A white curved object on a black background

Description automatically generated

This protocol is designed to guide teams when seeking to define, synthesize, and/or summarize elements of a larger task or investigation. This tool can be used to support the identification of key themes and can support consensus finding.

Logistics

**Roles:** Facilitator, Timekeeper

**Group Size:** 2-10

**Time:** 30+ minutes (depending on group size)

Materials

**In-person:** Shared note taking: large poster paper (posted prior to engaging in the protocol) and markers; Individual note taking: post its or paper, and pen or pencils

**Virtual:** virtual affinity workspace, such as Google Jamboard

Instructions for Use

**1.** Introduce the topic or question. Invite a silent reflection.

**2**. Silent write: Invite participants to silently write their ideas on a piece of paper and to then transfer to post-it notes, or write directly on post-it notes. Utilize one post-it per idea. Set a timer for 3-5 minutes.

**3.** Share ideas. Instruct the participants to bring their post-it notes to the chart paper, continuing in silence, and randomly place them on the Affinity Map.

**4**. Affinitize ideas. Ask participants which ideas go together.

Have a portion of, or all, participants silently group like ideas.

Remind participants that their ideas may be moved, and that’s ok.

Once most post-its are grouped, end this phase of the activity.

**5.** Label the groups of post-its.

Ask volunteers to read aloud one affinity group of post its at a time.

Ask them to share whether they believe all of the post-its belong in the groups, and invite them to move any that do not belong.

Ask them to give the affinity group a title and label it.

Do this for each group of post-its.

***Note: It is ok to have a group of outliers at the end.***

**6.** Reflect on findings. Facilitate a group discussion by inviting participants to reflect on themes, surprises, and anything that may be missing. \*Equity pause\*

**7.** Plan for next steps. In small groups or whole group, identify high leverage categories to focus on, additional questions that need to be answered, and additional next steps based on the goals of the group.