

THE PRINCIPLED PROBLEM SOLVING (PPS) MODEL

The Principled Problem Solving (PPS) Model is unique among theories of leadership and change. The PPS Model identifies and engages complex issues in a manner that is guided by our Core Values and characterized by integrity. It provides a flexible process of navigating social change and innovation.

While rooted in Quaker faith and practice, it is inclusive of and relevant for use within multiple belief systems. It can be used across multiple sectors, including in business. It integrates socio-psychological abilities with values-based shared leadership and participatory decision-making. It assumes that multiple perspectives are necessary for seeking solutions, recognizing that complex problems require contextualized, collaborative, and adaptive approaches to change. It encourages innovations through the consistent use of critical, creative and constructive thinking.

Participants engaged in this model cycle through the following seven stages:

- **Identify**
 - Values: Before identifying "problems," it is crucial that an organization or individual spend time discerning the core values that they hold to be most central to their identities and to how they aspire to participate in society.
 - Capacities: Every organization, individual and community, no matter how troubled, contains strengths, skills and assets that can be utilized to solve complex problems in collaborative, ethical ways. In this stage, participants identify these capacities before identifying particular problems that they will address.
 - Problems: At this stage, participants raise to awareness a situation that is inconsistent with one or more of their previously discerned core values. The problem is then addressed through the lens of bringing this situation more in line with the institution's and/or individual's core values.
- **Research** - Effective, principled problem solving requires an extensive research process. Through multiple forms of research, participants come to understand the complexity of a situation in relation to its historical and cultural contexts, stakeholders and related organizations or individuals already working to address similar issues. The research process thus involves building collaborative relationships among diverse partners.
- **Discern** - Once all the research has been gathered, participants pause to discern, both individually and through the wisdom of the group, about all that has been learned and about which aspects of the problem can and should be addressed. In

this stage of discernment, each person recognizes her or his motivation for engagement and willingness and energy to respond. The group evaluates their skills for equitable collaboration, and addresses any concerns that may have arisen.

- **Imagine** - Creative, ethical change is not possible without imagination of an alternative future. In this stage, people imagine a positive future in relation to the issue they are addressing. They then generate innovative ideas toward making that vision a reality.
- **Plan** - Participants move from creative imagination to critical analysis to identify which idea is most promising. They then engage in a detailed planning process, incorporating multiple perspectives through dialogue and incorporation of research findings. Participants pay particular attention to possible unintended consequences, and recognize that plans will likely require ongoing revision during implementation.
- **Act** - Participants implement their plan, paying close attention to coherence with their core values and seeking feedback from all affected. They remain flexible, willing to reconsider their plans when necessary to maintain their integrity and to act most effectively.
- **Reflect** - While reflection is integral to the implementation stage of principled problem solving, (demonstrating the non-linear nature of this approach), participants also take time for intentional reflection, asking how they might improve their process and where they might address new problems or issues that have emerged.