

Double-sided Pencil

The Double-Sided Pencil framework helps determine which method works best during three phases of a workshop: Open, Explore, and Close.

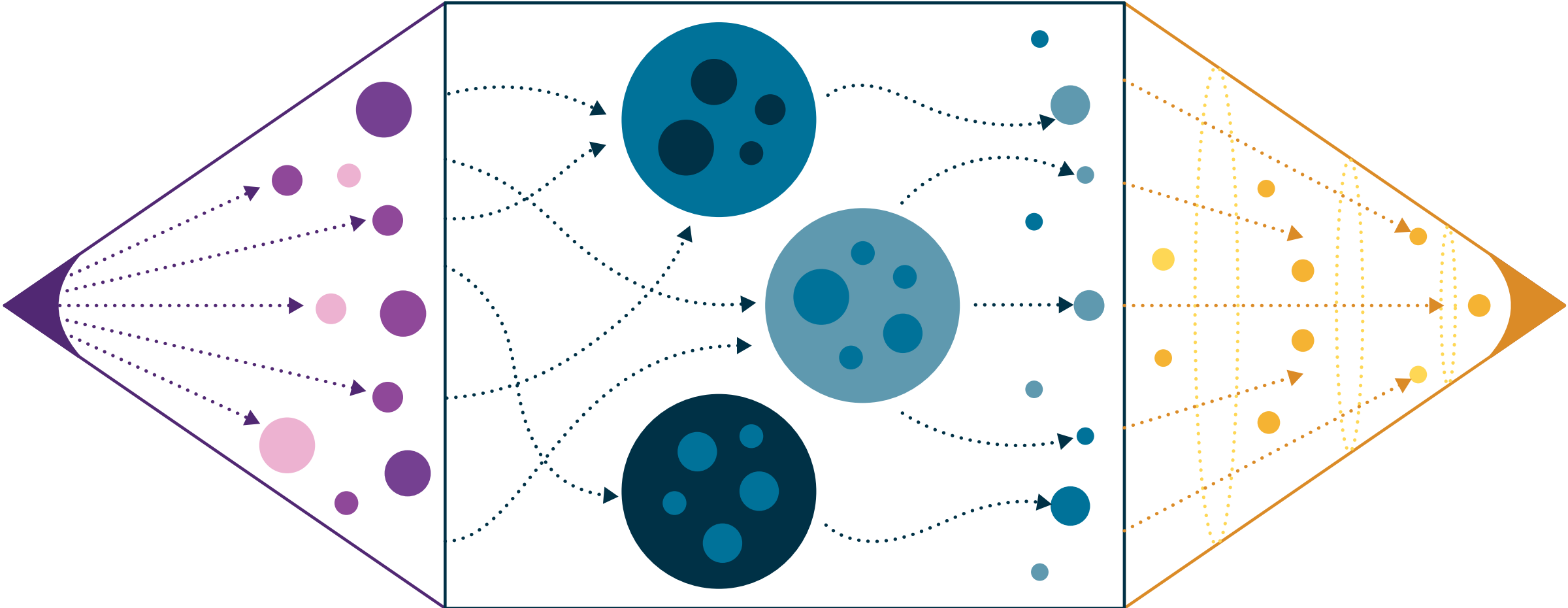
The “Double-Sided Pencil” is a framework we use with clients to explain the process we take groups through to get them to generate insightful and creative ideas and get them to make clear and accountable decisions. In the **Opening** phase, activities are designed to set the stage, develop themes and ideas, and gather information. Activities in the **Exploring** phase examine the options, explore opportunities and experiment with different solutions. Activities in the **Closing** phase are designed to make decisions, draw conclusions, and plan actions or next steps.

1
On a digital whiteboard or poster, draw a “double-sided” pencil: a long rectangle with pointed ends on either side. Label the left side of the pencil Open, the middle rectangle Explore, and the far right pencil Close. Use the illustration as reference for filling in the circles and lines within the double-sided pencil.

2
Tell the story of how the workshop process works and how it might feel as it progresses.

3
Show where the group is in the process and where to expect to be by the end of the workshop.

4
Check in with the framework throughout the workshop to show how activities relate to progress toward the goal.



Opening (Divergent)

Opening: The first act is all about opening—opening our minds, opening up possibilities. The opening is about getting everyone in the room, the cards on the table, the information and ideas flowing. Think of the opening as a big bang, an explosion of ideas and opportunities. The more ideas we can get out in the open, the more we will have to work with in the next stage. The opening is not the time for critical thinking or skepticism: it’s time for blue-sky thinking, brainstorming, energy and optimism. The key word for opening is “divergent”: we want the widest possible spread of perspectives.

Exploring (Emergent)

Exploring: Once we have the energy and ideas flowing in the room, we need to do some exploration and experimentation. This is where the rubber hits the road, where we look for patterns and analogies, try to see old things in new ways, sift and sort through ideas, build and test things, and so on. The keyword for the exploring stage is “emergent”: we want to create the conditions that will allow unexpected, surprising, and delightful things to emerge.

Closing (Convergent)

Closing: In the final act we want to move toward conclusions—toward decisions, actions, and next steps. This is the time to assess ideas, to look at them with a critical or realistic eye. We can’t do everything or pursue every opportunity. Which of them are the most promising? Where do we want to invest our time and energy? The keyword for the closing act is “convergent”: we want to narrow the field in order to select the most promising things for whatever comes next.”