



IS CO-GOVERNANCE THE RIGHT STRATEGY FOR YOUR TEAM?



This resource is a supplement to the **Co-Governance**
Tool for a Multiracial Democracy



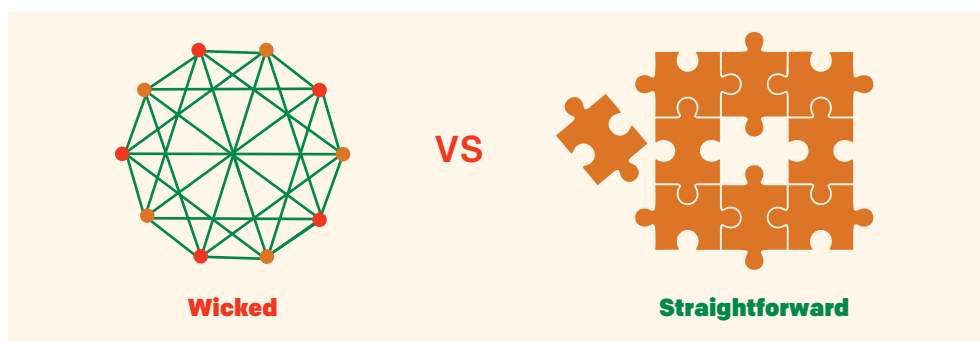
What is Co-governance?

Co-governance is a collection of participatory models and practices in which government and communities intentionally aim to share power and drive fair and just outcomes. This can work through formal and informal structures that support collective policy decisions, co-create programs to meet community needs, and foster accountability in implementation.

When rooted in racial justice, co-governance is more than just a mash-up of the concepts “collaboration” and “governance.” Co-governance calls for sharing power and centering community leadership and impact, particularly people who are most harmed by structural racism and our economic system.

Why Would We Want to Use a co-governance Strategy?

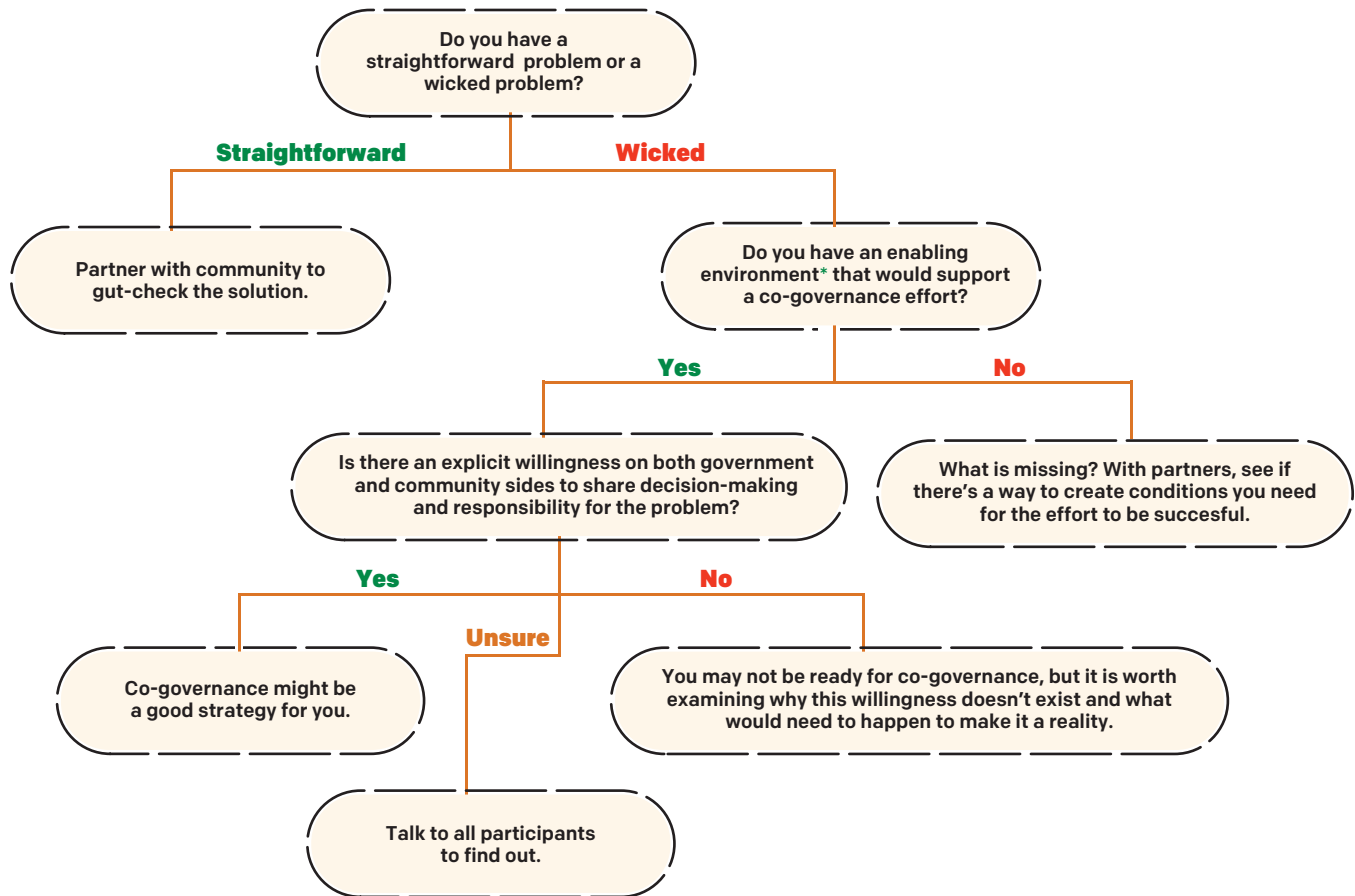
Co-governance is best for problems that are **“wicked”** — complex, multifaceted, and not easily solved by one entity. Wicked problems can include large-scale issues like rising climate temperatures, pandemics, and homelessness, just to name a few. These complex challenges require multiple sectors — and, importantly, those most impacted by the problems — to come together and design a shared solution. These sorts of problems are different from **“straightforward”** problems, which are more easily defined and clearly lend to specific solutions. Straightforward problems can include issues like mailing out Social Security checks, repairing roads, and reporting water test results.



Co-governance can be an effective way to address a complex issue because it can help to build strong, durable relationships between community and government partners that allow them to share the problem as well as co-create dynamic solutions. However, there are challenges with the approach and it is not a decision teams should undertake lightly. Success requires a great deal of intentionality, resources, and commitment by all involved in the partnership.

How do you know if your situation might be right for co-governance?

You can follow the guide below as a starting point. Going through this flowchart is an exercise that can be done within community groups or within government teams. However, at some point in the process, this exercise should be done jointly by community and government partners to make sure you can get on the same page.



If you reach a “dead end,” that doesn’t mean you have to stop. Take the time to discuss more fully as a group the strengths/weaknesses of accomplishing your work through a co-governance strategy. Use this as an opportunity to examine the ecosystem you’re in and find ways to work together, even if it ultimately isn’t a co-governance effort. If the time or situation isn’t right for engaging in a co-governance effort, see if there’s another way to meaningfully engage the community in the solution.

***NOTE:** An *enabling environment for co-governance* is a set of conditions and current context that either *helps* or *hinders* successful partnerships between community and government to drive racial equity and deepen multiracial democracy moving forward.

Check out “[Building an Enabling Environment for Racially Just Co-Governance](#)” for more information!