

Fruitful paths

A tool for starting off new projects.

Introduction

Use this tool for initial exploration of a new project or work request, to quickly get a broader perspective.

For best results:

- Leverage multiple views by inviting people from key groups to work through the tool independently
- Then, come together to review the results collectively.

When using the tool - don't try to answer perfectly - the point is to make a start, not have the right answers!

Step 1: Initial idea or problem

Briefly, what has triggered the work request - what's this potential project about?

(Just a draft - this doesn't need to be perfect.)

Step 2a: The story so far

Start off by thinking about any work that's been done on this problem so far.

Question 1. Wind in our sails. What's been helping you make progress?

Question 2. Beacons. What's on the horizon that you're looking forward to?

Step 2b: Holdups & barriers

Still thinking about what has been tried so far.

Question 1. Anchors holding us back. What's been making progress harder?

Question 2. Barriers ahead. Do you see any upcoming problems to navigate?

(Screens 2a and 2b come from the Sailboat Retrospective, a well-known Agile template.)

Step 3: Context

Question 1: Does this relate to a bigger strategy or mission?

Question 2: Has anything already been committed to?

Question 3: Relevant timelines

Question 4: Budget for this piece

Step 4a: People

Question 1: Who has a hands-on role? Eg will be part of build or delivery?

Question 2: Who will use the tool or service?

Question 3: Funders / who has sign-off

Question 4: Others who may be affected by changes or new work.

Step 4b: Goals

Going back to the previous step (4a People), add details of what the goals / desired outcomes could be for each role or group.

- Think about how confident you are in this understanding
- Look for potential areas of both conflict & synergy

Step 5: Organisation context

Question 1: What level of alignment does there tend to be on goals and direction? Rating scale from **weak** to **strong**.

Question 2: Resourcing tends to be: Rating scale from **perilous!** to **reliable**.

Question 3: How would you rate the level of psychological safety? Rating scale from **low** to **high**.

Question 4: How connected are groups within the organisation? Rating scale from: **siloes - not well connected** to **Communicative - a sense of flow**.

Step 6: Initial hunches

Question 1: What initial ideas do you have about possible solutions, or what the underlying issue could be?

Question 2: What ideas or opinions have you heard from others?

Step 7: Scope

Question 1: What would you (and others) really like to do if it were possible?

Question 2: What is the level of urgency? Rating scale from **Need something ASAP** to **Exploring what's possible**.