

Tackling Wicked Problems

Michael Goodman

Jan 22, 2014

In the News

Homeless shelters perpetuate homelessness

Food aid leads to increased starvation

Drug busts increase drug-related crime

“Get tough” prison sentences fail to reduce fear of violent crime

Job training programs increase unemployment

Failed Solutions Have Common Characteristics

Address symptoms vs. underlying problems

Obvious and often succeed in the short run

Short-term gains undermined by long-term impacts

Negative consequences are unintentional

If the problem recurs, we do not see our responsibility

Slide 3

2 This is a build page
Lisa Spinali, 1/24/2013

**The Philanthropic Challenge:
Fixing Now vs. Helping Over Time**

When you are confronted by any complex social system ... with things about it that you're dissatisfied with and anxious to fix, you cannot just step in and set about fixing with much hope of helping. This is one of the sore discouragements of our time.

If you want to fix something you are first obliged to understand ... the whole system.

Lewis Thomas

Objectives

Understand what systems thinking is and why it is important

Introduce basic systems thinking framework, principles and tools

Hands on experience actually applying systems thinking to your own work

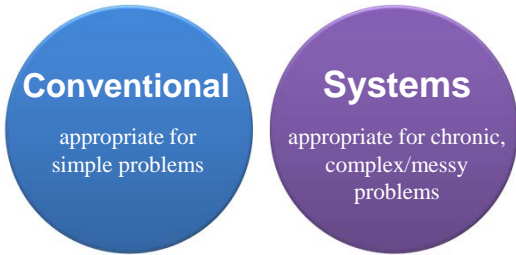
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Agenda

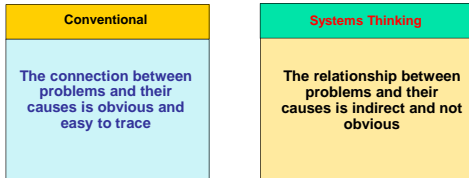
- Introduction to Organizational Learning and Change
- Systems Thinking
 - Distinguishing Traditional from Systems Thinking
 - The Iceberg and Exercise
 - Basic Language of Systems Thinking
 - Systems Archetypes and Exercises
- Mental Models
 - Sherlock Holmes Exercise
 - Ladder of Inference
 - Belief-Action-Results Maps Exercise
- Leverage Points
- Café Dialogue – A tool for collective thinking and action

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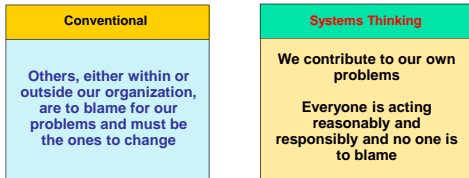
Two Types of Thinking



Conventional vs Systems Thinking



Conventional vs Systems Thinking



Conventional vs Systems Thinking

Conventional
What we do short-term will also assure long-term success

Systems Thinking
Most quick fixes either make no long-term difference or actually make matters worse in the long run

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Conventional vs Systems Thinking

Conventional
In order to optimize the whole, we must optimize the parts

Systems Thinking
In order to optimize the whole, we must improve relationships among the parts

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Conventional vs Systems Thinking

Conventional
The best way to implement change is to aggressively tackle many independent initiatives simultaneously.

Systems Thinking
Only a few high leverage interventions are required for large systems change

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“A Learning Organization or Community is ...

... a group of people who are continually enhancing their capacity to create the results they want.

If you think about this statement, it has two parts to it:

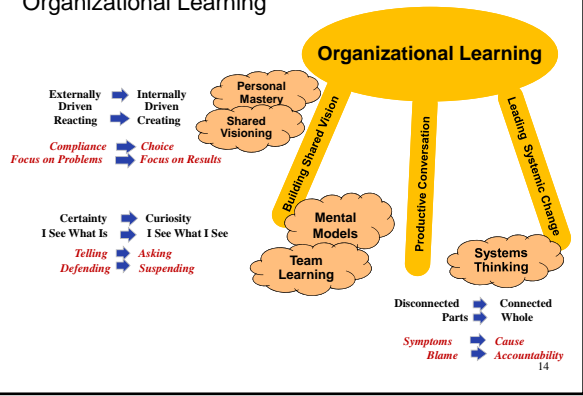
*One, you have to know **what you want to create**, so you're continually reflecting on your sense of purpose, vision.*

*And secondly, you have to be continually **developing the capability** to move in that direction.”*

- Peter Senge, Author

1990, *The Fifth Discipline-The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*
 1994, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*
 1999, *The Dance of Change*
 2000, *Schools that Learn*
 2005, *Presence: An Exploration of Profound Change in People, Organizations, and Society*
 2008, *The Necessary Revolution: How Individuals and Organizations Are Working Together to Create a Sustainable World*

The Disciplines of Organizational Learning



The Five Disciplines of Organizational Learning

Building Shared Vision



Personal Mastery: Developing capacity to clarify what is most important to us, and to achieve it.

Shared Visioning: Building a sense of commitment in a group based on what people want to create.

Productive Conversation



Mental Modeling: Developing capacity to reflect on our internal pictures of the world to see how they shape our actions.

Team Learning: Developing capacity for collective intelligence.

Leading Systemic Change



Systems Thinking: Developing capacity for putting pieces together and seeing wholes.

Systems Thinking... why?

- Helps us to recognize **hidden & unintended consequences**
- Enables us to **think deeper and wider** about effective strategies in complex systems
- Can be helpful when thinking about strategy & change - **the short term as well as the long term**
- **Expands the choices** available to us & enables us to focus on higher leverage strategic interventions

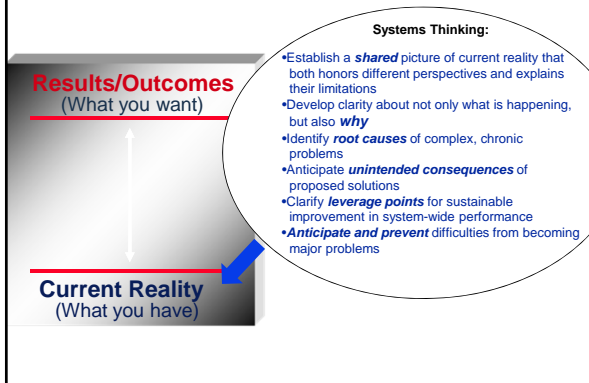
Observations about Systems

- Many of today's problems were yesterday's solutions.
- **The Law of Unintended Consequences** - Systems are seductive... what looks obvious to do often generates non obvious consequences... but NOT right away.
- **The Law of Worse Before Better** - What works in the short term typically makes things worse in the long term and what works in the long term often makes things worse in the short term.
- **The Law of Compensating Feedback** – The harder you push on the system the harder the system pushes back.
- We are prisoners of systemic forces to the extent we are unaware of their existence and don't appreciate their power.

Observations about Systems Cont.

- Systems naturally resist change despite how well-intended the efforts to improve performance are.
- We spend enormous time, effort and money fixing problems we don't really understand.
- Real leverage points in the system are displaced both in time and in space from the symptoms.
- Collective awareness of the system can produce the shifts needed to produce real, sustainable change... when see it, we no longer have to be controlled by it.

Basics of Strategy & Change: Establishing Creative Tension



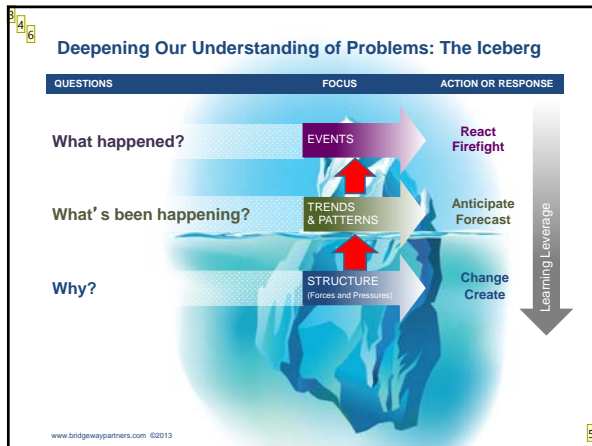
Using Systems Thinking to Understand Current Reality

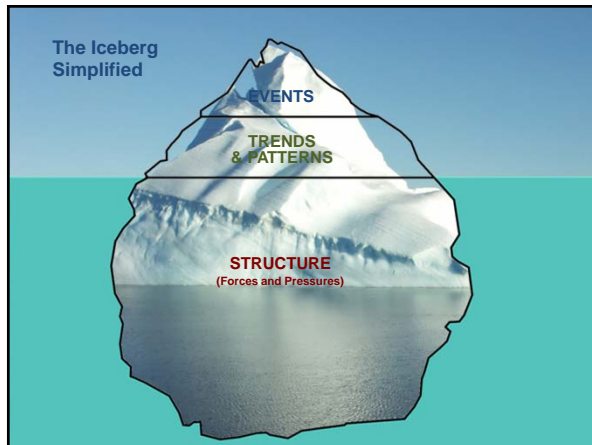
1. **Why** do we have the current reality we have? (*Diagnosis*)

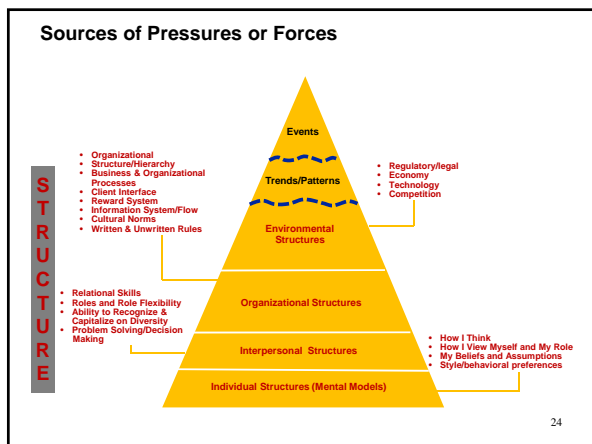
- Why do we have this gap (between desired results & current reality)?*
- Why has it persisted?*
- What will prevent or impede change?*
- What are the barriers to improvement?*

2. **What would be our strategic recommendations for making the most progress on closing the gap based on a systemic view of the current system.** (*Treatment*)



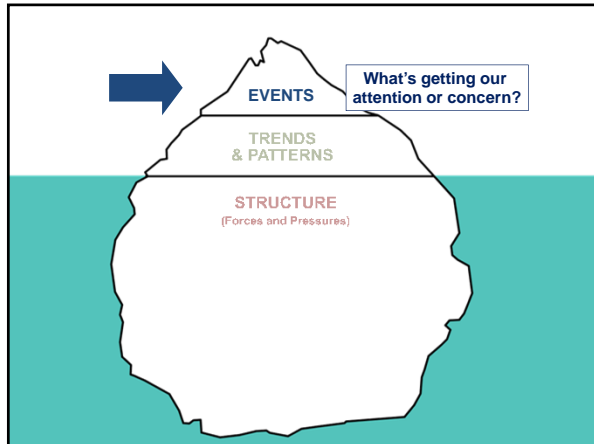






Slide 22

- 3** We probably don't need this slide here any longer but may be good to close out this section
Lisa Spinali, 1/24/2013
- 4** This is a page that builds
Lisa Spinali, 1/24/2013
- 5** the sub items under structure are currently not building and the very first sub item (should also build item by item)
Lisa Spinali, 1/24/2013
- 6** Lisa Spinali, 1/24/2013



Case Example of a Wicked Problem:

Ending Homelessness in Calhoun County

Events

Calhoun County, MI: estimated 250-500 people homelessness among population of 100,000

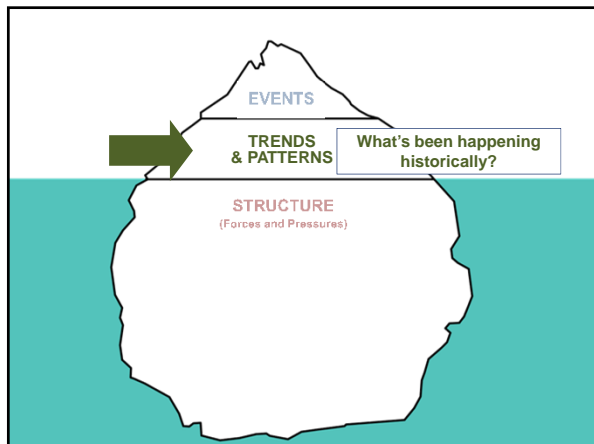
Homeless Coalition meetings again fail to deal with the problem: disagreements, competition, and lack of knowledge cited

Opportunity to receive funding to develop ten-year plan to end homelessness

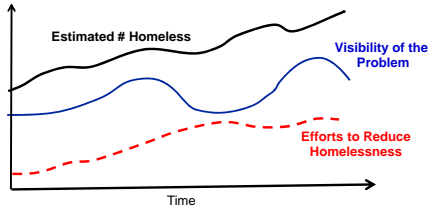
Systems thinking integrated with community building process – involving political and business leaders, service providers, and homeless people – to produce the plan

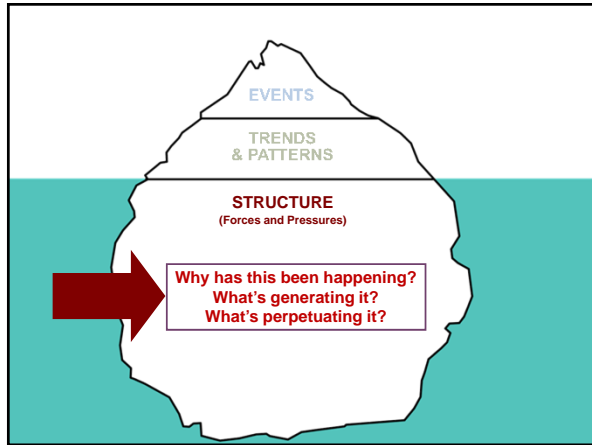
Focusing Question

Why, despite our best efforts, have we been unable to end homelessness in Calhoun County?



Trend or Pattern Perspective: Calhoun County





Case Example of a Wicked Problem:

Ending Homelessness in Calhoun County

Structural elements & drivers

Focusing Question

Why, despite our best efforts, have we been unable to end homelessness in Calhoun County?

What Leads to People Being at Risk?

- Factors That Create Risk
 - Individual and family risk factors, e.g. poverty, discrimination, and lack of education; substance abuse, mental illness, DV; lack of support for minors; absence of life management skills, underlying self-esteem
 - Limited permanent, accessible, living wage jobs
 - Financial problems stemming from above, e.g. difficulty paying for medical emergencies and child support – not just rent and food
 - Limited permanent, safe, affordable, supportive housing
 - Social risk factors, e.g. aging, meth lab immigration
- Dynamics That Increase Risk
 - Renting to people who are at risk reduces housing affordability for *landlords*, which increases vacant housing or gentrification and decreases quality of the remaining stock
 - Vulnerability to scams, e.g. slum lords, quick cash

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What Enables People to Move Off the Streets Into Temporary Housing?

- “More Desirable” Shelters
 - High quality of early responses by individual organizations, e.g. The Haven, SHARE
 - Movement of people who are homeless to communities with better services
- “Less Desirable” Shelters
 - Alternative temporary placements, e.g. hospitals, jails
 - Unsafe, unsustainable housing, e.g. slum lords, squatting in abandoned housing, doubling up
- Temporary Supports
 - Jobs, child support, case management
- Personal Determination

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What Causes People to Move Back to the Streets?

- Recycling of people through shelters
- Limits of support
 - Lack of personal determination
 - Strength of risk factors
 - Unsustainable income from temporary jobs and restricted child support
 - Backlog of cases
 - Case management that enables vs. empowers
- Movement of people back into community when services elsewhere are no longer available

What Keeps People from Moving into Permanent Housing?

1. Availability, awareness, accessibility of critical services:
 - Detox and substance abuse treatment
 - Mental health services
 - Services to women
 - Discharge planning for prisoners
 - Longer term case management
 - Life skills training
 - Transitional housing for selected groups
 - Housing placement services
 - Education, job training, and employment support
2. Availability of permanent, safe, affordable, supportive housing
3. Permanent, living wage jobs – and access to those jobs through child care and transportation services

What Keeps People From Moving Into Permanent Housing?

The Coalition's ability to implement this fundamental solution is limited by several factors:

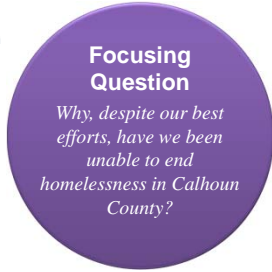
- Time delays – the solution takes time to both develop and produce results
- Barriers produced by homelessness itself
- Our very success in providing temporary shelters and supports (!)

Take note

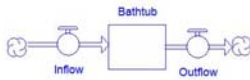
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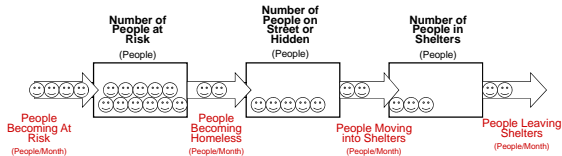
Making Systemic Connections

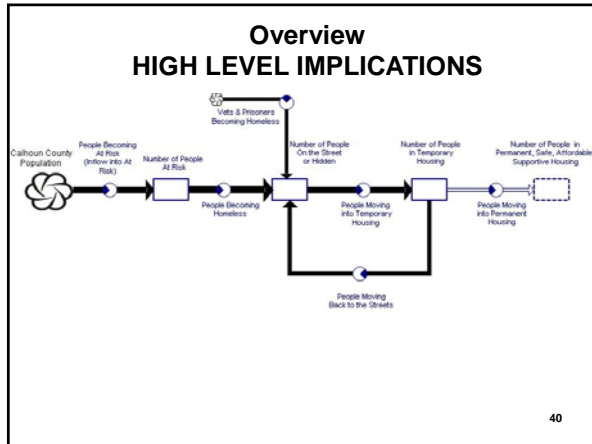


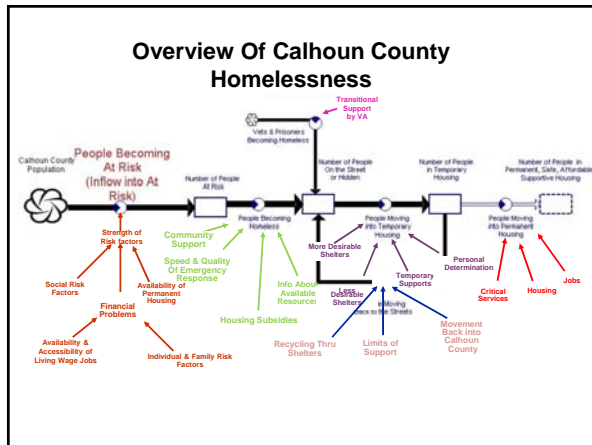
Bathtubs and Homelessness

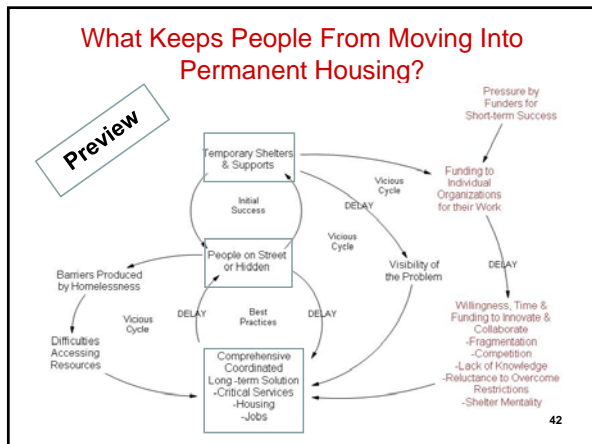


Simplified Homeless System Flow View









What makes for good systems thinking issues?

The problem/issue is chronic

- There is a known history – we have data and are knowledgeable about the issue
- Prior attempts to solve the problem have failed
- Multiple perspectives exist on why we have the problem & what should be done
- We believe there is more to be learned about the issue
- We have some control or influence over the situation including access to the key stakeholders

Using Systems Thinking to Understand Current Reality

Team Application Exercise Deliverables

- 1. Statement of desired result**
Given your issue or challenge, what are the results you'd like to see created? What would it look like if the issue or challenge was fully resolved?
- 2. Key events/symptoms & key trends (Draw Graphs)**
What is the current reality now? What is the history? Where does it look like we are heading?
- 3. List of key factors/drivers at the structural level**
Why do we have the current reality we have?

E.g. Why do we have this gap? What is perpetuating or exacerbating it? What are the barriers to improvement?

NOT WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT OR HOW TO FIX IT YET

An Iceberg Exercise

1. Tell the Story

What happened?
What are some key events or crises?
Why is this a problem for us?

Share stories & info
Listen for key variables & trends

Example

Calhoun County, MI: estimated 250-500 people homelessness among population of 100,000

Homeless Coalition meetings again fail to deal with the problem: disagreements, competition, and lack of knowledge cited

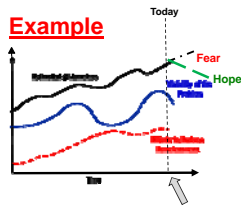
Opportunity to receive funding to develop ten-year plan to end homelessness

An Iceberg Exercise

2. Draw the Graphs

Historically what has been happening over time?
What are the trends & patterns we see?
Where is this headed (hopes & fears)?

Draw 3-5 key historic trends of the key variables important to the issue



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An Iceberg Exercise

3. Identify the Structure

Why did this happen?
What are the forces & pressures at work?
What is perpetuating or exacerbating the problem?

- **Develop a list of important drivers or factors contributing to or perpetuating the problem**
(Suggestion: Use sources of pressures or forces list on earlier slide)
- **Use Brainstorming**
- **Avoid solutions or fixes**

Example

- Factors That Create Risk
 - Individual and family risk factors, e.g. poverty, discrimination, and lack of education; substance abuse, mental illness, DV; lack of support for minors; absence of life management skills, underlying self-esteem
 - Limited permanent, accessible, living wage jobs
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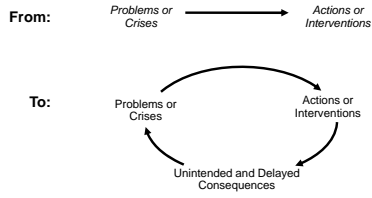
The Language of Systems Thinking

- In complex systems we can't easily connect cause & effect or inputs & outputs
- Our systems & organizations operate the way they do because of the way we think & operate
- Language shapes thought & thought shapes actions
- English is a linear language – Noun ->Verb

- *Systems Thinking is a different language*
- *It is a pattern language*

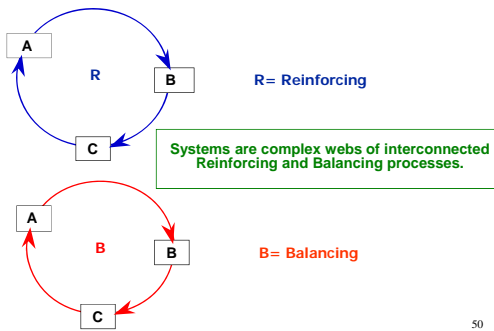
The Language of Systems Thinking

The world is circular– not linear



The Language of Systems Thinking

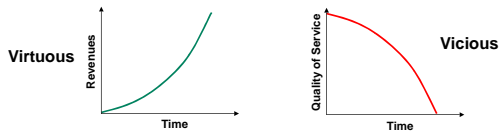
Two Kinds of Loops



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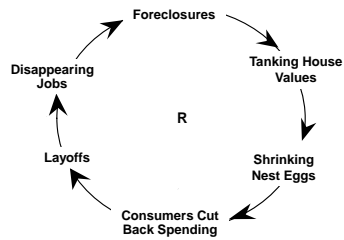
Systems Language

- Reinforcing process
 - Virtuous cycles that generate growth
 - Vicious treadmills that create disaster

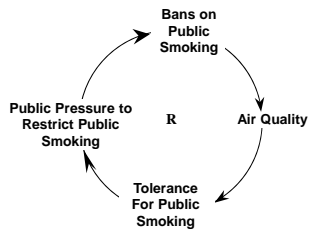


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Reinforcing Process: Vicious Cycle

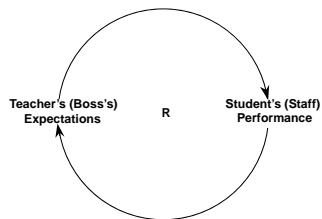


Reinforcing Process: Virtuous Cycle



The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

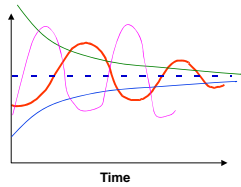
Reinforcing loops can be virtuous or vicious.



To what extent have you experienced the same dynamic with people who work for you, your colleagues or partners, your children?

Systems Language

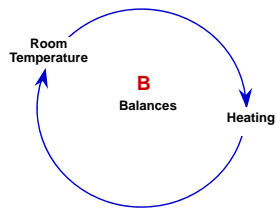
- Balancing processes
 - The corrective mechanisms that sustain us
 - The primary source of resistance to change



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Balancing Process

Maintaining Room Temperature

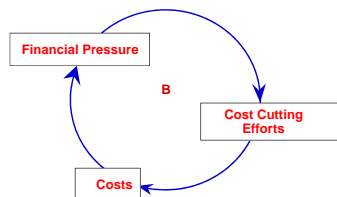


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Balancing Process

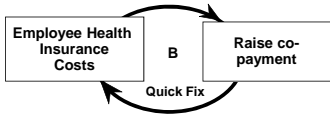
Cutting Costs To Help Finances

Facing **financial pressure**, we **cut back on costs** (e.g. travel, training, etc.) **Cost cutting efforts** lower **costs**. Reductions in cost reduce **financial pressure**.



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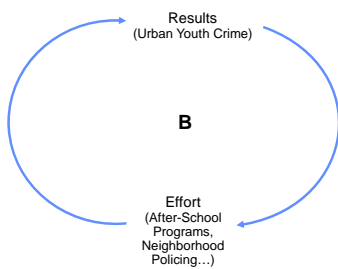
Health Insurance



Addressing Homelessness

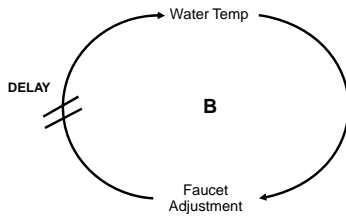


Balancing Effort and Results: The Risk of Taking the Pressure Off



Balancing Loops

The Challenge of Managing Time Delays



- Delays are a significant and often hidden part of system structure.
- Delays can occur in awareness, decision-making, implementation, and/or correction.
- The tendency is to be impatient and over-respond or to give up prematurely.

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The Power of Systems Archetypes

Systems archetypes are recurring structures that appear in many different types of situations.

They often serve as initial guides to making sense of a complex system.

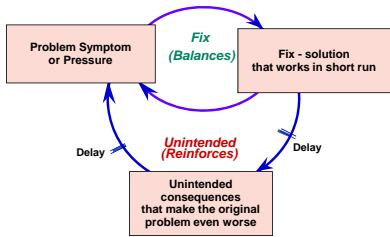
- Make systems thinking visible
- Well understood--recur frequently
- Easily transferable
- Naturally promote systems thinking and acting in a team
- Shift focus from blaming to inquiry

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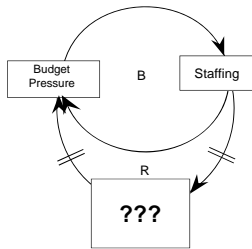
System Archetypes

Virtuous/Vicious Cycles	Amplification and Reinforcement: a reinforcing process producing success or disaster.
Balancing Process	Corrections: we try to reduce the gap.
Fixes that Backfire	Unintended Consequences: the long-term negative consequences of a quick fix.
Shifting the Burden	Unintended Dependency: the quick fix that we become addicted to.
Limits to Success	Unanticipated Constraints: the limiting mechanism on spiraling growth.
Accidental Adversaries	Partners Who Become Enemies: two parties want to cooperate, but each sees the other undermining their success.
Escalation	Unintended Proliferation: the harder you push, the harder the competitor pushes back.
Drifting Goals	Inadvertent Poor Performance: actual and desired performance levels gradually falling.
Success to the Successful	Winner Takes All: your success produces my failure.
Tragedy of the Commons	Optimizing Each Part Destroys the Whole: everyone takes advantage of a resource that doesn't belong to anybody.
Multiple Goals	Conflicting or Competing Commitments: trying to do too much or satisfy conflicting goals can lead to accomplishing none.

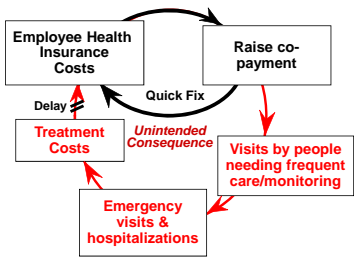
Fixes that Backfire Template



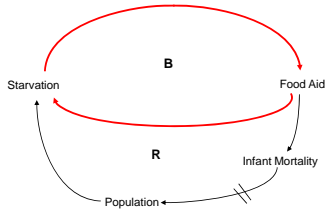
The Perils of Downsizing



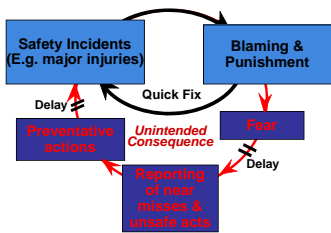
Health Insurance



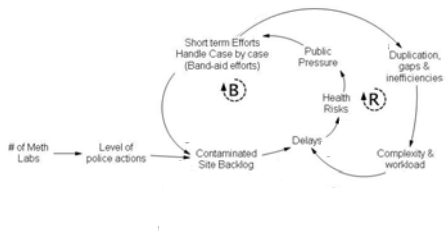
Food Aid



Fixing Safety



Dealing with Meth Labs



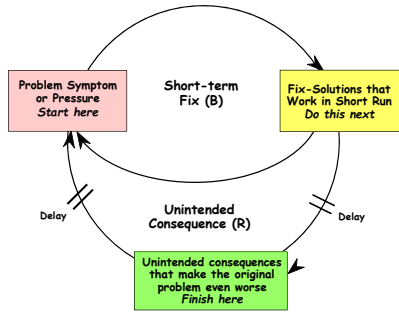
Fixes that Backfire Exercise

Purpose:
To practice applying the "Fixes That Backfire" template.

Time: 5 minutes

- Instructions:**
- Identify a story from your own experience that fits this template (related to your issue or organization)
 - Share your story with a partner

Fixes that Backfire Template



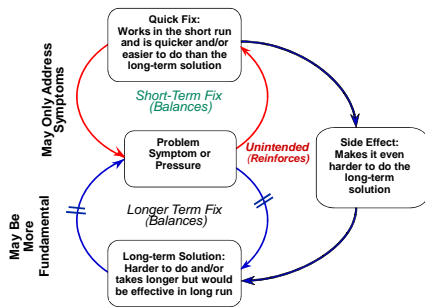
Fixes that Backfire: Summary

- The fix addresses the symptom, not the problem.
- The reinforcing loop is longer term, usually not obvious, and dominates behavior.

What you can do:

- Increase awareness of the unintended consequences
- Identify and address the root problem
- Implement a different fix
- Implement the same fix without the negative consequences

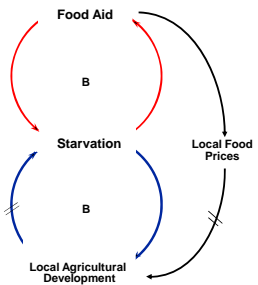
Shifting the Burden Template



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Stage 2.2) Systems Analysis

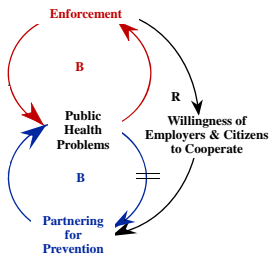
Food Aid As Shifting the Burden



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Enforcement Is Not Enough



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What Keeps People From Moving Into Permanent Housing?



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What Keeps People From Moving Into Permanent Housing?



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What Keeps People From Moving Into Permanent Housing?



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What Keeps People From Moving Into Permanent Housing?

- Visibility of the problem of homelessness decreases when people move into shelters and other temporary placements
 - Natural reluctance to see the problem in the first place
 - Reluctance on the part of homeless people to be seen
 - Lack of visibility further reduces pressure on the community to solve the problem
 - Lack of data also reinforces the invisibility of problem

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What Keeps People From Moving Into Permanent Housing?

Ironically, temporary success in getting people off the streets has unintended consequences that make it *more* difficult to implement fundamental solutions

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What Keeps People From Moving Into Permanent Housing?

- Barriers produced by homelessness itself
 - Inherent uncertainty that compounds family risk factors
 - Problems establishing legal identity
 - Poor credit history
 - Previous evictions
 - Criminal record
 - Negative stereotyping of people who are homeless
- These barriers lead to difficulties in developing or taking advantage of resources
 - No opportunity to practice life skills
 - Reluctance on the part of potential landlords and employers
 - Legal regulations and restrictions
 - NIMBY

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What Keeps People From Moving Into Permanent Housing?



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What Keeps People From Moving Into Permanent Housing?

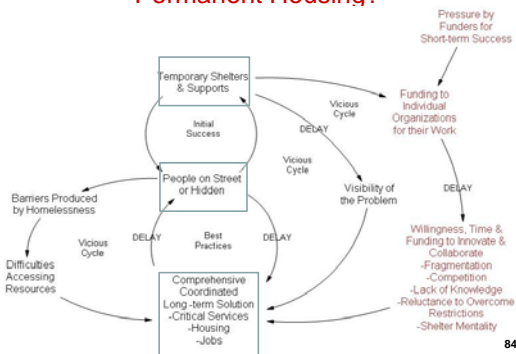
Temporary success and pressure by funders for short-term success reinforce funding to individual organizations for their current work.

This decreases their willingness, time, and funding to innovate and collaborate, which in turn leads to:

- Fragmentation of services
- Competition for existing funds
- Lack of broader knowledge of best practices
- Reluctance to overcome government restrictions that make it difficult to innovate
- Shelter mentality

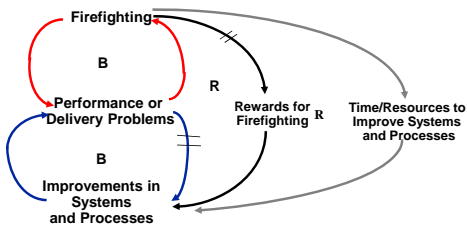
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What Keeps People From Moving Into Permanent Housing?



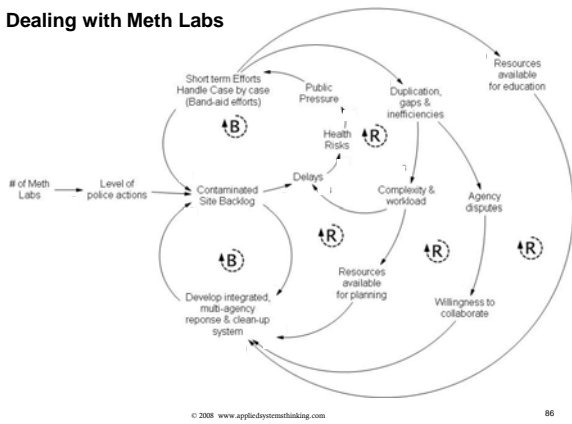
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Addiction to Firefighting



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Dealing with Meth Labs



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Shifting the Burden Exercise

Purpose:

To practice applying the "Shifting the Burden" template.

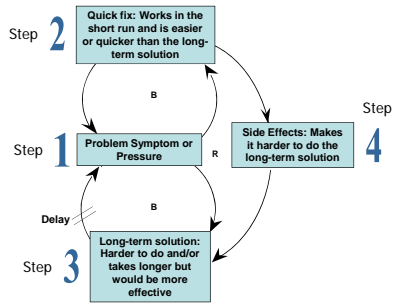
Time: 10 minutes

Instructions:

- Apply Shifting the Burden to your issue or challenge
- Be prepared to share your case with the whole group

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Shifting the Burden Template



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Shifting the Burden: Summary

- Short-term is easy. Long-term is hard.
- If overall vision or goals are missing, short-term focus takes over.
- Short-term solutions can erode long-term capability.

What you can do:

- Focus on the long-term solution in support of a compelling vision.
- Sometimes the best approach is to support only the long-term solution, to "go cold turkey."
- Pay attention to dependency on the short-term fix as you strengthen long-term capability.
- Look for mental models that tend to perpetuate dependence on the quick fix & mental models that impede serious consideration of the fundamental solution.

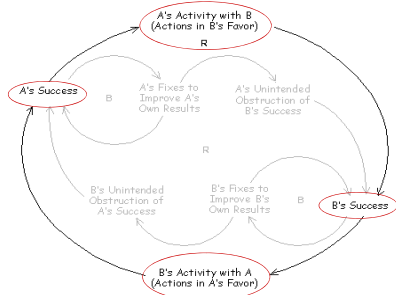
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Accidental Adversaries Partners Who Become Enemies

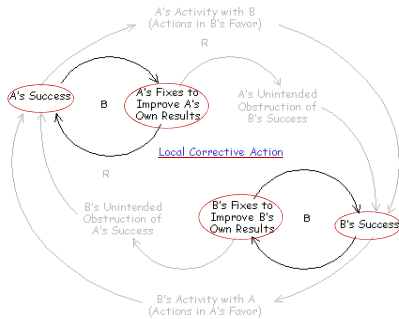
- Two parties work together to receive mutual benefit from the relationship
- Problem arises when one or both parties need to correct a local performance gap. They take action to improve performance and accidentally undermine their partner's success.
- The impact of these harmful activities may create a sense of frustration and resentment between the parties, who remain partners, or may reach the point of turning them into hostile adversaries.

Accidental Adversaries – Stage 1

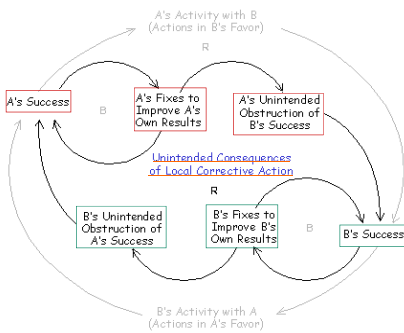
Engine of Growth for the Partnership



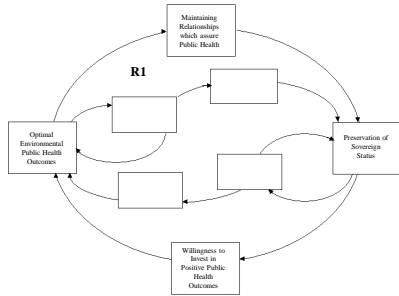
Accidental Adversaries – Stage 2



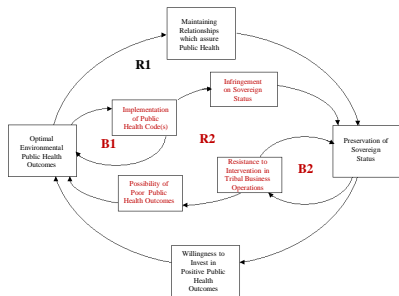
Accidental Adversaries – Stage 3



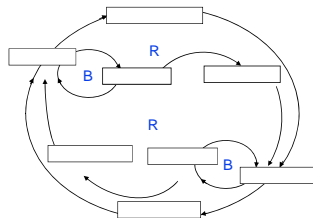
Challenges in the Relationship Between EPH Regulators and Tribal Casinos



Challenges in the Relationship Between EPH Regulators and Tribal Casinos

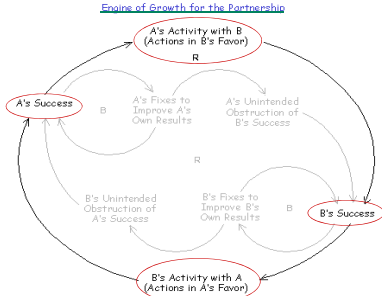


Accidental Adversaries Worksheet



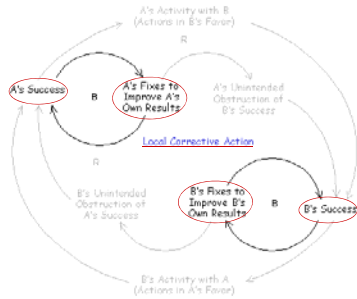
Accidental Adversaries – Stage 1

Step 1: What is the engine of growth (R loop) for our partnership?
How will we each contribute to the other's success?



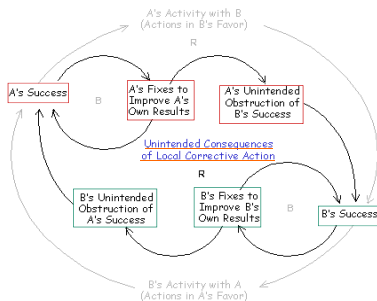
Accidental Adversaries – Stage 2

Step 2: What do we each need to do to achieve our own organizational/business needs? What the actions required to meet our own targets/goals? (B loop)



Accidental Adversaries – Stage 3

Step 3: How do our local actions to meet our own needs impact our partner?
Are there unintended consequences on our partners?



Accidental Adversaries

- Two groups have chosen to work together because they can mutually support each other's success.
- If the alliance works, both groups will gain increasing success.
- The problem arises when one or both parties are not satisfied with its current performance and take corrective measure that unintentionally obstructs their partners success.

What you can do:

- Get together and understand the whole picture.
- Remove or weaken the constraints in your partner's system that make your own solution harmful.
- Reaffirm the intent of the partnership and acknowledge the damage that was done was unintentional.
- Strengthen your mutual understanding of each other's needs and the criteria by which each of you defines success.

Mental Models

What are our Mental Models?

The beliefs, assumptions, and models we have are about every aspect of ourselves, others, our organizations, and how the world works.

- They are critical to our effectiveness.
- They affect how we think and how we act.
- They may be conscious, or unconscious; they can get us into trouble.
- It's easier to see others' mental models and harder to see our own.
- They are always incomplete and often flawed.
- They are high leverage.

Sherlock Holmes Exercise

You have just arrived at the ABC Company for a job interview. This job sounds like just what you have been looking for; your title would be Director. You would be working directly for the V.P. of Sales & Marketing, who has now requested a private interview with you. You arrived on time and were met by the V.P.'s secretary, who apologized and said there would be a delay. The V.P. was called unexpectedly into an important conference and will be there for at least 15 minutes more. In the meantime, the secretary has informed you that you are welcome to wait in the V.P.'s private office.

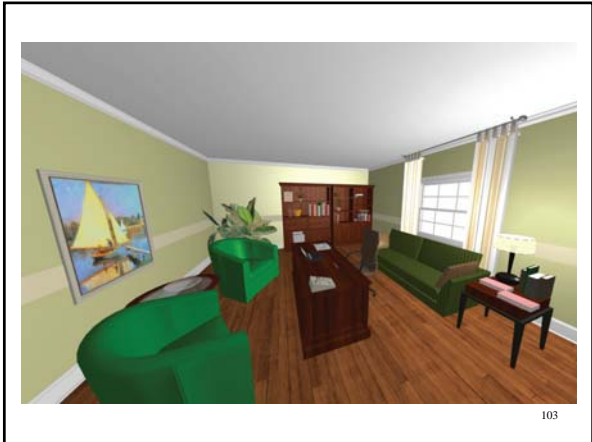
You enter the private office. You know that you will be alone here for at least 15 minutes. You look around the room, naturally curious about the person you may be working for . . .

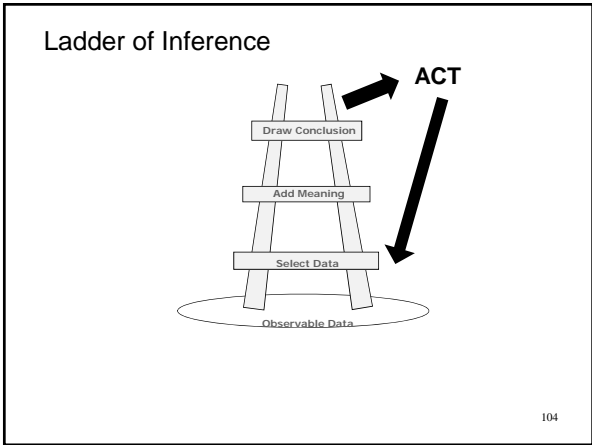
The office is carpeted in a short plush pile in light gray. You sit in one of the two emerald green club chairs to the left of the doorway. Between the chairs is a low glass table on which there is an empty gold glass ashtray. Next to the ashtray are two books of matches; one is from a popular nightclub and the other is from a local restaurant. On the wall behind you is a picture of an old sailing ship in blues and browns. A rubber plant set in a brown and green woven basket sits against the side wall next to the other chair.

There is a window on the far wall, and you get up and go over to look out. Directly in front of the window is a sofa covered in emerald green and beige print. Two woven throw pillows in beige cotton lie against the arms of the sofa. The draperies at the window behind the sofa are a cream white woven material with a beige stripe. The view from the window is pleasant—a few small shops bordering a small park.

Your gaze turns to the square dark wooden table next to the sofa. Magazines and newspapers are scattered in front of a black ceramic lamp with a cream white shade. They include a copy each of *The Economist*, *Paris Match*, *Vogue*, and *The Financial Times*. There is also a souvenir program from the Football World Cup Finals.

As you turn to walk back to your chair, you notice that the papers on the desk in front of the chair are your resume and that the statement of your sex has been marked with a felt-tipped pen. Since the V.P. may return any moment, you sit in the emerald green club chair to wait.





Mental Models Examples

“Who would ever want a computer in their home.”

“The only way anything changes around here is when our senior leaders change it.”

“Learning is what we do outside of work.”

“The world is a big machine we own & operate.”
(Vs. “The world is a garden we live in & tend.”)

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Mental Models Question

As you think about your issue:

What mental models are at play that could be barriers to change or improvement? What are the mindsets that have perpetuated the current situation?

Write them as if they were statements of fact:

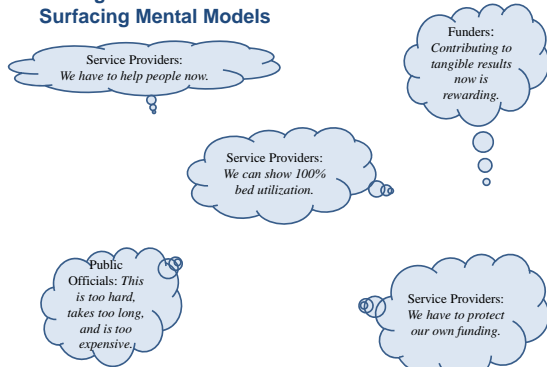
"The only way anything changes around here is when our senior leaders change it."

"Things only get done when we have a major crisis."

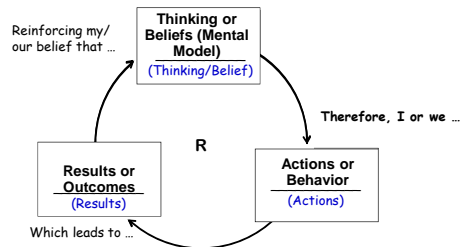
"Meetings are a waste of time."

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Ending Homelessness: Surfacing Mental Models

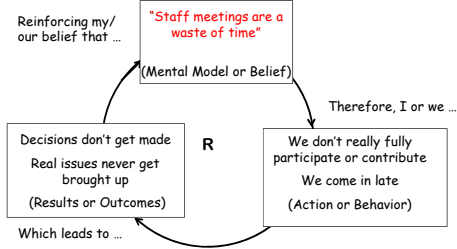


Belief-Action-Results Maps



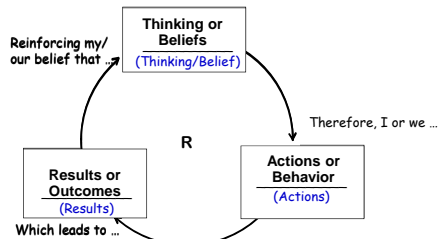
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Beliefs – Actions – Results Loop: Example



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Develop a BAR map using one of the mental models you just identified



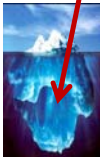
110

Characteristics of Leverage Points

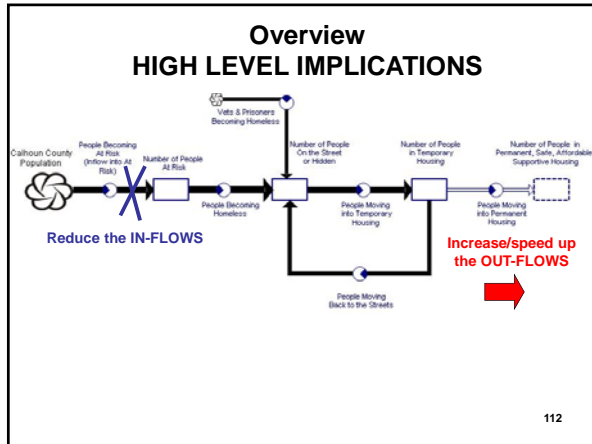
Leverage points have certain characteristics.

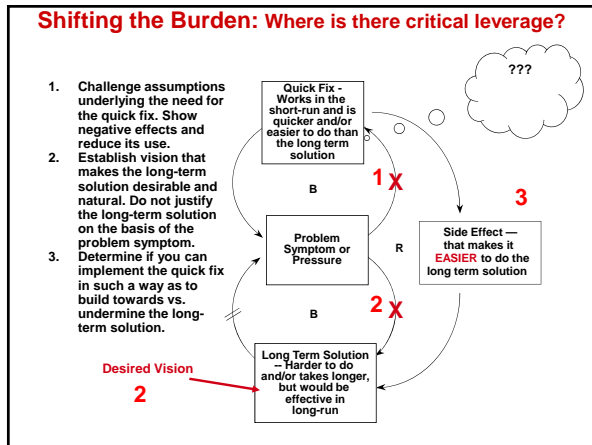
They are:

- Long-lasting and self-sustaining.
- Capable of qualitatively changing (shifting) the long-term pattern of performance. (trends & patterns)
- Are at the structural level (bottom of iceberg) (Think trim tab)
- Often involve addressing entrenched mental models to start with
- May require stopping or doing less of something
- May require starting or doing more of something



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What Keeps People From Moving Into Permanent Housing?

Our ability to implement this fundamental solution is limited by several factors:

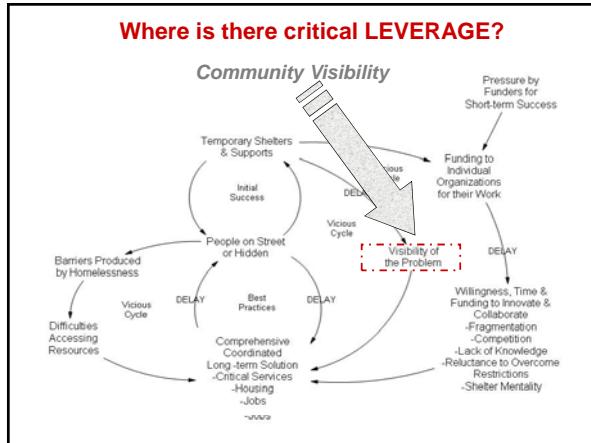
- Time delays – the solution takes time to both develop and produce results
- Barriers produced by homelessness itself
- **Our very success in providing temporary shelters and supports (!)**
- Another limiting factor is the county's ability to create permanent, living wage jobs. This goes beyond the charter of the Homeless Coalition but is related to people living healthy, independent lives.

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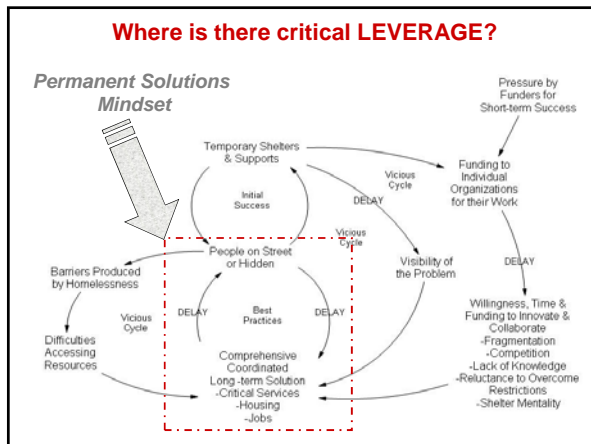
Leverage for Ending Homelessness

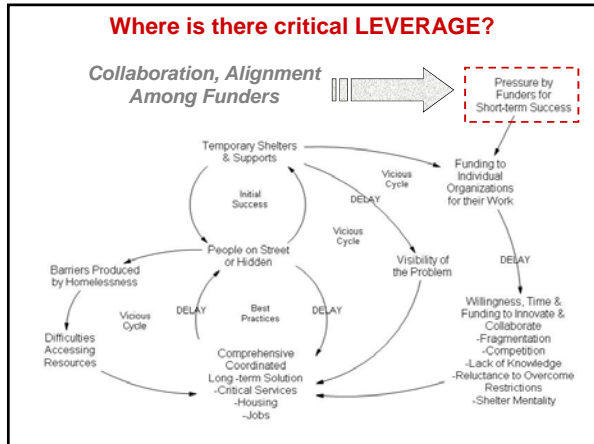
- Increase visibility of the problem (without endangering homeless people)
- Establish permanent solutions mindset
- Increase collaboration/alignment among funders
- Increase collaboration/alignment among providers and community
- Improve access to housing, employment, and critical services

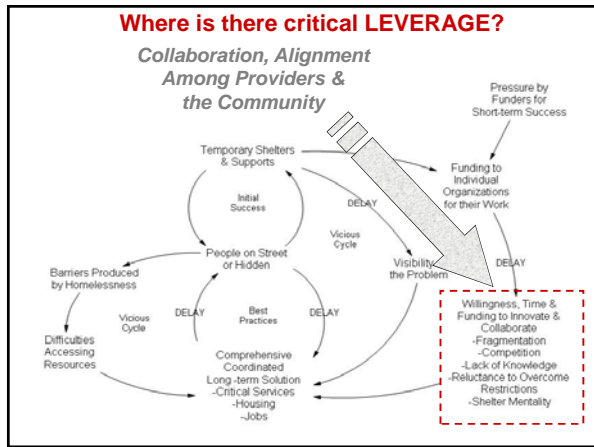
Where is there critical LEVERAGE?

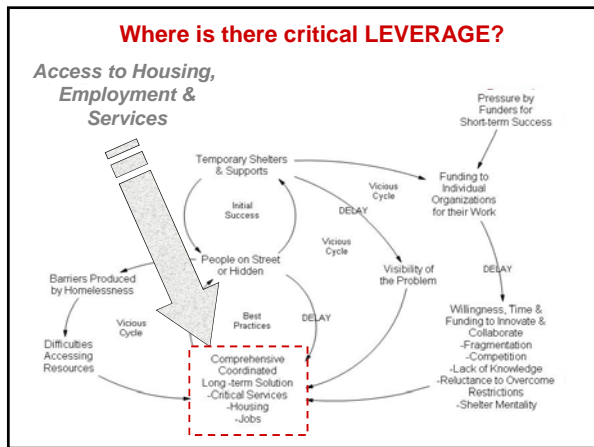


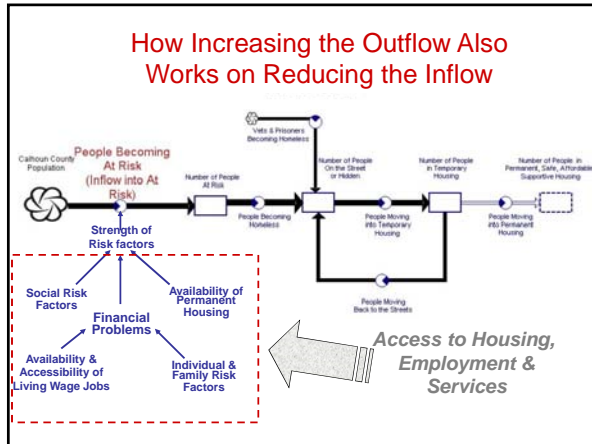
Where is there critical LEVERAGE?











Ending Homelessness: **Making a Choice**

- Focusing on temporary shelters has appeared to be the *right* thing to do
- Although shelters help people *cope* with homelessness, they actually make it more difficult to *end* it
- The community, especially service providers, has to make a *choice* between coping with homelessness and ending it

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Ending Homelessness: **Learnings**

Jennifer Schrand, Chair of the Calhoun County Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness, observed:

*I learned so much, especially the **difference between changing a particular system and leading systemic change**. You (systems thinking) helped **involve our consumer** – homeless people – in developing the community's ten-year plan to end homelessness. You **expanded the view of service providers** so that they are now committed to helping the consumer overall instead of just "doing their own thing" as individual organizations. Agencies took a hard look together at their individual and collective responsibilities for failing to end homelessness, and **recognized that their emergency work hides the problem** and reduces community pressure to solve it. The **goals of our new plan** to end homelessness derive directly from your analysis of the whole system and identification of leverage points to achieve a sustainable solution.*

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Ending Homelessness: Results

Plan funded: Leverage points identified by a shared understanding of why homelessness persisted became the basis for state approved plan

Collaborative breakthrough: Homeless Coalition voted unanimously to reallocate HUD funding from one service provider's transitional housing program to permanent supportive housing program run by another provider

Quantitative results: In the plan's first three years of operation (2007-2009), the county reported the following results

Homelessness decreased by 13% (from 1658 to 1437) and eviction rates declined by 3% ... *DESPITE* a 70% increase in unemployment and 15% increase in bankruptcy filings

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Resource List

Books

- Peter Senge, [The Fifth Discipline](#)
- Peter Senge et al, [The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook](#)

Websites

- Applied Systems Thinking: www.appliedsystemsthinking.com
- Society for Organizational Learning: www.solonline.org

Online Systems Thinking Course

- www.iseesystems.com
