Method 8: Problem/proposition definition

Time involved	Using the method, 60 minutes
Associated capabilities	Understand value as created in practice Move between concepts and knowledge, and inside and outside organizations
Methods to use before or after this one	Method 7 Opportunity mapping Method 10 Telling stories

What you'll need

Blank sheets of paper, marker pens

A flipchart

A facilitator to guide the teams

A documenter to capture the results
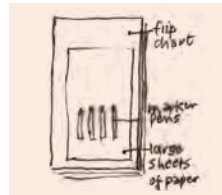
key question

'What is the issue and what is a possible solution?'

Purpose

This method prompts a team to clarify its understanding of an issue, reflect on how it is framed, clarify who it is an issue for, and explore how a possible solution relates to this problem and the impacts it might have.

Outcomes

Brings into view what the issue is represented to be and a possible solution to it at a particular moment in time. Prompts a team to link generating concepts for solutions, to representations of problems.

Tip

Use this method after solution concepts have been suggested, to clarify how they relate to the issues to which they are a proposed solution.

How to do it

Summarize problems and solutions. Ask people to work individually or in pairs to use the template to summarize their current understanding of the issue, and any current solution concepts. They should explore each possible issue/solution pairing on a new sheet of paper.

Share and tell. Ask people to share their issue analyses and possible solutions.

Discussion. Review the different problem/proposition pairs. Do all the solutions relate to the same issue, or are some of them solutions to different problems? Do the different versions suggest that participants agree on the key users and stakeholders and on the resources available? Do you have sufficient information at this stage to define the problem in ways that make sense to everyone relevant? What research could you do to clarify understanding of the issue for the different publics or stakeholders involved?

Do some of the solutions make you think about the problem in a new way? If you have people from different personal or professional backgrounds in the group, discuss how these backgrounds shape their understanding of the issue.

Is the issue being framed in ways that make sense to everyone? How could you reframe the issue?

End the exercise by agreeing on one or more versions of the problem/proposition statement.

4 Exploring and analyzing

continued...

Problem/proposition definition

Use this to define the issue and possible solutions

Proposition definition

It's a …
(kind of thing)

That is/has …
(characteristics)

Which results in …
(the change we want to take place)

User segments

Aimed at/co-created with…
(the target user segment(s))

Who want/need to…
(purposes, tasks)

And are able to…
(capacities)

And who benefit because…
(outcomes)

Problem/issue definition

Addressing the issue of…

Which is shaped by …
(social, economic, other factors)

For which we have evidence that shows that …
(research findings)

Which matter because …
(insights)

And which we are framing as a …
(kind of issue/opportunity)

Organizational/wider resources

Which is resourced and co-created by involving …
(organizational and other resources)

Resulting in…
(organizational and/or social outcomes)

Example

Problem/proprsition definition

The proposition
It's a service/platform that connects and supports older people & volunteers (young people + early retired) via befriending, tech support ot home & trips out resulting in reduced loneliness...

Aimed at
Older people in stable situations but with not many meaningful connections
and
Young people with time and with tech/phone skills who need some work experience to move towards employability
and
recently retired people who want to stay active & have a sense of purpose & build connections

...which is resourced by combining..
older people's groups, community groups, colleges
and Broadband providers, phone providers
and public sector providers - eg social workers, housing providers, employability enablers
Resulting in Reduced isolation, better mental health, reduced use of acute emergency services, lighter burden on carers/families, early warning of issues.

Problem
dealing with (i) the loneliness & isolation of older people with reduced or few meaningful connections and (ii) difficulties in establishing careers and work for young people with few connections/social capital
Because evidence shows loneliness is a significant factor in well being and mental health
Framing This as about inter-generational connections not just befriending older people and seeing them as having capacities, not just needs.

4 Exploring and analyzing