

# Case Study - Streamlining cross-departmental collaboration (Fredericia Municipality)

Using the Cross-Departmental Co-design (CD2) Playbook to solve a fundamental problem in a Danish municipality

Many municipalities struggle with problems that go across departments. It is hard to identify these, and harder still to build momentum for impactful change across the organization. The department for health and welfare in Fredericia municipality, Denmark, came up with the cross-departmental co-design process, as they created a new way to collaborate between departments. This case study introduces the problem, the process and the value created.

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Cross-Departmental Co-Design Process (CD2)

## 背景・問題

Innovation processes often take a single department as their point of departure, and seldom invite or guide innovation initiators to consider their problems in the context of the wider organization. The CD2 process is uniquely adapted to help initiators build enthusiasm across the organization around a fundamental problem. It does this by examining the problem through 3 stages: 1) bilateral validation of a sensed problem. 2) Organizational contextualization with multiple management stakeholders and 3) intersectional mapping of the problem, to understand how it is perceived in the organization.

## どんな変革を起こしたか

- Made a narrative of the problem to create empathy and build momentum around a

- perceived problem.
- Conducted workshops with management to build alignment and validate the problem across the organization.
- Did qualitative and quantitative research involving 350 staff, volunteers and other stakeholders to understand the problem from all angles.

どんな価値を生み出したか

Waiting time for initiating case work was reduced from several months to 2 weeks.

ストーリーボード

There are up to 9 different municipal staff connected to the case of one girl, independently of each other. That's very inefficient.	Have you seen this in your department as well?
It seems like we have these 6 core problems in common, and they have a big cumulative impact on welfare services going forward.	How are these problems perceived in the organization?
Figuring out what the necessary solution package could look like, and implement it to change work behavior.	Now we have a system for sharing case work, and a new set of procedures to make collaboration more efficient. We've reduced case start-up times from up to several months to just 2 weeks!

## Introduction

In 2021 a leader in Fredericia Municipality, Denmark, saw a problem with how child-wellbeing was supported by existing city hall processes.

As they recognized the need for cross-department collaboration to adequately solve the problem, they approached the problem with what was later collected into the "Cross-Departmental Co-design (CD2) Playbook" - an innovation process well-suited for large organizations and the public sector.

## Motivation

The motivation for the project came from a desire to deal with a fundamental problem, which was causing issues in many different departments.

## Challenge

Child-wellbeing is dealt with through many different departments and procedures, depending on how the case is entered into the system. There has so far been little co-ordination between departments regarding the fundamental issue of child-wellbeing, which has led to inefficiency and poor service outcomes.

## What is child-wellbeing

A light case would be a child whose parents get a divorce, the child becomes sad, isolates itself, stops social participation. Would escalate to sitting below the table, not eating, bad sleep or outwardly reacting negatively. A little older youth would typically be about drugs and alcohol, beginning crime.

## The status quo

The parents or pedagogical staff (teachers etc) notice a child is not thriving and raises an alarm.

In the past in Fredericia Municipality, when a young person was not thriving, the staff had a plan A, and then tried to see if that works, and if it didn't they'd try for Plan B. There's waiting time in between these trials too. Standard solutions were tried sequentially to unique cases, which created an inefficient hit-or-miss approach.

Since there is no coordination, different people could raise separate alarms, and multiple interventions might be initiated independently of each other. This in effect puts the strain of coordination on the child and their family

## Objectives

The main objective of the project was to identify the right problem. Subsequently the project evolved into finding a solution for the problem, which could bring together the entire organization and get people to change how they work.

1. Identify the right organizational problem.
2. Develop a corresponding, cross-departmental solution.

## What happened

### Phase 1: Sensing problem signals

The head of youth services in Fredericia municipality, Rasmus, and a project manager in the staff for welfare services, Mette, both saw independently that there were a lot of duplicate efforts in how services were delivered.

However things took shape when Rasmus was appointed interim manager of another welfare section, where he heard about citizen-cases that were also dealt with in his own department.

Specifically, the case that stood out was one of a girl who was not thriving at all, and had many problems in her life - both at home and in school. As Rasmus looked into the case, it became clear that 9 different municipal staff were working with the girl and her family in

different respects, but they did not coordinate or even know about each others' efforts. All the systems they were using were not set up to share data, so they couldn't know.

This case was the driver towards what would turn into the major welfare service overhaul called Trivsel+.

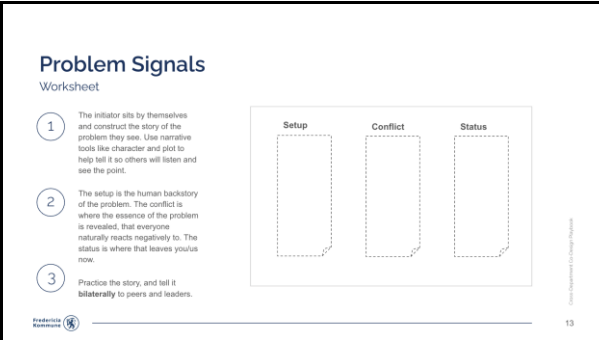
What happened was that Rasmus sensed a problem signal, which is the first phase of the Cross-Department Co-Design playbook. The person who senses the problem does not have to be a leader, however it seems likely that leaders are in position to better sense cross-departmental issues. We can call the person who senses the problem, the **initiator**.

As he sensed the problem, he proceeded to frame it as a narrative, rather than merely dealing with it as an outlier datapoint.

The narrative framing followed the three stages outlined in the playbook on the “Problem Signals” worksheet: setup, conflict and status.

The narrative framing is derived from the classical narrative arc of setup, conflict, resolution<sup>1</sup>. In this playbook, since there is no resolution to the problem, the final step is called status, to help the initiator wrap up their experience.

By framing the sensed problem as a narrative, Rasmus used the fundamental allure that stories have in all human culture, to help him build empathy and interest in the problem.

 <p><b>Problem Signals</b> Worksheet</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 The initiator sits by themselves and constructs the story of the problem they see. Use narrative tools like character and plot to help tell it so others will listen and see the point.</li><li>2 The setup is the human backstory of the problem. The conflict is where the essence of the problem is revealed, that everyone naturally reacts negatively to. The status is where that leaves you/us now.</li><li>3 Practice the story, and tell it bilaterally to peers and leaders.</li></ol> <p>Frederick Heinecke</p> <p>13</p>	<p>The problem signals worksheet outlines a way for the initiator to frame the problem they sense, as something to act on across the organization.</p>
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In this case, the story that Rasmus told again and again, was the story of the case with 9 staffers dealing with one girl and her family. Below is a paraphrased write-up of what his narrative consisted of in broad terms.

### Setup

*“I came into this interim position, and then I heard about a case that I also had seen come up in meetings in the other department I work in. I thought it was already being dealt with, but it seems other departments are also working on it independently.”*

The setup draws the listener into the setting, the situation and the people involved.

### Conflict

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<sup>1</sup> The British author F.C. Malby has a good write up on narrative arcs on her blog: <https://fcmalby.com/2014/05/14/narrative-arc-shaping-your-story/> (accessed January 7th, 2025)

*“As I dig in and ask around, it appears that there are 9 people attending to this case, without coordination.”*

This is the gist of the problem that he sensed, and it is a very clear conflict. Anyone listening to this will immediately feel antagonized by the apparent inefficiency of the situation.

### **Status**

*“It seems like this happens in other cases in the departments I supervise. Do you recognize this kind of situation?”*

The status step wraps up the story and opens up for curious questioning.

A side note on data, knowledge and evidence

This approach is a qualitative data validation based on relations. When working cross-departmentally, intuitions and sensings become quite powerful and precise. Because Rasmus is a leader talking with other leaders, and being open about what he sees, he opens up to learn from other leaders' tacit knowledge.

Conversely, had Rasmus gone and talked to the people on the floor in his own department about the case, he would get much narrower input with a clear bias towards making their own job more manageable. In their position, they would be liable to frame a bad day as a more general problem, which is something managers would be less likely to do, as they are looking out for the broader interest of their organization.

Evidence, data and knowledge are not the same. If you insist on working evidence-based, you will always be behind, because it takes a long time to collect proper evidence of something. Instead, the approach of this playbook is to first and foremost establish what is known, from the general, tacit experience of leaders across departments.

The narrative approach is a key tool towards this end.

The curious questioning is an important point of this phase, because it is not about getting buy-in for a solution. It is not even about getting agreement on something. Rather, it is about getting validation of the sensed problem. This is why the playbook emphasises the bilateral nature of the meetings in this phase.

By taking an open and curious approach in bilateral meetings, you build up trust, which is important to have going forward. In this sense, it is a relational and exploratory phase. Meetings are not the method, because everyone has meetings all the time. The method emerges as the attitude of the initiator in the meetings. Rather than getting input on a decision, it is about collecting and listening.

In the case of Trivsel+, it was clear that there was a crisis in wellbeing among youth, which had to be dealt with, for the municipality to function optimally going forward. If the problem wasn't dealt with, it might grow to such a degree that future budgets could not uphold the present welfare standards.

You walk out of phase 1 with a fairly clear impression that the problem you have sensed has been validated as a cross-departmental, fundamental issue.

During his sessions, Rasmus also met and conferred with Mette in the staff for welfare services. Because Rasmus had validated his hunch that there was a cross-departmental issue before them, he put Mette in charge of going ahead to work on it as a project.

## Phase 2: Organization context

In the beginning of the project, they spent a lot of time mapping out what the project should solve. Wellbeing (“trivsel”, in Danish) is a very charged word in Denmark, and people have a lot of opinions about it. It’s a fundamental issue when there is a lack of wellbeing, and so if they could solve this, they could generate positive ripple effects throughout society. That meant they had to be very specific about the core problems of the project, and what it should and shouldn’t attempt to solve.

They went into the second phase with a validated problem signal, but the next challenge was to clearly identify the organizational context of the problem as a whole.

According to the playbook, the second phase is about “*motivation and preparation of the organization*”. This was achieved in the Trivsel+ case, by a series of multi-stakeholder meetings with formal power holders. If informal power were included here, they were worried that they might lose control of the direction of the project. Through multi-stakeholder meetings with formal power holders, they built consensus.

In the case of Trivsel+ they built consensus around 6 core problems that all the relevant leaders in the organization could recognize as problems, no matter what their area of responsibility was.

The 6 core problems were:

- 1. Meetings rarely change practice**

Meetings often contribute little to end-user experience. So there are too many meetings.

- 2. Success depends on specific individuals**

Their efforts are often relying on whether a certain individual is involved or not — the collaboration process is “person independent”.

- 3. Parallel efforts**

Often they don’t know who works with who, what or when, which means duplicate and parallel efforts across the organization.

- 4. Lack of governance**

The staff involved in case-work are often in doubt about what they should do, what they can do, what they may do and who might be able to help them. Lack of clarity around governance, which hinders collaboration.

## 5. Too few adults take responsibility

It's not that they don't want to, but there is no clarity around mandate when people work across the organization.

## 6. Citizen has coordination responsibility

The more challenges a citizen faces, the more people from city hall they have to talk to.


With these 6 core problems defined and agreed on, there was a clear 'why' for everyone to move ahead with. They had defined a foundational and relevant problem, and identified 6 cross-departmental issues which contribute to the foundational problem.

## Phase 3: Intersection mapping

With a well-defined problem, and agreement across departments, Rasmus and Mette could enter the third phase, which is called intersection mapping.

The point of the third stage is to get as broad a perspective on the problem as possible, so as to get hints on how to most effectively deal with it. This work helps maintain a cross-departmental focus, as it adds the perspective of everyone affected by the problem.

In the case of Trivsel+, this meant they conducted interviews, focus groups and surveys of around 350 people, on all levels of the organization.

<p><b>Intersection Mapping</b> Worksheet</p> <p>The worksheet is a guide. Please consider using a larger canvas like a whiteboard, a wall or an online tool, to manage inputs.</p>  <p>20</p>	<p>In the playbook, the work is summarized as a rough map of the organization depicting both different departments and their respective hierarchies.</p>
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All the information and insights were shared and discussed in a series of meetings, both in the working group established by Rasmus and Mette, but also more widely, to keep stakeholders informed and aligned.

The third phase took about 12 months to complete, as they talked with dentists, volunteers, teachers, parents, managers and many more.

They ended up with what in the playbook is described as *“everyone can see the problem as it manifests across the organization”*.

## Outcomes

The solution that came out of this year-long process was the initiative called Trivsel+.

The Trivsel+ initiative aims to improve the well-being of young people aged 0-25 by fostering collaboration among different departments and professionals within the municipality. Recognizing the limitations of traditional, siloed approaches to addressing youth challenges, Trivsel+ focuses on creating a way of collaboration that enables rapid and effective intervention when a young person is experiencing difficulties.

To overcome the identified core challenges, Trivsel+ introduced a common platform for information sharing and emphasized the importance of a collaborative process. A key component is a "quick-reaction collaboration process" that allows for the rapid assembly of a cross-departmental team within 14 days of a concern being raised. This team, composed of professionals from various fields such as education, social work, and healthcare, works together to address the specific needs of the young person.

Trivsel+ consists of several tools.

- a model and a shared language for describing well-being levels.
- a decision tree to guide team formation.
- a standardized plan of action template, and a data bank for tracking progress and identifying areas for improvement.

The system also emphasizes specific principles for cross-departmental meetings, such as ensuring that all participants have the authority to take action and that leaders focus on coordinating and enabling employee action.

## Measurement

The impact of Trivsel+ is measured through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including interviews, focus groups, and analysis of various data sources. While challenges remain, such as resistance to change among some leaders, the initiative has shown promise in improving the speed and effectiveness of interventions for young people in need. By fostering collaboration and breaking down departmental silos, Trivsel+ aims to create a more responsive and effective system for supporting the well-being of youth in the community.

## 本ケースの特徴的な点

- Introduces a way to do cross-departmental collaboration from the beginning of a project.
- Provides 3 steps to identify the characteristics of a problem which is fundamental to an organization.
- Reframes everyday activities such as meetings, in a way that can help the initiator build momentum towards bigger change.



## 2で触れられていない、当該手法の活用に係る留意点・前提条件、再現可能性に関するコメントなど

- The CD2 process is meant as a framework to be reviewed, when someone senses a problem in their department might have deeper roots in the way the organization works. This could in theory be anyone, but in practice it is most likely an experienced employee or manager, who has a broad grasp of how the organization works.
- It is a prerequisite that the person is attentive not to how the problem impacts themselves, but how it impacts the wider organization.
- In Japan, this work might have been undertaken by a DX推進 department looking across the organization. The point in this case study, is that it is a bottom up initiative from a 事業部.

## 関連するプレイブック、コンピテンシーマップ

- Play book Landing page