

Shifting perspectives and unlocking opportunities - Reframe the challenge

Background

This template is designed to help teams to understand challenges and opportunities related to a procurement/ commercial problem. This can be run as a standalone exercise by any team looking to gain clarity on a procurement challenge. The exercise can be carried out remotely or in person but optimal value is achieved when carrying this out in person.

For the exercise to be successful, a multi-disciplinary, cross-functional team should be gathered. Stakeholders present should be of sufficient seniority (or with appropriate delegations and empowerments) to take forward any actions derived from the exercise. The session should be led by an independent facilitator, who is not involved in the project or business concern that relates to the exercise, and does not get involved in the conversation but guides the attendees through the exercises. The facilitator should possess adequate public procurement knowledge to be able to advise the stakeholder group during the exercise, if required.

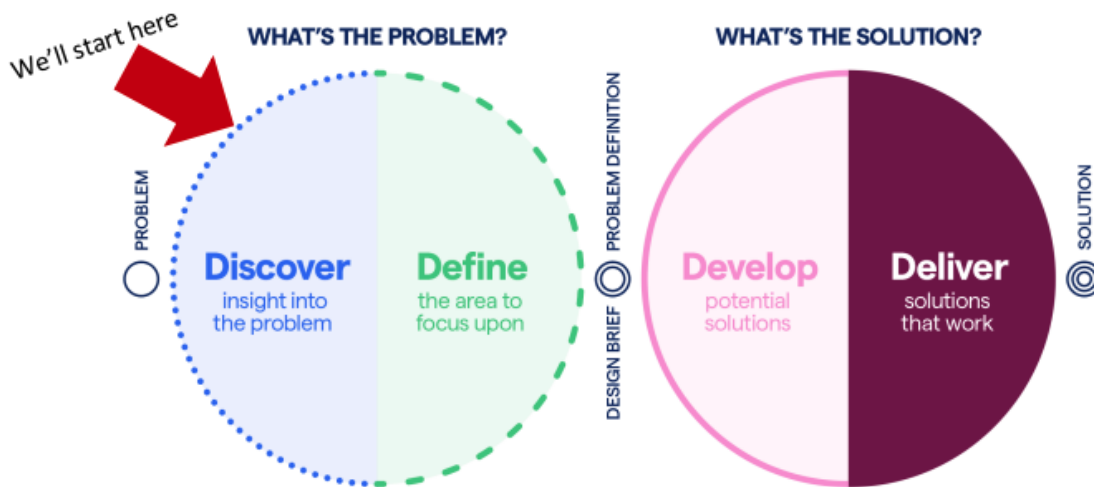


Figure 1. The four step user-centred design process based on the “Double Diamond”, a universally accepted depiction of the design process. It’s a simple way to describe the steps taken in any design and innovation project, irrespective of methods and tools used.

The exercises are based on foresight and futures tools and techniques, and other exercises commonly used in user-centred design (UCD). Why do we do this? Simply put, UCD and the procurement journey are very similar. The procurement journey is formed of 4 phases - Plan, Define, Procure and Manage - and the UCD process we used is also made up of 4 phases - Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver. By applying UCD principles to commercial and

procurement problems, organisations can develop the procurement with the users (the public, suppliers, internal stakeholders etc) in mind.

Exercise Guide

This exercise ensures that the procurement project team is acting on the right problem. If teams jump into solution mode and move forward with the first solution to the “obvious problem” the risk arises that the solution is not right. The realisation that the wrong solution was chosen is often too late, leading to unsatisfactory procurement outcomes (including a failed procurement), poor service delivery, and likely strained commercial relationships with suppliers.

To get out of the vicious cycle of not asking more questions and exploring the problems, this template helps teams to reframe their problem to find a different perspective. In the “What’s your problem” book, written by Thomas Wedell-Wedellsborg¹, a real-life example of reframing is given. This example is “the slow elevator problem”. The initial framing is that the elevator is too slow which leads to expensive solutions such as replacing the lift. However, by reframing the problem to “the wait is annoying”, other solutions can be found which are easier to achieve and not as costly (see table below for problem and solution examples).

Problem Framing	Solution Space
<i>“The elevator is too slow.”</i>	<i>“Make the elevator faster.”</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Install a new lift ● Upgrade the motor ● Improve the algorithm
<i>Reframing the problem</i>	
<i>“The wait is annoying.”</i>	<i>“Make the wait feel shorter.”</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Put up mirrors ● Play music ● Place TV screens playing news ● Install a hand sanitiser

The “slow elevator problem” shows how a simple reframing of the problem can lead to completely different solutions and this can be applied to any procurement during the Plan and Define stages of the Procurement Journey. The exercise can be applied to the procurement

¹ Wedell-Wedellsborg, T. (2020). What’s your problem? to solve your toughest problems, change the problems you solve. Boston, Massachusetts Harvard Business Review Press.

process itself (e.g. “Our procurement process is too slow”) and to shaping the requirements (e.g. “We need to procure (x) service because we have done so before”).

Benefits of Reframing

Reframing helps teams to understand the problem in a different way, that is not immediately obvious and constructively challenges assumptions. Teams can use a reframing loop², made up for three steps, which is repeated throughout the problem solving process. The steps are:

1. Frame: define the problem you are trying to solve
2. Reframe: think about a different perspective to your problem:
 - Look outside the frame
 - Rethink the goal
 - Examine bright spots (where did things go right)
 - Look in the mirror
 - Take their perspectives (users/ stakeholders/ suppliers)
3. Move forward: close the loop by working on solutions for the reframed problem.

Exercise: The Reframing Loop

Purpose:

- To collaboratively define and reframe the problem at hand.
- Look at challenges from different perspectives and open-up space for new ideas that may not have been considered.
- Embrace a wider set of opportunities available to you through mechanisms afforded by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, procurement legislation and Welsh Procurement Policy Notes (WPPNs).

Preparation: Individuals should come prepared for open and honest self-reflection, and to constructively challenge colleagues and be challenged by them. Furthermore, individuals should come prepared for exploration and curiosity, which encourages asking questions to understand the others' behaviours.

Participants: [List of team members or roles involved - ensure to involve a wide range of stakeholders to get proper representation.]

Materials Needed

If you are doing this in person, prepare the session by gathering the following materials:

- Whiteboard or large paper (flip charts)
- Markers in different colours

² [Using the Problem Reframing Method to Build Innovative Solutions](#)

- Sticky notes

For remote sessions, you might want to use [Slido](#), [Mural](#), [Mentimeter](#) (word cloud generator) or other similar software permitted by your organisation's IT policies, which allows you and your stakeholders to record ideas and thoughts.

Step 1: Introduction and context setting

- **Facilitator:** Briefly explain the purpose of this exercise – to frame the problem your team faces which is specific to [your area/challenge]. Emphasise that this is about exploration, not immediate problem-solving.

Step 2: Frame the problem

- **Prompt:** *"What is the problem you are trying to solve?"*
- **Activity:**
 - **Group discussion:** Depending on the number of attendees, the room can be split into smaller groups, or kept within the one group, and each group writes down the problem that immediately comes to mind e.g. "We need to procure a new contract for the collection of household waste".
 - **Group share and cluster:** Post sticky notes on the whiteboard. As a group, discuss each one, clarify, and start to cluster similar ideas. Label the clusters.

Step 3: Reframe

- **Prompt:** *"Look at challenges from different perspectives and open-up space for new ideas that may not have been considered. Embrace a wider set of opportunities available to you through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Procurement Act 2023, the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, the Health Service Procurement (Wales) Act 2024, and newest policies including WPPNs."*
 - Think about:
 - How might you change your approach to the issue?
 - What might be possible?
 - What might be difficult?
 - Which opportunity excites you the most?
 - Who should be involved (particularly people or groups not present during the session)?
- **Activity:**
 - **Group discussion:** Again, split into groups and write down a reframed problem, for example, linked to the previous example of waste collection, "Household waste needs to be collected", "Household waste needs to be reduced", "Household approach to waste needs to change".

- **Group share and discuss:** Post sticky notes under the relevant clusters from Step 2.

Step 4: Solutions to the reframed problem

Question: How can you address the reframed problem?

- For each identified reframed problem, think of what might be possible to achieve the desired outcome.
- Consider factors like:
 - Going further upstream (Use fewer resources and waste less, rather than recycle the waste).
 - Do a different type of opposite - for example, rather than produce less waste, encourage reusing, donating and upcycling.
 - Extend your thinking to all levels of the system - for example, go beyond waste collection and think about what waste reduction is trying to achieve - better environment, reduced pollution etc.
 - Reverse an unhealthy pattern or a vicious cycle.
- **Activity:**
 - **Group discussion:** Go through the reframed problems identified in the previous step. For each, collectively brainstorm an outcome. Write these down next to the reframed problems.
 - **Prioritise:** If time allows, vote on or discuss which outcome seems most significant or impactful.

Step 5: Wrap-up and next steps

- **Summary:** Briefly recap the reframed problems which have been identified.
- **Transition:** Explain how this understanding will inform future discussions (e.g., "This informs how we might reframe our challenge", etc).
- **Future action:** What is the very next step for this team based on this exercise? (e.g., "Share findings with [X team]", etc).