

Transcript

Co-design: What is CAO?

Voiceover:

This animation will introduce a simple tool to use in the co-design process which works with challenges, assets, and opportunities. We call this method CAO.

What is CAO?

Quite often, design processes start with a problem, challenge or need. However, focussing too much on problems at the start, can dampen the co-design process and make people feel disempowered. The method is a simple technique that helps co-designers move from challenges, and what they lack, to start thinking about the things they have, their assets.

And ultimately, to find opportunities to use these assets to address their perceived challenges.

As an asset-based approach, it helps people unearth and articulate their existing strengths (their skills, knowledge, or resources) and consider how these could be better mobilised, connected and used in a design process.

What are challenges?

A challenge is anything that can get in the way of achieving something, a barrier, or indeed the reason why a co-design process is needed. For example, a challenge could be a lack of green spaces, need for repairs, lack of funding, or lack of knowledge about a specific subject.

What are assets?

An asset can be anything that a person or a group perceives to be of value.

It's helpful to consider assets as falling within three broad categories:

- **People & connections** - which includes skills and knowledge as well as relationships with other groups and organisations.
- **Resources & tools** - which includes spaces, infrastructures, natural or financial resources.
- **Values & emotions** - these can help a group unearth their underlying motivations, cultures, traditions, and perceptions, which is really important for any collaborative design process.

And what about opportunities?

Opportunities will arise when participants combine and use assets to address specific challenges.

An opportunity can be a specific idea (such as trying out a new technology) or a more general principle for collaboration and action going forward (such as engaging with marginalised users).

How does the Challenges, Assets and Opportunities method work?

The method is very simple to organise. You will need a space (physical or digital) where participants can come together (in one or more groups).

Participants are first asked to identify specific challenges and place them on a shared board or table, discussing the roots to these challenges and making connections between them.

Participants are then asked to add their individual and collective assets onto this tapestry, moving their focus to what skills, experience, relationships, and resources they have in their individual and collective reach.

Finally, each group connects assets to the challenges they have identified and generates opportunities to use certain assets to address their challenges.

It often helps to have other people (such as experts or peers) acting as critical friends. In this role, they can provide advice, creative input, and inspiration to help the group to articulate and clarify their thoughts and visions.

Groups often use hexagon cards or sticky notes of different colours to write down their challenges, assets, and opportunities. These can be connected at their corners to make associations and relationships in multiple directions. But you can be creative.

Why not use string to connect distant cards, or draw on a piece of paper?

At the end of the session each group can create a poster or representation to present their ideas, summarising the opportunities generated and how they relate to challenge(s) and assets.

This can be a useful first step towards developing an action plan or articulating a shared vision.

CHALLENGE(S) + ASSETS = OPPORTUNITY

Why use CAO?

The method facilitates collaboration by helping people express their concerns, values and strengths. It helps people focus on collaboration and action, allowing them to see beyond their challenges and discover opportunities and pathways for achieving positive change.