**PHASE 1
AUDIENCE
ANALYSIS**

Root Cause Analysis

Effort ●●●○○○

Objective
To use the data collected during the desk review and immersive research to identify a set of priority challenges that are the root of the problem.

Time needed
3–4 hours

Participants
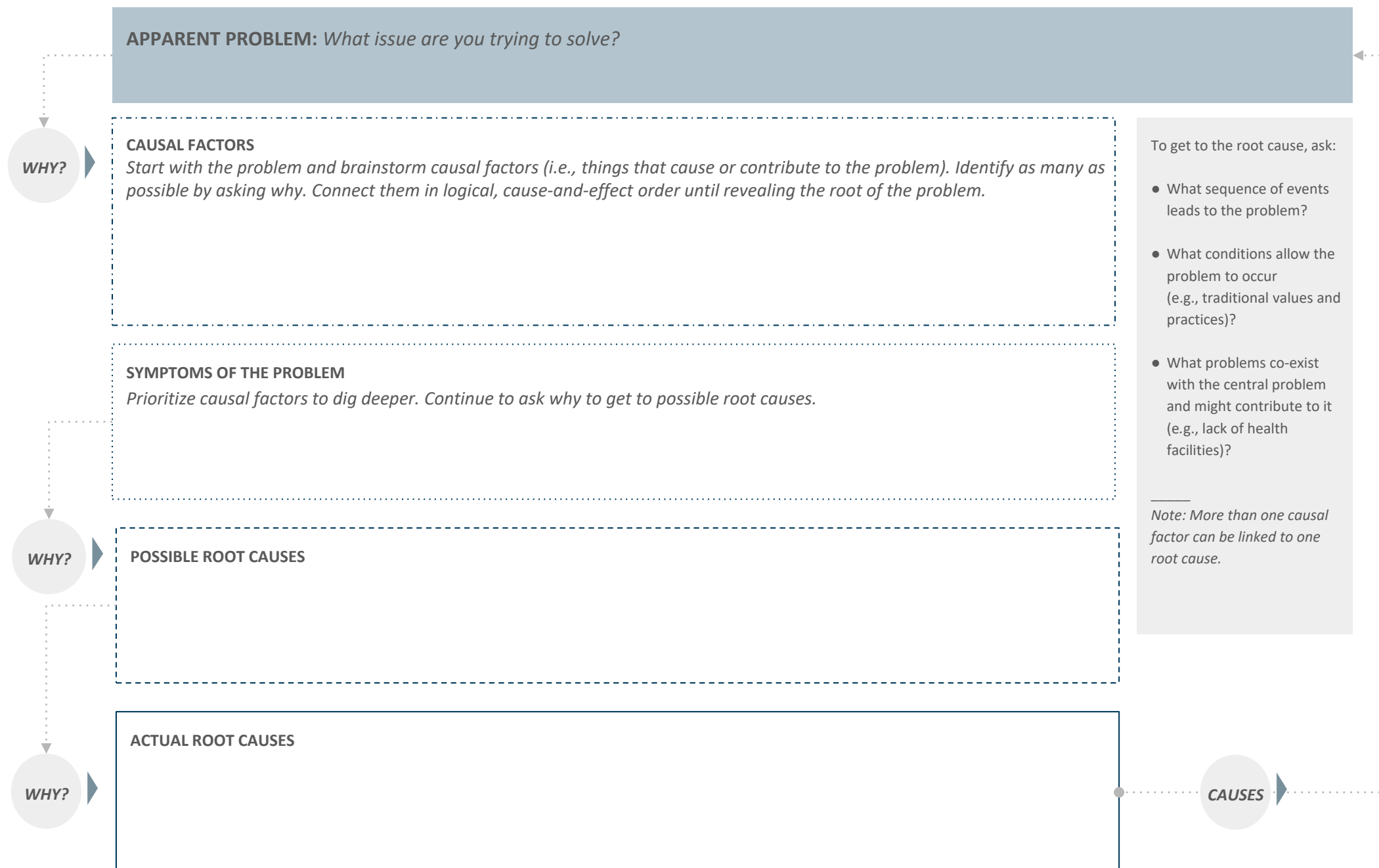Core design team; research, monitoring, evaluation, and learning unit

How to use this tool
A root cause analysis is a good way to sift through data and identify the primary source of a problem. Use this template to think through the problem you are trying to solve.

1. **Identify causal factors.** During the desk review and immersive research, you collected a lot of information to better understand the situation. Use the Root Cause Analysis template to sort through the causal factors (i.e., issues contributing to the health problem). Identify as many causal factors as possible. Start with the problem and discuss causes for that problem by asking why.
2. **Identify the root causes.** To find root causes—the primary sources of the challenge—start with the previously identified causal factors and continue to ask why. Root causes are seldom obvious. Dig deeper and continue to find causes until responses have been exhausted or roots that seem important to address are reached.
3. **Prioritize the root causes.** Identify challenges from the root causes and rank them in order starting with the main cause. Consider the following:
   a. The potential impact of addressing the challenge.
   b. The difficulty of reaching the intended audience.
   c. The resources available to address the challenge.
   d. Whether you can identify a logical order in which to address the challenges.

PHASE 1: AUDIENCE ANALYSIS **Root Cause Analysis**

APPARENT PROBLEM: *What issue are you trying to solve?*

WHY?

CAUSAL FACTORS
Start with the problem and brainstorm causal factors (i.e., things that cause or contribute to the problem). Identify as many as possible by asking why. Connect them in logical, cause-and-effect order until revealing the root of the problem.

SYMPTOMS OF THE PROBLEM
Prioritize causal factors to dig deeper. Continue to ask why to get to possible root causes.

WHY?

POSSIBLE ROOT CAUSES

WHY?

ACTUAL ROOT CAUSES

CAUSES

To get to the root cause, ask:

- What sequence of events leads to the problem?

- What conditions allow the problem to occur (e.g., traditional values and practices)?

- What problems co-exist with the central problem and might contribute to it (e.g., lack of health facilities)?

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Note: More than one causal factor can be linked to one root cause.

PHASE 1: AUDIENCE ANALYSIS **Root Cause Analysis**

APPARENT PROBLEM: *What problem are you trying to solve?*

WHY? ▶

ACTUAL ROOT CAUSES

RANKED ROOT CAUSES

Root Cause #1

Root Cause #2

Root Cause #3

Root Cause #4

Identify challenges from the root causes and rank them in order, starting with the main cause. To determine rank, consider the following:

- The potential impact of addressing the challenge. The greater the potential impact, the more reason to address it.

- How difficult it will be to reach the audience associated with the challenge.

- Other resources available to address the challenge (e.g., other partners working on the challenge or additional funding streams).
  Whether you can identify a logical order in which to address the challenges.

- If more than one causal factor is linked to the root cause. When a root cause is the source of multiple causal factors, addressing the root cause may have far-reaching effects.

Citations

Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs. (n.d.). *How to Conduct a Root Cause Analysis.* The Compass for SBC. https://thecompassforsbc.org/how-to-guide/how-conduct-root-cause-analysis