The Cougar Pause

Clackamas Community College

A Collection of Strategic Tools for Planning, Decision Making, and Conscious Reflection

What is The Cougar Pause?

The Cougar Pause is a Strategic Equity Resource designed to increase our chances of making decisions that lead to more equitable outcomes. It is meant to take out the guesswork of what equity work looks like in action. It consists of a set of critical questions that individuals or work teams can ask themselves while navigating decisions, both big and small. These questions prompt users to pause in their thinking and broaden their perspectives, leading to greater awareness about where we have choice and ability to confront disparate results.

WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT ISN'T
✓ A tool to help us make decisions and take actions that are more equitable and inclusive	✗ A solution to end racism or all discriminatory practices.
✓ An invitation to pause and be more intentional rather than defaulting to ingrained habits and patterns of thinking.	✗ A linear, simple, quick checklist to be 'checked off.'
✓ A resource for mindset shifts, growth, and continuous improvement.	✗ A tool for passing judgment.

How to use the Cougar Pause:

While we recommend beginning with the 'Foundation,' the Cougar Pause is not a linear tool. It's designed to be bi-directional, allowing you to revisit and refine decisions made at earlier stages. Through this flexible and iterative decision-making approach, you may find that your overall work product becomes richer and more equitable.

Ready to begin?

START HERE

Foundation

- What is the primary goal of this work? What is the deeper purpose behind it?
- What specific outcomes are you aiming to accomplish? Why are these outcomes important?
- Who are you centering in this work? Be specific about their identities and narrow your focus. Examples might be: bilingual high school students at Milwaukie High School, or Black male students currently attending CCC full-time.
- How will this work support or challenge those whom we are centering?
- What parameters inform or constrain your work? What are the potential tradeoffs and benefits?
- What knowledge, insights, biases, or assumptions are you bringing into this work —from background research, existing feedback, Clackamas Community College cultural norms, etc.?
- Are you the most informed person to answer these questions? If not, who else might you bring in to help?

Collaborate

- Who do you need to engage with and hear from about this work? Prioritize the centered audiences identified during the Foundation phase.
- What techniques will be most effective and relevant when listening to and collaborating with your centered audiences (such as online surveys, focus groups, types of questions asked, anonymous feedback, etc.)?
- How will you best support diverse opinions so they can be shared during this collaboration, in a courageous space, while mitigating power dynamics?
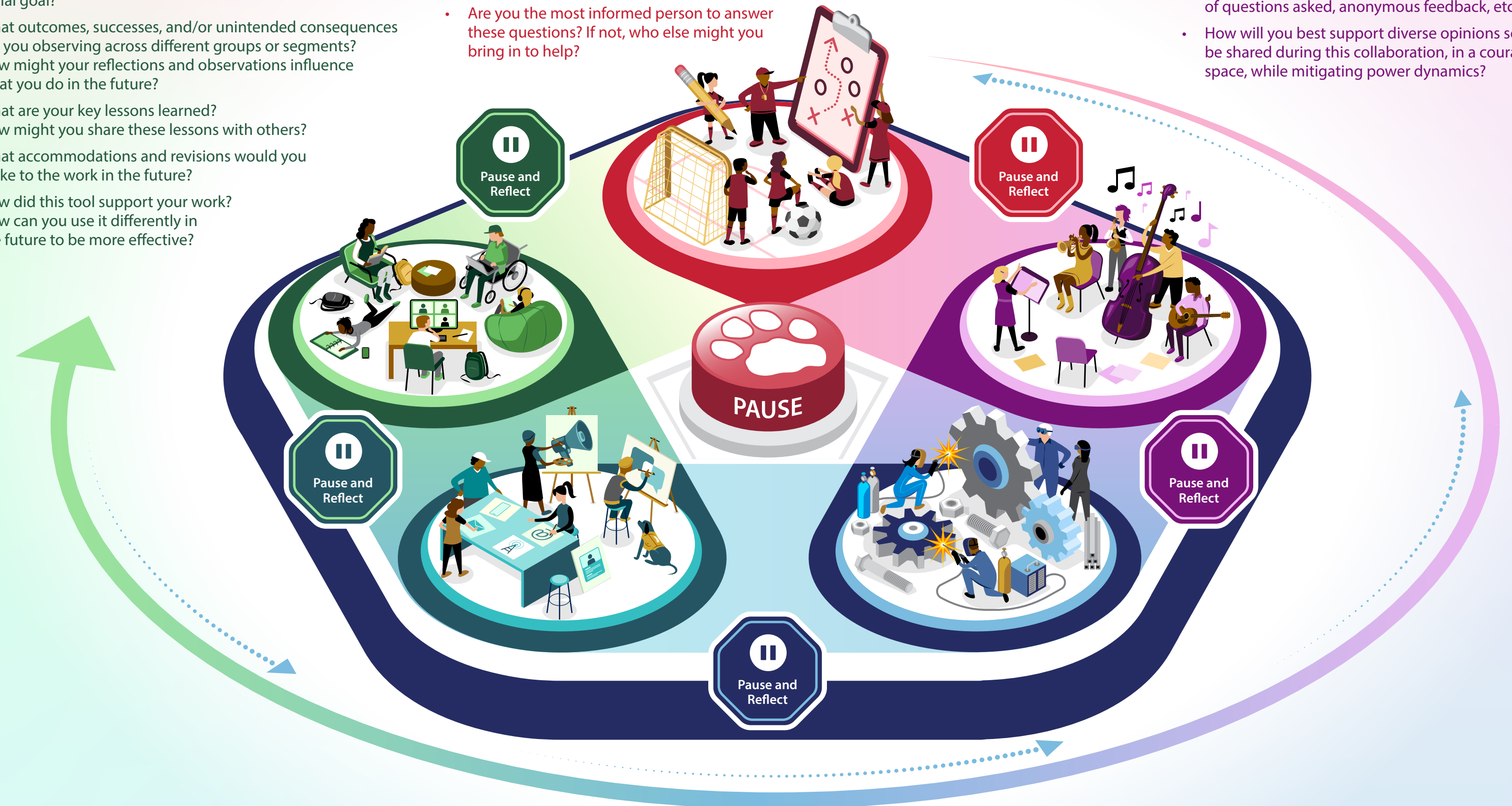
Evaluate, Learn, Revise

- How do you feel you have progressed toward achieving your initial goal?
- What outcomes, successes, and/or unintended consequences are you observing across different groups or segments? How might your reflections and observations influence what you do in the future?
- What are your key lessons learned? How might you share these lessons with others?
- What accommodations and revisions would you make to the work in the future?
- How did this tool support your work? How can you use it differently in the future to be more effective?

Communicate

- How is your communication plan culturally responsive and tailored to specific audiences?
- What information can you share to help audiences understand how this work will impact/benefit them? What else do they need to know?
- What are the best ways/formats to communicate with all of your audiences, especially those centered in this work?
- When will you begin communicating? Who is best suited to deliver communication to your centered audiences?

Implement

- How did you incorporate what you learned during your collaborations into this implementation plan?
- How is your plan specific and responsive to the needs of those we are centering, and how does it best support their full participation?
- Do you have sufficient time and resources allotted to the work to avoid overwhelming the people involved? If not, can you get more time or the resources you need?
- What indicators will you use to evaluate the results and outcomes of the work?
- How are you adapting your work as it's implemented to respond to newly emerging needs, situations, and feedback from centered audiences?

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