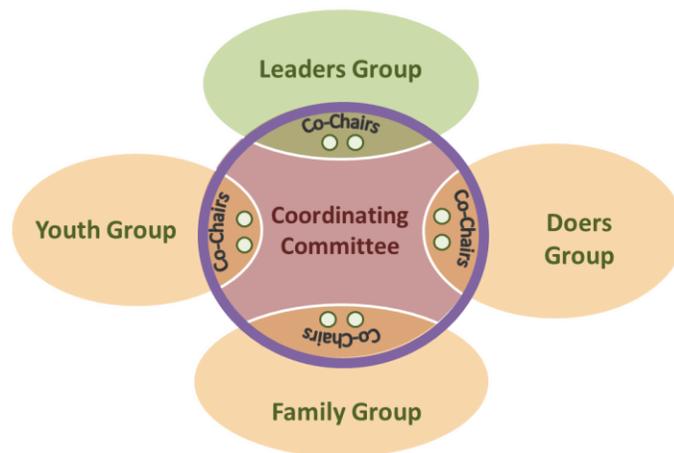
- Think outside of the box. When you hear problems or opportunities come up in conversations, think about who else might need to know about these issues or could support this work that we typically don't connect to?

WEAVING ACROSS ACTION TEAM MEETINGS

During an Action Team meeting, the Weaver is responsible for the following:

- Share insights, feedback and ideas gathered from other action teams for feedback
- Generate questions to ask of other teams to guide the action learning cycle
- Review shared agenda and action plan to identify possible areas of synergy and interference

Coordinating Committees can help with the weaving role:



WEAVING ACROSS PEOPLE & SETTINGS TO BUILD CONNECTIONS

Throughout the work of the change effort, the Weaver is responsible for the following:

- Identify opportunities and need for connections across people, organizations, groups.
- Use your knowledge of the system to initiate connections by suggesting relevant people, organizations, groups, action teams, or information that could be relevant for addressing emerging problems or opportunities.
- Follow-up on progress to ensure connections are made and to provide necessary supports.

Identifying Weaving Opportunities

- What insights or questions should be exchanged between action teams?
- Has anything come up in this conversation that should be shared with other stakeholders across the system?
- How can the activities initiated by each action teams be coordinated?
- Are there any outside stakeholders or organizations that we could connect with to improve our efforts?
- Who can help us understand whether our strategies are being implemented and diffused across the system?