

# RESCHOOL Design Lab

version 1 January 2024



<https://www.reschoolcolorado.org/designlab/>

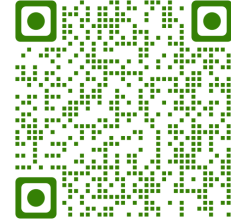


Photo by Jason Goodman

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# Invitation and Introduction

Design Lab invites you to: radically listen, co-create ideas and try those ideas, and anchor how and if concepts evolve and grow to reach more people based on what you learn.

Who is Design Lab for?

Organizations (for example: non-profits, government agencies, foundations, school districts) and people interested in or growing in their practice to co-create with community and better align their work with community needs



# Introduction to Design Lab

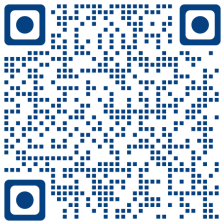
## Components of Design Lab



### **10-minute overview of the components and tools in Design Lab.**

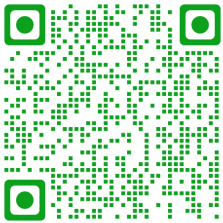
Note: This video features Design Lab in Miro. For pdf users, it is still an effective way to learn about the components of Design Lab. For a more in depth look at the components of Design Lab, check out the 1-hour recording, "Exploring Design Lab"

## Exploring Design Lab



**1-hour recording looking more in depth at each component of Design Lab.**

## Frequently Asked Questions



**Check out our website for frequently asked questions about Design Lab.**



# Glossary

Let's build some shared understanding about a few terms.





Example of co-design in action

**Assumptions:**

There is belief these things must be affirmed in order for the future state to occur. Note: These assumptions will be tested when you implement your plan.

**Awareness of each other**

Listening tools are centered on learning from the people with lived experience navigating challenges and/or seeking opportunities that the collective group desires to learn about. That process will impact you and how you and your team show up in the work. So, by engaging in this process you will have more of an awareness of yourself and your group sits in systems because while its not the primary purpose of the listening tools, they have ripple effects if used authentically and intentionally.

**Co-design:**

The process of surfacing ideas from and within community and trying those things together as equal partners and collaborators in systems change. The group is not working in a hierarchical structure. Everyone is interdependent on each other.

**Community:**

It is important to note that a community includes both people supporting/resourcing an idea or process and people with lived experiences in a particular setting, navigating challenges and/or seeking opportunities which the collective group desires to learn about.

**Community-anchored work:**

The work you do is generated by and evolves based on the community you're collaborating with, namely people who directly experience our learning systems yet have not had a seat at the table in the design of those systems.

**Desired Future State:**

Think of this as the vision statement for the body of work you are focusing on as you begin a project or process. What you hope to see happen over time as a result of the journey you are about to embark on together.

**Empathy:**

Put simply, it's the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

Check out the ladders of connectedness frame which breaks empathy down a little further.

**Equity:**

Each person has access to what they need to thrive.

**Hypotheses:**

Idea(s) and solution(s) that are proposed with a prediction. These are often if/then statements.

Hypotheses can be tested to see if they are true.

**Interdependencies:**

These are collaborators, relationships and resources that are dependent on each other.

**Measure and Review:**

Define your learning agenda and what you're measuring—what data and information you need to collect and track to determine whether the assumptions you've made are correct (or not!). At key points along the way, reflect on where you are in testing your assumptions and reaching your desired state. What has proved to be true and what did you perhaps get wrong? Based on where you are at these points, further define the research agenda for your strategy. This could be a point where you take a pause too, and decide to move in a new direction based on what you've learned since starting this process.

**Strategies:**

Ways to affect the current state in order to achieve the desired future state: Outline what you plan to do to get to test your assumptions and get to your desired future state, including the roles different people will play, the activities you expect to embark on, the data you will need to collect, and the timeline for implementing this strategy. Involve the people you're collaborating with to co-create a strategy.

**Have a question about a term or phrase we use? Want to request a word/term be added to the glossary? Send us a note at [info@reschoolcolorado.org](mailto:info@reschoolcolorado.org)**

# The Triple Loop Model

A Model for Co-Design-Our hypothesis is that the work is made more joyful, equitable and valuable if the participants reflect on awareness and action as connected by an intention.

The premise is that the burden of all knowledge is action.



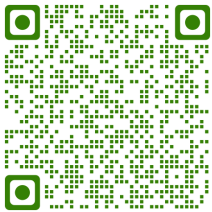


The Triple Loop Model : A Model for Co- Design

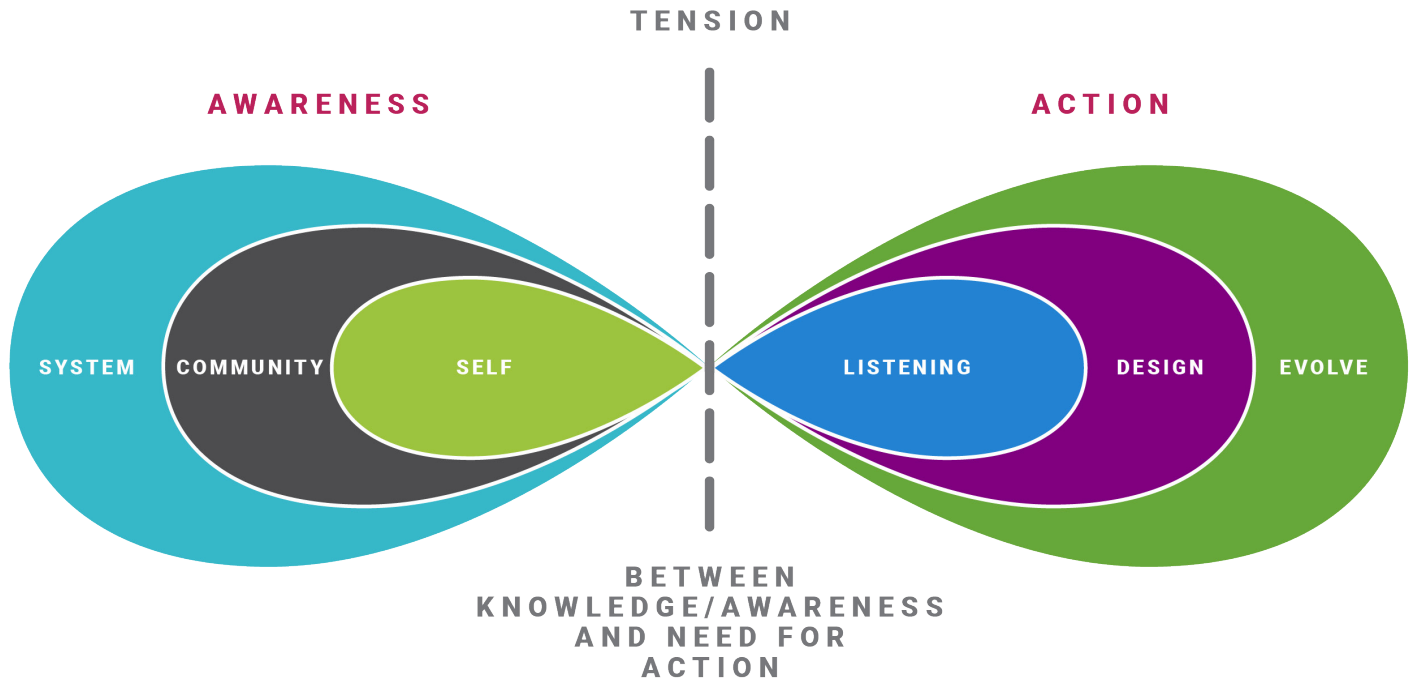
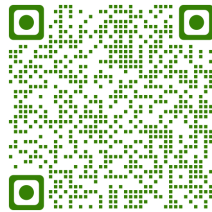
The Triple Loop Model:

- Reflects the key aspects of co-design
- Visualizes all those aspects as inter-connected
- Explains how co-designing can lead to changes in our systems.

Triple Loop Model explained



Example of co-design using the Triple Loop Model



# Co-Design Commitments

Commitments are the anchors for engaging in Design Lab and create the environment you operate within. They set the tone, pace and the intent of your work.



**Commitments** Click on the QR codes to learn more about the commitment and how it can look in practice.  
Reflect on where you are within each commitment and how that might impact your ability to co-design with community.

<p><b>1</b> Honor and name those that have inspired this work and recognize work/processes similar to ours <small>Our acknowledgements are located at <a href="https://reschoolcolorado.com/designlab">reschoolcolorado.com/designlab</a></small></p>	<p><b>2</b> Be grounded in and committed to equity</p>
<p><b>3</b> Listen to what you hear and learn from people you're collaborating with. Co-design with them.</p>	<p><b>4</b> Create the external and internal structures to go slow to go far. Be able to learn, reflect and pivot.</p>
<p><b>5</b> Lead with empathy, not sympathy</p>	<p><b>6</b> Create the external and internal structures to work through tension, create, ideate, iterate</p>
<p><b>7</b> Start small and keep things simple before moving to larger, more complicated and expensive endeavors (ie: visual prototyping, simulations leading to prototyping with real situations/people)</p>	<p><b>8</b> Interrogate and evaluate where you sit in the system (individually and as a team), the conditions needed to do this work and how to creatively make that happen.</p>
<p><b>9</b> Reflect on impact. Have consistent clarity about why you are doing something and to what end. Ability to answer the work's alignment to a greater purpose.</p>	<p><b>10</b> Leverage power and resources to advance the ideas of people you are collaborating with.</p>

# Tools

The whole of anything is greater than its parts.  
-Gestalt Theory

Use one of the tools in this engagement and it will be valuable. Use them together multiple times and they will be more powerful than if they were used by themselves.

There is not a “standard flow” for utilizing these tools and components, though you will eventually use all of them. That said, if you want to spend time experimenting with one tool for a while-do it. The other tools will be there when you’re ready.





# Listening

Without genuine connection, we can sometimes fall short of acting on the immense potential that exists in our communities. Committing to understanding ourselves, others, and the systems we perpetuate is at the heart of the work.





## Listening

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### Tools and processes for listening authentically

The list below is not intended to be used in any order, one is not dependent on the other, nor should be seen as a task to complete. They are on-going practices that can be integrated into one's work.

#### When curious about...

Broadening perspective; building relationship

Tuning into how you are connecting in the moment; reflecting on patterns over time

Amplifying diverse voices;  
focusing a conversation

The quality of  
conversation; reflecting  
on listening.

#### You might turn to...

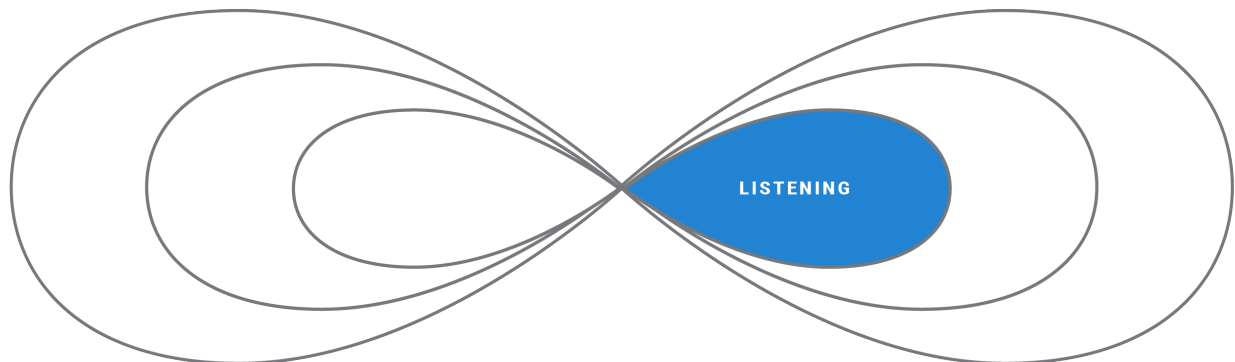
An Empathy Walk  
Practice 1

The Ladder of Connectedness  
Practice 2

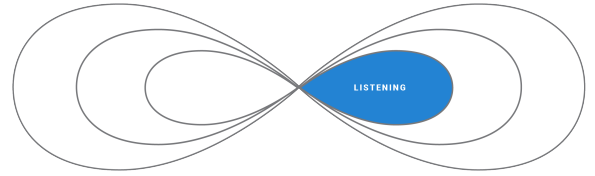
The Community Interview  
Practice 3

Four Fields of Conversation  
Practice 4

Do not engage with community to simply try out these practices. Respect the people you are engaging with in community to co-design and try concepts that emerge based on what you learn.



## Practice 1: An Empathy Walk



### Where it came from:

The empathy walk, a practice informed by Otto Scharmer and the team at the Presencing Institute, has been adapted from the work of MIT Professor Emeritus Ed Schein. Schein has shaped the field of organizational culture, learning, and leadership over the past 50 years. He is the author of numerous books, including *Process Consultation Revisited*, *Helping*, and *Humble Inquiry*. The Empathy Walk is often valuable when working with a new community or group.

### Purpose:

- Develop empathy for someone different from yourself to expand your understanding of your community

### Role

- Your role is to “just be”. You have no agenda. This is not the empathy building we may think of when considering design thinking. Instead, it is a more open, inviting space. You are not trying to learn about something in particular. You are coming in with a stance of respect and learning.

### Suggested Process

1. If you haven't already, spend some time reflecting on your community – who would hold thoughts, views, and experiences different from your own. Who would have a very different worldview? Who would explain and understand things differently from you?
2. Consider whether you yourself are well positioned to do the empathy walk or if another team member or partner should reach out to people. This could look many different ways. For example, RESCHOOL didn't have built relationship with families part of a housing community in Boulder but we did have a relationship with the staff there. The staff asked families if they'd be interested in connecting with us and they were.
3. Reach out and ask if they would be interested in a conversation with you, explaining the purpose of the time is to learn from them and to hear about their experiences. Be explicit about giving them a gentle way out; the intention is to create an experience that holds reciprocal value for you both, not just for you to pull out knowledge from them.
4. Schedule to be with this person.

Being in person is preferred as it allows you and the person you are spending time with to more easily connect register non-verbal cues. You can also learn a lot from meeting a person in a place of their choosing. Being in a place that they spend time in (ex: their home, a community space, park) makes it easier to see the world from their perspective. Although not recommended, these can be completed in online spaces.



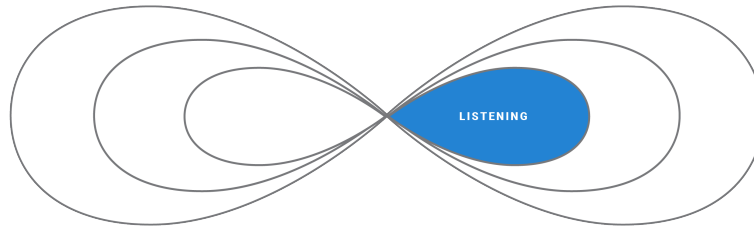
**Listening Tools and Processes**

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Plan to spend several hours (one hour at the least) getting to know the person, seeing and experiencing that person's world enough to get a feel for what it would be like to be in that person's shoes. How you go about this, what you say to the person, what kind of time you actually spend, etc. is all up to you. There are no rules or guidelines. Be creative. The idea here is to go out into the world and simply practice relationship building, and deep listening with another person. It's not to seek a solution or to pressure test your thinking. If you need some questions, begin as broad as possible, working to illicit stories of the other's life and experiences in the community.

5. In preparing for empathy walks, it's helpful to reflect in advance. We offer a few questions to consider:
  - a. Who am I in this interaction (identity) through the lenses of race, culture, gender, age, and role?
  - b. What assumptions might I be bringing to this conversation? What unconscious biases may be at work in my brain?
  - c. What beliefs might I hold that could be challenged?
  - d. What am I curious about?
  - e. What social threat might be activated for the other person?
  
6. When you are finished, spend some time reflecting on what you learned. What did you notice about the situation, about your interaction, and about yourself? What was said, what did you experience that sticks out to you or came up a few times?

## Practice 2: The Ladder of Connectedness



Fritz Breithaupt, author of *The Dark Sides of Empathy*, argues empathy is a morally ambiguous capacity, one that can lead us astray if we don't understand its many sides.

**Where it came from:** The Ladder of Connectedness, was developed by Mette Böll and Peter Senge for the Garrison Global Collaboration for Integrated Learning.

**About the Ladder of Connectedness:** The Ladder of Connectedness distinguishes different states of connection, to others or to a situation. It is important to not judge these states as good or bad but to use the distinctions to be simply more aware.

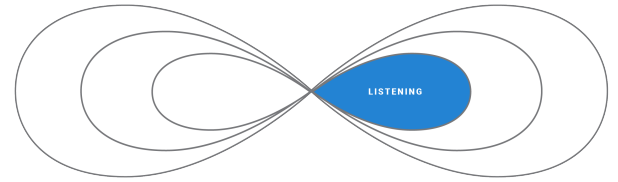
### **Purpose and How to Use:**

- This tool breaks down the different sides of empathy and provides a means to reflect on how one might be showing up for another or in a particular situation. Once that is identified, ask yourself how that type of connection could be impacting the relationship and the work.
- Use this tool to reflect on any patterns. What differences do you notice over time? Does anything change as a result of having more awareness about how you are connecting?

## The Ladder of Connectedness

Agape	Akin to neurophysiologist Humberto Maturana's definition of love as "the act of allowing the other to be a legitimate other." At this level of connection, there is unconditional positive regard for another.
Neutral Awareness	This level of connection does not imply indifference, but more a suspended non-attached, and non-judgmental mode of observing. Often a sense of spaciousness or mental freedom accompanies this state of being. One could define this awareness as a state of equanimity.
Altruistic Empathy	This level of connection reflects unselfish regard for the welfare of another. Recent findings in neuroscience show that there's a direct link between cultivating compassion for oneself and others and behaving altruistically towards strangers.
Cognitive Empathy	Perspective-taking. This level is the process of understanding the view of another without necessarily connecting with or attuning to the emotion associated with that view. This stage allows for a rational relationship with the other but differs from compassion since there is no immediate will to alleviate the suffering of the other, or an impulse to bring kindness and happiness into the relationship.
In-group Empathy	The classical stance of us vs. them. In-groups are the groups people identify themselves as belonging to. They can be gender-, culture-, race-, religion- or age-based. In-groups are juxtaposed to "outgroups," which are composed of people who do not belong to the identified in-group. Scientifically speaking, it's generally easier for people to empathize with others who belong to their in-groups than those who do not.
Empathetic Distress	Empathic behavior can come from feeling uncomfortable and wanting to avoid other people's distress. In this state, one can try to console the person in distress, but the intention behind the seemingly empathic behavior is to alleviate one's own personal discomfort, and so the gesture of empathy comes out of a selfish need for managing an undesired emotional state in oneself.
Emotional Disconnect	When people shut down entirely and fail to recognize others' emotions there is a state of disconnect. Rage, violence, loathing, and a depersonalizing of the other are amongst the outcomes of this state.

## Practice 3: The Community Interview



How can you be sure that the relevant voices of people directly affected are heard? Community Interviews often fall within a broader category of interviews conducted by practitioners with their key stakeholders. The intent here begins to shift to more focused conversation than one may experience in a traditional interview. Depending on the ecosystem this could include community members, decision-makers, service beneficiaries, peers, or customers both within and outside the organization/community. In this case, we invite you to spend time with people that have lived experience about something you are working on.

### Purpose

The purpose of a community interview is to see your work from the perspective of the people closest to the experience. Community members often provide clarity about how your work matters from their viewpoint. They also help identify barriers and roadblocks they are experiencing.

**When to engage in a Community Interview:** These types of interviews are valuable at any time but the most common use is during the preparation phase (after an empathy walk), and the reflection phases of a project, when you are assessing impact and how to engage next.

**The guide below is intended to bring reflection and depth to your conversations, as these types of conversations may be a common experience for you.**

- Create transparency and trust about the purpose and the process of the interview: establish a personal connection early on. Let people know if they will be compensated for their time. Make the date, time and location (virtual or in person) work for their schedule.
- Suspend your voice of judgment to see the situation through the eyes of your interviewee: Don't suggest answers to your questions. What matters at this point is not whether you agree with what your interviewee is telling you. What matters now is that you learn to see the situation through their eyes. [Ask why. Even when you think you know the answer, ask people why they do or say things. The answers will sometimes surprise you. A conversation started from one question should go on as long as it needs to.]
- Access your ignorance: As the conversation unfolds, pay attention to and trust the questions that occur to you. Don't be afraid to ask simple questions or questions you think may reveal a lack of some basic knowledge.
- Listen with care: Encourage stories. Stories reveal how we think about the world. Thoroughly appreciate and enjoy the story that you hear unfolding and put yourself in your interviewee's shoes.



## Listening Tools and Processes

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- Trust the power of presence and silence: One of the most effective interventions as an interviewer is to be fully present with the interviewee and the current situation—and not to interrupt a brief moment of silence. Moments of silence can serve as important trigger points for deepening the reflective level of a conversation. More often than not, these opportunities go unused because the interviewer feels compelled to jump in and ask the next question.

## Potential Sequence

### Connect

1. You'll engage with the people that have lived experience in something you're curious about/working on. Identify the community member (s) you would like to connect with.
2. Define/revise questions to adjust to the specific context.
3. Schedule time together.
4. Decide whether to send the questions to the interviewee in advance.

### Reflect/Assess Yourself

5. Before you meet the interviewee, allow for some quiet preparation or silence.
  - a. Who am I in this interaction (identity) through the lenses of race, culture, gender, age, and role?
  - b. What assumptions might I be bringing to this conversation? What unconscious biases may be at work in my brain?
  - c. What beliefs might I hold that could be challenged?
  - d. What am I curious about?
  - e. What social threat might be activated for the other person? Am I well-suited to conduct this interview or is this better done through a partner the person has built trust with?

### The Conversation

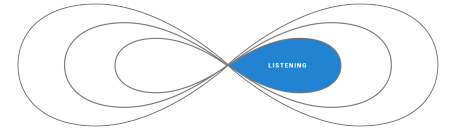
6. Feel free to deviate from your questionnaire if important questions occur to you. The questionnaire you create in advance is designed to serve you and your work—not the other way around. Sample questions from Scharmer's *The Presencing Institute*:
  - a. What is your most important objective? Does anything get in the way of you realizing it? Are there resources that would support you? What? What do you need me for?
  - b. Describe what it would look like if my role in supporting your efforts was successful. What criteria do you use to assess whether my contribution to your work has been successful?

### Reflect

7. Right after the interview, take time to reflect on key insights, capture your key thoughts in writing.

This document is based on the work of Jemez Principles of Democratic Organizing (<https://www.ejnet.org/ej/jemez.pdf>), Shane Safir (<https://shanesafir.com/>) author of *The Listening Leader*.

## Practice 4: The Four Fields of Conversation



### Purpose and How to Use:

- Provides a means to reflect on how one might be showing up for another. Once that is identified, ask yourself how that type of connection could be impacting the relationship and the work.
- It can be used to set intention or as a means for reflection, including a team debrief.
- When used over time, this could provide some insight into patterns of engagement with others. What differences do you notice over time? Does anything change as a result of having more awareness about the types of conversations being had?

Downloading "Talking Nice"	Factual (Adaptive) "Talking Tough"
<p>Sometimes labeled as a kind of "bubble of conformity" this field often lingers in the exchange of polite phrases.</p> <p>One listens from one's habits, from what one already knows; the result is one re-confirms what one already believes.</p> <p>A good indicator when engaged in this field of conversation is everything that one expected to see and hear actually did happen.</p> <p>[Cautious and mindful of social norms]</p>	<p>In this field, people tend to speak their minds. One might notice something new or something that differs from what one already knew or expected to hear. When one comes out of this conversations, some new aspects, new data points, new perspectives become more clear. One might begin to challenge some of their own assumptions.</p> <p>This can be useful because it gets all opinions on the table, but can also restrict the conversation to thoughts and assumptions that are "already known."</p> <p>[Debate]</p>
How are you? "I am fine."	How are you? "I am terrible."
Empathetic Reflective dialogue	Generative
<p>When one comes out of a conversation in this field one is not only exposed to new data that challenges assumptions, but really allows one to see reality through another perspective, through another pair of eyes, and to begin to see oneself through the eyes of another and through the eyes through the experience of another.</p> <p>Speakers work from a stance of "I am not my point of view." As Bill Issacs, author of <i>Dialogue and the Art of Thinking</i> says, "I can suspend my own point of view and look at somebody else's assumptions."</p> <p>[Trust, confidence, and open-mindedness]</p>	<p>How would one know whether or not one has been part of a level four conversation? If one's energy is way up, one's level of inspiration is much higher, or one notices something that wasn't quite there before, such as a "breakthrough idea," then it is likely conversation falls into this field.</p> <p>Often in this field, a person might also feel as though they have exited a conversation changed as a person in some way. Perhaps one feels more connected to their real self, of who one could or might become - a deeper sense of authenticity (sometimes vulnerability and humility).</p> <p>[Serving a larger, more creative purpose]</p>
How are you? "I'm not sure; feeling a bit uneasy" "Oh, really? What's going on?"	How are you? An infinite possibility of responses...

# The Future State Design Process

An inquiry cycle made up of seven key components that guides strategy as projects evolve.

It supports taking what you have learned from building relationships and listening to people into a stage of ideation, co-creation and action.

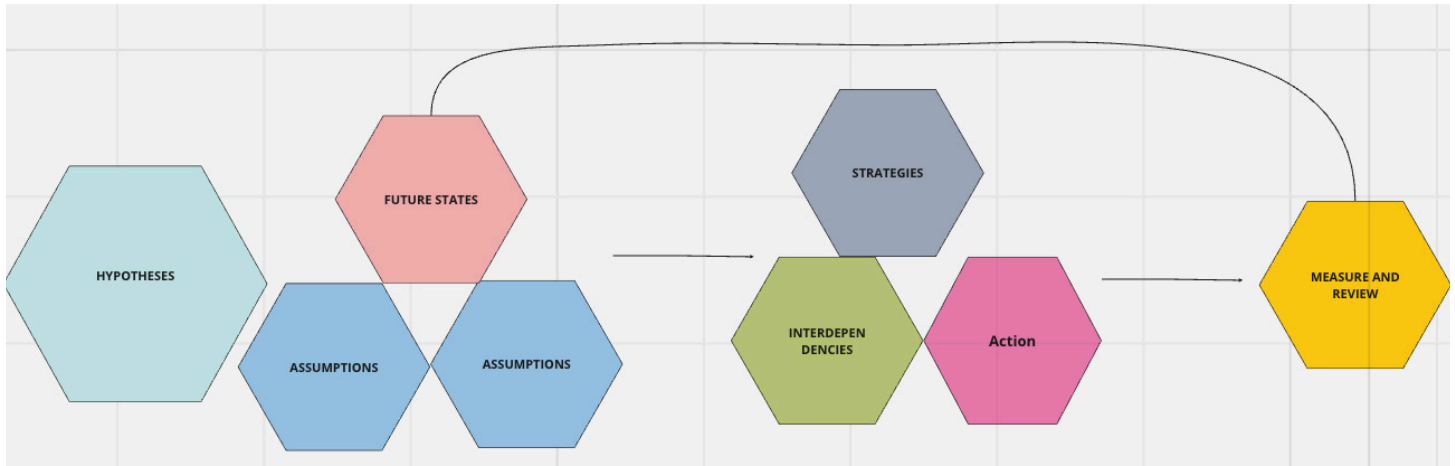
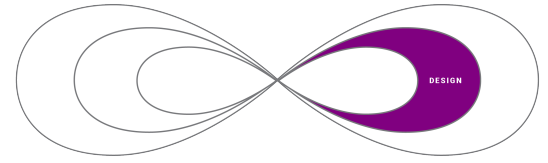


The Future State Design Process - Tile Format



**Ways to use the Future State Design Process**

While this video is shown in Miro users can use this process outside of Miro in many ways (ex. use different color sticky notes and move around on a table.)



**You can have any number of strategies, hypotheses, or assumptions. This method is a reminder to complete all parts of the process.**

**Purpose:** The Future State Design Process helps you organize what you heard while listening to community info strategy and tangible concepts to try.

**What is it?**

An inquiry cycle made up of seven key components that guides strategy as projects evolve.

**Why use it?**

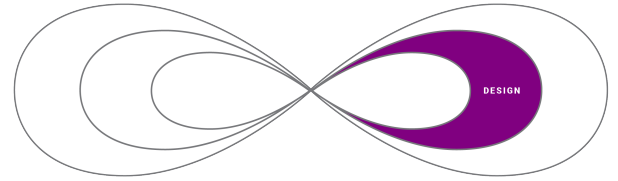
It helps you remain strategic while engaging in and responding to the messiness of learning as you learn from a community in which you are collaborating with.

**When do you use it?**

After you have done some listening with community. Continuously reference the process as work evolves and when necessary, realign the desired future state and assumptions with what you have learned from your partners.

**The Future State Design Process - Workplan Format**

This Workplan Format is an alternative way to engage with The Future State Design Process. Groups can use this in lieu of the tiles if they prefer.



**[Project Name]**

RATIONALE

DESIRED FUTURE STATE
<i>ASSUMPTIONS</i>
•

KEY PEOPLE/ROLES		
•	•	•

Strategy	Key Actions/Interdependencies (3-4)	Measured Impact	Timeline
A1.	•	•	
A2.	•	•	
A3.	•	•	
A4.	• •	•	



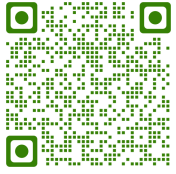
# Reflection

Reflection is built within each of the tools and processes.

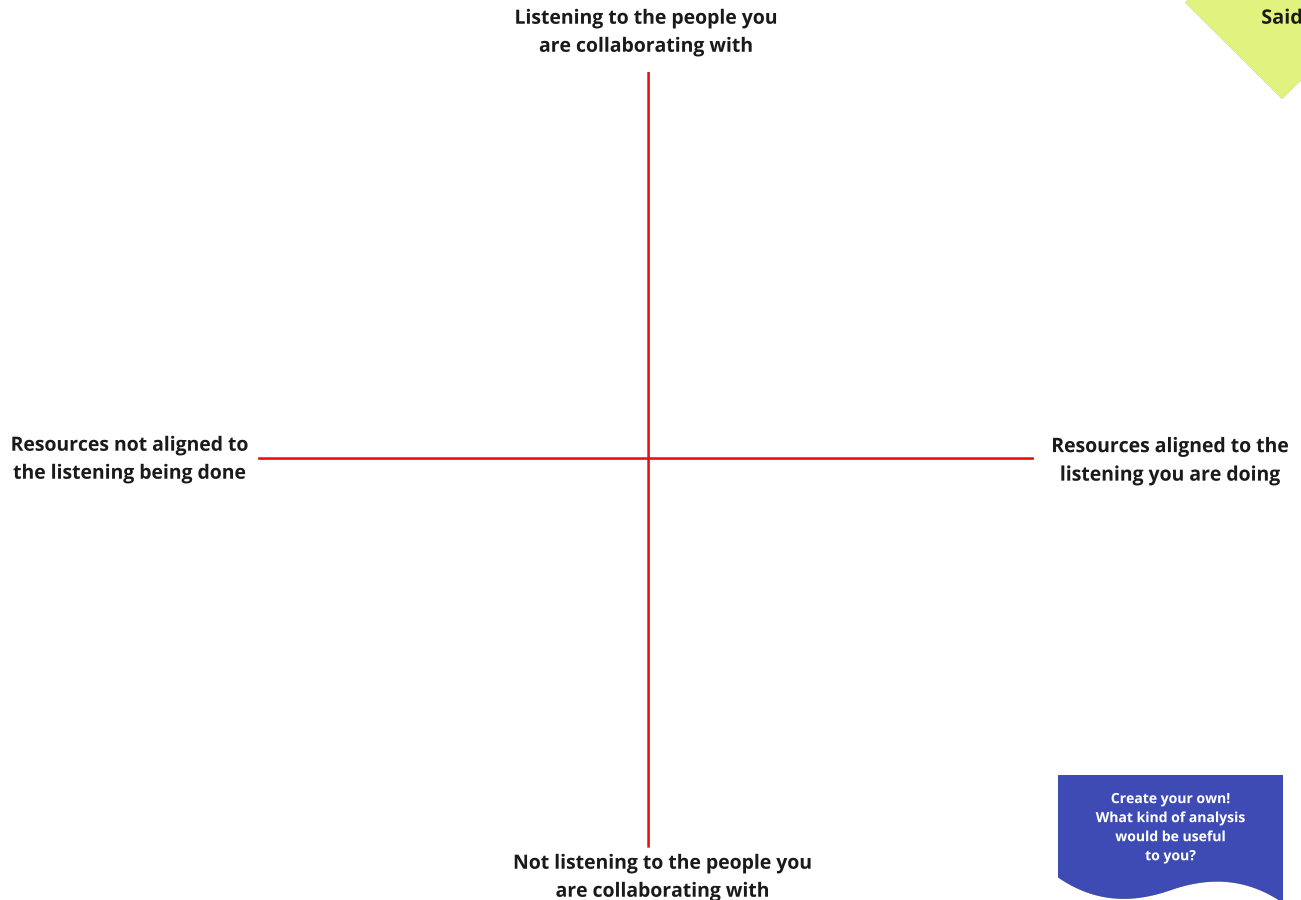
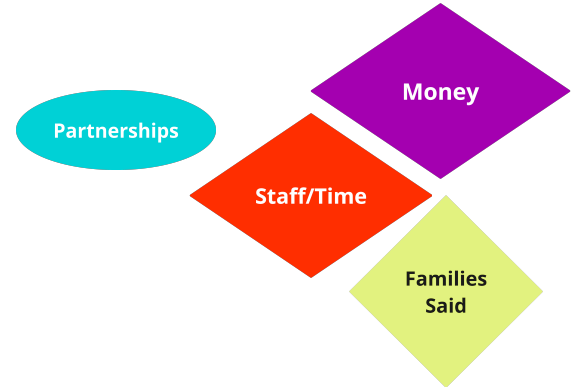
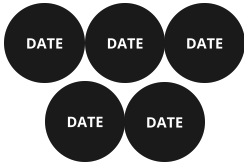
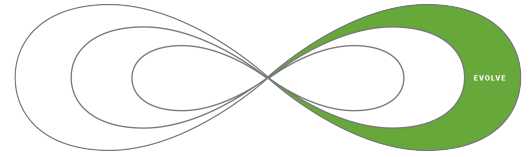
The Situational Analysis Tools within this section serve as potential ways of reflecting on how habits and operations have shifted as you have engaged in the tools and processes in Design Lab over time.



Situational Analysis : Checking In On How Things Have Shifted



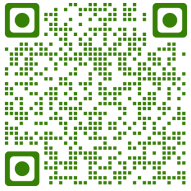
Ideas for how to use the situational analyses.



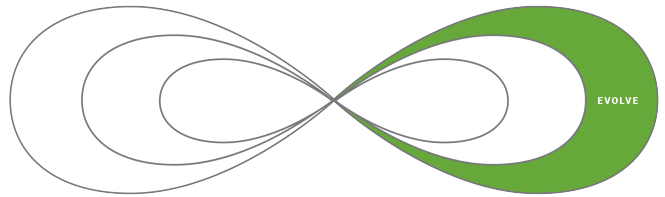
**Suggested add on:** send a text survey to those you're collaborating with. Ask them to rate 1-5 if:

- Their experiences are authentically listened to
- If they've noticed investment in the ideas they co-created with you

Situational Analysis : Checking In On How Things Have Shifted



Ideas for how to use the situational analyses.



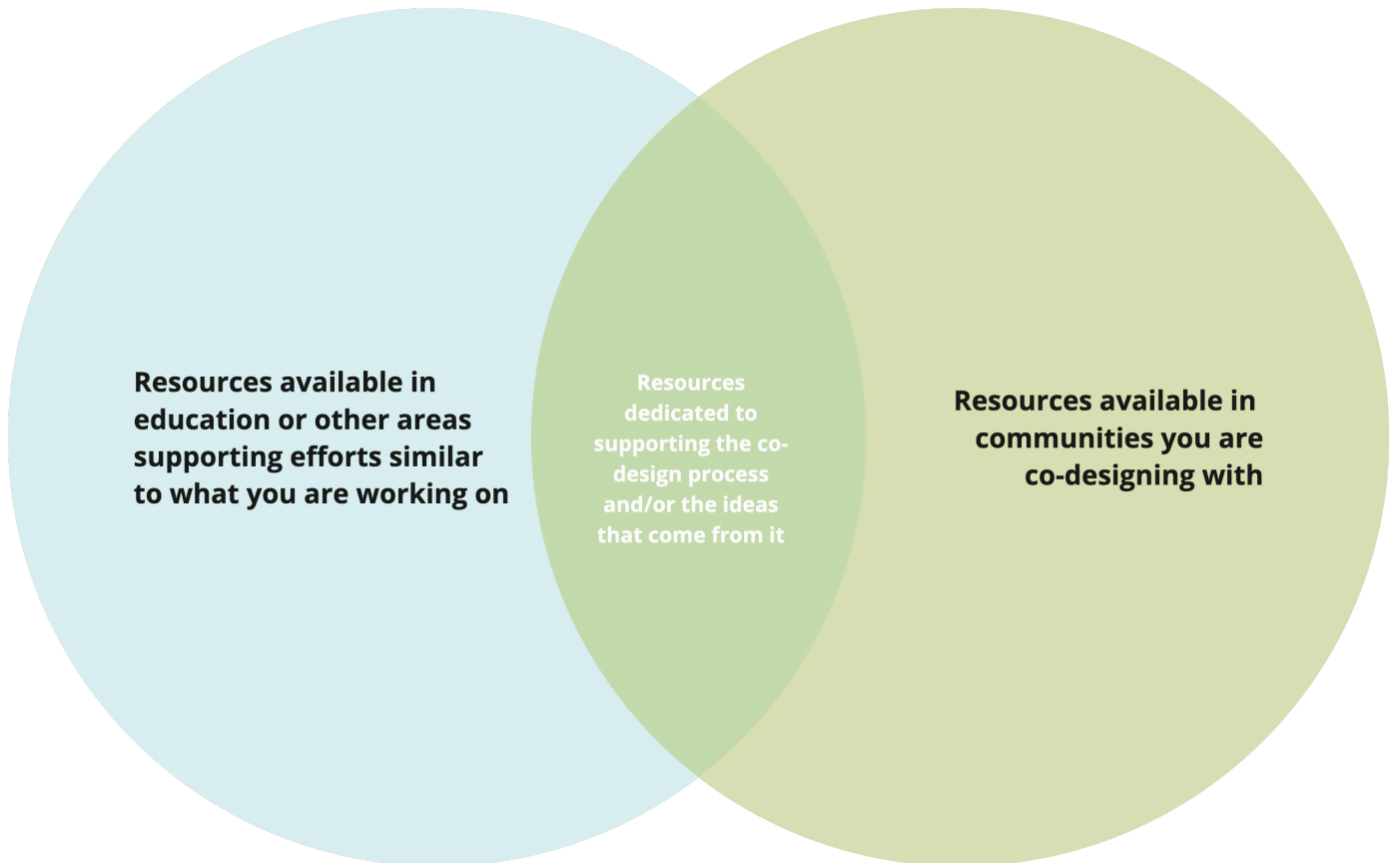
Partnerships

Money

Staff/Time

Families Said

Create your own!  
What kind of analysis would be useful to you?



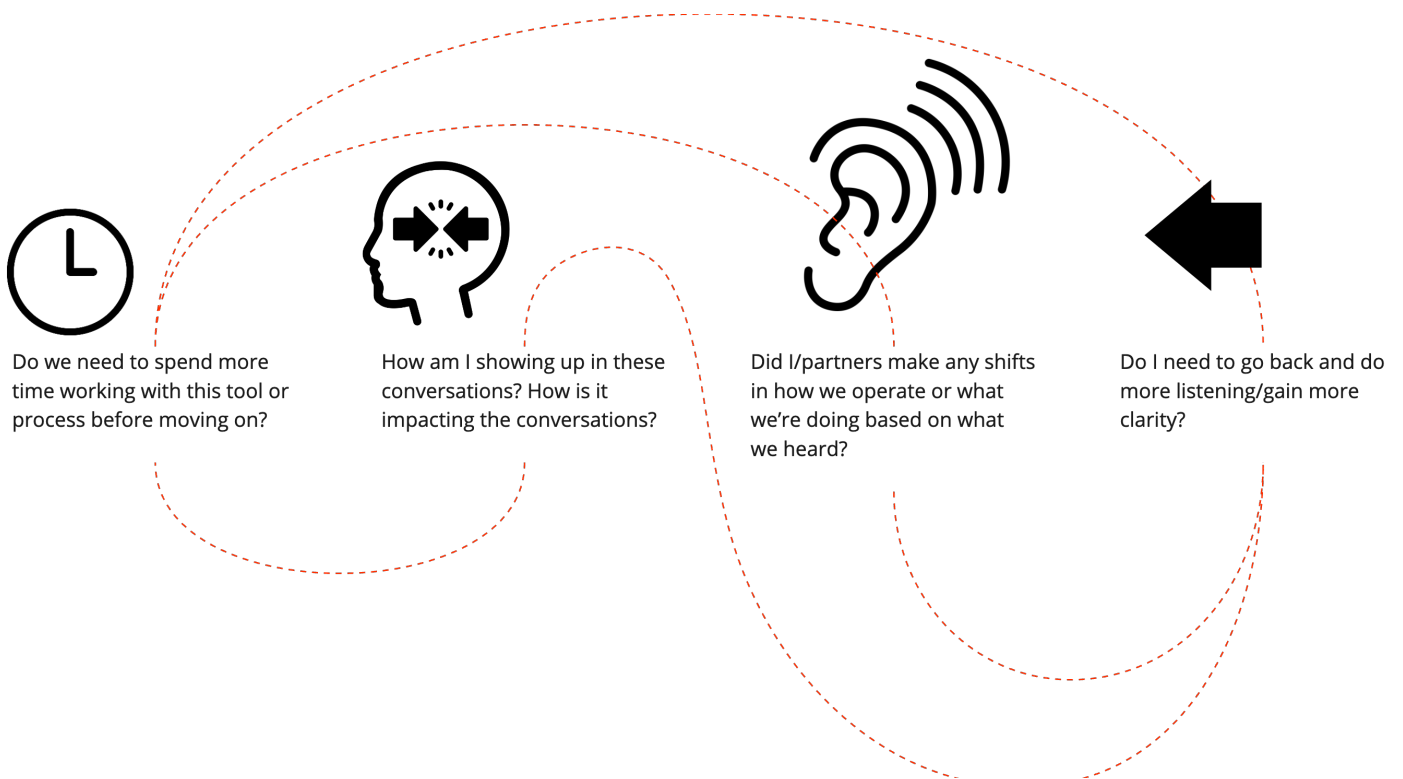
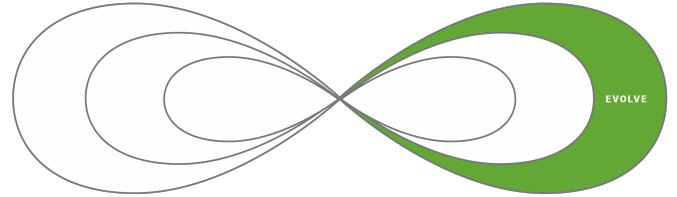
## Reflection - Visual Option

RESCHOOL offers a few ways for you to review reflection prompts, depending on how you like to work. Here is a visual option.

### Give space for reflection throughout the design process.

Examples:

- Carve out time during team meetings.
- Journal about what you are noticing.
- Check in with partners about their experience so far.





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## Design Lab on Miro

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For those that prefer to work digitally, Design Lab is also available in Miro, a digital white board that easily allows you to manipulate, duplicate and work within the tools, as well as add in additional tools you work with to compliment the ones in Design Lab.

### An invitation to Design Lab

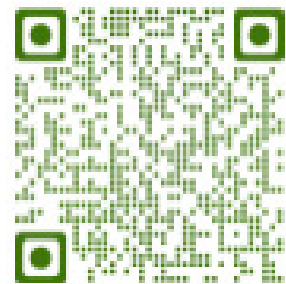
Hear from our design partner, Rick Griffith at MATTER



Orientation: Design Lab in Miro



Components of Design Lab



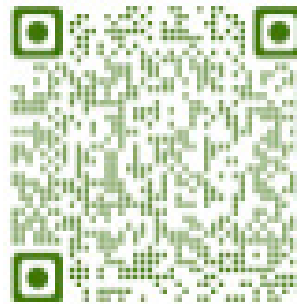
### Miro Tutorials



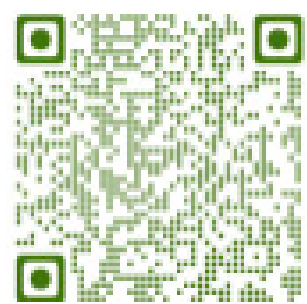
What is Miro



How to create content in Miro



How to move around a board in Miro



How to collaborate in Miro

# Connect and Partner With Us!

We'd love to hear about your experiences with Design Lab and your feedback. Reach out if you're interested in RESCHOOL facilitating workshops or partnering with you as an advisor.

- Send us a note
- Sign up for our newsletter
- Follow us on social

