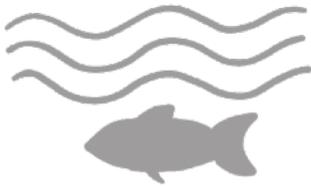# Circle of Ideas

In-Depth

This toolkit works on the basis of having an in-depth structured conversation.

Completing the whole toolkit in one go could take half a day. However, the process follows stages and is also split into four themes, which means that you can pause and mark your progress, and return to the toolkit over multiple sessions.

About this toolkit

The Circle of Ideas is made up of structured prompts which will help you and your team have a conversation to map out the 'who / what / why / how' of your project idea.

What problem does it solve?

You can use this toolkit to develop a project idea, starting with a rough area of interest, and focusing it into a research plan or proposal.

This toolkit might be helpful when:

You have an initial area of interest for a research project, but need some structured planning time to develop a research question and map out the rationale for why and how you want to do the project.

Credits

This toolkit was designed and illustrated by Hannah Mumby.

Instructions

Introduction
You can use this toolkit to develop a project idea, starting with a rough area of interest, and focusing it into a research plan or proposal. The Circle of Ideas is made up of themed prompts which will help you and your team talk through your ideas, which should clarify your thinking.

What you will need
- A rough area of interest or basic idea for your research project, before you start using this toolkit.
- Access to a printer to print the toolkit on A4 paper (ideally in colour)
- Space with a table where your team can gather around the printed toolkit
- Pens to write on the summary sheets
- Post-it notes to keep track of important points, insights or emerging questions
- Optional: a piece of blu-tack or other movable counter to track your progress on each quadrant
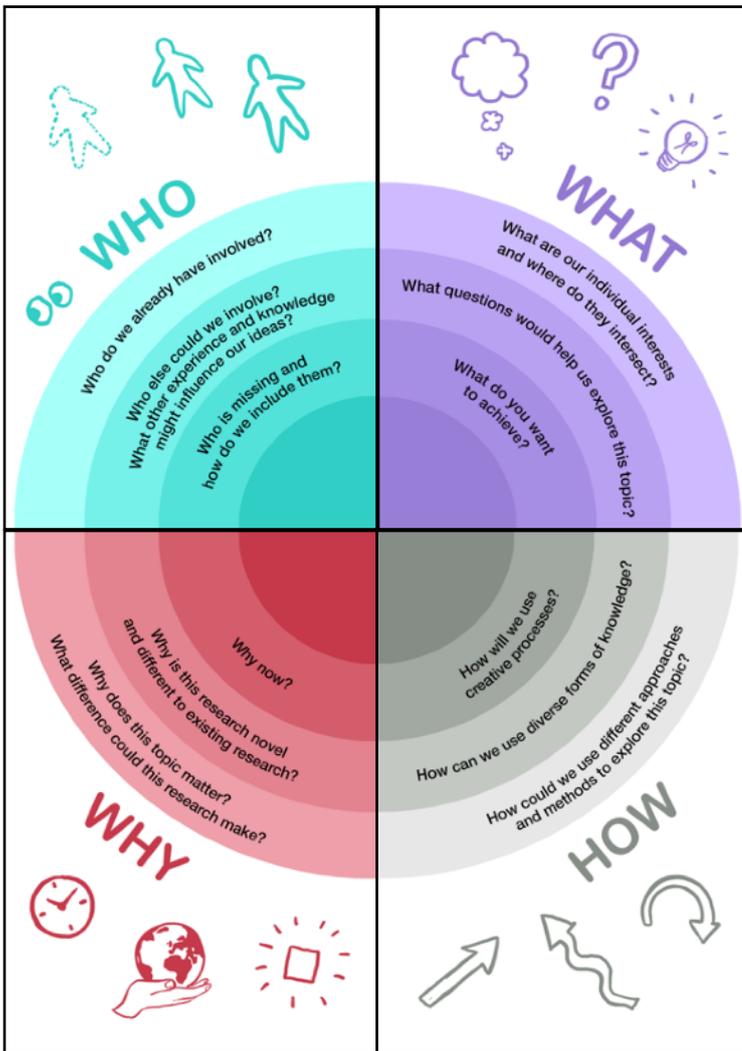
Printing Instructions
- Print the toolkit on A4 paper, preferably in colour, single-sided.

How to use
- The toolkit is made up of two sets of pages: 4 coloured quadrants with the headings 'WHO', 'WHAT', 'WHY' and 'HOW' and a set of summary sheets to write up your project idea, with one sheet per quadrant.
- First, print out the toolkit and arrange the sheets as shown on the next page.
- Start at the outer edge and read out the prompt - discuss this as a group in relation to your broad research idea. You can either work on one quadrant at a time, or work through all four sections of each ring, before moving onto the next ring.
- Work until you reach the centre of each quadrant. If you can't get as far as the centre you can add a counter to track your progress and come back another time when you're ready to move forward.
- Whenever the process raises more questions, you can write these on a post it notes.
- Once you have reached the centre of a quadrant, you're ready to write up your ideas on the corresponding summary sheet.
- Once you have reached the centre of **all** the quadrants you should have developed your research idea to the point where it will be ready for you to write a research plan or proposal. You should be able to fill in all 4 sheets.
- As with most ideas **this will not be a linear process**! If you feel you need to revisit some of the outer rings you can move in towards the centre and then out again, in each quadrant.

What your printed out sheets should look like:
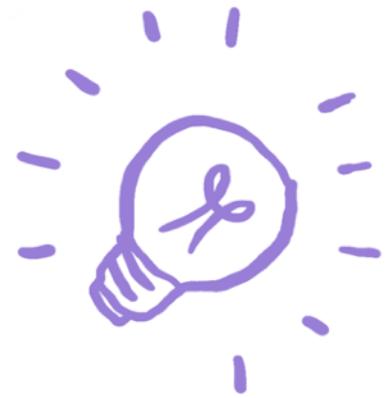
Quadrant sheets

Project Summary Sheets

WHO

Who do we already have involved?

Who else could we involve?
What other experience and knowledge
might influence our ideas?
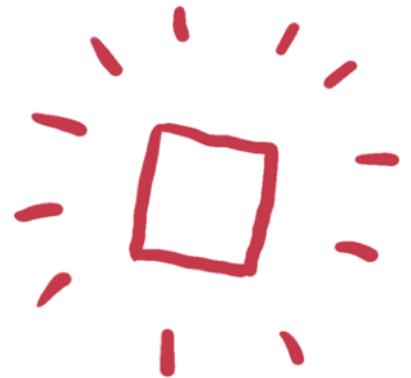
Who is missing and
how do we include them?

WHAT

What are our individual interests and where do they intersect?

What questions would help us explore this topic?

What do you want to achieve?

Why now?

Why is this research novel and different to existing research?

Why does this topic matter?
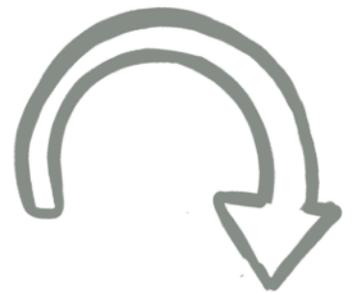
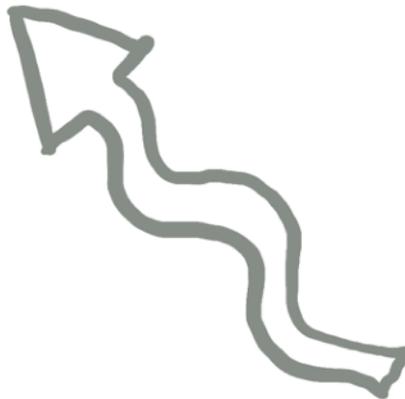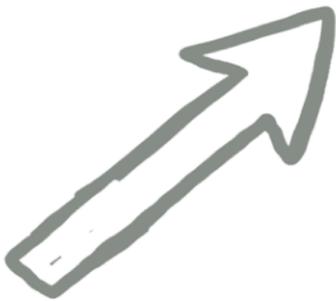What difference could this research make?

WHY

How will we use
creative processes?

How can we use diverse forms of knowledge?

How could we use different approaches
and methods to explore this topic?

HOW

Writing up Your Project Idea

Who is involved?

What is this research seeking to do?

Why is this research important?

How will you do the research?