

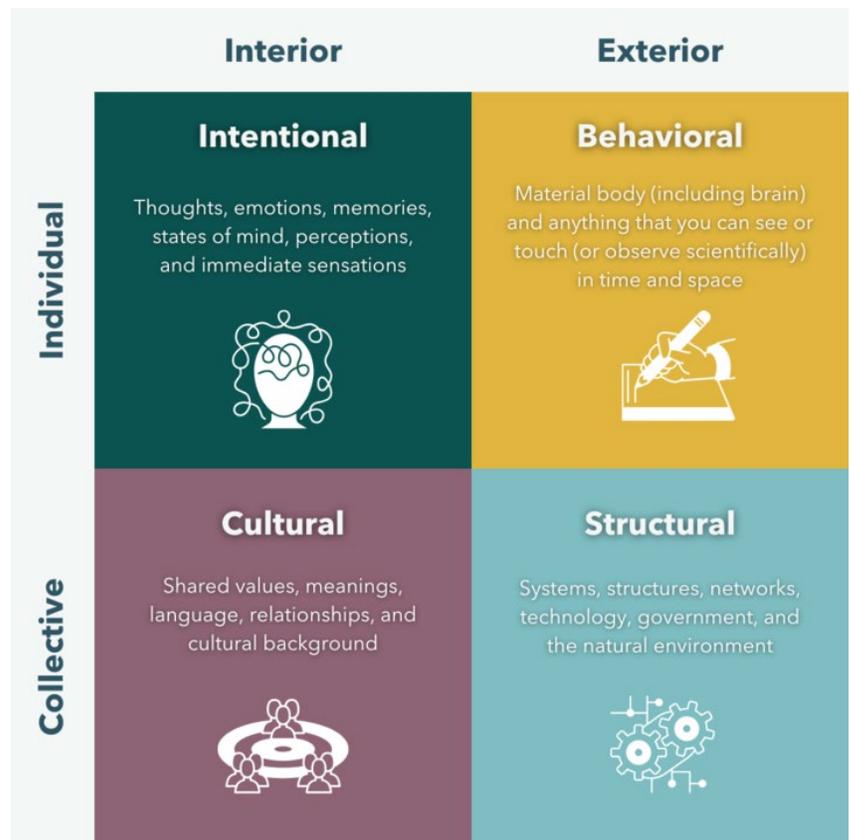
## THE FOUR QUADRANT MODEL

*Adapted from the work of Ken Wilber*

### OVERVIEW

The Four Quadrant Model is a framework for understanding systems change that emphasizes the interplay of both the **interior** (mindsets, values, culture) and **exterior** (behaviors, structures, policies) dimensions of change, across both the **individual** and **collective** levels.

- **Quadrant 1 (Individual Interior - Intentional):** thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and mental models.
- **Quadrant 2 (Individual Exterior - Behavioral):** actions, skills, and observable behaviors.
- **Quadrant 3 (Collective Interior - Cultural):** shared values, relationships, and norms.
- **Quadrant 4 (Collective Exterior - Structural):** systems, institutions, and policies.



By helping groups see that **lasting systems change requires shifts in all four quadrants**, the tool encourages more holistic strategies that go beyond surface-level fixes.



## WHEN TO USE

- At the **start of a project or initiative** to build a shared understanding of the complexity of change.
- When groups are **stuck in one dimension** (e.g., focusing only on policy reform without addressing culture, or only on individual behaviors without shifting structures).
- To **map a complex challenge** (e.g., housing, health, education, environment) and identify leverage points across the quadrants.
- During **reflection or evaluation** to assess where progress has occurred and where gaps remain.

## HOW TO USE

### Introduce the Model

- Share the diagram of the four quadrants.
- Explain that sustainable change requires attention to all quadrants, not just one or two.
  - For example, imagine you're a group working to address waste in your community. Your local city government started a composting program with curbside service but soon finds that waste management personnel are spending hours cleaning out glass, plastic, and metal that can't be composted. If community members don't carry internal beliefs that waste is a problem or know what composting is (Q1) they won't engage in behaviors to sort their waste effectively (Q2), resulting in a poor outcome for curbside composting (Q4).

### Frame the Issue

Pose a guiding question: "If we want to address [challenge], what's happening in each of these quadrants?"

Example: Rising teen suicide can be understood in terms of individual mindsets (Q1), adolescent brain development (Q2), cultural norms and pressures (Q3), and structural influences like social media platforms or school systems (Q4).

### Facilitate a Quadrant Mapping Exercise

Break into small groups or work collectively. You can use a variety of facilitation tools to gather information for each quadrant. For example, you could draw the four quadrants on easel paper and invite individuals to add their examples to sticky notes and place them in the corresponding quadrant. If you split the group up into smaller groups, you can have them each focus on one quadrant to begin with, then rotate between quadrants to add to the



previous group’s ideas. In digital spaces, you can use white board tools to do the same activity.

Ask participants to generate examples for each quadrant:

Q1 - What individual beliefs, fears, or hopes shape this issue?

Q2 - What observable behaviors, habits, or skills are relevant?

Q3 - What cultural values, relationships, or norms play a role?

Q4 - What policies, structures, or institutions are influencing outcomes?

### Identify Leverage Points

Invite groups to look across quadrants: Where do we already have momentum? Where are we missing strategies?

Emphasize that all four quadrants co-evolve. Change in one can spark or stall change in the others.

### Integrate into Action Planning

Use insights from the exercise to design strategies that integrate all four dimensions. You can ask, “Based on how the system is currently working, what would we like to try to shift the system? Come up with ideas for each quadrant.”

Example: A housing initiative might pair advocacy for zoning reform (Q4) with storytelling to shift narratives (Q3), leadership coaching (Q1), and new landlord-tenant practices (Q2).

## COMMUNITY LEARNING MODEL

### *Culture of Collaboration*

Strengthen the capacities that support collaborative work such as facilitative leadership, communication, information sharing and shared accountability. These elements strengthen the ability to move through the stages of the Community Learning Model.

The 4 Quadrant Model is a tool for the Culture of Collaboration phase of the Community Learning Model, as it helps to map out the multidimensional nature of the change process. To learn more about tools for dialogue and the other areas of the Community Learning Model, visit [civiccanopy.org/clm](http://civiccanopy.org/clm).

