



ASLA 2023 SCALEUP

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TRY IT OUT

Empowering Communities
Through Play



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PLAYCE[®]

Placemaking through play

We do play differently!

Why Play?

All people play, and lack of play limits how we interact with the world around us and our capacity to shape it.

- Play contributes to cognitive growth which, in turn, grows capacity.
- Every human plays regardless of their age, ability, culture, or language.
- Participants become collaborative problem solvers.
- Play builds the required trust and empathy to explore possibility!
- Play comes naturally to people even when they don't think so.
- Play allows us to suspend risk which allows us to be more authentic.

13 Benefits of Play - According to Science

Play scientists have proven through observational evidence that all people benefit from play, in the following ways. Through our playful placemaking methodologies, we leverage those benefits to support community empowerment through engagement. We often lose sight of the benefits of play as we age, thinking play is only for children, however play is a natural human state that is valuable at any age.

We are out to change public meetings as we know them today through play.

By taking advantage of these 13 benefits of play, we can start turning public meetings and community engagement into a playground!



Session Outline



- Session Intro & Panel Intro
- Roles and Contribution Game
- 4 Magic Questions Game
- Describe how barriers round in traditional community engagement can be removed through play.
- Summarize how the science of play directly aligns with playful placemaking methodologies.
- Cover Story Game
- Explore types of outreach models and social science games and activities to empower communities and designers.
- Collage Game and Frequency Matrix
- Participants take on leading activities themselves
- Discuss the impacts available when integrating play into community engagement techniques.
- Discuss what participants see is available for designers and communities through this methodology?

PLAY FUELS THE MIND
ELEVATES ENGAGEMENT &
MOTIVATION
JUMP STARTS IMAGINATION
& CREATIVITY

CULTIVATES EMPATHY
IMPROVES DECISION-MAKING
CREATES CONSENSUS
QUICKLY

Roles + Contributions

Layout your Insight card deck on the table, with images facing various directions to support people viewing from multiple sides of the table.

You'll need a strip of tape or post-it for each person; they will write their name on the tape and place it on the back of the card they select for this game.

You will inform participants: The images on the cards mean "everything and nothing, they are meant to be nudges for your brain. Using the cards as a prompt, select a card that answers the following question:

Question: What role do you see you have in the project, or how do you see yourself contributing to the project?

Participants will choose and pick up a card that speaks to them. Using the tape or post-it, they will add their name to the back of the card. They will find someone to introduce themselves to and introduce themselves by their card and answer to the question. "I chose this card, because I see that I am a person that gets stuff done".

Once they have done that, participants will switch cards with their partner and "assume the identity" of that partner, find another person in the group, and introduce themselves as their partner to a new partner. Do this another round or until each participant has had three partners and then come back to the group.

You will ask people to share the story of the person whose card they are holding. When they have finished, you'll ask the person whose name is on the card "If the person sharing got their information correctly".

Capture the responses about each person and their role or contribution on the flipchart.



4 Magic Questions

Using your Insight card deck you will prompt participants by saying: “The images on the cards mean everything and nothing, they are meant to be nudges for your brain. Using the cards as a prompt, select a card that answers the following questions: (remind them to not overthink the responses)

Question 1: What do they see is presently holding the project or community back?

After each question, ask each person to share, repeating back to them their response to check correctness and then capture the corrected response on a flip chart.

Question 2: What could be possible if their obstacle were to be moved out of the way? (don't fix it or change it, just move it)

Question 3: What's it going to take for the possibility to be a reality?

Question 4: What partners or resources do they see they need for success?

Review the answers to each question as a group. Facilitate a discussion around the alignments that the group sees for itself.

You can ask if anyone sees any larger overarching themes or outliers that don't seem to fit with the other responses. Engage in a conversation about those themes or outliers.

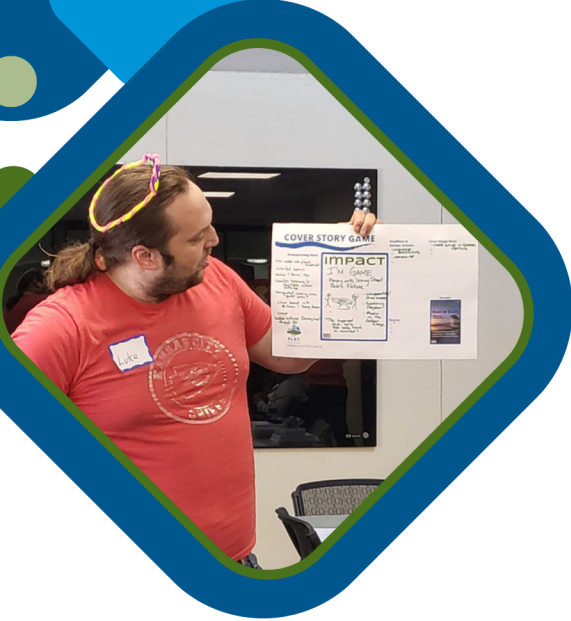
For more in-depth play around the challenges and possibilities of a project, you can take each challenge and play through the 4 Magic Questions again until you are satisfied with your findings.



Cover Story

The prompt is to imagine that at the end of the 5 year time horizon (adjust time horizon to be applicable to your project), the project has made such an incredible contribution or impact on the community that a major magazine or newspaper (New York Times or Time Magazine) wants to put the project on the cover of their publication. The group brainstorms and develops the magazine cover, capturing the Headline story, sidebar articles, quotes from noteworthy people, selecting the art or photography, etc.

Once complete, each group shares their cover stories with the larger group, and findings are collected. At the conclusion, the group identifies the alignments, but also discusses any outlying ideas that may have been overlooked. Based on the alignment conversation, the group defines the mission and vision. This mission and vision will guide the design process, and should be used to evaluate various design concepts.



Facilitation Tips

- Don't overthink it!
- Listen from a space of there are no wrong answers
- For large groups, consider breaking into groups of 10-12 and enroll more facilitator support
- All activities presented can be facilitated virtually as well
- Remember that you are there in a listening capacity and not as an expert
- Remind yourself that trust, empathy, belonging, etc. are part of your goals



Collage + Frequency Matrix

Our subconscious brain has much more to say than our oral language can express. This exercise asks the participants to imagine their most perfect future in this space or a perfect outcome of the project.

Using magazines, construction paper and glue sticks, encourage the participants to create a collage about their most perfect future for the project area. Participants can keep the following ideas in mind: Who is there with them, what are they doing there, how does the space make them feel, what sounds do they hear, what smells do they experience, etc.

(This activity can also be played digitally through various free and or/ easy software programs)

Once complete with their collage, participants will pair up. Each person narrates their collage to a partner. The partner is capturing all the narration in one or two words on sticky notes, for each phrase or idea. The objective is to have as many sticky notes as possible. The partners switch and repeat the capture.

Frequency Matrix Creation

When each person is complete, each individual person's sticky notes are added up. The person with the highest number of stickies, places them on the wall or table top, on the vertical axis. The remaining stickies are collated in alignment with the vertical axis, creating the horizontal axis. If there are new ideas in the remaining stickies, they should be added to the vertical axis. Once all stickies have been sorted, we will have a conversation about "what we see in the matrix outcome" This conversation represents the first data alignments.

You will lead the group in a next level discussion, on broader themes, outlier ideas, and any adjustment in the data sorting. The group then has the opportunity to add or change anything before the information is shared with the larger group.



Case Study 1: Westminster, CO

- Playground was a victim of arson, community invited to reimagine not only playground but the park space surrounding it.
- Community alignments were focused on activation and inclusion (ages, cultures, abilities) to increase participation as well as safety.
- Workshop Play Experiences
 - Roles and Contribution
 - 4 Magic Questions
 - Cover Story Visioning Game
 - Collaging as storytelling and Frequency matrix
- Unique Outcomes because of PLAY
 - Live translation was included in the event, allowing diverse voices to be ACTIVE in the MOMENT. At the end the translators shared they had never experienced such interaction before
 - Newly introduced community members were overheard offering to share tools and resources, setting up times to meet up in the community.



Case Study 2: Bailey Green Buffalo, NY

University studio course, empowering the community to reimagine 7 vacant parcels in the neighborhood

Outcomes found in play that guided direction of project. Through design:

- A shared sense of responsibility could be possible
- Forgiveness could be possible
- Workshop Play Experiences
 - Roles and Contribution
 - 4 Magic Questions
 - Collaging as Vision
 - Prop Play
 - Community Faire
- Unique Outcomes because of PLAY
 - Neighborhood sceptics became champions
 - University course completed in May, but Community activated a single parcel with activities to create a garden from June- Aug
 - In Sept the community re-activated its Block Club after 20 years
 - Community Garden remains strong the following year




Resources

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The public becomes champions, guiding the prioritization and implementation ensuring short-term and long-term success. The design team delivers an implementable plan for the project utilizing the community's data and prioritization. Working with a qualified professional, such as landscape architect, architect, urban planner, or engineer that is well-versed in these social science methodologies may increase likelihood of success in your playful placemaking.

We hope this guide serves you well in delivering playful engagement to the communities you serve and live in. You can find more information and resources on our website.

*Thank You &
Happy Playing!*



PLAYCE[®]

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PLAYCE Studio is a small, women-owned business that is out to change the world.

We aim to empower collaboration between communities, their agents, and design professionals to create beautiful, meaningful environments for all.

If you like our content, we invite you to become a member or apply to be accepted into our coaching program where you will learn and apply playful facilitation strategies to your own projects.

Learn more at:
www.playcestudio.com

