

Using the Systems Iceberg to Deconstruct a Problem

1. Select one problem within the system or organization.
2. Discuss the following questions:
 - a. What is seen and known as it relates to the problem? What are today's lived experiences? Capture your observations at the Event level.
 - b. What has been seen and known over time? What are the trends related to what you observe? Capture your responses at the Pattern level.
 - c. What structures, policies, norms, or rules contribute to those trends? Capture your insights at the Structures level.
 - d. What beliefs, values, and mindsets justify those structures? Capture your thoughts at the Belief level.
3. Review your completed Systems Iceberg and reflect on the following questions:
 - a. What new questions do you have about the problem?
 - b. What do you understand about your system or organization that you may not have seen before?
 - c. How might other people affected by the system see the Events, Patterns, Structures, and Beliefs differently than you do? In what areas do you need different perspectives or more information to understand how the system is operating?

Using the Systems Iceberg to Assess the Depth of Proposed Solutions

1. Select a solution that you or others are proposing to solve the problem from your iceberg.
2. Discuss the following solution-assessment questions:
 - a. Is the solution reacting to events? Are we shifting resources, setting a standard without making any additional changes, or buffering the effects of what already exists?
 - b. Is the solution anticipating and responding to what is likely to happen based on patterns from the past? Are we working to speed things up, slow them down, or strengthen interventions that seem to be working well?
 - c. Is the solution designing new structures? Are we changing the policies, habits, or rules that govern what we do or the way the elements of the system or organization relate?
 - d. Is the solution transforming what people believe about the system or organization? Are we setting new visions and goals and changing the values and mindsets that underpin the system?
3. Analyze options for deepening the solution by doing one of these things:
 - a. Ask yourself:
 - i. Can the solution be adjusted to address the problem at a deeper level?
 - ii. What could you do that would address the structure or belief level?
 - b. Alternatively, select a structure or belief that must be changed to address the problem in a meaningful way. Use the solution-assessment questions to inspire ideas about the types of solutions that could shift structures or beliefs.