

# 12 LESSONS TO LEARN

At the end of 2019, the McConnell Foundation reflected on which question we want to guide our learning and inquiry in 2020. Jotting down 12 questions was easy enough. Getting to the right 12 questions, however, proved much more difficult.

What questions are specific enough without being too limited? Which ones resonate universally without becoming too abstract? How do we pick a question that is relevant to our context that also feels substantial enough to warrant a spot in the top 12?

Throughout the process we learned a few things about generating good questions. In this worksheet, we have captured some of the learnings from our process and have augmented them with a handful of insights from leading thinkers in the field. We hope it will help you generate good questions to guide your own learning and growth.

# QUESTION-CRAFTING WORKSHEET

## USER GUIDE: TIPS TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS ACTIVITY

**WORK QUICKLY** - this is not an exercise in perfection. It's better to complete this process a couple times quickly than get it perfect on the first go.

**USE PENCIL** - as you go you'll want to revisit and iterate your ideas. Once you've settled on a final question switch to pen to make it durable and crisp.

**PLAY!** - Invite your curiosity in and experiment. Explore tangents, be silly, draw outside the lines. There are no right answers, only more interesting questions.

**MAKE THIS PROCESS YOUR OWN** - if it needs another step, add it! If you want to skip a step, or repeat a step twice, go for it!

**1**  
**DEFINE YOUR PROBLEM OR OPPORTUNITY**

WRITE DOWN ONE PROBLEM OR OPPORTUNITY YOU WANT TO WORK ON.

If you don't have one, use this space to brainstorm and select an option.

JOURNAL FOR TWO MINUTES ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL CONNECTION TO THIS PROBLEM OR OPPORTUNITY.

Pause for a breath to let your journaling sink in

**2**  
**SELECT YOUR QUESTION**

BRAINSTORM 3-5 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY

CRITIQUE YOUR QUESTIONS AND IMPROVE OR REMOVE ANY THAT:

- Contain a problematic or unproven assumption
- Don't represent a genuine unknown
- Are actually an answer dressed up as a question

SELECT YOUR FAVOURITE QUESTION AND WRITE IT BELOW. TO HELP CHOOSE THE BEST QUESTION, CONSIDER:

- Who do you want your question to be relevant to?
- Why is it important to pose this question?

Does your question motivate you? If not, consider tweaking.

**3**  
**EXPLORE ADJACENT QUESTIONS**

PARENT QUESTIONS  
Related questions with a broader scope

YOUR QUESTION

SUB QUESTIONS  
Related questions with a narrower scope.

Does your question operate at the right level?

**4**  
**RE-FORMULATE YOUR QUESTION**

EXPLORE THE FACETS OF YOUR QUESTION BY REFORMULATING IT. Start with our prompts then try additional permutations.

A version that begins with "Why..."	A version that begins with "What if..."	A version that begins with "How might we..."

Did the reformulations reveal anything new about the question?

**5**  
**FINALIZE YOUR QUESTION**

WRITE OUT THREE STRONG VERSIONS OF YOUR QUESTIONS FROM THE EXERCISES ABOVE.

SELECT THE BEST QUESTION AND WRITE IT OUT BELOW. Write it clearly and beautifully.

Which of these questions do you think will have the most impact?

You want to invite this question into your daily work.

Sleep on it, does your question still feel right? If not, keep tweaking.

**6**  
**CREATE AN ACTION PLAN**

WHAT EFFECTIVE ACTIONS COULD YOU TAKE TO EXPLORE YOUR QUESTION THIS YEAR?

Try using verbs such as learn, discuss, watch, observe, reflect.

WHAT EASY ACTIONS COULD YOU TAKE TO EXPLORE YOUR QUESTION THIS YEAR?

SELECT ONE EFFECTIVE AND REALISTIC ACTION AND WRITE IT OUT HERE.

NOW GO DO IT!

**Don't search for the answers,**

**which could not be given to you now,**

**because**

**you would not be able to live them.**

**And the point**

**is to live everything.**

**Live the questions**

**now.**

**Perhaps then,**

**someday**

**far in the future,**

**you will gradually,**

**without even noticing it,**

**live your way into the answer.**

**– Rainer Maria Rilke –**