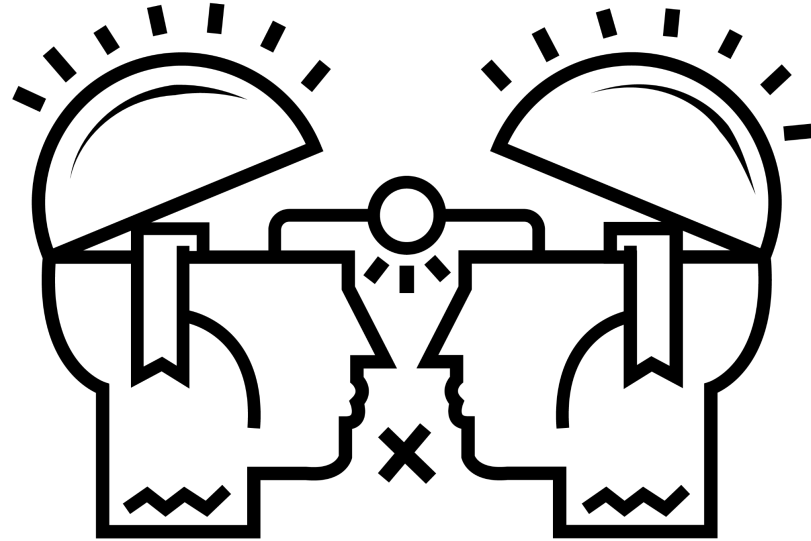# 01

Introduction

Why talk about this?

Creative Thinking as Strategy

- Topic requested by program committee
- Can creative problem-solving be taught?
- Ambition of our Vision and Movement Strategy
- Uniqueness of our Wikimedia context
  - Though we have some tried-and-true, replicable practices!
- Creative thinking as strategy

02

Opening exercise

# What problem facing your group would you most like to solve?

03 About creative thinking

Some principles and observations

Isn't all thinking creative?

- Why do we not always think creatively?
- Most thinking is like water running down a river
  - and that's good!
- Creative thinking is like irrigation -- forging new paths for the flow
- Sometimes even flowing upstream!
- (okay, this simile is breaking down…)
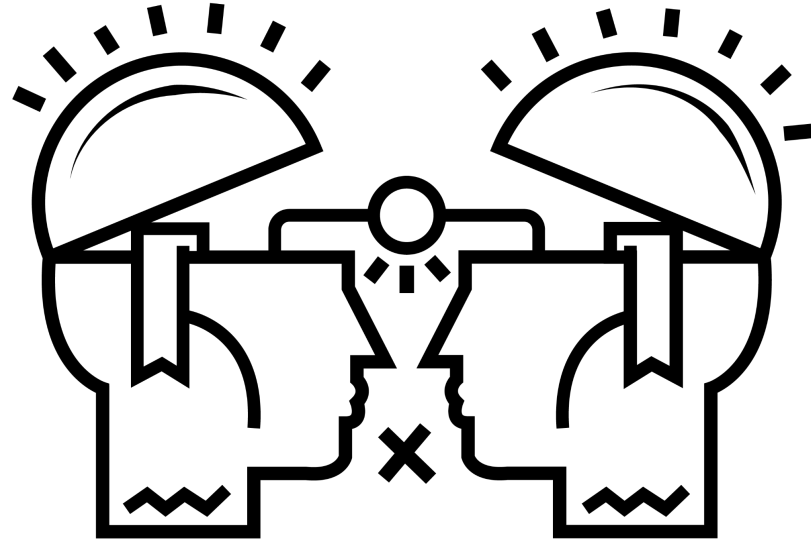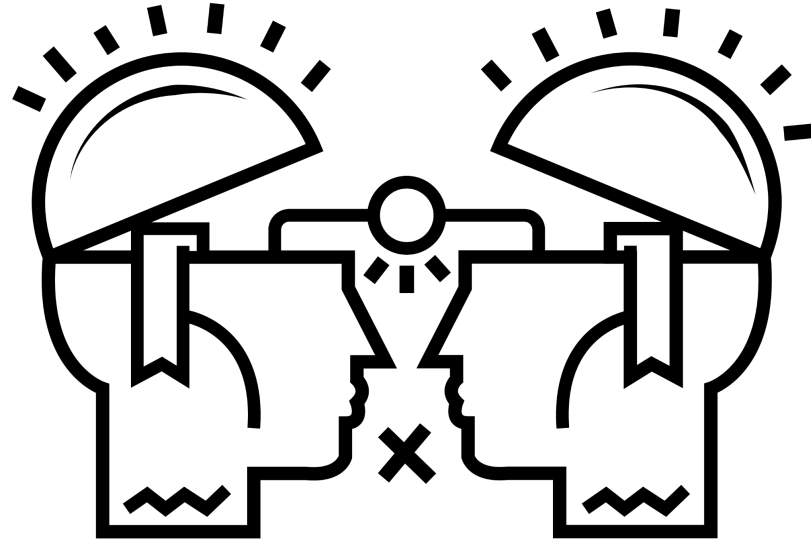
What blocks creative thinking?

- Fear of failure
- Fear of criticism
- Fear of looking stupid
- Fear of looking smart[er than...]
- Mandated boundaries from above or below
- Low morale, depression
- ...
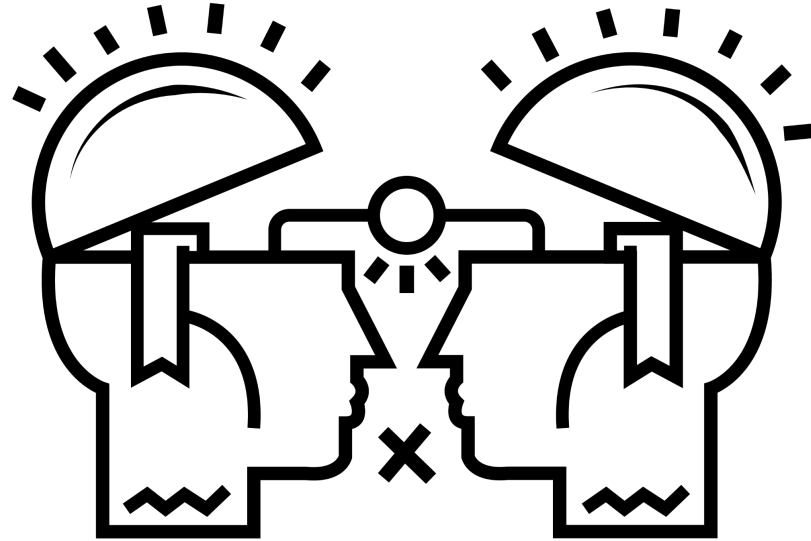
What encourages creative thinking?

- Sense of safety
- Suspended criticism
- Supportive colleagues
- Minimal group politics
- Explicit mandate to explore
- High morale, joy
- ...

A creative thinking mindset

- Learn from failure
- Make it
- Creative confidence & optimism
- Empathy
- Embrace ambiguity
- Iterate, iterate, iterate
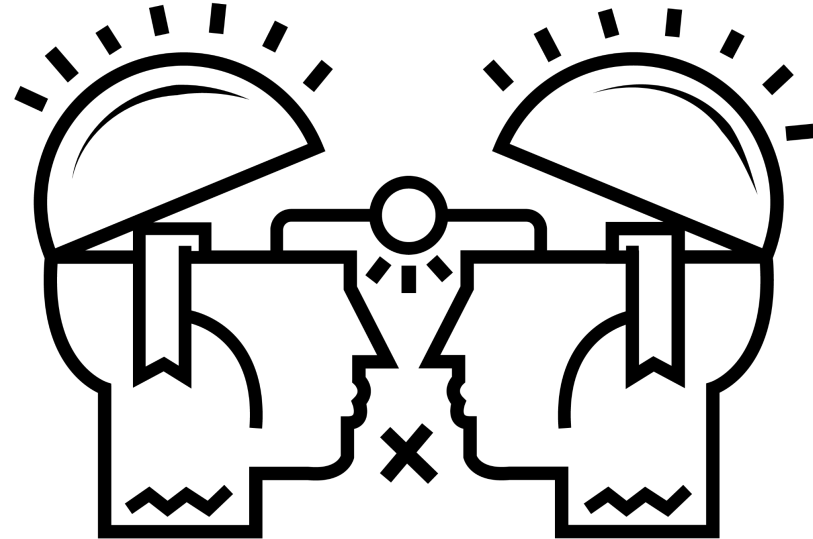
Source: IDEO.org's Design Kit
https://www.designkit.org/mindsets

A broad process

1. **Learn** facts, context, and offered analysis
2. **Generate**, sort, and select ideas
3. **Implement** a pilot / prototype + Iterate
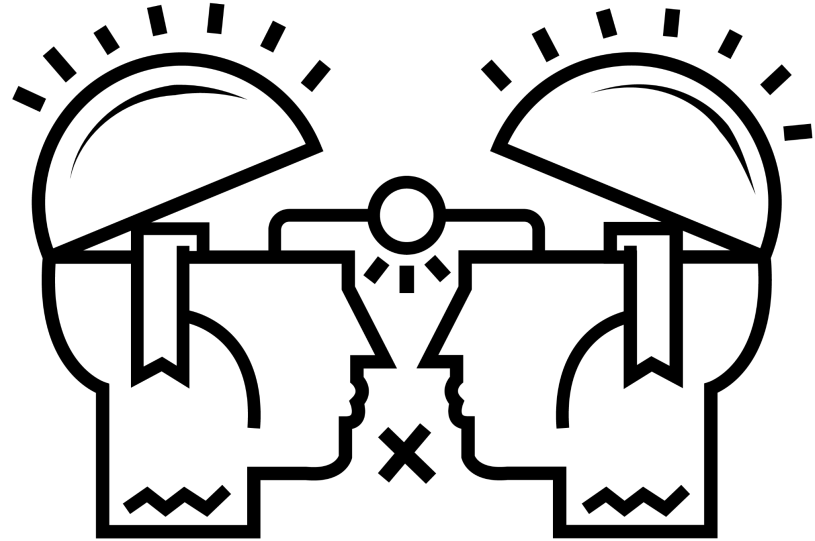
04 Tools and pitfalls

Common mistakes and useful techniques

Some pitfalls: Learning phase

- **Ideas without users**
- **Solutions to non-problems**
- **Solutions to problems that don't matter**

Tools for the Learning phase

- **Define your audience; map ecosystem**
- **Interviews (direct, group, third-party)**
- **Personas and insight statements**
- **Five whys**
- **Identify mainstream vs. extreme (in demographics, skills, attitudes)**
- **Framing problems as "disruptive" promises**
- **Devising criteria for prioritizing problems**

Some pitfalls: Generation phase

- **Reaching for the obvious**
- **Incomplete solutions**
- **Starting too big**

Tools for the Generation phase

- **Identify long-term goals (> 3 years)**

- **Map backwards from the long-term goals to interim outcomes, with cause-and-effect leading from interim outcomes to long-term goals**

- **Identify intervention points -- opportunities for action**

A **quick example** of a *very* general *Wikipedia* cause and effect links diagram.
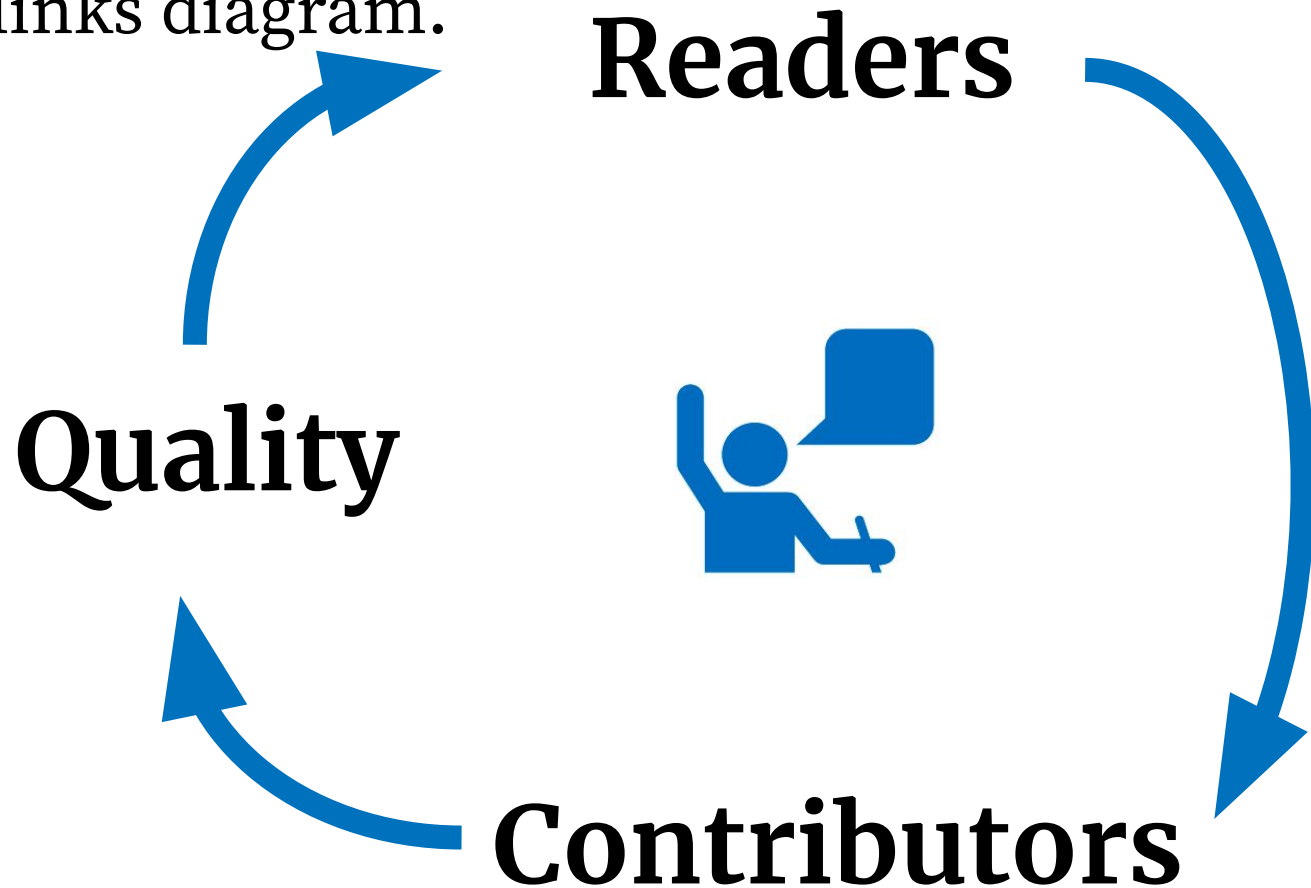
Readers

Quality

Contributors

A **quick example** of a *very* general *Wikipedia* cause and effect links diagram.

Readers

Quality

Contributors

Potential interventions!

Potential interventions!

Potential interventions!

1. Long-term outcomes example

Non-Wikimedia goal

CEE youths gain better job prospects in software engineering

Wikimedia goal

Wikimedia's technical volunteer base is diversified with more people from CEE

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1. Long-term outcomes example

Non-Wikimedia goal

CEE youths gain better job prospects in software engineering

Wikimedia goal

Wikimedia's technical volunteer base is diversified with more people from CEE

?

How do we get there? What are the *prerequisites* for these outcomes?

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2. Mapping outcomes backwards

Non-Wikimedia goal

CEE youths gain better job prospects in software engineering

Wikimedia goal

Wikimedia's technical volunteer base is diversified with more people from CEE

CEE youths undergo *practical* training as interns or volunteers in real-world software projects

cause and effect!

cause and effect!

Potential interventions!

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2. Mapping outcomes backwards

Non-Wikimedia goal

CEE youths gain better job prospects in software engineering

Wikimedia goal

Wikimedia's technical volunteer base is diversified with more people from CEE

CEE youths undergo *practical* training as interns or volunteers in real-world software projects

cause and effect!

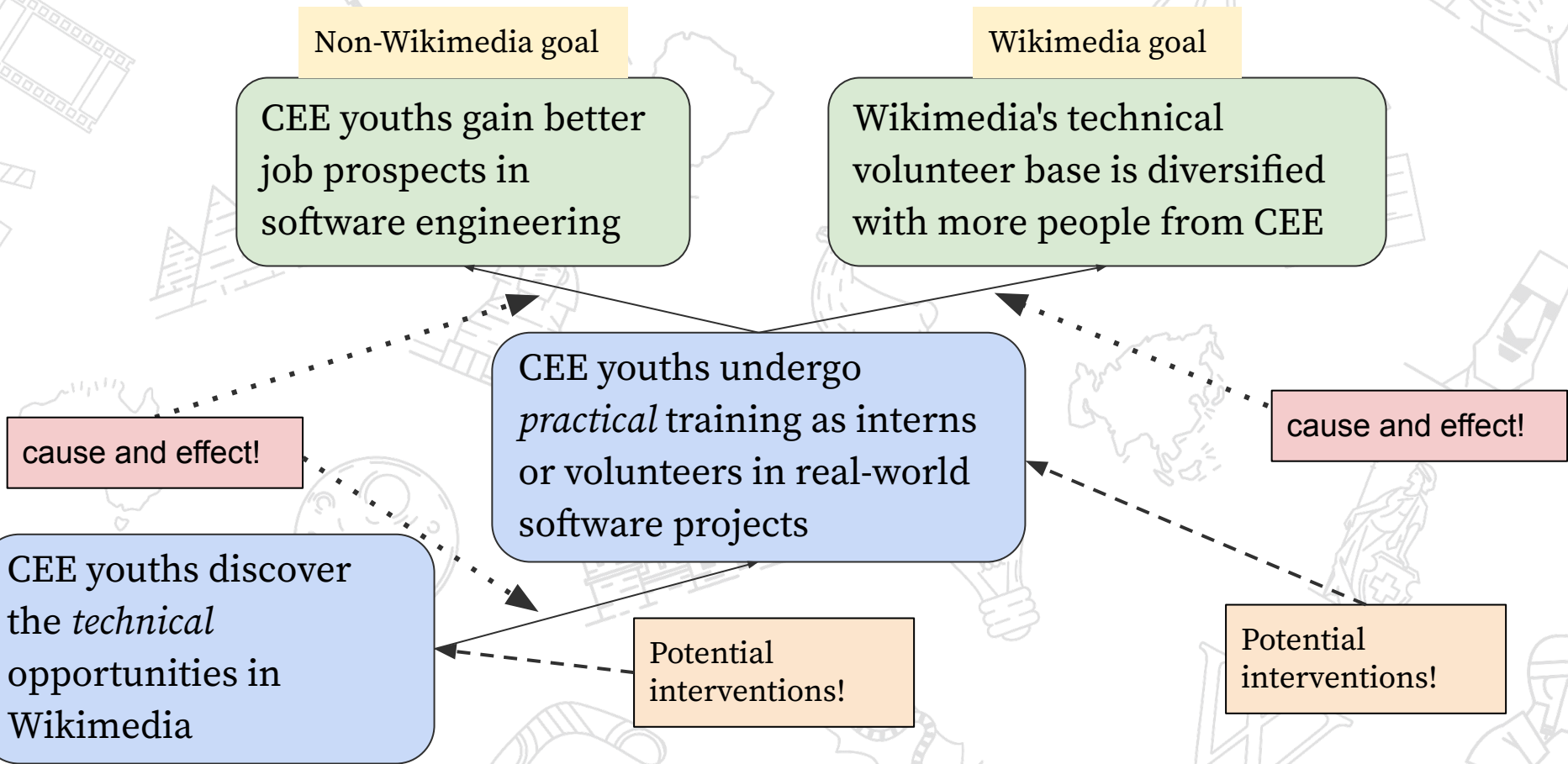cause and effect!

CEE youths discover the *technical* opportunities in Wikimedia

Potential interventions!

Potential interventions!

What if I'm the kind of person who's better at seeing problems than solutions?

I have just the thing for you!

Tool: Problem/solution trees
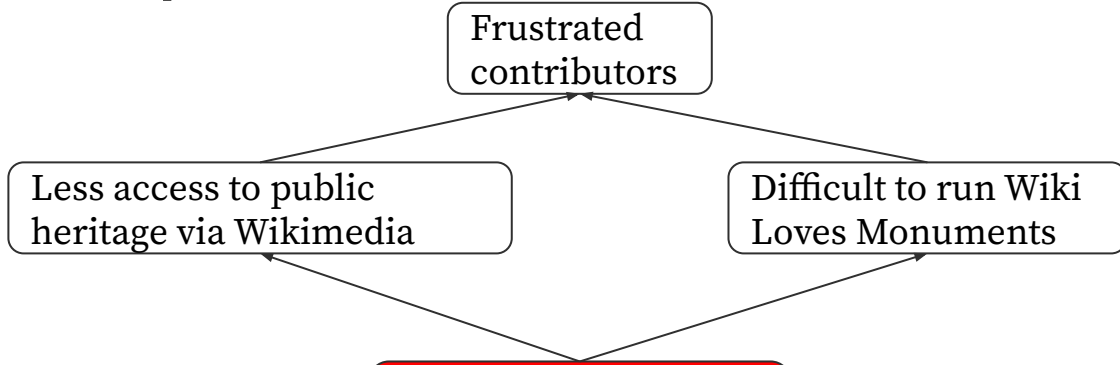
1. Build a tree with a main **problem** as the trunk, the **causes** (primary and secondary) as roots, and the **consequences** of the problem as branches
2. Then **reverse** the negative statements, creating a **solution tree**
3. Look at the solution tree and **evaluate** practicality and priorities, *deriving a strategy* toward a solution.

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Quick tool

Problem tree example

effects

causes

Frustrated contributors

Less access to public heritage via Wikimedia

Difficult to run Wiki Loves Monuments

We don't have freedom of Panorama

Legislators unaware

"Boring" topic

Public unaware

Low copyright enforcement in general

Quick tool
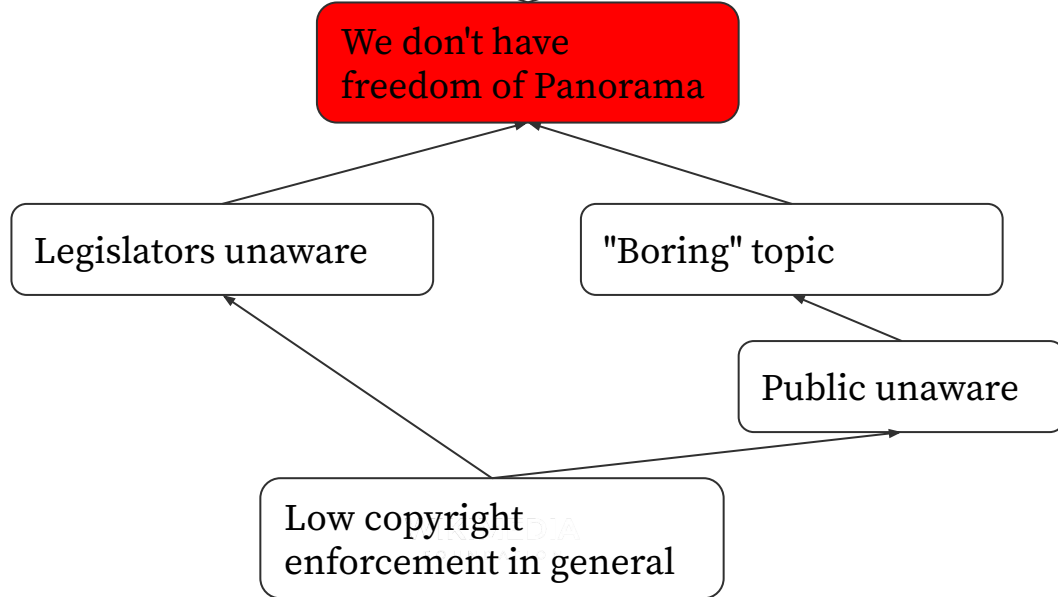
Let's reverse this!

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Solution tree example

Happy contributors! :)

More access to public heritage via Wikimedia

No barrier to run Wiki Loves Monuments

Long-term outcome

We have freedom of Panorama! :)

Interim outcomes

Legislators aware and take action

Attractive topic

Public is aware

Better copyright enforcement in general

Quick tool
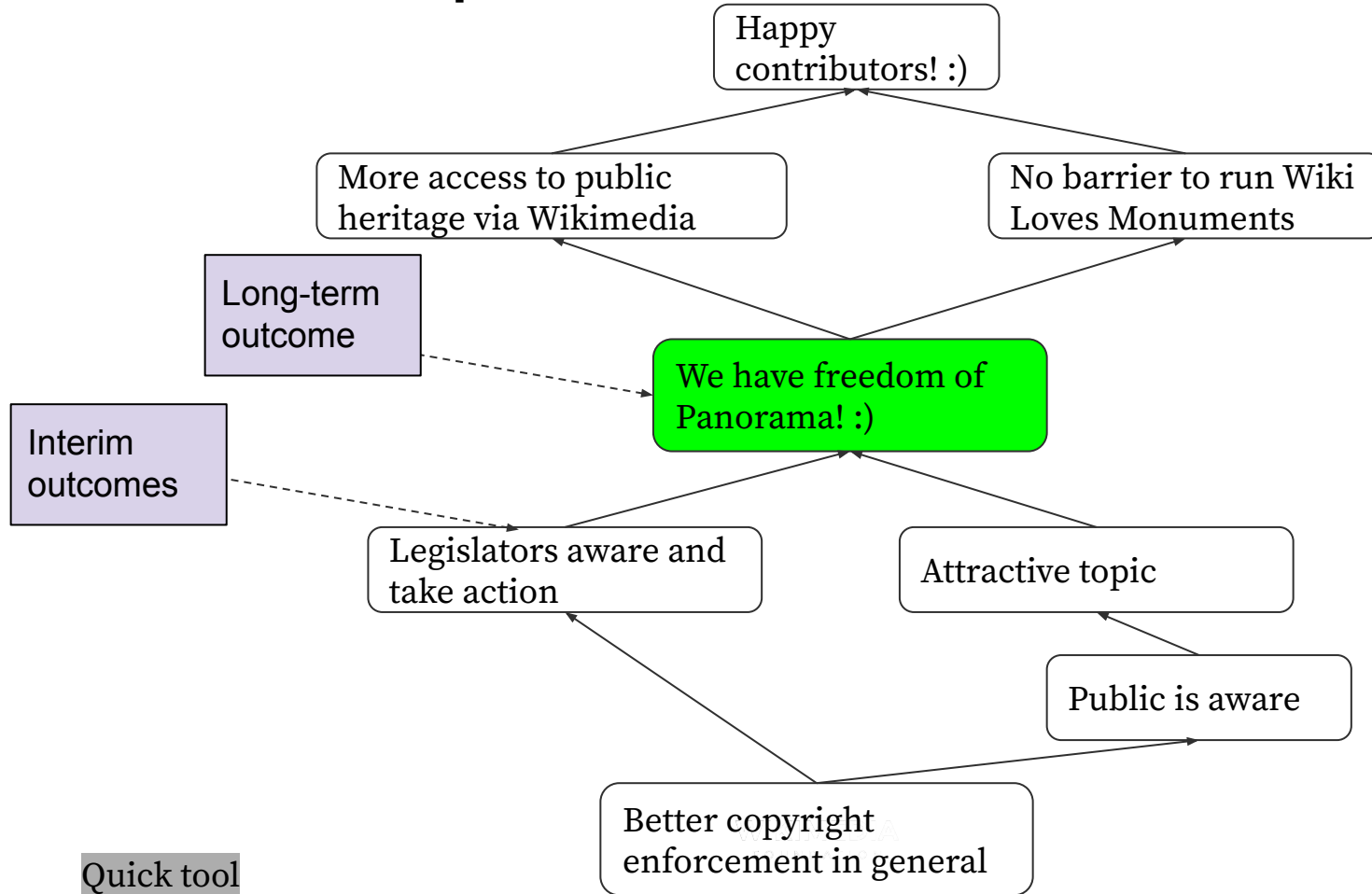
Derived strategy example

Happy contributors! :)

More access to public heritage via Wikimedia

No barrier to run Wiki Loves Monuments

We have freedom of Panorama! :)

With public awareness, encourage legislation

Legislators aware and take action

Attractive topic

Draft FoP bill and lobby legislators

Public is aware

Social media campaign

Better copyright enforcement in general

Quick tool
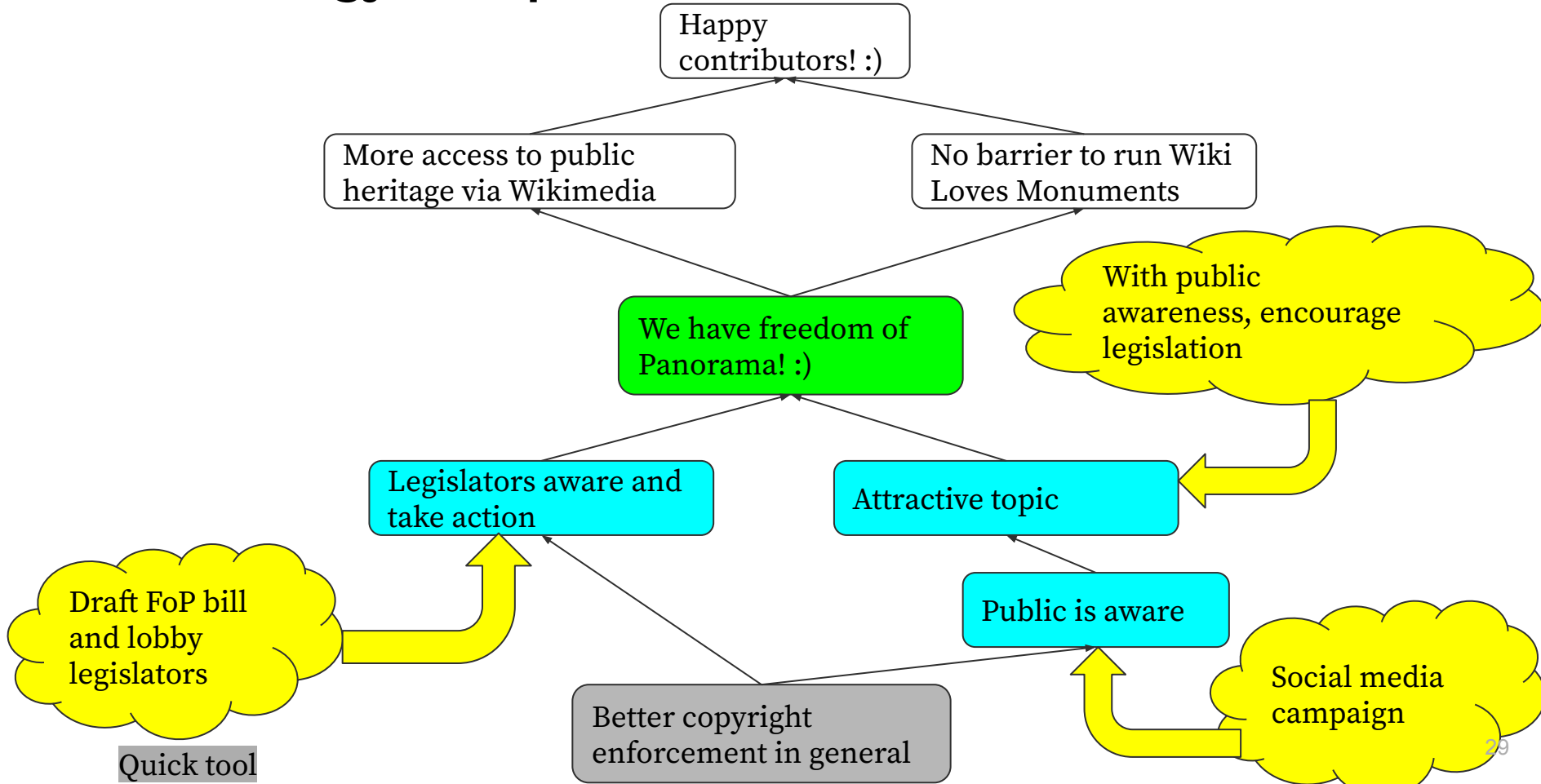
Tools for the Generation phase

- **"How might we…?" based on insight statements**
- **Brainstorms** (defer judgment, build on others, quantity, encourage wild ideas, stay focused on topic, be visual)
  - Different generation **modes** to draw on different parts of the brain (timed, drawing, themed, etc.)
  - **Rapid**, silent idea generation, later clustering

Okay, so now we have a ton of ideas, including wild and crazy ones. Now what?

Tools for the Generation phase

- **Top-five, rubric scoring,** etc.
- **Map process** of selected ideas end-to-end, identifying actors, skills, and assumptions
  - **Reject** impractical ideas; re-generate if necessary
- Show **how** our solution is expected to solve the problem by expressing it as **a sequence of cause-and-effect relationships**, e.g. using the **Impact Ladder** (inputs, outputs, outcomes, impact)
- Come up with **metrics** and evaluation plan

Some pitfalls: Implementation phase

- **Failing to invest**
- **Failing to communicate**
- **Failing to learn**
- **Failing when scaling up**

Tools for the Implementation phase

- **Test hypotheses with MVPs**
- **Maintain shared reality**
- **Retrospectives**
- **Translate evaluation into action**
-

05

Workshop

Let's put some of this to use!

Let's pick something to work on!

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In each group, let's take 15m to Learn

Now let's <u>select</u> our top ideas and <u>develop</u> them for 20m:

- End-to-end process, stakeholders, resources
- Logical cause-and-effect chain of outcomes
- Metrics and evaluation plans for each outcome

Who wants to share?
(15m)

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06 Next steps

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1. Consider **holding a creative thinking workshop** in your community

2. **Document your challenges and thinking online** and recruit the entire movement's wisdom

Sources and detailed references:

- IDEO's Design Kit
- ThoughtWorks' Actionable Innovation toolkit