Ladder of Abstraction

TOPIC	TIME [45 MIN]	FACILITATOR'S NOTES
Select the topic and invite participants	**Prepare**	Identify a topic for this session and craft a problem statement that's framed as an inspiring goal, i.e., "How might we support women who are Black, Indigenous or People of Color looking for local, social support resources?" Pre-populate the statement into the Ladder of Abstraction template as a starting place for the group session to follow. Invite participants to help ensure you are thinking broadly about potential impacts, make sure you have people with diverse perspectives and experiences as a part of your session. It would help to include individuals who are not core team members as they will likely represent a unique perspective.
Set the stage and review your insights	**5**	Share context about why your team is spending time to right-size the problem space you are working on. If available, give your team shared access to any existing project work or briefs that may be helpful to set the stage for the worksession. Screenshare this and walk through it together if you want to better control the timing and focus the group. Have the team review and reflect on the background context silently for 1 min. Then take 2 min for them for them to comment or add additional insights that they feel need to be represented. Play music in the background.
Share starter statements for feedback	**5**	Share the problem statement that's been created with the group and invite comments and questions. If desired, allow the team to finesse if needed.

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Right–size your statements by laddering them up and down	**25**	Facilitation Tip: When finalizing your problem statement, consider posting these 3 guidelines (clear, generative and impactful) to the group to help keep the team on track. As a group, begin by taking your problem statement and "laddering up" (with why questions) or "laddering down" (with how questions) to make it as clear, generative and impactful as possible. To keep everyone focused on the task, communicate these 2 tips verbally or via a slide or chat box (if available): 1. If your problem statement feels too specific, like it won't generate expansive thinking, ask "Why" of your question until it feels more expansive. Expansive questions often provide you with a lot of ways to respond to the opportunity. 2. If your problem statement feels too broad, like you're trying to "boil the ocean," ask "How" of your question until it becomes more concrete and focused.
Choose your best	**10**	Determine what next steps should be. If your team completed multiple exercises, vote on a set of statements that seem most clear and inspiring to clarify the opportunity space. As a next step, consider using the Conducting a Brainstorm exercise to transform these statements into big ideas.