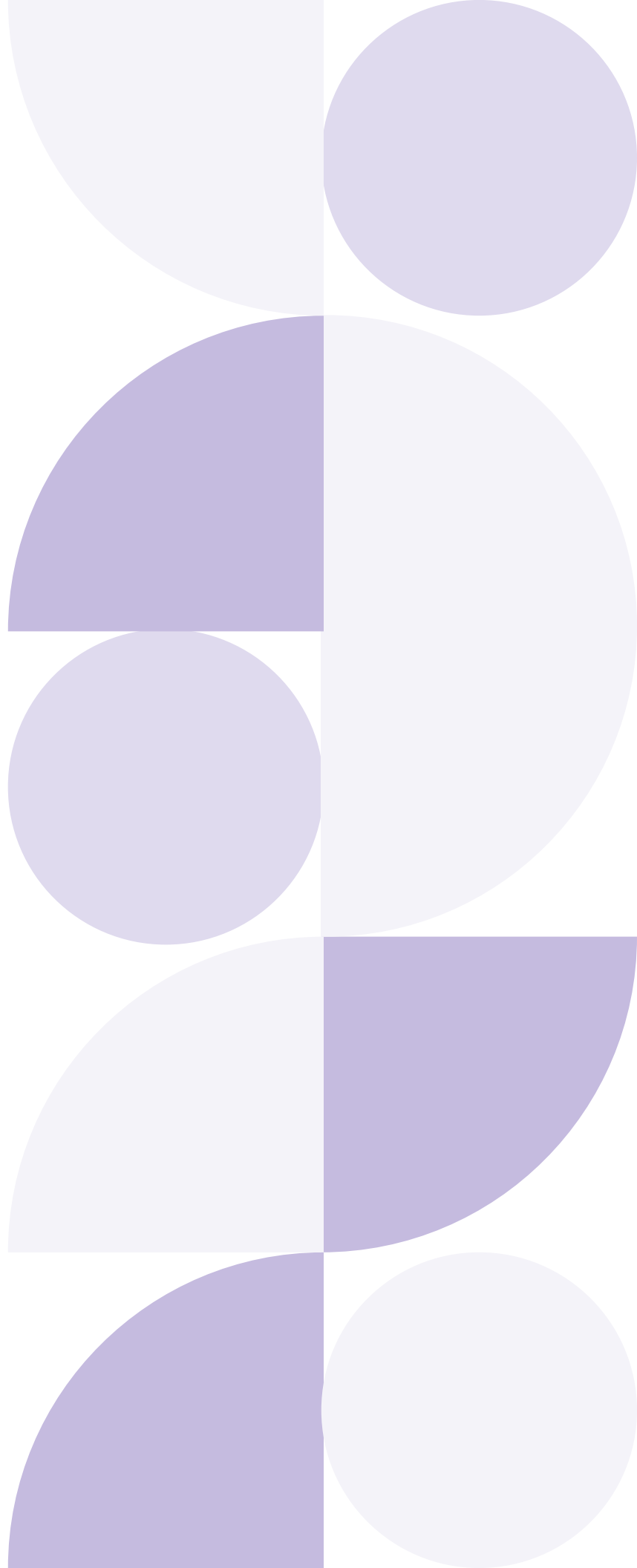


# FROM LEARNING TO DOING

How you can support people  
to actually implement what  
they learn

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## **1. CREATE A LEARNING COMMUNITY**

First, I think learning communities are the best place to be introduced to new ideas. A learning community is simply a group of people (using zoom such groups could actually be very large if good use is made of breakout rooms) who commit to meeting regularly (usually monthly) to support each other's learning and doing. It's wonderful if you can have skilled, paid facilitation of such a group but they work amazingly well with informal groups who share the facilitation role. Most learning communities have some sort of focus to their learning, i.e. they may be people who want to learn more about systems strategies or network weaving or food access.

An important part of successful learning communities is that people in them feel safe to share their concerns or challenges. This means that learning community facilitators will need to include relationship building activities in every session where people get to know each other more deeply.

## **2. HEAR INFORMATION ABOUT A NEW PROCESS, SKILL OR STRATEGY AND HAVE SPACE TO ASK QUESTIONS AND REFLECT**

I have found that listening to something new is often overwhelming, so I recommend that presenters limit their talk to 10-15 increments. If the topic is complex, you might want to have two 10 minute presentations each followed by a breakout session of 5 minutes. People can generate questions during the breakouts that are captured on a jamboard or Miro board – and answered by the presenter(s) as they are written.

## **3. DO A DEMONSTRATION**

It's often very useful for presenters to demonstrate the new skill or process with an individual or small group, with the rest of the participants observing.



## 4. PRACTICE IN THE LEARNING COMMUNITY

The next step is to actually practice the process in the learning community, or in some cases, you may want to set up a smaller popup session for practice.

## 5. THINKING/FEELING ABOUT APPLICATION

It's often useful, especially for introverts, to have some time by themselves processing their reaction to the process. Participants can be encouraged to notice how the process feels to them? Might it be a good fit with their community? Does the process seem hard or simple/ is it scary to think about doing something like this in their community? They can write notes or be encouraged to draw.

You might also give participants time to discuss potential application in a breakout room. Here they might answer questions such as, "How might this work in my community? Who else could work with me on implementing this process? Could I try it first with a small group of people? What is a meeting coming up where I could try this?

Participants then (if they plan to go ahead) make a commitment to try out the process or skill in the coming month.

## 6. APPLYING IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Participants hopefully have worksheets etc to help them take the information back to their community. They also need to be encouraged to find one or two others to work with them on the application. An important part of their planning process needs to be thinking about how the process may need to be modified for their specific context.

An essential part of any process will be to allocate time for the groups' reflection on the process.

Other worksheets can encourage the facilitation group to spend time after to reflect on the process: what worked well? What would we need to change? What challenges did we encounter that we didn't expect?



## **7. GET PEER SUPPORT FOR CHALLENGES**

When the learning group next meets, ask if anyone experienced any challenges in applying the practice. If there are several, you might want to have each person with a challenge go into a breakout room with others to support them. Then share the peer assist process to help them think how to work with the challenge.

As facilitator, you will need to frame the request for challenges with the importance of seeing challenges as a way to deeper learning. This embracing of so called mistakes is a key part of the mindset shift we all need to make.

## **8. CELEBRATE SUCCESSES AND HARVEST TO SHARE WITH OTHER NETWORKS**

Encourage one or two participants to share successes they had with the process – encourage them to share pictures to make their success come alive for others.

You may want to facilitate a knowledge harvesting process. Some people have had success using jamboard, Miro or a google doc where everyone can add what they learned from implementing the process, suggestions for changes or improvements, key factors for success and so forth. Encourage one or two participants to take this input and craft into a post or handout that can be shared by participants with all their networks and social media connections. They may want to include video snippets of the process or people sharing how useful it was.

## **9. SHARE WITH OTHER NETWORKS**

If the learning community is part of a specific network with a communications ecosystem, encourage the information to be shared through newsletters and social media. You might also want to turn the information into a resource or handout, as we are doing with this blog post!

If there is a good response to the sharing of the information, you might want to set up a popup for others outside of the learning community on how to use the process in their settings.