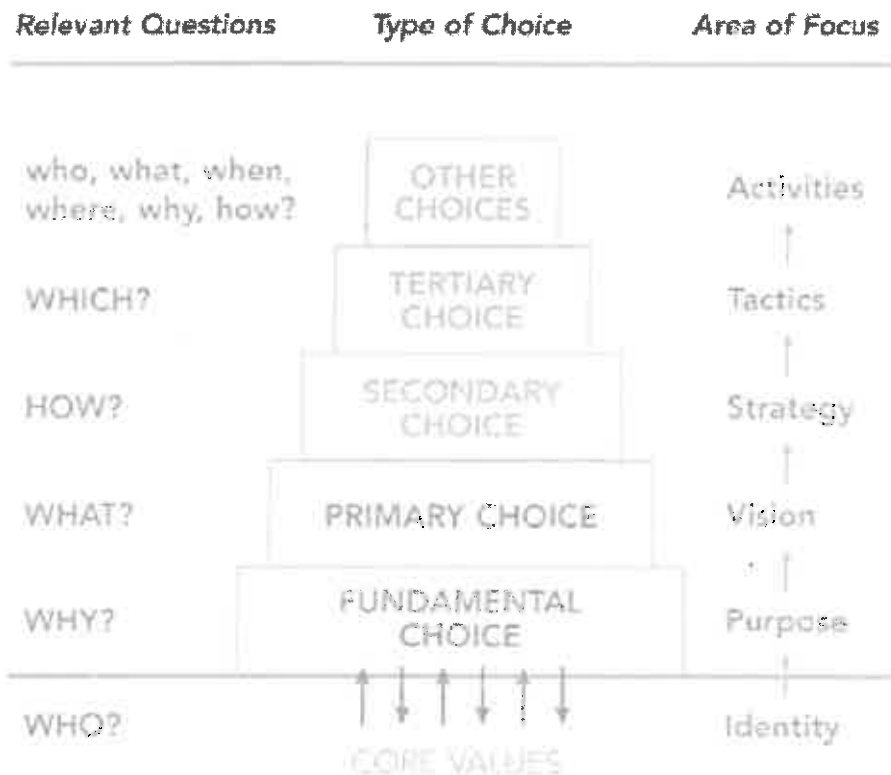


Question Guide to Accompany

Hierarchy of Choices



Hierarchy of Choices from:

Daniel Kim, *Foresight as the Central Ethic of Leadership*. Indianapolis, IN: The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership, 2002, p.16.

Model illustration from *It Begins Here: Organizational Learning Journey Toolkit*. Compiled and designed by W.K. Kellogg Foundation in collaboration with Daniel H. Kim and Diane Cory. Copyright 2006, Daniel H. Kim. Available from Cobee Trading Company in Singapore, www.cobee.com.sg.

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This Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide a partial list of powerful questions that can help groups apply the Hierarchy of Choices model to their work. At different points in the evolution of a group and its work, different questions will be appropriate. Select the questions from each section that will be most effective for your group.

The Model

From *Foresight as the Central Ethic of Leadership* (Kim, 2002):

Choice plays an important role in vision. If we never exercise choice, we will forever stay in a state of wanting things without ever taking steps toward attaining them. It is the conscious choice to bring something into reality that transforms an idle dream into a vision that has the power to tap into people's energy and commitment.

In his book, *The Path of Least Resistance*, Robert Fritz differentiates between making Fundamental, Primary, and Secondary Choices. Fritz points out that it is very difficult to make choices at one level if we have not yet made choices at the level below it.

When every member of the team (or organization) has internalized the core values and purpose of the team and has a clear picture of the result they are striving for, they will be guided every step of the way by the clarity of these choices at the foundational levels.

Hierarchy of Choices is a useful model for structuring strategic planning using a generative, systemic approach. It applies equally well to the work of a group of community members and to an entire organization. One significant result of applying this model is building a strong foundation for aligned action.

Generally as we apply this model, we begin with purpose and core values and proceed through vision. At the point that we move to strategies, we take a side step and apply the Vision Deployment Matrix, VDM (based on Levels of Perspective). After completing a VDM for our work, we have the shared analysis and agreements that result in strong strategies, tactics, and activities that support achieving our vision.

Daniel Kim reports that he typically begins with an initial conversation about purpose, but then quickly returns to deeper conversation about Core Values that would serve that purpose. However, this guide is organized starting at the bottom of the model.

Core Values: Who are we? (The foundation for our work)

- What values are so essential to our work that they are core to our identity?
- Which values will underlie and be reflected in every decision, action, and communication about our work?
- If values are the DNA of collective work, what is our DNA?
- What implications does our purpose have for the core values that we will embrace?

Purpose: Why do we exist? (Fundamental Choice)

- Why does this group exist?
- What is our one, central reason for being? (Not HOW do we do things—what is the purpose of our work together?)

Vision: What do we want to create together? (Primary Choice)

- Who needs to participate in providing thinking and leadership for developing our vision for the future?
 - Who has been historically excluded from conversations? How will we engage them respectfully?
 - In what ways will we authentically engage youth as partners, leaders, and decision makers?
 - How can we assure that the collaborators effectively represent diverse people and thinking in the community?
 - What will we do to assure community involvement throughout this work?
- If we pursue our purpose and live by our values, what future will we create?
- What is the vision we want to achieve together?
- What is the future we truly care about creating for children and families in our community?
- If we could create things the way we want them to be, what would that look like?
- When we reach our vision, what will people experience? What will they see, hear, do, and feel in their daily lives?
- What is the future toward which we would be willing to commit our time and resources?
- What are our anticipated long-term outcomes?

Strategies: How will we go about achieving our vision?

(Secondary Choice)

- What long-term approaches will we employ together to achieve and sustain our shared vision?
- What is our collective picture of the system when it is fully functioning and creating the future we want?
 - What are the causal relationships among the parts of the system?

- What are the key success factors that will influence our ability to achieve our vision? What are the causal relationships among those factors? In other words, what is the self-reinforcing success loop we are trying to create?
- Where are the longest delays between a change in one part of the system and its influence on the next? How might we reduce the delays through investments of various resources?
- What investments will we make to create the future we envision?
- What is our theory (what are our mental models) about how change will occur to move from current reality to our vision?
 - What is our collective thinking about how the strategies we identify will result in the future we envision?
 - What is the relationship among the strategies we are considering?
 - What strategies have we decided against? With what consequence?
 - What formal and informal policies can be adopted to help create the future we seek?
 - What practices will we adopt or change to create our preferred future?
- What is the appropriate sequence or phasing for our strategies?
 - Which strategies are dependent on other strategies for their effectiveness?
 - What resources do we have available, compared to what resources are needed for each strategy?
 - For which strategies do we need to create readiness before we can pursue them?
- What will we assess to know whether our strategies are having the intended effects on the system, and to make adjustments as frequently as needed? How often will we consider making adjustments in strategies?
- What might be some unintended consequences of choosing to implement the strategies we are considering? What can we build into our strategies to monitor effects and to reduce the likelihood or the impact of these consequences?
- What is the role of communications in these strategies?
- ***See “Question Guide to Accompany Levels of Perspective” for a more detailed set of questions for identifying strategies.***

**Tactics: Which actions will we take to carry out each strategy?
(Tertiary Choice)**

- Which shorter-term approaches will we use to implement our strategies?
 - Which should come earlier in our sequence?
 - Which should come later?
- What timely opportunities, consistent with our strategies, are available now?
 - Which opportunities are in alignment with our vision and strategies

- What are the costs of pursuing the opportunity? What are the costs of not pursuing it?
- Of those available, which should we access?
- What resources, including partners and expertise, will we need to implement strategies? How will we secure these resources?

**Activities: Who will do what? When? Where? Why? How?
(Other Choices)**

- What illustrative examples of activities and actions add clarity to our plan, recognizing that specific activities will be identified and planned throughout implementation?
- To what extent does each proposed activity clearly carry out a tactic and strategy, in service of achieving our shared vision?
- Who will lead implementation of each activity?
- When will we implement each activity? What is the sequence that we believe is practical and useful?
- Where is the most appropriate place to carry out the activity?
- What resources do we have available to us? Which activities are highest priorities to implement with the available resources?

References and Resources

Fritz, Robert. *The Path of Least Resistance: Learning to Become the Creative Force in Your Own Life*. New York: Ballentine Books, 1989.

Kim, Daniel. *Foresight as the Central Ethic of Leadership*. Indianapolis, IN: The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership, 2002, p. 16.

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