

Empathy 3: Root Cause Analysis

WHAT will we have when this activity is complete?	We will have identified the root causes, challenges and assets that led to the key themes identified as resonating for your community.
WHY is this activity important?	Our prototype should address the root causes, otherwise we risk putting a “band-aid” on the issue.
HOW do I do this activity while keeping the habits in mind?	We will focus on empathy by creating space for all in our coalition to participate. We will pay special attention to the voices and thoughts particularly of those who are not quick to respond to questions or may feel uncomfortable with the educational jargon or processes.
WHEN in the process does this activity come?	We will do this activity after we identify key themes, and before we name our challenge.
WHO needs to be involved with this activity?	We will do this activity with our whole coalition.

In-Person Directions

Provide a step-by-step walkthrough of the process for this module if teams are facilitating in-person sessions. Provide suggestions for in-person facilitation methods. Templates and scripts may be included in this section.

Problem Tree Analysis: (good when you have multiple identified themes)

This analysis provides a template for mapping causes and effects in order to better understand the chain of connected circumstances that led to the identified theme(s).

Method:

1. Create a list of your identified themes from the previous exercise.
2. Assemble diverse groups, at least 2 per theme, made up of 3-5 members
3. Gather each group around a flip chart with markers
4. Write the identified theme in the middle of the chart with a circle around it
5. Ask each group to discuss the causes of the theme (roots)
6. Write the various responses below the theme
7. Ask each group to discuss the effects of the theme
8. Write the various responses above the theme
9. Ask each group to discuss which of the causes to focus on
10. Create a carousel review of the flip charts, with the recorder staying with their chart to answer questions
11. As a whole group, prioritize those one or two root causes for further action

Or, alternatively, use the 5 Whys Exercise:

5 Whys Exercise:

Theme:

Why is this happening? What is causing this? [ask why 5 times below]

1 Why:

2 Why:

3 Why:

4 Why:

5 Why:

Root Cause Problem Statement:

Virtual Directions

Provide a step-by-step walkthrough of the process for this module if teams are facilitating a virtual design session. Provide suggestions for virtual facilitation methods. Templates, virtual tools, links to workspaces, and scripts may be included in this section.

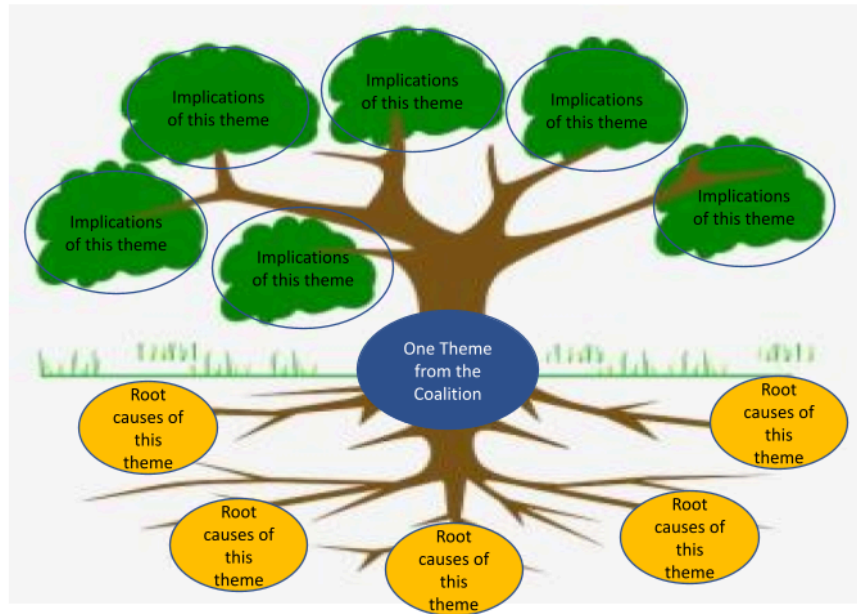
Both of these exercises can be employed online using slides virtually instead of flip charts.

Example Process & Product

Provide a sample to guide teams in the creation of their intended process and product for the module; include photos or links to a document if helpful

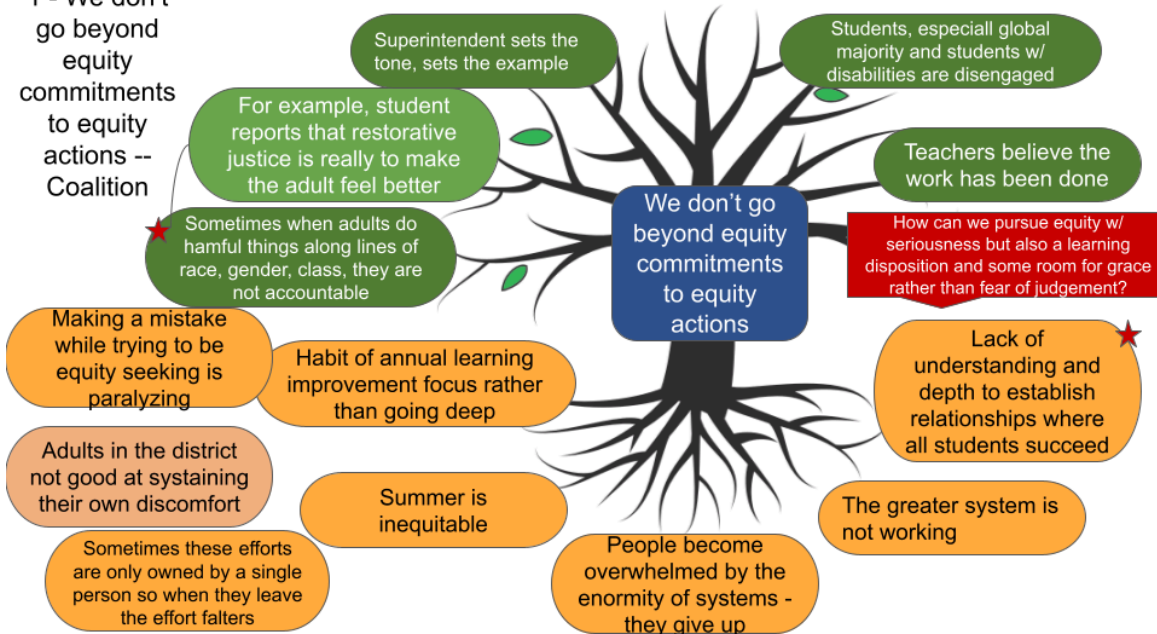
Example - The following is an example of use of the Problem Tree Exercise, where the theme is in the blue oval at the center, the root cause statements are in yellow below and the implications are in green above.

The second image is an actual example, working the theme, “We don’t go beyond equity commitments to equity actions,” where the team identified that individuals became overwhelmed by the enormity of the issues and difficulty staying in their own discomfort as core root causes to the lack of action. Using this model it is important to finalize priority root causes to spur action in the ideation phase. Ultimately, this team implemented a co-creation model to address the root cause.



In small groups -- develop Root Cause and Implication Trees that looked like this --

1 - We don't go beyond equity commitments to equity actions -- Coalition



5 Whys Video Example:

[Here](#) is a short youtube video that describes the 5 Why's method, as originally developed by Taiichi Ohno's Toyota Production System, explained by the Lean Institute.

Gut Check & Reflection

Prompt teams to evaluate their product based on the module objectives, the habits, and their

<i>work from previous modules</i>
Example “Gut Check” questions (should vary with each module): • Does the root cause identified explain the problem statement? • Does it give valid reasons for the future vision of our priority theme? • Does the identified root cause explain the user’s needs? • Is it different enough from what currently exists to add value?
Resources & Links <i>Provide links to supporting tools, strategy resources, templates, etc to support the module</i>
If the two exercises offered here don't meet your needs, you might consider using a Fishbone Exercise. Here is a well explained version of this model with an example as developed by the Minnesota Department of Education.
Next Steps <i>Provide a direct link to the next module</i>
The next module in the design sequence is Empathy Activity 5: Defining Challenge. Your team will use the prioritized root causes identified in this activity to create a problem or challenge statement in the next module.