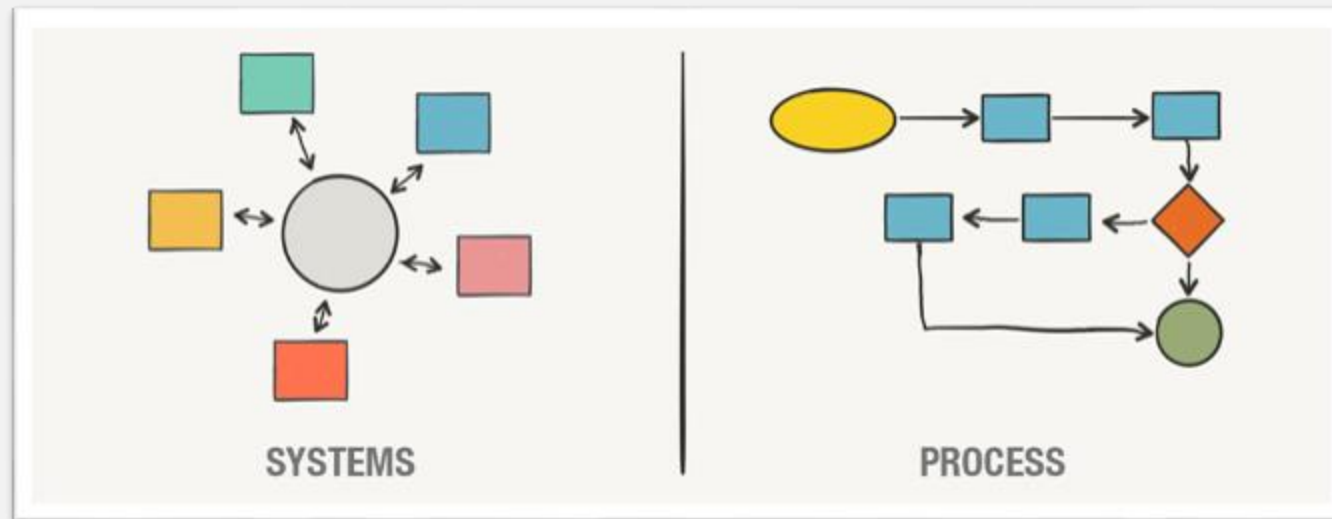


Using Systems Thinking to Address Structural Inequities

PART I

What is a System?

We can define a system as a group of components or subsystems that **integrate** and function together in order to achieve a specific goal.



What is a System?

The Housing Crisis System



Florida housing coalition

What is a System?

Our Food System



What is a System?

The City System



What is Systems Thinking?

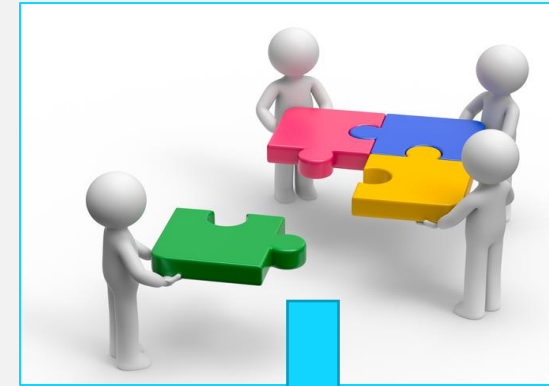
- The ability to see the interconnected elements of the system, and to distinguish patterns instead of conceptualizing change as isolated events.
 - The ability to see things as a whole (or holistically), including the many different types of relationships between the diverse elements of a complex system.
- Consider how local policies and actions influence the state of the neighboring communities.
- Consider a car. “a system of interconnected parts that make the car run well”.
 - If a mechanic makes improvements to the steering wheel or radiator, does it guarantee that the car will run faster?



Are you a part of “The System”?

- We all hold a piece of the puzzle.
- And our puzzle pieces are part of even a larger puzzle.

It's about the big picture!



A Systems Thinking Approach to Advancing Health Equity

Part II

How Can Systems Thinking Help to Advance Health Equity?



Who holds what piece of the puzzle?

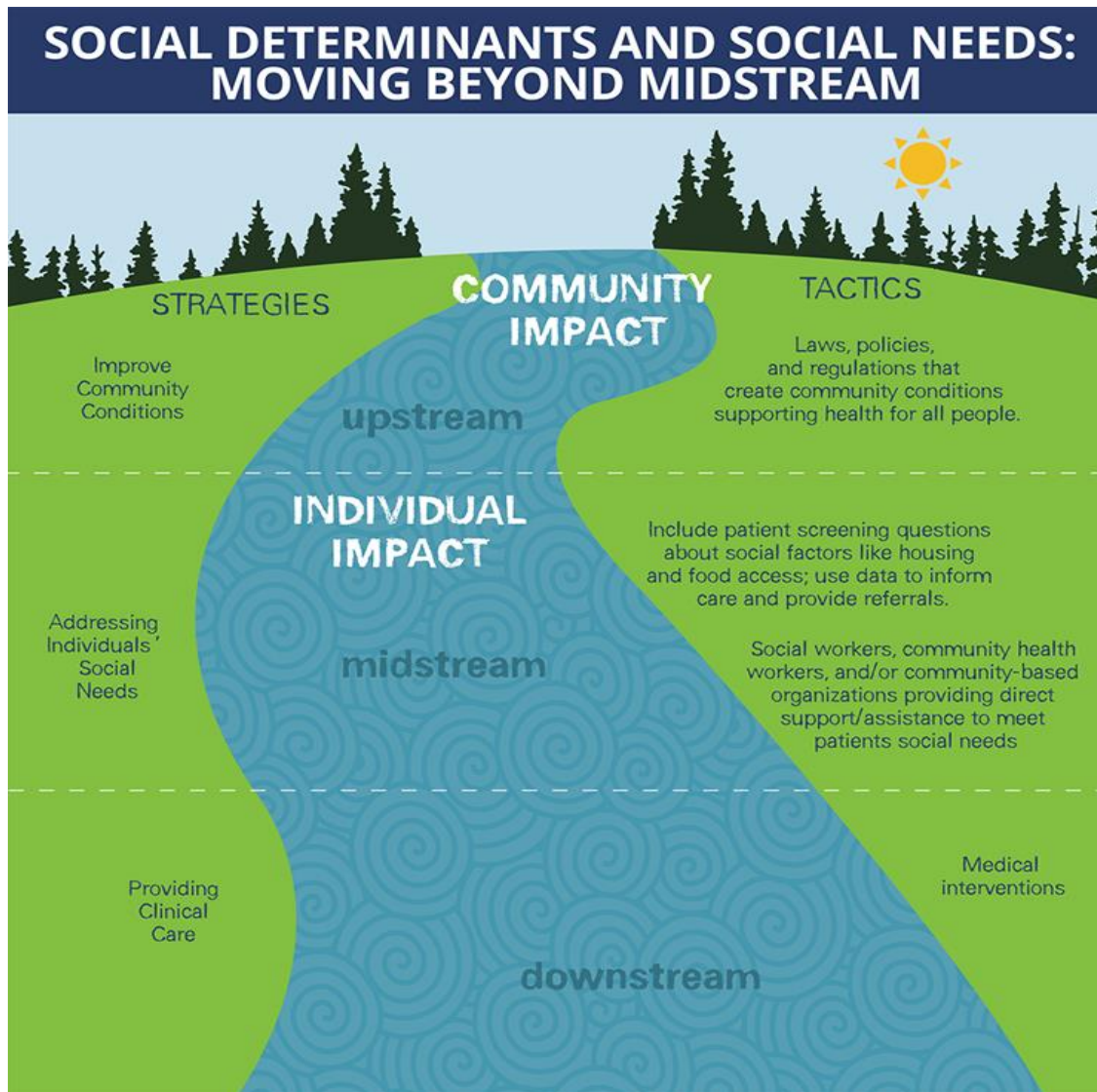


How Can Systems Thinking Help to Advance Health Equity?

- Achieving health equity is an adaptive challenge involving multiple systems working together.
- Systems thinking helps us go think more **broadly** about our work- e.g. who are our about key players/potential partners in other parts of the system-
 - “downstream”, ”midstream” and ”upstream”
- Helps with the design of more equitable systems.



Efforts at Midstream are Necessary, But Not Sufficient



- **Upstream** efforts seek to create community-level impact and improve community conditions by addressing social determinants of health through policy, laws, and regulations.
- **Midstream** efforts seek to create individual-level impact by meeting individuals' social needs through screenings, referrals, and other individually-focused processes/protocols.
- **Downstream** efforts seek to create patient-level impact by providing clinical care.

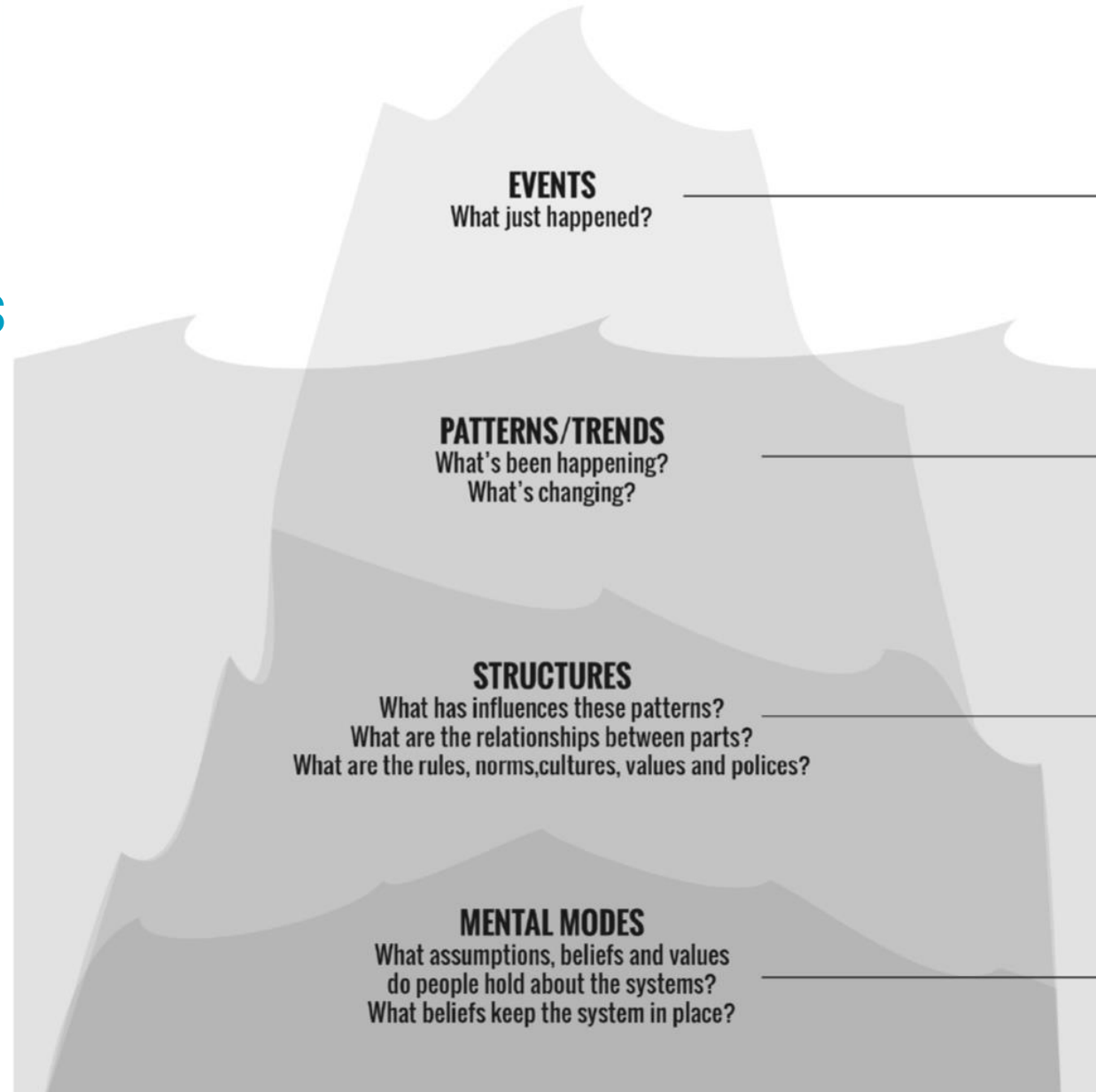
Efforts at Midstream are Necessary, But Not Sufficient

What is Happening Upstream (structural determinants)?	
	Poverty
	Low wages - jobs that don't pay a living wage
	Income inequality
	Redlining - certain neighborhoods are poorer
What is Happening Midstream (social determinants)?	Poor nutrition - junk food
	Lack of access to healthy food (too expensive)
	Low income neighborhoods don't have healthy options
	Parents don't have time to prepare healthy meals
	Unhealthy foods are cheaper
What is Happening Downstream?	Childhood obesity
	Diabetes
	Hypertension
	Cardiovascular disease

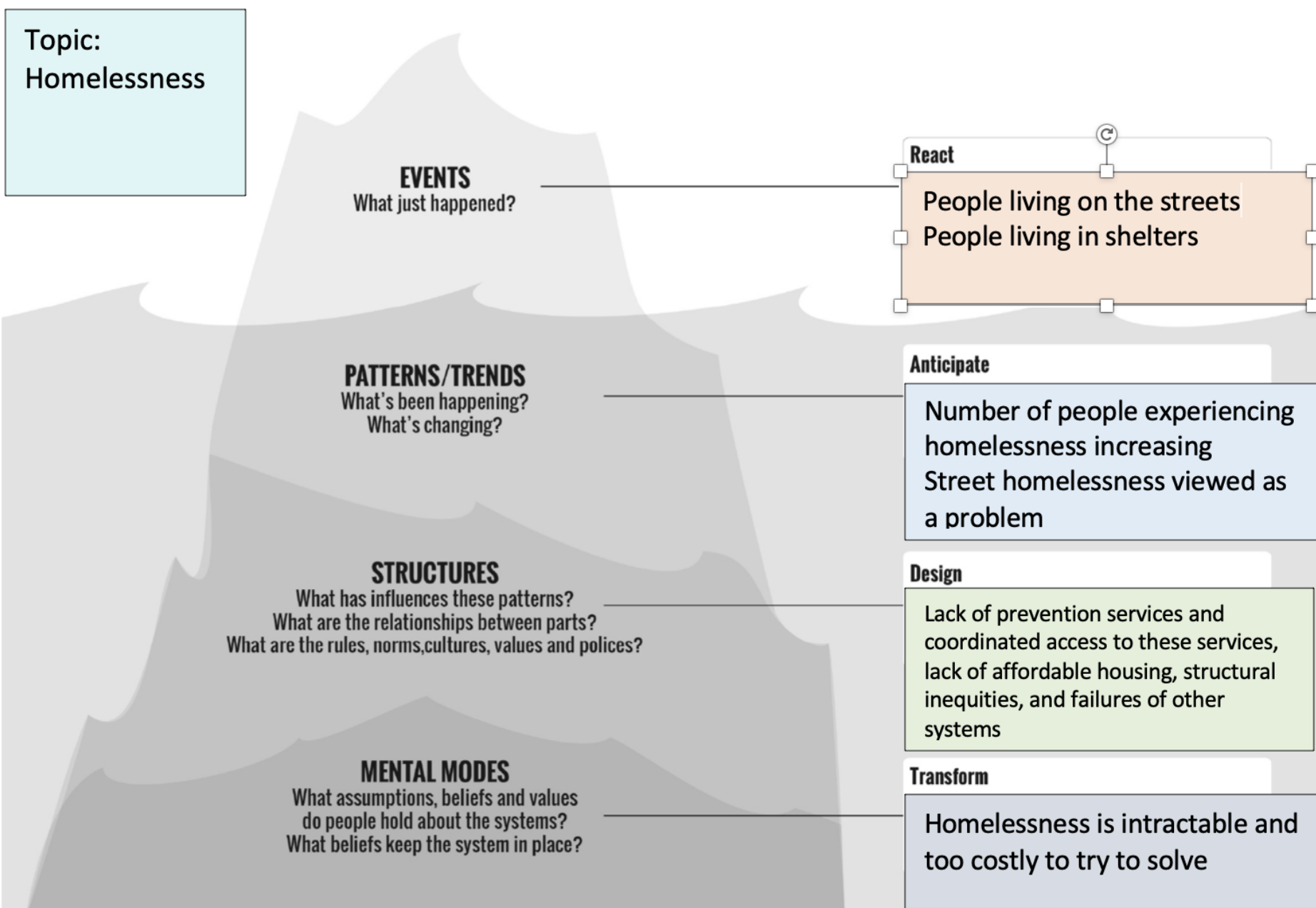
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Becoming a Better Systems Thinker: The Iceberg Model



Becoming a Better Systems Thinker: The Iceberg Model



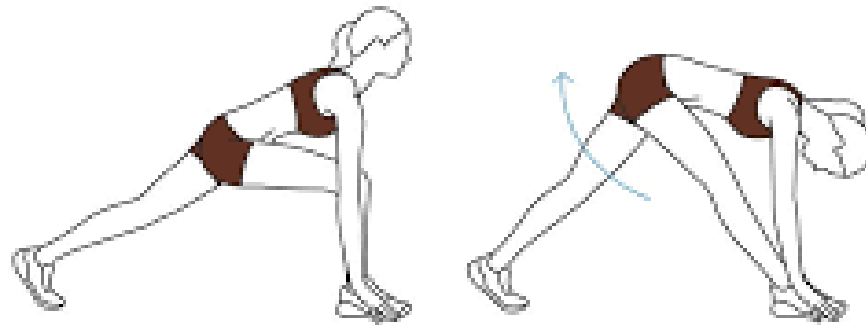
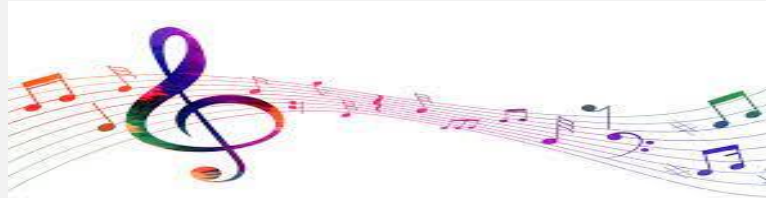
Why is Systems Thinking Important?

Systems thinking can help us:

- Identify the root causes for inequities.
- Reveal the gaps in our system(s).
- Show what levers (downstream, mid-stream and upstream) we need to move to successfully tackle the issue.
- Help us identify who we can/should have on our Improvement Teams.
- Inform health equity collaborations.
- Win the lottery.



Stretch Break



Mapping the Downstream, Mid-Stream and Upstream Components of Your System



Based on Your Team's Improvement Project

- Think about downstream, mid-stream and upstream elements of the system you're working within.
 - How do they affect your project?
- What improvement efforts (if any), are you currently making?
 - Downstream?
 - Mid-stream?
 - Upstream?
- Who else is working with you? At what level?
 - Downstream?
 - Mid-stream?
 - Upstream?



Apply an Equity Lens to Your Improvement Project

Consider the following:

- How do structural inequities, e.g. structural racism **impact** the upstream elements of the system?
- How does the system you are working within **impact** the mid-stream elements?
 - Can you think of things the organizations/systems do/don't do to impact the midstream elements?
- How do individual biases and the fact that we are “swimming” in white supremacy culture **impact** the downstream elements?
- Who within our systems are we current harming?
 - What would it take to change that?



Designing Your Ideal System

Demo

Use flip chart paper, post-it notes and markers to complete the Downstream, Mid-Stream and Upstream Systems Thinking Exercise for your Improvement Project.

Part of System	What is Happening Here?	Who is Working Here?	Applying an Equity Lens
Upstream			
Mid-Stream			
Downstream			



Guidance for this Exercise

- This is from the point of view of **end-users** - the people that are negatively affected by the system currently and would benefit if the system is improved
- Your improvement project may not (or not yet) be tackling downstream, mid-stream and upstream elements (that is ok!). AND it is important to still know what these elements are and who might be in a position to work on them.
- Continually apply an equity lens at all levels (racial and other groups that the current system has been designed to produce poorer outcomes for)
- The system should include:
 - **Downstream elements** (how the system will address the immediate needs/symptoms).
 - **Mid-stream elements** (how the system will address social determinants of health/social needs related to your focus area -i.e. the things that lead to the immediate needs/symptoms we see downstream).
 - **Upstream elements** (the policies, structural racism and systems that would need to be dismantled, redesigned and aligned i.e. the things that need to change to tackle the social drivers of health we see mid-stream)

Let's Go!

- You have approx. 30 minutes to map the downstream, mid-stream and upstream elements of your ideal system.
- We are all here to provide support – raise your hands if/when you want help and someone will come over
- We will then debrief after this, including how you can use what you come up with!



Systems Exercise Debrief

- What was hard about this exercise or something you aren't sure you got right (yet)?
- What did you learn about your system?
- How might you use this as you begin work on your improvement project?
- Who else might you bring to the table to work on your improvement project?





*Please evaluate this
session: **Using Systems
Thinking to Address
Structural Inequities***

Aim your phone's camera
at the screen, click this
QR code, and a short
survey will open. Thanks
for helping us improve.