

'4-PTS' TRAINING GUIDE FOR IE FOR ACTION ©

A GUIDE FOR DOING RESEARCH USING IE FOR ACTION TOOLS FOR INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS AND CHANGE

4-PTS STEPS

Step 1 Identifying a problematic

Step 2 Making it concrete

Step 3 Mapping institutional work processes, including

Going deeper with interviews, text-work-text/discourse analysis and mapping

Step 4 Working with Groups for Change

STEP 1 IDENTIFY A PROBLEMATIC

Step #1 is always about LEARNING FROM PEOPLE and GETTING A FOCUS

IT MEANS listening to people about their experiences of concern.

IT MEANS identifying the specific institutional processes, moments, sites, where there's a problem that happens and seeing that how it happens is invisible.

When you get them to tell their stories, you want to help them make what they say 'concrete' (be about actual people doing things).

HOW YOU DO IT

- Work with a team, group or individual to find the problematic for your inquiry/research project. There's a problem to solve, something to change.

Methods include:

- Informal conversations, talking to people, their experience and everyday work
- Community gatherings – be clear about who you mean by 'community'
- Focus groups – people are asked "talk about your experience of..."
- Interviews – use a topic list of 3-5 things you want to learn about, not survey/fix questions

What's a problematic?

A FOCUS TO CLEARLY LAY OUT THE RESEARCH DIRECTION.

- IT'S HELPFUL TO WRITE UP A CLEAR (short paragraph 3-4 sentence) STATEMENT OF YOUR FOCUS to remind yourself and your team of your in-common focus when you meet together.
- THE STATEMENT says what you want to know or find out. It's usually stated as a problem of not knowing *how something goes on, how it is put together* in what people are actually doing. It usually specifies an institutional process, moment or site, where individual lives and institutions intersect and there's a problem that happens. It may involve a specific institutional text. It may be how people's work is regulated or connected. 'It' affects people. People are concerned about it.
- THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMATIC MAY EVOLVE AS THE RESEARCH GOES ALONG AND AS YOU LEARN MORE. You may learn about work in one place and move on to explore how it's coordinated with work in other sites.

2. MAKING IT CONCRETE

NOT KNOWING IS A GOOD PLACE TO START. YOU CAN ASK ABOUT ACTUAL ACTIVITIES.

WHAT YOU'RE GOING AFTER

INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES AND WORK (*Small Hero diagram*)

- What work is getting done and how?
- What different organizational processes are going on?
- What text-based work is being put together?
- Who's in them doing things (the position)?
- What TEXTS are integral to the action? (form to fill in, report, letter, etc)
- Texts that are being produced in the process
- Texts that are outside the process but that regulate, (shape what people do, how they think about what they do, and talk about what they do)
- What connected work processes that will happen next?
- What you might want to explore?

Keep people on track in their telling.
Say things like:

"I don't know what you are talking about. You're the expert on this, so could you tell me more about what people are doing? How do people "sign up?" for example?"

WHAT YOU'RE NOT GOING AFTER:

Individuals are never the 'object of inquiry.'

What you want to know is never about any individual or group.

TIP Write up a statement saying this and what you are going after (your problematic). Say it and/or give it to people when you 'recruit' them for interviews or talk to them.

HOW YOU CHOOSE TO LEARN FROM PEOPLE WILL VARY.

Classic methods include:

- Informal conversations, professional knowledge (preliminary only)
- Community gatherings
- Focus groups
- Interviews

IE FOR ACTION/MAPPING FOR CHANGE MAKES DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT USE OF THEM

You may use all methods, refining your problematic as you go during Steps 1 & 2.

A PROBLEMATIC BEGINS IN A LOCATION (Smith's SMALL HERO diagram).

IA FOR ACTION HELPS YOU LOOK AT CONNECTED THINGS IN DIFFERENT LOCATIONS. YOU CAN MOVE RESEARCH INTO INSTITUTIONS WHEN YOU SEE THEY ARE PRODUCED IN PEOPLE'S EVERYDAY WORK.

THE 'TRICK' TO GOING INTO INSTITUTIONS IS FOCUS ON WORK-TEXT SEQUENCES.

DECIDING *WHO* TO GATHER TOGETHER OR TALK TO AT ANY STAGE IS IMPORTANT.

WHAT YOU'RE AFTER:

- People's experiences and work
- How experience emerges and work is regulated/shaped in institutional processes
- Concrete descriptions of what happens for them (who, what, when, where)
- Different people's expert 'work knowledges' of being in/working in these processes in different locations and capacities
- How they put their actions together with others
- Identifying with them, issues and sites for inquiry, exploration

HOW YOU GATHER DATA WILL BE COMMUNITY-, RESOURCE-, AND GOAL-SPECIFIC.

GENERAL TIPS:

- Keep Focus Groups small – 4-5 people
- Open Interviews/conversations – use a topic list (3-5 work bits you want to learn about)
- Gently, firmly, bring people back to 'concrete' description of actual actions & away from general, vague or abstract terms
- Mutual respect, focus is learning about the work/text/process of common interest

CHECKS AS YOU GO

keeping to concrete actual actions? (TALK, WRITING, READING, FILING ETC)

keeping the specific work-text interaction or process in view?

reminding self/team of what it is you are going after, what you want to know?

using small hero and work process diagrams as reminders?

asking HOW something works in institutional action & time (with different outcomes)?

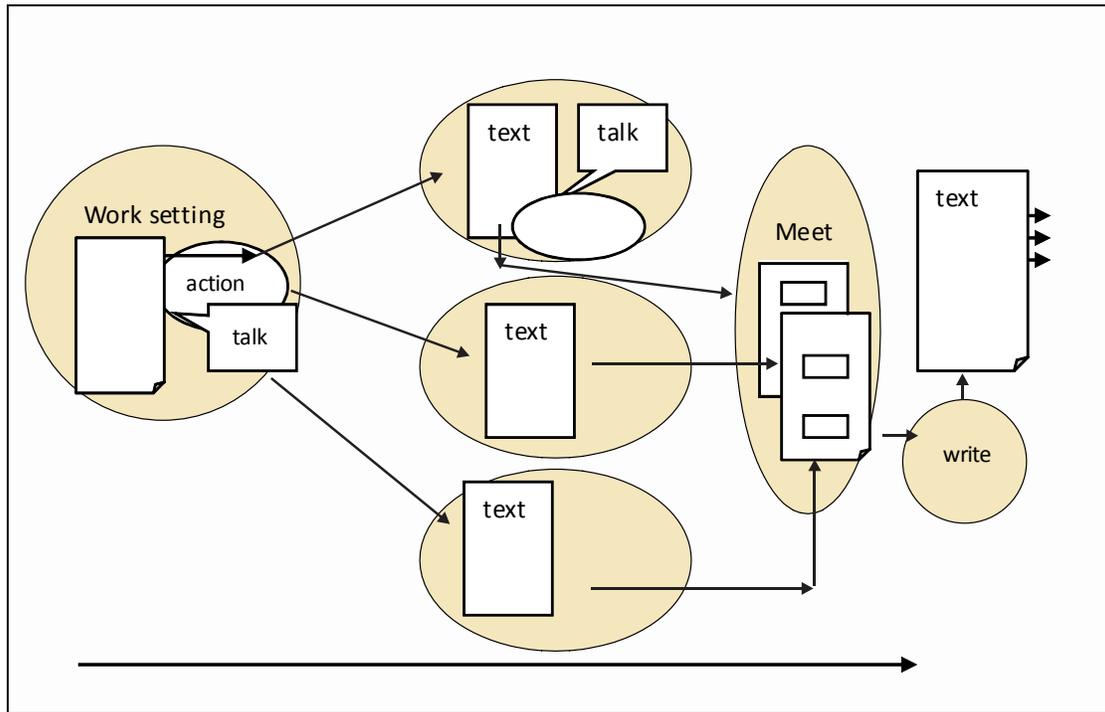
language (empty concepts or 'shells' – ask:

KEEP YOUR GOAL OF CHANGING HOW THE INSTITUTION WORKS (STEP #4 BELOW) IN VIEW THROUGHOUT YOUR RESEARCH PROCESS so that people are prepared to put their new knowledge of the institution's work into effective strategizing and working towards action.

'DE-BRIEF', meet **OFTEN AT EVERY STEP** to talk about what you're learning, how you're writing up what you've found, challenges, and to revisit your problematic.

STEP 3 MAP INSTITUTIONAL WORK PROCESSES

WORK WITH THE MAPPING INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES GUIDE.



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SKETCH ACTUAL WORK-TEXT-WORK SEQUENCES. THESE CAN GET COMPLEX! KEEP FOCUS.

Sketch specific institutional work processes in order to open them up to identify sites for deeper inquiry and to locate sites for do-able change.

GO DEEPER INTO WORK ORGANIZATIONS

- Text-reader conversation (text analysis)
- Text-talk observations (text work decision process analysis)
- Text work interviews
- Text-work-text layer mapping
- Discourse analysis and mapping
- Accountability circuits.

HOW YOU DECIDE TO GO DEEPER VARIES. YOU CAN BE PRODUCING DIFFERENT MAPS FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES, DEPENDING ON WHAT YOU WANT TO MAKE VISIBLE AND TO SHOW GRAPHICALLY.

WRITE UPS TO EXPLAIN YOUR MAPS ARE ESSENTIAL.

KEEP YOUR PROBLEMATIC AND INSTITUTIONAL ACTION AND CHANGE GOALS IN VIEW.

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STEP 4 WORKING WITH GROUPS FOR CHANGE

WHAT YOU'LL HAVE DONE

The groups you are working with will have undertaken some version of Steps #1, #2 and #3 that are mostly complete. Trained participants have learned:

1. Institutional ethnography basics – real people, real activities & how coordinated
2. How to track and create diagrams of institutional work & processes
3. How to explain the maps produced
4. How to identify sites, people and paths for developing real options for change.

WHAT YOU DO NOW

Work with your group/team with your data, maps, analyses to organize, write up, communicate, and go about making some changes. At this stage, you want to see *just how* to go about it, **how “change” could be brought about as people’s actual coordinated work.**

Change comes out of wanting/needing to know how something works,

Learning how that something **actually gets done** in time & place

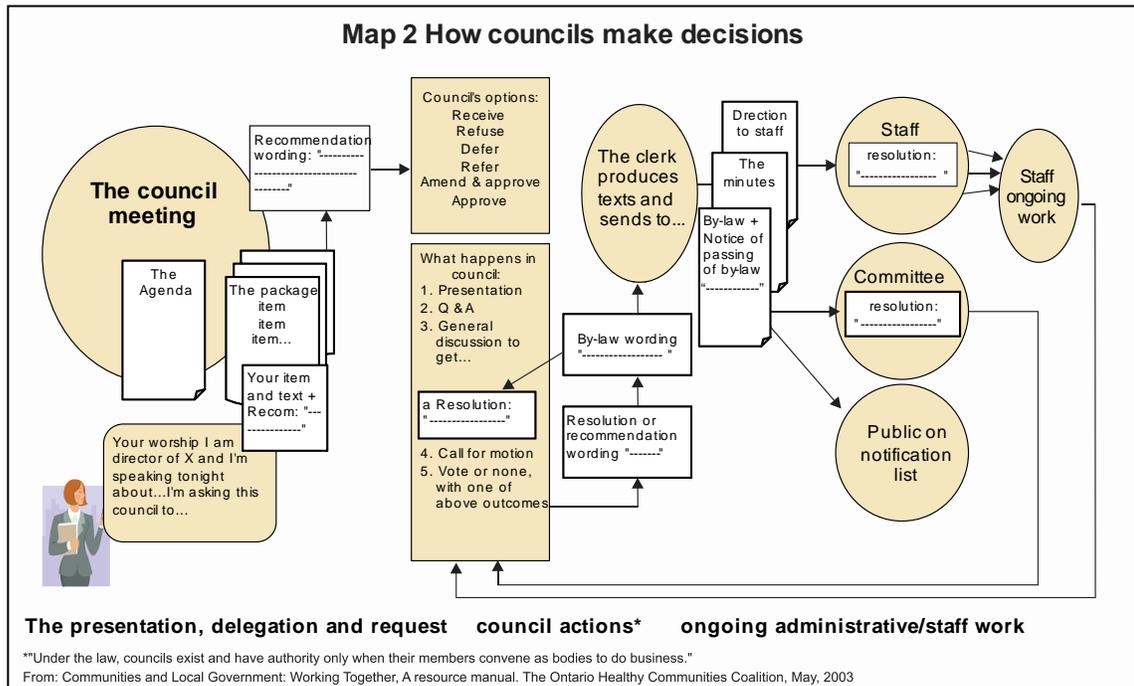
By learning about many different others’ work & how to talk and work with them to make change

Changing how an institution works means changing how people do their work, what’s done and how it’s coordinated with others’ work. It means textual change.

EXAMPLE

Problem: A new government service centre in a small rural town was taking clients away from the *women’s* employment centre. Research discovered a big reorganization of programs and service delivery at federal and provincial levels.

Do-able change: The group decided to produce a sheet about how local government works for women’s organizations so they would know how speak to them about issues in the region related to women’s poverty. They produced the map below with an explanation in a fact sheet and small booklet for service organizations.



ALONG THE WAY IN YOUR RESEARCH

- ✓ You'll record and talk about what you're learning as you do IE for Action/Mapping for Change.
- ✓ You'll be asking "What is going on? How are institutions at work doing things? Who does what, where, how next? What texts are in the action? Will you tell me how you do your work?"

ALONG THE WAY, working with the 'no judgment/no blame' principle supports you building working relationships across the institution. This is absolutely necessary and can't be overemphasized.

WHAT YOU'LL HAVE GATHERED & PRODUCED:

- Work knowledges from across the institution
- An understanding of key institutional WORK-TEXT-WORK processes
- Maps of key text-based work processes connecting work in different sites
- Who's in them doing things
- Analyses of Texts that are being produced in the process
- Analyses of Texts outside the process but that regulate, shape what people do, how they think about what they do, how they talk about what they do
- New understandings of people's work, resources and action capacity
- New knowledge relations.

MAKING CHANGE PLANS: LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEAMS

Ideally teams are comprised of 5-6 people who will actively learn and do the work:

- ✓ Interviewing,
- ✓ Reading and inquiry,
- ✓ Talking to people about their work,
- ✓ Writing up reports and other communications, and
- ✓ Learning how and being a spokesperson to media and others
- ✓ Writing up news releases and letters to the editor etc;
- ✓ Developing connections to people in the media and learning about their needs and work processes in order to work effectively with them.

Every group or community builds its own change plans and actions based on how they've put together their research process, the kinds of new work knowledge they've assembled and the quality (accuracy) of their analysis.

CHANGE OPTIONS

Each community research may hook into the same legislation, agencies and ministries, but discover things in different sites. You'll identify different options for change at different sites and institutional levels (local households, schools, federal, provincial, regional organization policies, practices or laws.)

EXAMPLE: A project wanted to make federal policy changes by hosting 'policy forums' but found working with local governments and organizations was do-able and effective.

What is possible to do to fix or solve a problem comes out of how you've formulated your problem, where you've gone deeper into institutional work, having good accurate picture of who does what, where, when, how and what you decide are priorities for your team/community. Throughout the entire process, it's essential to de-brief, review, and refine, goals, AND ALWAYS BE LEARNING.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- ✓ Economy – What’s do-able? What do you need? What can be fixed? Focus?
- ✓ Methods – What concrete outcomes do you want? Whose work is involved?
- ✓ Context – What’s the work organization, regulatory and integral texts and what are institutional workers’ knowledge needs?
- ✓ Resources – Team/community capacity? Organization/government capacity?
- ✓ Evaluation – How will you identify change, benefits? Devise qualitative methods.
- ✓ Media – Learn how different media work and what they need to do a story.

OTHER TOPICS FOR STRATEGY DISCUSSIONS

- Locating and choosing institutional sites for change
- Audiences including media for texts you produce
- How you want to be depicting power relations
- Most useful language to speak about findings
- Locating decision making power
- Real world context: any policy, government, agency cutbacks & reorganization happening

CONSIDERATIONS IN WRITING UP A REPORT AND OTHER TEXTS

- Remember the text is *always* integral to a work process!
- Remember work is *always* going on in a sequence in time and space!
- *Translate* academic ‘research questions’ or professional ‘debates’ about the common issue or problem you’ve identified *into your statement of the problematic*. *It’s helpful practice for when you want to reframe questions that people ask you that are framed in discourse terms, including newsmedia.*
- State up front your location and interest in institutional and how it works.
- State up front your interest in each aspect of work you’ve researched.
- State your discoveries as discoveries (this is “your news.” it opens up possible solutions to the old problem).
- Choose carefully the form a text takes (to whom? Where and for what institutional purpose?)
- Texts you want to produce to ‘go to work’ in government, an organization, community (town, urban or rural region, etc) each take a different form.
- Include maps in texts going to workplace, government, communities that are relevant to their everyday work/lives.
- *Your maps must be accurate* so that what you say in talk or text is real and usable. IT *MEANS your analysis and explanation of what the processes are and how they actually work can be checked out. Everyone can agree what you’ve described is indeed how it works, and thus what you offer and recommend* can be taken up by various professionals, workers – indeed by anyone – in the institution’s now-visible work processes).

READ THIS GUIDE *A NUMBER OF TIMES* WHILE YOU ARE DOING YOUR TRAINING AND YOUR RESEARCH.

DEVELOP YOUR OWN WORKSHEETS AND TRAINING TOOLS FROM IT TO USE WITH YOUR TEAMS.