

Thinking Systemically about our County's Challenges

A Systems Thinking Introduction

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Overall Objectives

- Understand what systems thinking is and its importance
- Learn a few basic Systems Thinking tools
- Gain hands on experience applying systems thinking to challenges facing Durham County

Topic Agenda

- Why Good Intentions are Not Enough
- Observations about Systems
- Conventional Vs. Systems Thinking
- Why Systems Thinking?
- Fundamental Systems Thinking Framework & Case
- Team Iceberg Exercise
- Introduction to Mental Models & Exercise (Time permitting)
- Q&A

Pre-work

Identifying an Issue or Challenge

During the program, you will have an opportunity to begin solving a critical issue by applying *Systems Thinking* tools and concepts.

We recommend selecting a ***chronic issue*** that:

- is important to you and the county
- has a known history
- is currently under discussion for potential solutions – multiple perspectives exist
- is a situation that may have defied previous attempts at solving
- the county has direct or influence over and
- there is some level of consensus regarding addressing the issue more thoughtfully and effectively

What specific issue would you like to focus your learning and application on in the workshop?

Issues are best formulated as a focusing question that starts with the words **Why** or **How Come** but not **How To**.

Example focusing questions

- “*Why, despite our best efforts, have we been unable to end homelessness in our county?*”
- “*Why, despite the county’s various programs, are we seeing the trends we’re seeing in hunger and food insecurity?*”