

# Making Sense of Your Information

## 7. Phase 3 – Sensemaking

The sensemaking phase can be the most challenging and 'messy' to work through. This is because it is focused on bringing together all the data, consultation and group knowledge collected in the previous stages to find patterns/themes and commonalities.

By identifying the underlying themes in all this information, your co-design team will be better able to focus on the areas where solutions are needed and likely to be effective.

This stage can sometimes feel 'all talk and no action' but it's vital to stick with it and ensure you have enough knowledge and understanding of the topic/challenge to move forward.

### Share insights

Ask each team member to share the insights they've had and the assumptions that were challenged. Share stories from the community conversations you've all taken part in. Make sure you spend time on this so all members can absorb outcomes and community stories.

Consider:

- Asking questions and encouraging conversations to build a strong team understanding.
- Capturing this information on sticky notes around the room, noting key findings/insights. This can help people visualise themes and start to identify patterns in the information.
- Checking in to ensure team members feel confident to move forward with the information available. More conversations may be needed and this is a good time to identify if that is the case.



**Note:** The co-design team may identify gaps in the information or that certain key stakeholders are missing from the consultation. Be prepared to go back into the community to collect additional information if you need it.



## Review and identify themes

When all the information has been shared with the team, it's time to identify the themes/patterns/links within what was heard. This can be done by first sorting the information into broad themes and then sub-themes.

There are many methods and tools for sorting information into themes – this may include software, templates or sticky notes.

This step will take time and is unlikely to be completely 'sorted' the first time around.

Continue to discuss and review theming until the team is happy with how the information is being sorted.

- During this sorting, you may identify some information that doesn't align with the themes or sits quite independently – don't try to force a link if there isn't one. Keep these outlying issues separate but don't remove them.
- It is likely there will be overlap and information could sit across a number of themes.
- Don't remove any information at this stage.
- Sit with any uncertainty; don't rush ahead.
- Give people time to walk around the room and review the information.
- Discuss what stands out, surprises, shocks or inspires people.

### Example:

#### Safeguarding Volunteering Project

Broad theme:

Accessible and Innovative Volunteering

Major barriers to volunteering included time restraints, lack of flexibility in roles and costs to the volunteer. The way people want to volunteer is changing: People want alternative and flexible ways to connect and engage with opportunities and to make volunteering more inclusive and accessible.

Sub-themes:

- Look at ways to engage younger people.
- Make volunteering more accessible by removing identified barriers.
- Explore innovative volunteer roles that accommodate people's needs.

## What gets taken to the next stage?

When deciding what information should be taken to the next stage 'ideation', your co-design team can:

- Develop and use simple criteria to assess the suitability of themes and/or sub-themes (achievable, affordable, within scope, etc.).
- Have a vote to determine preferences.
- Decide to take all the information forward.

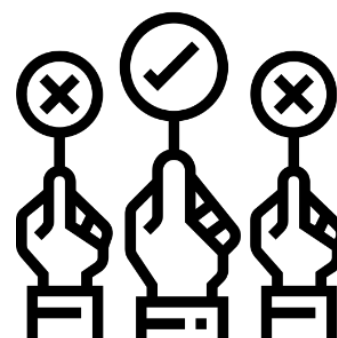


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*"It was great to see all the meaningful information captured and converted."*

*Co-design team member, Devonport*

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