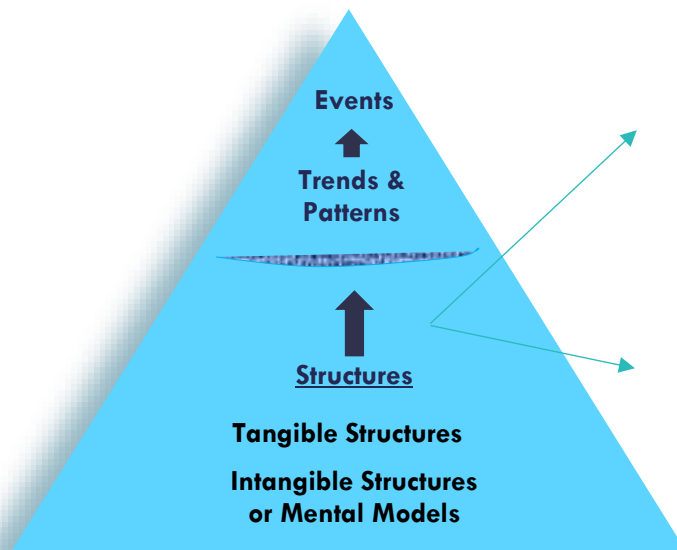


Tool E: Systems Thinking and The Iceberg Model

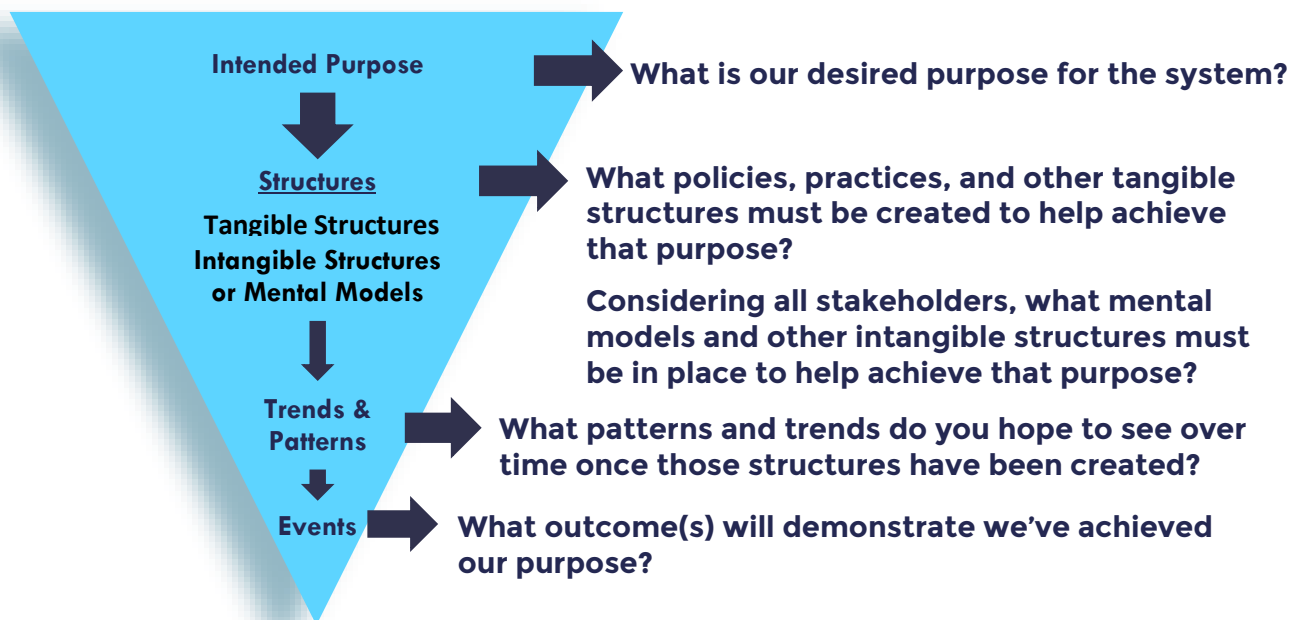
The Iceberg Model is useful to unpack the underlying causes that lead to an acute event or issue. Events, trends, and patterns are above the waterline; what we see the most and are most familiar with. Structures are below the surface - they give shape to how everything is arranged, situated, and connected, often invisible without system analysis. Structures include systems with dynamic interactions between all of the system components, each affecting the others, and contributing to inequitable outcomes.



- **Where is there inequity?**
- **Who are the stakeholders?**
- **What tangible structures help explain the patterns and trends?**
- **What intangible structures help explain the patterns and trends?**
- **What are the mental models (beliefs, perceptions) of stakeholders?**
- **What cultural norms and stereotypes are held?**

Flipping the Iceberg

When we flip the iceberg, we begin envisioning a different purpose for the structures we identified and begin planning to address inequities.



What is our desired purpose for the system?

What policies, practices, and other tangible structures must be created to help achieve that purpose?

Considering all stakeholders, what mental models and other intangible structures must be in place to help achieve that purpose?

What patterns and trends do you hope to see over time once those structures have been created?

What outcome(s) will demonstrate we've achieved our purpose?

1. Use the Iceberg Model to *deepen your understanding* of the problem and the system at work. Identify some of the relevant patterns/trends, tangible and intangible structures, and the observed purpose of the system. Consider using these prompting questions to help guide your discussion. *Tip: Start by choosing an “event.”*

What are the events that we are concerned about?

What are the trends or patterns impacting or underlying these events?



What tangible structures help explain the patterns and trends? *Tip: What policies and procedures exist? What factors or conditions contribute to the problem (e.g. physical/environmental, income/wealth, housing segregation, health, education)?*

Where is there inequity in those structures? *Tip: Who is burdened most and who benefits most?*

Who are the stakeholders?

Considering each stakeholder group, what intangible structures or mental models (norms, beliefs, attitudes, stereotypes) help explain the patterns and trends?

2. Flip the Iceberg and start *problem solving* from your intended purpose. Develop at least one specific intervention or solution that could shift a tangible or intangible structure toward the desired purpose for the system. Consider using these prompting questions to help guide your discussion:

What is our desired purpose for the system?

What policies, practices, and other tangible structures must be created to help achieve that purpose?



Considering all stakeholders, what mental models and other intangible structures must be in place to help achieve that purpose?

What patterns and trends do you hope to see over time once those structures have been created?

What outcome(s) will demonstrate we've achieved our purpose?