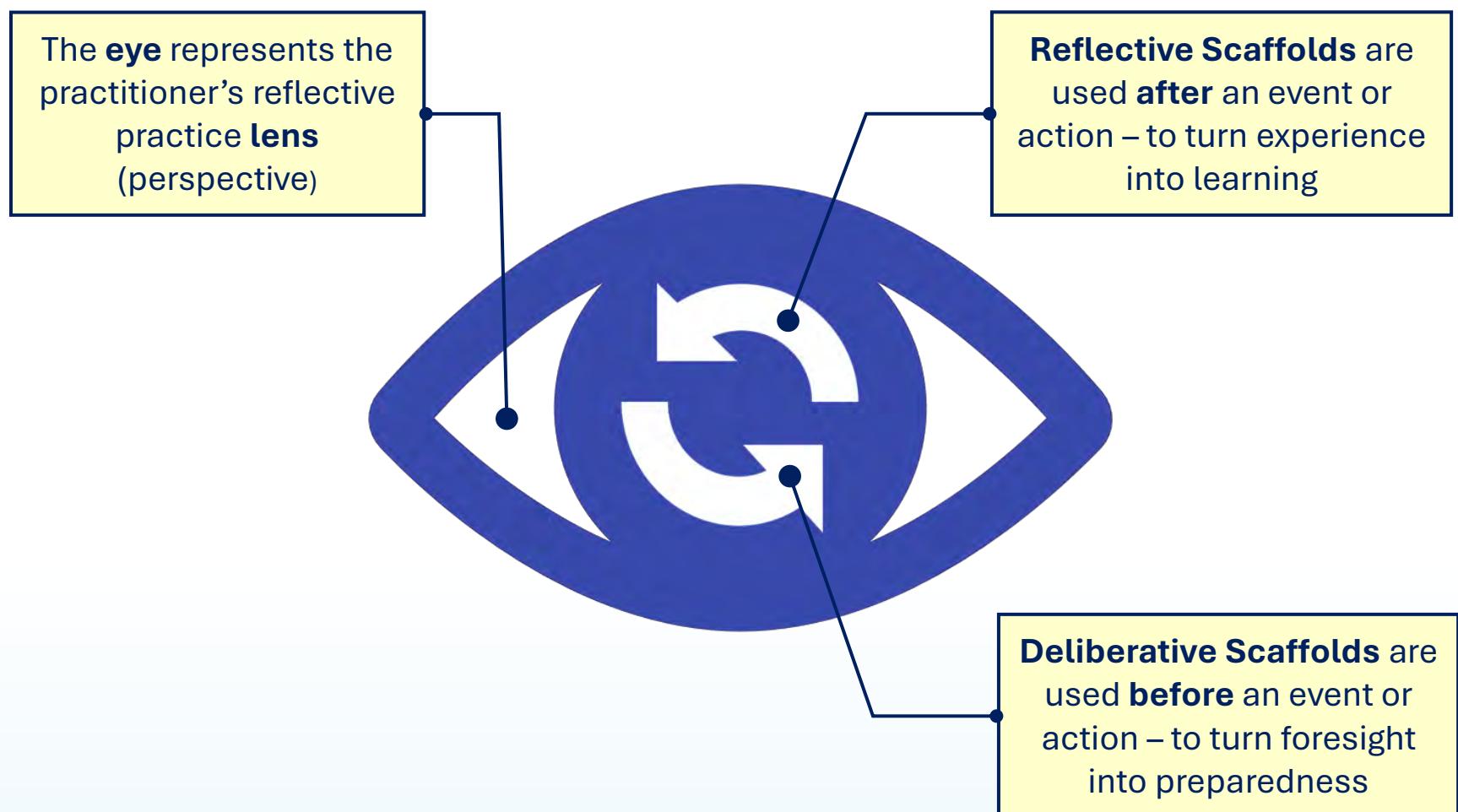


Reflective (and Deliberative) Scaffolds



A Reflective Practice Resource Collection

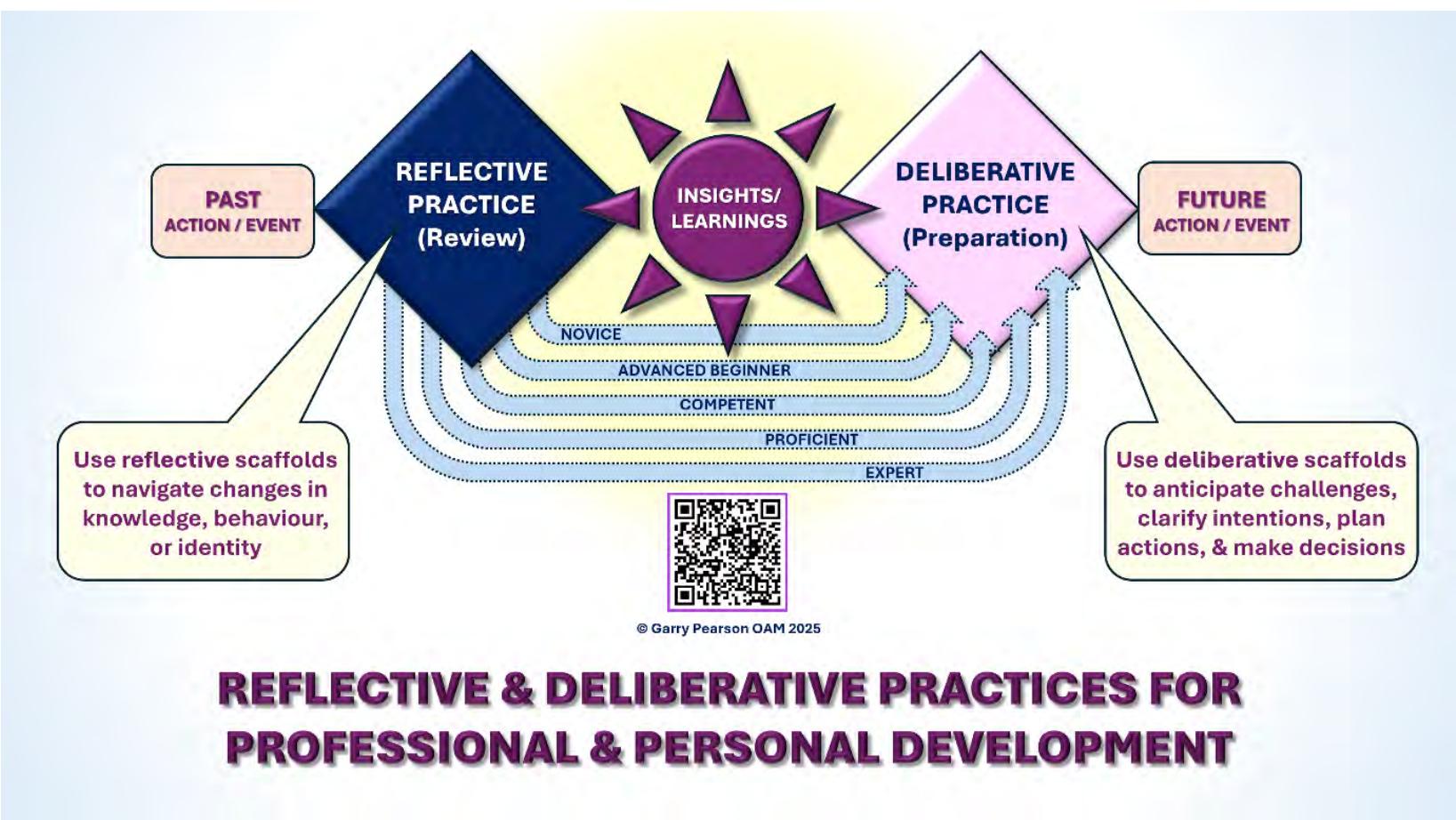
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1. About this resource collection

Reflective (and Deliberative) Scaffolds is designed as a practical companion for professionals, leaders, mentors, and learners who seek to cultivate reflection as a disciplined habit of mind. It assembles a suite of one-page tools, each structured to support conscious sense-making **after** events (reflective scaffolds) or **before** action (deliberative scaffolds).

The publication draws on the long lineage of reflective learning—from John Dewey and Donald Schön to Peter Senge and Jack Mezirow—and adapts those traditions for contemporary practice. Each scaffold offers a cognitive framework for observing, diagnosing, and improving one’s own thinking, judgment, and behaviour. It can be seen as both a *teaching companion* and *self-guided workbook*.

While designed primarily for professional development and leadership learning, the tools are flexible enough for use in mentoring, organisational learning, or personal journaling. Collectively they promote a rhythm of inquiry— **Act → Reflect → Learn/Adjust → Deliberate → Act again**—which deepens insight and strengthens adaptive capacity. This sequence, and its relationship to reflective and deliberative scaffolds, is illustrated below.



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Reflective (and Deliberative) Scaffolds: A Reflective Practice Resource Collection

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2. Introduction: Reflective and Deliberative Scaffolds

In construction, scaffolding provides temporary support so a structure can rise safely until it can stand on its own. In education, metaphoric scaffolding gives learners structured support until knowledge and skills are securely internalised. In mentoring and professional development, scaffolding guides reflection, deliberation, and growth until new ways of thinking, behaving, or leading become self-sustaining.

Just as a scaffold supports a structure while it takes shape, these tools support thinking while insight takes form.

Reflective scaffolds ...

... mediate transformation, serving as functional instruments for navigating change in identity, knowledge, or behaviour, e.g.:

- From unconscious reaction →
- From learner identity →
- From cognitive confusion →
- From problem →



- to conscious response
- to decider/actor identities
- to integrated understanding
- to insight or resolution



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This resource collection introduces two complementary kinds of scaffolding: **reflective scaffolds** and **deliberative scaffolds**.

- **Reflective scaffolds** are used *after* an event or action. They help individuals and groups make sense of what happened, identify strengths and weaknesses, capture lessons, and integrate insights into future practice. Reflective scaffolds turn experience into learning. Insights offered include: *evidence-based learning, awareness of biases in action, recognition of relational/emotional dynamics, understanding of systemic consequences*.
- **Deliberative scaffolds** are used *before* an event or action. They provide structured ways to anticipate challenges, clarify intentions, consider scenarios, and align strategies with values and goals. Deliberative scaffolds turn foresight into preparedness. Insights offered include: *clarity of intention, anticipation of challenges, alignment with mission/values, mental rehearsal of scenarios*.



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What are they?

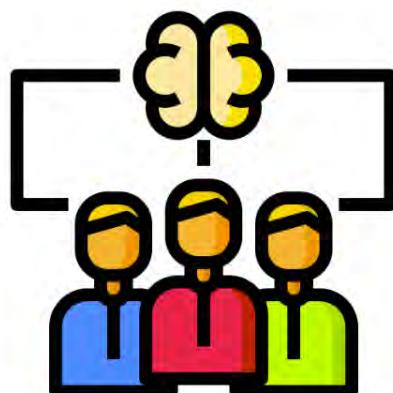
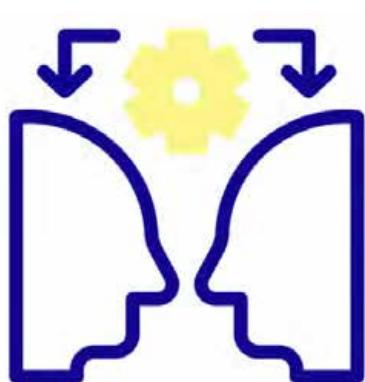
Cognitive tools that:

- Prompt **awareness of thought patterns**, habits, beliefs, & biases
- Help regulate **executive function** processes (e.g., working memory, inhibition)
- Enable **metacognitive oversight** (e.g., noticing when you are stuck, reframing the problem)
- Support **self-directed learning, professional growth, or leadership decision-making**
- Offer a **safe structure** for exploring ambiguity or internal conflict

This collection had its *genesis* in, and was drawn from, reflective practice frameworks developed for professional and governance education, and from mentoring activities.

Who Can Use Them?

- **Individuals** can use scaffolds to structure personal journaling, plan key tasks, or review important experiences. This helps develop executive functions, strengthen metacognitive awareness, and build confidence in decision-making
- **Mentors and mentees** can use scaffolds as shared frameworks for dialogue. They offer prompts and structures that make reflection and preparation more focused, helping mentoring conversations move from the abstract to the practical
- **Work teams** can use scaffolds to prepare for major projects, meetings, or initiatives, and then review their performance afterwards. Used collectively, scaffolds promote shared understanding, accountability, and a culture of learning
- **Boards** - At the governance level, reflection ensures that leadership systems themselves remain adaptive, ethical, and learning-oriented





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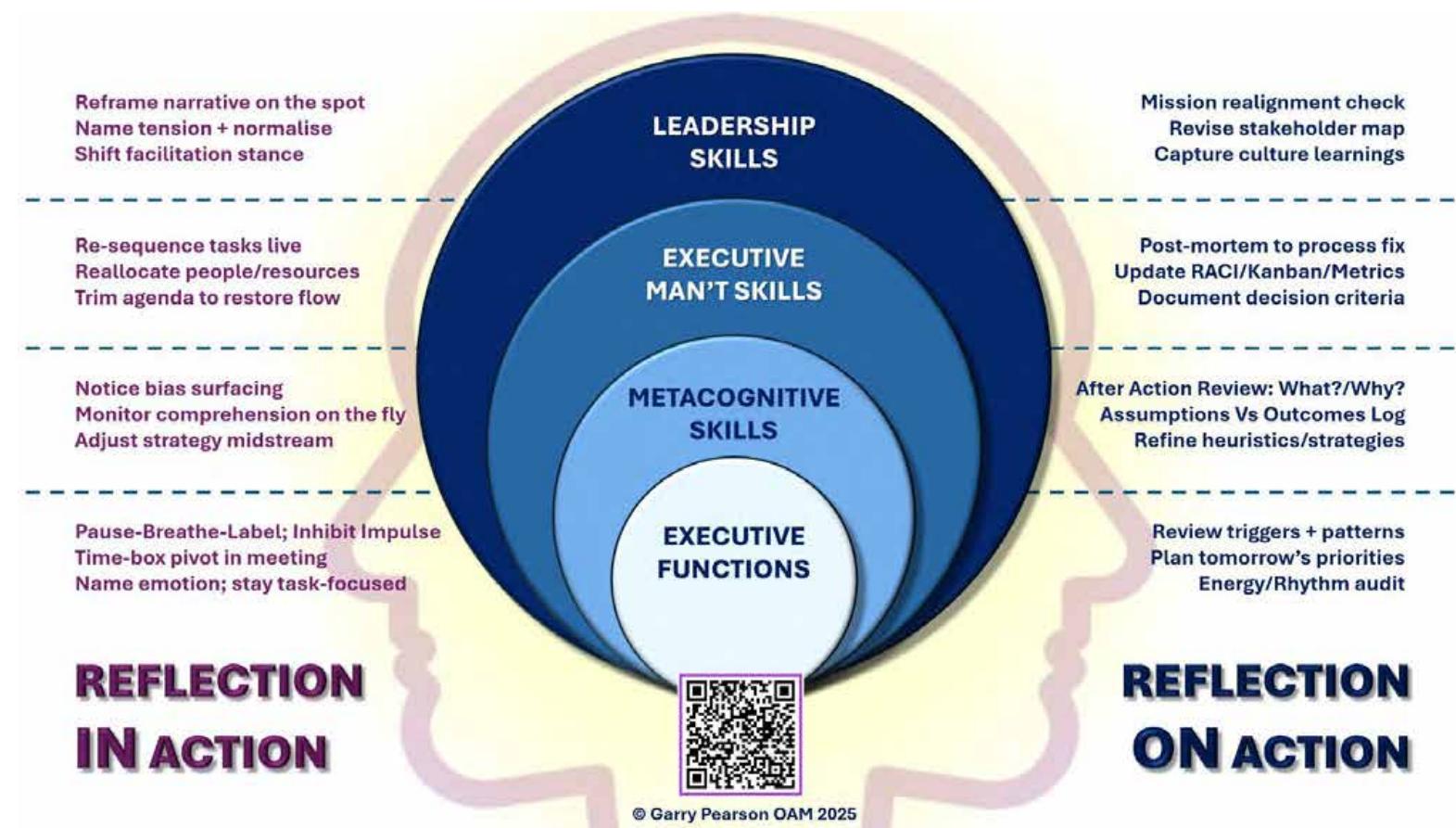
Why and When are they used?

Scaffolds are simple, flexible tools. They can take the form of checklists, prompts, templates, or diagrams. They do not replace judgment or creativity; instead, they make it easier to pause, think clearly, and connect action to purpose. Over time, scaffolds build the habits of reflection and deliberation into everyday practice.

By using these tools regularly, nonprofit leaders and teams can strengthen their ability to anticipate challenges, adapt to change, and align their work with mission and values.

They are most effectively used:

- During **transitions** (e.g., novice → proficient, manager → leader)
- After **key events** (e.g., conflict, mistake, breakthrough)
- In **goal-setting or planning** moments
- While experiencing **identity tension**, burnout, or moral challenge
- In **mentoring**, coaching, & leadership development programs
- As part of **self-directed learning** or **professional supervision**



Partial Scaffold Inventory

The Reflective and Deliberative Scaffolds Inventory that appears on the following page highlights a selection of tools to help users navigate changes in behaviour, knowledge and/or identity. One-page versions of some of those tools have been included in this Resource Collection to illustrate the ways in which scaffolding can assist with personal and/or professional development.

Deliberative & Reflective Scaffolds Inventory



Deliberative Scaffolds (Before the Event)

Pre-Mortem Analysis – imagine the project has failed; list possible causes & plan mitigations.

Decision Criteria Checklist – pre-define values, evidence, & risk tolerances before deciding.

Implementation Timeline Template – map stages, milestones, & checkpoints ahead of execution.

Thinking Aloud Protocol – articulate reasoning & assumptions in advance.

Bias Anticipation Worksheet – predict likely cognitive traps (e.g., confirmation bias).

Goal Clarity Prompt – write down: *What am I aiming for? Why does it matter? How will I know success?*

Stakeholder Map (Pre-Event) – chart interests, likely reactions, & power dynamics before acting.

RACI Matrix (Roles & Responsibilities) – clarify accountability before projects launch.

Scenario Planning Sheet – sketch best-case, worst-case, & most-likely outcomes.

Vision Narrative Draft – craft the story or headline you want others to remember.

Values Alignment Canvas (Pre-Event) – check proposed actions against mission & ethics.

Influence Strategy Map – plan framing, pacing, & sequencing of communication.

Use deliberative scaffolds to structure planning & clarify intention

Reflective Scaffolds (After the Event)

After-Action Review (AAR) – compare intended vs. actual outcomes, note lessons, & define next steps.

Decision Pathway Log – capture how the decision was made, including rationale, options, & consequences.

Learning Log – record what worked, what didn't, & feedback from each stage of implementation.

Assumption & Bias Review – identify which assumptions proved true or false, & which biases appeared.

Observer's Lens Prompts – note what you saw, heard, & sensed without judgment.

Values Alignment Reflection – assess how outcomes aligned (or misaligned) with mission & ethics.

Stakeholder Response Map – note how stakeholders actually responded & what patterns emerged.

Process Review Template – examine how roles & responsibilities played out in practice.

Surprise & Insight Log – capture unexpected results & emergent learning.

Narrative Reflection – compare the story you hoped to tell with the one that actually emerged.

Culture Pulse Check – review how decisions affected morale, trust, & organisational values.

Feedback Harvest – gather input on how your communication landed with others.



Use reflective scaffolds to capture lessons & refine future practice

3. The Continuous Learning Cycle: Act → Reflect → Learn/Adjust → Deliberate → Act

Learning through practice is rarely linear. It unfolds as a **living cycle** that links intention, action, reflection, and adaptation. The two families of scaffolds in this resource—*deliberative* (before action) and *reflective* (after action)—anchor this cycle at opposite but complementary poles. Together they ensure that decisions and experiences feed an ongoing loop of inquiry and improvement.

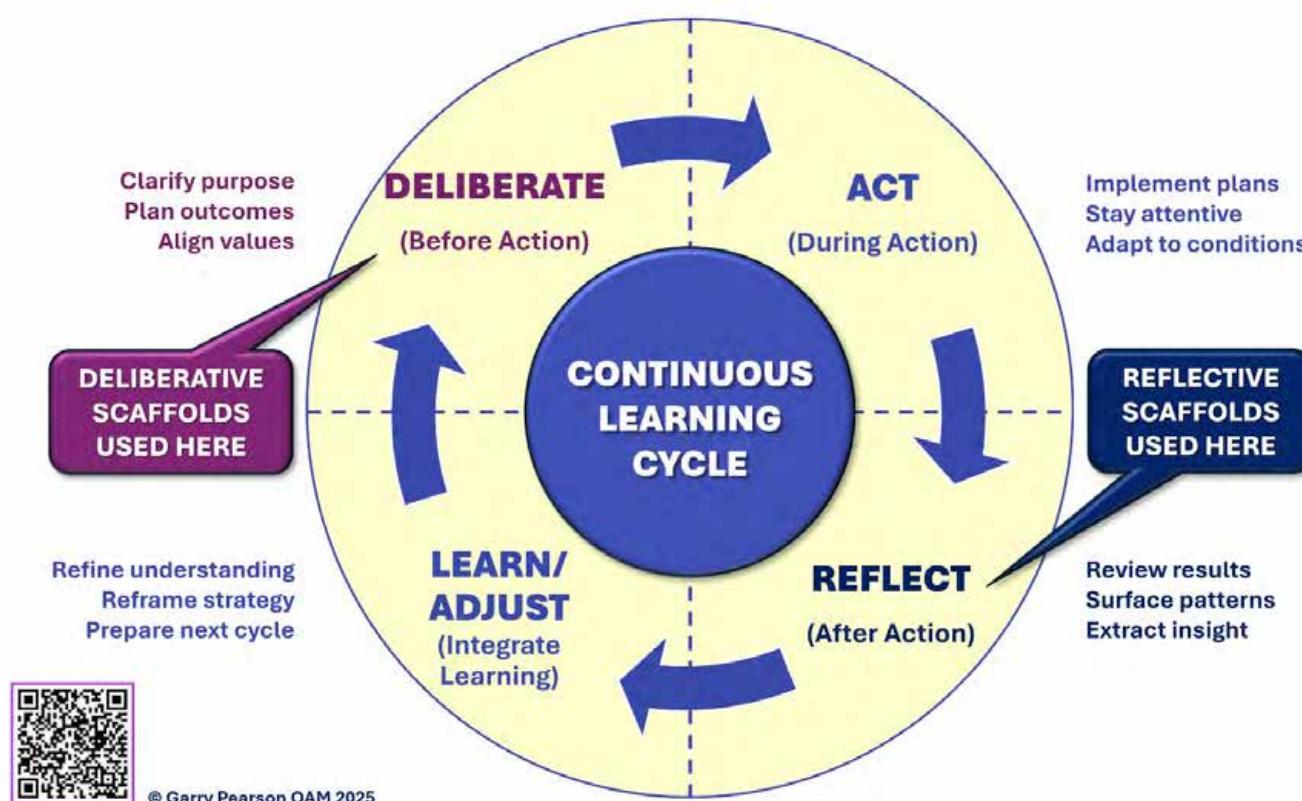
At the start of the cycle is **Action**, where previous plans meet reality. Here, metacognitive and executive functions are tested—attention, adaptability, and composure are needed to respond effectively.

Then follows **Reflection**, when practitioners pause to make meaning of what happened. **Reflective scaffolds** help trace reasoning, emotions, and consequences, turning lived experience into structured knowledge.

Learning and Adjustment allow insight to be invested in future action. Lessons are translated into refined strategies, norms, or behaviours, completing the cycle and preparing the next round of deliberation.

Deliberation sharpens foresight. Before acting again, we clarify purpose, define success, and anticipate risks or ethical tensions. By making thinking visible at this stage, **deliberative scaffolds** help transform impulse into intention.

Over time, this rhythm—**Act → Reflect → Learn/Adjust → Deliberate → Act**—becomes a disciplined habit of adaptive practice. It transforms isolated experiences into cumulative wisdom, and supports individuals, teams, and organisations in aligning what they *intend* with what they *achieve*.



4 . Identity Modes, Learning Stages, and Reflective Scaffolds

Reflection is shaped not only by events, but also by *who* is reflecting. The **TWLDA Identity Mode Framework**—Thinker, Watcher, Learner, Decider, and Actor—offers five complementary lenses through which practitioners can engage in reflection and deliberation. Each mode represents a distinctive way of processing experience and constructing meaning.

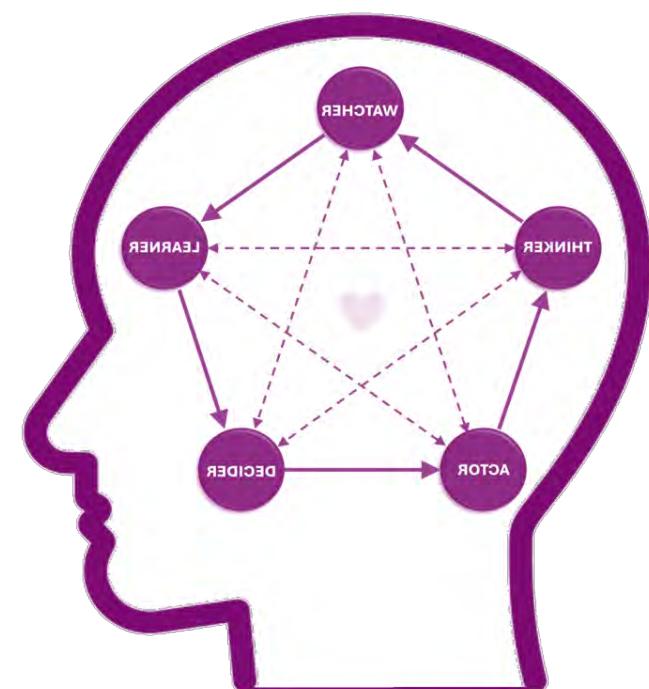
- **Thinker** – analyses, connects ideas, and frames problems conceptually.
- **Watcher** – observes impartially, noticing patterns, biases, and emotional tone.
- **Learner** – experiments, absorbs feedback, and integrates new understanding.
- **Decider** – weighs options, applies values, and commits to a course of action.
- **Actor** – translates intention into behaviour, testing ideas in practice.

Together, these modes represent a **systemic identity in motion**, where cognition, observation, learning, choice, and enactment are continually intertwined. Effective reflection calls on all five: the Thinker's observation and logical analysis, the Watcher's awareness and metacognitive observation of thinking, the Learner's curiosity, the Decider's discernment, and the Actor's courage.

Across the developmental spectrum—from novice to expert—different modes become more or less prominent. Early stages emphasise the **Learner** and **Watcher**, developing awareness and receptivity. Intermediate practice engages the **Thinker** and **Decider**, strengthening analysis and judgment. Mature practice integrates the **Actor**, embodying reflective insight through ethical and adaptive action.

Reflective scaffolds align with these stages, offering structured ways to develop and balance each mode. For instance, an *After Action Review* draws on the Thinker's and Watcher's capacities; a *Values Alignment Canvas* engages the Decider and Actor; while the *Learning Log* nurtures the Learner's iterative growth.

By using scaffolds through all five modes, practitioners cultivate **identity coherence**—a dynamic equilibrium where thinking, observing, learning, deciding, and acting reinforce one another. Reflection thus becomes not just a technique, but a way of being: grounded, adaptive, and purposefully self-aware.



The five lenses offered by the TWLDA Identity Modes (Thinker, Watcher, Learner, Decider and Actor) each provide unique perspectives for reflection on the development of leadership skills at various stages in the learning process.

Some of these are hinted at in the charts on this page, with reflective scaffolds suitable for each stage, suggested in the first of these below.

TWLDA MODE	LEARNING STAGE	REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLDS	TRANSITIONAL* FOCUS
Thinker	Knowledge Acquisition	Concept Mapping Thought Logs Mindfulness Prompts	From Information to Insight
Watcher	Awareness & Observation	Metacognition Prompts Empathy Maps Third-Person Journalling	From Observation to Engagement
Learner	Skill-Building & Adaptation	Learning Journals Feedback Loops Skill Simulations	From Learning to Strategy
Decider	Judgment & Prioritisation	Decision Trees Scenario Planning Values Clarification Tools	From Intention to Action
Actor	Application & Embodiment	After Action Reviews Self-Audit Checklists Reflective Debriefs	From Action to Integration

* Scaffolds are bridging & developmental tools



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REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLDS ALIGNED WITH TWLDA MODES & LEARNING STAGES



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Practical competencies for planning, organising, prioritising, & coordinating tasks & people to achieve strategic objectives

Higher-order capacities for inspiring, guiding, & aligning individuals or systems toward shared purpose through vision, ethics, & influence

Core cognitive processes that regulate attention, behavior, & emotion e.g. working memory, impulse control, & cognitive flexibility

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

EXECUTIVE MAN'T SKILLS

METACOGNITIVE SKILLS

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

The ability to reflect on, monitor, & adjust one's own thinking & learning processes in real time

Nested Developmental Layers of Reflective & Executive Capacity

5. A Short History of Reflective Practice



Timeline not to scale

6. Reflective Governance: Institutional Reflection, Oversight & Adaptation

Governance is more than decision-making and oversight — it is a continuous learning process about how institutions think, act, and evolve over time.

Reflective governance treats the act of governing itself as a practice open to observation, questioning, and renewal. It encourages boards and oversight bodies to think about their own thinking, monitor their decision rhythms, and align their actions with long-term mission and values.

Traditional governance often focuses on compliance and performance. Reflective governance expands this to include *learning, adaptability, and foresight*. It draws on the **MELD cycle** — *Measure, Evaluate, Learn, and Direct* — as an institutional learning loop that parallels the reflective practice cycle used by individuals and teams.

A reflective board asks such key questions as:

- “Are we achieving results?”
- “What patterns are shaping our judgments?”
- “How do we make sense of time — past, present, and future?”, and
- “What signals are we missing?”

Reflective governance helps boards to:

- Examine the assumptions and timeframes shaping their decisions.
- Learn from strategic surprises, near-misses, and unintended consequences.
- Surface latent risks and untested beliefs.
- Balance accountability with adaptability.
- Strengthen institutional memory and intergenerational learning.

Boards that embed reflective scaffolds in their regular routines — such as annual strategy reviews, post-decision debriefs, or committee cycles — transform oversight into **institutional learning**. Reflection becomes a shared discipline that sustains ethical integrity, resilience, and strategic foresight.



The **Plus/Delta** method illustrated overleaf is a simple and rapid reflective governance tool supporting continuous improvement of board operations.



A REFLECTIVE MINUTE

PLUS/DELTA FOR BOARD EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION

At the end of each board meeting,
the chair invites directors to identify:



1 THING WE DID WELL

- Acknowledge effectiveness in one aspect only



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1 THING WE COULD IMPROVE

- Frame your observation constructively
- Use as a basis for suggesting an approach that may improve board effectiveness
- If agreed, the board can ask for implementation from the next meeting, or refer to your Governance Committee for advice

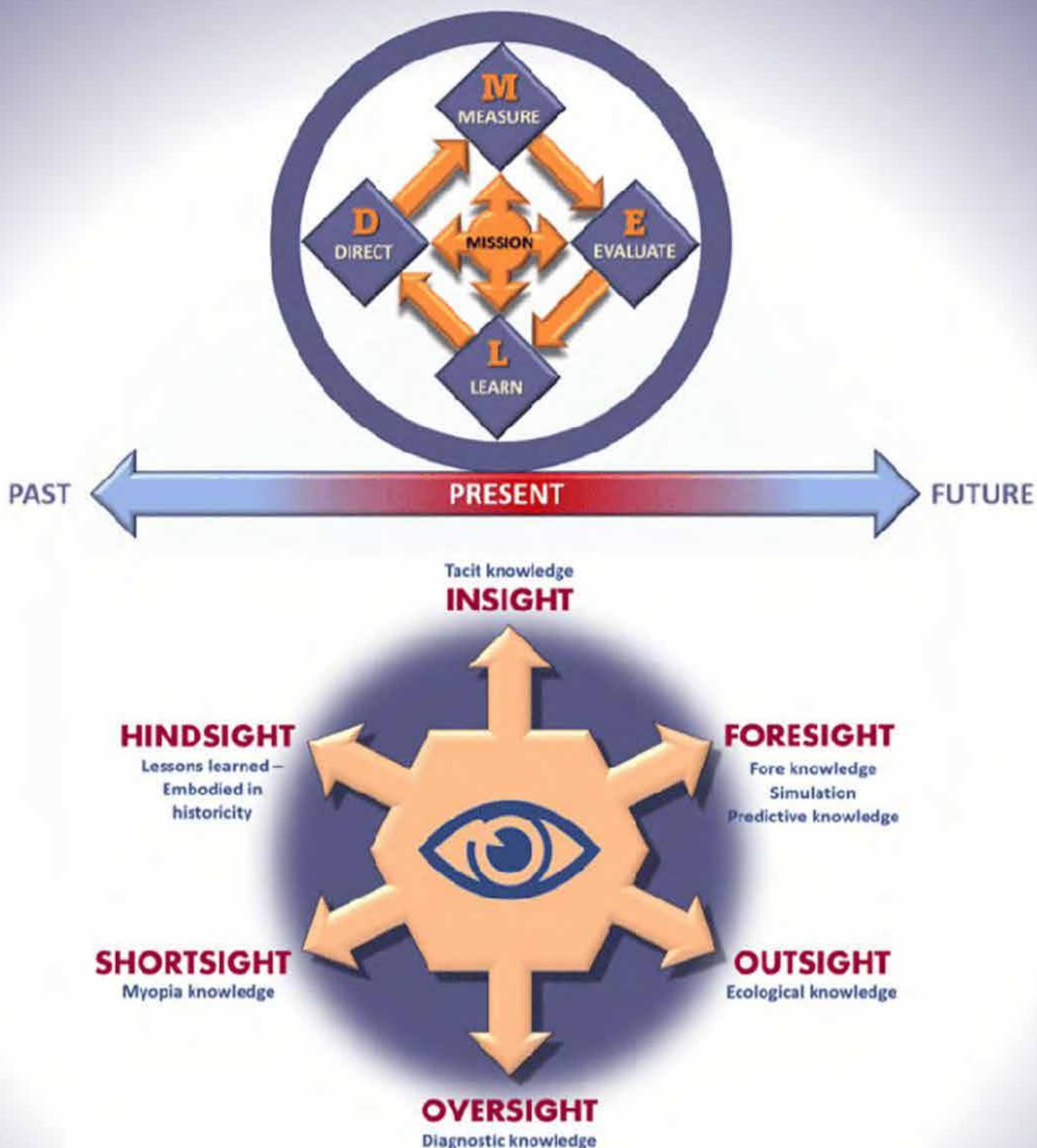


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Below are brief descriptions of several reflective governance scaffolds:

- **Board Signal Radar:** a template for categorising early warning signals across domains (strategic, operational, reputational).
- **Stakeholder Feedback Loop:** structure for gathering and reflecting on stakeholder input (both internal and external) and integrating it into board oversight.
- **Decision After-Action (Board Version):** adaptation of After-Action Review for board decisions—reflecting what went as intended, what didn’t, and governance learning.
- **Governance Assumptions Audit:** surface, test, and challenge core assumptions that undergird strategy, risk appetite, and reporting.
- **Temporal Sensemaking Canvas:** ensure the board asks: *What past patterns influence our future expectations? Where are we overemphasising the short term? Which trends are invisible in our time horizon?*
- **Institutional Memory Harvest:** capture lessons learned, near-misses, and “lost wisdom” from past decisions to inform future governance cycles.
- **Governance Renewal Plan:** periodically review board composition, meeting cadence, agenda design, and decision protocols in light of insights from reflection.

By embedding such scaffolds into board routines—perhaps as standing agenda items, periodic retreats, or committee reviews—governance becomes not just a mechanism, but a **learning practice**. Reflective governance thus closes the learning loop at the level of oversight and institutional resilience.



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REFLECTIVE GOVERNANCE & TEMPORAL METACOGNITION

Further reading on reflective governance can be found in the blog index (page 47).

The following scaffolds are designed to operationalise reflective governance. Each provides a structured way for boards to *measure, evaluate, learn, and direct* — keeping the system of governance itself under reflective review.



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Governance Assumptions Audit



REFLECTIVE GOVERNANCE
SCAFFOLD



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Instruction:

List the key assumptions guiding recent board decisions, then test each against current evidence and context to confirm, revise, or retire it.

Steps:

1. Identify Core Assumptions

- What beliefs guide our current decisions about members, markets, funding, or risk?

2. Evidence Check

- Which of these assumptions are still valid?
- Which rely on outdated evidence or untested inference?

3. Contrary Indicators

- What signals challenge these assumptions?

4. Implications

- If one of our core assumptions is wrong, what consequences follow?

5. Update and Act

- Which assumptions should be retained, revised, or retired?

Prompt:

“What are we treating as true that might no longer be true — and what would change if it isn’t?”



Purpose: To surface & test the underlying assumptions shaping board decisions, risk appetite, & strategic direction.

Used for: Periodic board or committee reflection; before major strategy renewals, mergers, or risk re-assessments.

Timebox: 30–45 minutes (board workshop or facilitated session).

Board Signal Radar



REFLECTIVE GOVERNANCE
SCAFFOLD



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Instruction:

Scan each radar zone for emerging signals, trends, or anomalies, and note which require monitoring, discussion, or immediate action.

Radar Zone	Example Focus	Recent Signals	Priority / Response
Strategic	Mission relevance, sector trends		
Operational	Service delivery, system capacity		
Financial	Liquidity, investment, funding mix		
Reputational	Stakeholder trust, media tone		
Cultural	Values alignment, staff morale		
Regulatory	Policy shifts, compliance changes		

Prompt:

“What small patterns, if ignored, could become large issues?”



Purpose: To track early warning signs, weak signals, and emerging patterns across governance domains before they become critical.
Used for: Quarterly board environmental scans, risk reviews, or strategy updates.
Timebox: 20–30 minutes (as a standing agenda item).

Temporal Sensemaking Canvas



REFLECTIVE GOVERNANCE
SCAFFOLD

Instruction:

Reflect on how the board's focus on past, present, and future shapes decision priorities, and identify where rebalancing of time-frames is needed.

Canvas Elements:

1. Past Orientation

– What historical patterns still shape current decisions?

2. Present Focus

– What immediate pressures dominate our attention?

3. Future Horizon

– How far ahead do our decisions currently look?

4. Temporal Bias Check

– Are we over-emphasising short-term certainty or long-term aspiration?

5. Rebalance

– What governance practices could extend or shorten our temporal focus appropriately?

Prompt:

“What time-frames are shaping our choices — and whose future are we governing for?”



Purpose: To help boards recognise how their sense of time influences priorities, risk perception, and adaptability.

Used for: Strategic reviews, foresight discussions, or annual board planning retreats.

Timebox: 30–40 minutes (facilitated dialogue).

Institutional Memory Harvest



REFLECTIVE GOVERNANCE
SCAFFOLD



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Instruction:

Identify major governance moments from the recent period, extract their lessons and surprises, and record insights to guide future boards.

Steps:

1. Key Moments

- Identify major decisions or turning points from the past year.

2. Insights and Surprises

- What did we learn?
- What surprised us?

3. Continuities and Breaks

- Which lessons still apply?
- Which need reframing?

4. Codification

- Record insights as short “**Governance Lessons Learned**” notes.

5. Transmission

- How will new board members access and build on these insights?

Prompt:

“What hard-won knowledge must not be lost when this board changes?”



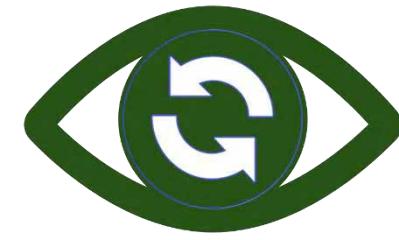
Purpose: To capture lessons from past decisions, transitions, and near-misses before they are lost through turnover or inattention.

Used for: Board succession planning, end-of-year reviews, post-project reflections, or governance transitions.

Timebox: 30–45 minutes (annual or biannual session).

MELD Review Template

(Measure – Evaluate – Learn – Direct)



REFLECTIVE GOVERNANCE
SCAFFOLD



Instruction:

Review recent governance performance through the four MELD stages to generate actionable lessons and direct the next cycle of improvement.

Steps:

Measure

- What indicators show how well governance has fulfilled its purpose this year?

Evaluate

- What do these measures reveal about / effectiveness, ethics, or culture?

Learn

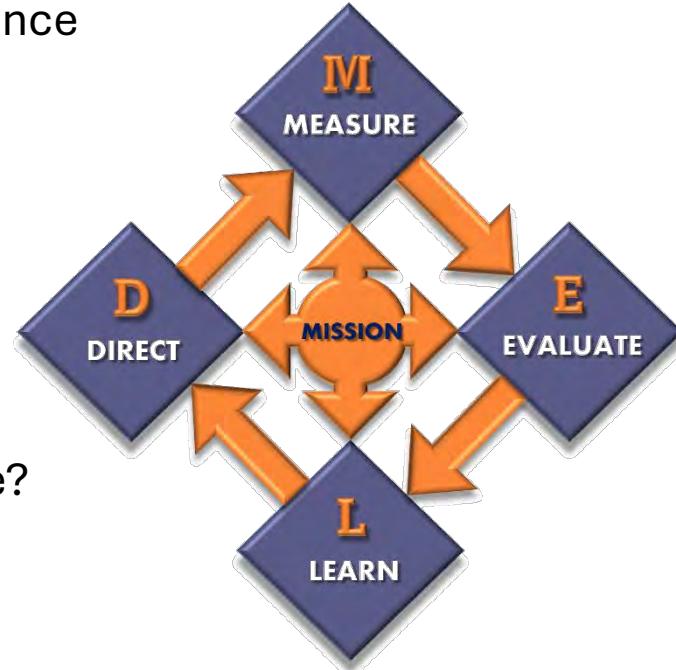
- What patterns, gaps, or insights emerge?
- What might we change?

Direct

- What next steps or governance reforms will we implement in response?

Prompt:

“Are we learning from our own governance — not just from organisational performance?”



Purpose: To provide a simple cyclical framework for continuous reflective governance, ensuring that board decisions generate feedback and adaptation.

Used for: Annual board reflection, post-strategy reviews, or ongoing governance improvement cycles.

Timebox: 45–60 minutes (board or committee discussion).

Root Cause Analysis (RCA) Scaffold



REFLECTIVE GOVERNANCE
SCAFFOLD

Instructions:

Work through each stage sequentially, encouraging inquiry rather than blame.

1. Define the Problem

- What happened, and how was it detected?
- Who or what was affected, and what were the immediate consequences?

2. Describe the Sequence of Events

- What decisions, actions, or omissions led to this outcome?
- When did early warning signs first appear?
- Were there points where communication or coordination between us, our partners, or service providers broke down?

3. Ask “Why?” (at least five times)

- For each contributing factor, ask “Why did this occur?”
- Continue until underlying causes are revealed (e.g., policy gaps, unclear roles, resource limits, cultural or relational misalignments).

4. Identify Root Causes

- Which causes are systemic rather than situational?
- Which relate to governance processes, information flows, shared accountabilities, or inter-organisational dependencies?

5. Develop Corrective Actions

- What changes (policy, process, culture, training, communication, partnership protocols) would prevent recurrence?
- Who is accountable for implementation and follow-up?

6. Reflect and Learn

- What does this reveal about how our governance system perceives and manages shared risk?
- How can we improve collective foresight, collaboration, and trust across governance boundaries?

Prompts:

- *What systemic and relational factors made this outcome possible?*
- *Where did communication or coordination falter — within our board, or between our organisation and its partners?*
- *How can governance processes be strengthened to clarify shared risk ownership and response?*



Purpose: To uncover the systemic and shared causes of a governance problem so that corrective actions address underlying issues of risk, communication, and coordination.

Used for: Board or executive reflection after governance, compliance, or operational failures, or when recurring risks involve multiple stakeholders or partners.

Timebox: 45–60 minutes (board, committee, or cross-organisational session).

7. Deliberative Scaffolds: Tools for Anticipation and Foresight

Deliberative scaffolds support **thinking before action**. They are designed to cultivate foresight, coherence, and ethical grounding at the planning and decision-making stage. Just as reflective scaffolds turn experience into learning, deliberative scaffolds turn **intention into clarity**.

They work by making the invisible architecture of preparation visible—surfacing assumptions, clarifying criteria, mapping dependencies, and rehearsing possibilities. Used individually or collectively, they strengthen systemic awareness and reduce cognitive and ethical blind spots.

Deliberative scaffolds typically help to:

- Anticipate risks, biases, and trade-offs.
- Align actions with mission, values, and long-term goals.
- Make reasoning explicit and defensible.
- Create psychological and cultural readiness for change.
- Encourage foresight as an ethical as well as strategic practice.

Typical examples include:

- *Scenario Planning Sheet* – exploring best, worst, and likely outcomes.
- *Bias Anticipation Worksheet* – identifying likely cognitive traps.
- *Decision Criteria Checklist* – defining standards for good decisions.
- *Values Alignment Canvas* – ensuring alignment between strategy and mission.
- *Feedback Planning Canvas* – preparing for constructive learning conversations.
- *Decision Dependency Snapshot* – mapping interdependencies that affect choice.

By integrating these tools into the front end of decision cycles, individuals and teams can improve not only the **quality** of decisions but also the **integrity** of the processes that lead to them.

The following templates illustrate practical ways to apply deliberation before action. Each may be used individually or combined to strengthen foresight, clarity, and value alignment. Use them as they are, or adapt them to your needs.



A DELIBERATIVE SCAFFOLD

Goal Clarity



A DELIBERATIVE SCAFFOLD

Instructions:

Answer each question briefly.

1. What am I aiming to achieve?

2. Why does this matter (to me, the team, the mission)?

3. What does success look like (specific indicators)?

4. What constraints or boundaries do I need to work within?

5. What first step will move me forward?

Prompt:

How will I know I've stayed on track?



Purpose: To sharpen intentions before starting a task, project, or event.
Used for: Planning presentations, initiatives, or meetings where success depends on clear goals.
Timebox: 5–10 minutes



Decision Criteria Checklist



A DELIBERATIVE SCAFFOLD

Instructions: Complete this checklist before making a key decision.

Criterion	Why it matters	Weight (1–5)	How will I measure it?	Notes
Mission alignment				
Values consistency				
Evidence/data support				
Stakeholder impact				
Risk tolerance				
Resource feasibility				
Long-term sustainability				

Prompt: Which criteria matter most, and how will I balance trade-offs?



Purpose: To clarify decision-making standards before acting, ensuring choices are values-driven & transparent.

Used for: Preparing decisions where trade-offs are likely or where clarity of rationale will matter to others.

Timebox: 10–15 minutes



Values Alignment Canvas



A DELIBERATIVE SCAFFOLD

Instructions:

Complete this canvas before approving or presenting an initiative.

Core Value	How does the proposed action support it?	Possible tensions or trade-offs	Mitigation/ Adjustment
Integrity			
Accountability			
Inclusion			
Stewardship			
Innovation			

Consultation:

Who needs to be informed, consulted, or otherwise involved before the initiative proceeds?

Prompt:

Does this action strengthen or weaken our ability to embody our mission?



Purpose: To ensure proposed actions align with core mission & values.
Used for: Decisions or initiatives with ethical implications, public visibility, or cultural impact.
Timebox: 10–15 minutes



Bias Anticipation



A DELIBERATIVE SCAFFOLD

Instructions:

Review each bias and note how it could distort your judgment.

Bias	How might this show up?	Mitigation strategy
Confirmation bias (favoring what I already believe)		
Optimism bias (overestimating positive outcomes)		
Anchoring (over-relying on initial data)		
Status quo bias (preferring no change)		
Authority bias (giving undue weight to a senior voice)		

Prompt:

What steps can I take to counteract these biases?



Purpose: To surface potential cognitive biases before acting, reducing blind spots.

Used for: Important decisions where judgment could be clouded by assumptions or group dynamics.

Timebox: 10 minutes



Scenario Planning



A DELIBERATIVE SCAFFOLD

Instructions:

Draft best-case, worst-case, and likely scenarios before action.

Scenario Type	Description	Early warning signs	Prepared response
Best case			
Worst case			
Most likely case			

Stakeholders

Communications

Resources

Prompt:

What's common across all scenarios, and what flexibilities do I need?



Purpose: To explore multiple possible futures and prepare for each.
Used for: Preparing for projects, proposals, or events where outcomes are uncertain.
Timebox: 15–20 minutes



Feedback Planning Canvas



A DELIBERATIVE SCAFFOLD

Instructions:

Complete this canvas prior to any feedback exchange. Use it to clarify your intentions, anticipate reactions, and design the environment for effective and respectful communication.

1. Purpose and Intent

- What is the purpose of this feedback exchange (learning, improvement, recognition, alignment, problem-solving)?
- What outcomes do I/we want to achieve?
- How can I frame this conversation to promote openness and curiosity?

2. Context and Relationships

- Who is involved, and what is the nature of our relationship?
- What sensitivities or dynamics should I consider?
- How can I build or maintain trust during the exchange?

3. Preparing to Give Feedback

- What specific observations or examples will I share?
- How can I balance reinforcing strengths with highlighting growth areas?
- What language or framing will be clear, respectful, and actionable?
- How can I invite dialogue rather than defensiveness?

4. Preparing to Receive Feedback

- What areas am I most open to hearing about?
- What feedback do I most need, even if it's hard to hear?
- How will I manage my reactions and listen for meaning?
- What questions can I ask to clarify and deepen understanding?

5. Conditions for a Constructive Exchange

- When and where will this conversation happen?
- How can the environment support honesty and respect?
- What ground rules apply (e.g., confidentiality, no interrupting)?
- How will I close the session — summarising insights and next steps?

Prompt:

How can I ensure this feedback exchange strengthens trust, learning, and alignment — not just performance?



Purpose: To prepare deliberately for giving & receiving feedback — ensuring clarity of purpose, psychological safety, & shared learning outcomes before the feedback exchange occurs.

Used for: Before project reviews, mentoring sessions, team evaluations, or performance conversations. Supports both feedback givers & receivers in framing feedback as a growth-oriented dialogue rather than a judgement.

Timebox: 15–30 mins (individuals) or 30–45 mins (teams or mentor/mentee).



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Decision Dependency Snapshot



A DELIBERATIVE SCAFFOLD

1. Problem & Criteria (2min)

- Decision statement (one line):

Must-meet criteria (max 3): 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____

2. Options & Risks (3min)

- Option A / B / C (1 line each):

Key risks by option (1 word each): A: _____ B: _____ C: _____

3. Dependencies (2min)

- What must be true? (max 3): 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____
- Who/what is on the critical path?

4. Choice & Rationale (1–2min)

- Selected option: _____ Because (≤15 words):

5. Ownership & Comms (1min)

- Owner: _____ Start: _____ Done: _____
- Communicate to: _____ Channel: _____ By: _____

6. On-Action Note (2min after)

- Outcome vs. criteria:
- Reusable lesson (tweet length):



Purpose: To identify & visualise the interdependencies that affect a decision — including upstream inputs, downstream impacts, & cross-team influences — so that choices are made with full situational awareness.

Used for: Before or during decision-making, especially in complex projects or multi-stakeholder contexts where one choice affects many others. Helps anticipate knock-on effects & coordinate dependencies.

Timebox: 15–25 minutes (individual or team session).



8. Reflective Scaffolds: Tools for Review and Insight

Reflective scaffolds support **learning after action**. They help practitioners, teams, and organisations make sense of what has occurred — not merely to record events, but to understand *why* things happened as they did and how future practice can improve. Reflection turns experience into structured learning, strengthening professional judgment, ethical awareness, and adaptive capacity.

These tools encourage users to pause, notice patterns, test assumptions, and surface lessons that might otherwise remain hidden. By introducing cognitive and emotional distance, they enable practitioners to examine outcomes without defensiveness and to reconnect their actions with purpose and values. Used regularly, reflective scaffolds turn experience into insight and embed a culture of learning and accountability.

Reflective scaffolds typically help users to:

- Examine what was intended versus what actually occurred
- Identify causes, consequences, and systemic patterns
- Recognise biases, emotions, and relational dynamics influencing outcomes
- Derive meaning and transferable lessons from experience
- Integrate insights into new strategies, behaviours, or mindsets

Two Mini-Clusters of Reflective Scaffolds

To make navigation easier, the reflective tools are presented in two complementary clusters:

Core Reflective Scaffolds

– Learning from Experience

These scaffolds focus on *review and interpretation*: describing events, analysing what worked or failed, and identifying practical improvements. They provide the foundation for systematic learning through experience.

Included tools:

After-Action Review (AAR) · Mission–Values Tension Canvas · 90-Second Focus Reset · Action Traceback Template · Decision Pathway Log · Narrative Reflection · Ways of Knowing · Culture Pulse Check · Feedback Harvest · Learning Log

Advanced Reflective Scaffolds

– Deepening Insight and Transformation

These scaffolds extend reflection into metacognition and transformative learning. They examine how thinking itself operates and how identity, values, and systems evolve through practice.

Included tools:

Metacognition Prompts · Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle · Gibbs' Reflective Cycle · 4 Lenses of Reflective Practice · Input/Output Model of Reflection · Mezirow's Transformative Learning Process · Rolfe's Reflective Model (What? So What? Now What?)

Together, these two clusters form a **continuum of reflective learning** — from concrete review to deep transformation — allowing practitioners to close the loop of the learning cycle and sustain continuous personal and organisational improvement.

A total of 17 reflective scaffolds appear on the following pages for your use or adaptation.





Core Reflective Scaffolds

(Learning through structured review of actions, decisions, & outcomes)



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Core reflective scaffolds provide the foundation for reflective practice.

They guide the practitioner through the essential stages of describing what occurred, recognising strengths and challenges, drawing conclusions, and applying new learning.

These tools are most useful immediately after key events, projects, or experiences, and can be used in mentoring, supervision, or team debriefs to ensure that insight is systematically captured and transferred into improved performance.

Mini-Index (with links):

1. [After-Action Review \(AAR\) Template](#) – Clarify what was intended, what happened, and what will change next time.
2. [AAR Example](#) – A hypothetical use of the AAR scaffold – illustrative only
3. [Mission–Values Tension Canvas](#) – Explore where actions or decisions align—or misalign—with organisational values.
4. [90-Second Focus Reset](#) – Quickly restore composure and intentionality during stressful or reactive moments.
5. [Action Traceback Template](#) – Retrace decisions and influences leading to specific outcomes.
6. [Decision Pathway Log](#) – Record and analyse reasoning patterns to strengthen judgment.
7. [Narrative Reflection](#) – Use storytelling to uncover meaning and professional growth.
8. [Ways of Knowing](#) – Reflect through multiple lenses—empirical, ethical, relational, and aesthetic.
9. [Culture Pulse Check](#) – Examine values, trust, and learning within organisational culture.
10. [Feedback Harvest](#) – Translate stakeholder input into actionable insights.
11. [Learning Log](#) – Track and consolidate ongoing insights over time.

Use the “Return to Core Index” button to access this mini-index (p.28)

Use the “Return to Advanced Index” button to access that mini-index (p.40)

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NOTE: While several scaffolds share similar questions, each applies a distinct lens or learning purpose—ensuring complementary, not redundant, pathways into reflective understanding. By varying sequence, focus, and framing, the scaffolds accommodate diverse contexts and cognitive styles, enabling users to select the structure that best fits their moment of reflection or learning goal.

AFTER ACTION REVIEW (AAR) TEMPLATE



A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD



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Intent & Criteria:

- Goal: _____
- Success signals/metrics: _____

What Happened? (facts & surprises):

- Timeline Highlights: _____

Why the Gaps? (causes/assumptions):

- _____

Keep / Stop / Start:

- Keep: _____
- Stop: _____
- Start: _____

Decisions (owner + when):

1. _____ — Owner: _____ — Due: _____
2. _____ — Owner: _____ — Due: _____

Updates Made Now:

- Decision register / Kanban / Metrics: _____

Check-Back Date: ____ / ____ / ____ (5–15 min)



Purpose: To capture key learning from an event or activity by comparing what was intended, what actually happened, why it happened, & what can be improved next time.

Used for: Immediately after projects, meetings, crises, or operations to ensure rapid collective learning & improvement. Works best when guided by a neutral facilitator & psychological safety is established.

Timebox: 30–60 minutes depending on team size & complexity of the event.

After-Action Review (AAR)



A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD

Scenario: Presentation of a new Community Engagement

Policy proposal to the Executive Team

Manager completing review: SH, Director of Programs

Date: October 2025



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1. Intended Outcomes

- Secure Executive approval to draft and pilot a new Community Engagement Policy.
- Demonstrate alignment of proposal with mission and strategic priorities.
- Gain input on implementation steps and resources needed.

2. What Actually Happened

- The presentation was delivered as planned, with clear slides and supporting data.
- Several executives asked detailed questions about resource allocation and compliance.
- The CEO expressed support in principle but requested more consultation with frontline staff before moving forward.
- Formal approval was deferred pending further staff input.

3. What Went Well (Strengths)

- Data visualizations on community impact were persuasive and well received.
- Linking the proposal to strategic priorities increased credibility.
- My calm and confident delivery helped establish trust.
- The CFO appreciated the early inclusion of cost estimates.

4. What Could Be Improved (Weaknesses/Challenges)

- I underestimated the level of concern about compliance obligations.
- I did not allocate enough time for Q&A, leading to some rushed responses.
- I could have engaged frontline staff earlier, to pre-empt concerns raised by the CEO.

5. Surprises / Unexpected Outcomes

- The COO suggested aligning this policy with a broader review of stakeholder engagement practices — a bigger scope than anticipated.
- The HR Director proposed incorporating a training component for staff, which I hadn't considered.

6. Lessons Learned

- Anticipate compliance and resourcing concerns as central issues, not side points.
- Secure frontline staff perspectives before bringing proposals to the Executive level.
- Allow more time for dialogue, even if that means shortening the initial presentation.
- Stay open to scaling proposals up (e.g., integrating with related policy areas).

7. Actions / Next Steps

- Conduct 3 frontline staff focus groups within the next month to gather feedback. (Owner: SH)
- Revise the policy draft to include compliance checks and potential training needs. (Owner: SH + HR Director)
- Schedule a follow-up presentation in 6 weeks with updated proposal. (Owner: CEO's PA to coordinate)



The AAR template was used to reflect on what was intended, what happened, why, & what will be done differently.

MISSION-VALUES TENSION CANVAS



A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD

1. Decision/Incident (1min)

- What happened? (one line):

2. Mission & Value Touchpoints (3min)

- Mission link (how this advances our purpose):

- Values at play (tick max 3): dignity equity integrity learning
 stewardship transparency other: _____

3. Tension Mapping (3min)

- Where was the pull between outcomes and values?

- Who experienced trade-offs? (stakeholders):

4. Alternative Moves (3min)

- One option that raises alignment with minor cost:

- Safeguard to prevent value-erosion next time:

5. Narrative & Signal (2min)

- One sentence we can say to staff/partners that honours both impact and values:

6. Commit (2-3min)

- Change we'll make (owner + by when):

- Culture cue (meeting ritual, hiring signal, celebration):



Purpose: To surface & explore tensions between organisational mission priorities & lived or espoused values, supporting ethically grounded decision-making & cultural coherence.

Used for: Strategic planning, policy discussions, or ethical dilemmas where practical actions may appear to conflict with stated principles. Helps teams realign around purpose & integrity.

Timebox: 30–45 minutes (team or leadership group discussion).



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90-SECOND FOCUS RESET



A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD



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1. Trigger & Sensation (10sec)

What just triggered me? email comment deadline

ambiguity other: _____

Body signal(s):

tight chest jaw breathing

heart rate other: _____

2. Name It (10sec)

Emotion (circle): *annoyed / anxious / frustrated / flat / other: _____*

Intensity (0–10): _____

3. Reset (20sec)

3 breaths (mark ✓✓✓)

Label → “Right now, my job is...” (9 words max):

4. Micro-Goal & Time Block (20sec)

One next visible action (≤2 min):

Time block: 10m 15m 25m other: _____

5. Shield (10sec)

Do Not Disturb Timer on Notes closed Tabs pruned

Other _____

6. Commit (20sec)

Start time: _____ : _____ Finish: _____ : _____ Result: _____



Purpose: To quickly restore clarity, calm, & intentionality during moments of distraction, emotional reactivity, or decision fatigue.

Used for: In the moment — before a meeting, conversation, or key task — to centre attention & reconnect with purpose. Can be used individually or introduced as a short team pause practice.

Timebox: 90 seconds (solo) or 2–3 minutes (group pause/refocus).



A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD

ACTION TRACEBACK TEMPLATE



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1. Context Snapshot (1min)

- Situation & goal in one sentence:

- Success criteria I (explicitly) used:

2. My Initial Model (2min)

- Key assumptions I was relying on:

1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____

- Heuristics I used (fast rules of thumb):

3. What Happened (facts, 2min)

- Notable outcomes/surprises:

4. Diagnosis (3min)

- Which assumption was off? Why?

- What signal did I miss or overweight?

- Bias flags (tick): confirmation availability sunk cost
 halo status quo

5. Model Update (2min)

- If faced with this again, I would now...

- New/updated heuristic (10 words max):

6. Next Experiment (2min)

- Small test I'll run: _____ Owner: _____ By: _____ / _____ / _____



Purpose: To retrace the sequence of actions, decisions, & influences that led to a specific outcome — revealing patterns, assumptions, & systemic factors that shaped results.

Used for: After an event, project, or unexpected outcome (positive or negative). Particularly useful for diagnosing process issues, governance gaps, or learning opportunities.

Timebox: 20–40 minutes (individual or team review).

Decision Pathway Log



A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD

Instructions:

Use this scaffold soon after a decision has been made or implemented. Record the key elements of your reasoning and the contextual factors that influenced it. Review periodically to identify patterns, biases, and strengths.

1. Decision Summary

- What decision was made?
- What was the context or situation?
- Who was involved in making or influencing it?

2. Information and Evidence

- What data, evidence, or insights informed the decision?
- What information was missing or uncertain at the time?
- How did I/we weigh competing sources of evidence?

3. Reasoning and Assumptions

- What key assumptions underpinned the decision?
- Were these explicitly tested or taken for granted?
- What logic, models, or frameworks guided the analysis?

4. Influences and Pressures

- What external factors (time, politics, personalities, risk appetite) affected the process?
- How did values, organisational culture, or emotions influence the outcome?
- Were any biases or blind spots apparent in hindsight?

5. Outcome and Learning

- What happened as a result of the decision?
- Did the outcome align with the original intention?
- What would I/we repeat, modify, or avoid next time?

Prompt:

- How does my/our decision-making pattern reflect underlying values, assumptions, and learning maturity?
- What principles or habits will I carry forward into future decisions?



Purpose: To document decision reasoning & influences, enabling clear reflection on how choices were made, what assumptions guided them, & implications for future decisions.

Used for: After completing a major decision-making process — such as policy development, strategic planning, project design, or leadership choices. Ideal for individuals or teams seeking to strengthen judgment, transparency, and learning agility.

Timebox: 20–30 minutes (individual reflection) or 40–60 minutes (team debrief).



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Narrative Reflection



A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD



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Instructions:

Write or speak through the prompts below as if you were telling the story of the event. Focus on meaning-making rather than factual detail. Allow patterns, emotions, and insights to emerge naturally.

1. The Story (What Happened)

- Describe the situation as a narrative — setting, characters, key events, turning points.
- What was at stake for you and others involved?
- What emotions or tensions defined the moment?

2. The Interpretation (Why It Matters)

- What meanings or themes stand out in this story?
- What assumptions or values of mine were revealed?
- What surprised me or challenged my expectations?

3. The Re-authoring (Shifts and Insights)

- How might I retell this story from a different perspective?
- What new understanding or possibility has emerged?
- If this were a chapter in a larger story of my professional journey, what would it be called?

4. The Forward Movement (Next Chapter)

- What do I want to carry forward from this story?
- How does this experience reshape my identity, priorities, or sense of purpose?
- What actions will help me live out this new understanding?

Prompt:

- What story am I telling myself about this event — and what happens if I tell it differently?



Purpose: To use storytelling as a means of reflection — turning experiences into coherent narratives that reveal meaning, growth, and evolving identity.

Used for: Processing complex or emotionally charged experiences; reframing setbacks or challenges; exploring professional identity; or preparing for mentoring, supervision, or developmental conversations.

Timebox: 20–40 minutes (longer for deeper writing or group storytelling).

Ways of Knowing

Prompts for Reflection



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1. Empirical Knowing (Carper, 1978)

- What evidence, research, or professional knowledge is relevant here?
- How does data or theory help me interpret this situation?

2. Aesthetic Knowing (Carper, 1978)

- What was I sensing or intuitively grasping?
- How did I respond creatively or sensitively to what was happening?

3. Personal Knowing (Carper, 1978)

- How did my own values, identity, or self-awareness influence what I did?
- What did I learn about myself?

4. Ethical Knowing (Carper, 1978)

- What moral questions or value conflicts were present?
- Did I act in line with what I believe is right?

5. Relational Knowing (White, 1995)

- How did my relationships with others shape what happened?
- How did I recognise and honour the personhood of others involved?

6. Emancipatory Knowing (Chinn & Kramer, 2008)

- What social, cultural, political, or systemic forces shaped this situation?
- Whose voices or perspectives were excluded, & how might this be addressed?

7. Integrative/Adaptive Knowing (Zander, 2007)

- How do these different ways of knowing come together in this experience?
- What new patterns or forms of knowledge are emerging?
- How will this reflection adapt my future practice?

Suggested Prompts

- Which “way of knowing” was most visible to me in this situation?
- Which do I usually overlook, and what would I gain by attending to it?
- What actions or commitments emerge from integrating all these perspectives?

References

Carper, B. A. (1978). Fundamental patterns of knowing in nursing. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 1(1), 13–23.

Chinn, P. L., & Kramer, M. K. (2008). *Integrated theory and knowledge development in nursing* (7th ed.). St. Louis, MO: Mosby Elsevier.

Johns, C. (1994). Nuances of reflection. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 3(2), 71–75.

White, J. (1995). Patterns of knowing: Review, critique, and update. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 17(4), 73–86.

Zander, P. E. (2007). Ways of knowing in nursing: The historical evolution of a concept. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 58(2), 193–200.



Purpose: To support deep, structured reflection by examining experiences through multiple dimensions of knowledge — scientific, artistic, personal, ethical, relational, and emancipatory.

Used for: Professional reflection, mentoring, education, and leadership contexts where holistic insight is needed. Especially useful for exploring complex or value-laden experiences.

Timebox: 20–40 minutes (longer if used in mentoring or group settings).

Culture Pulse Check



A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD

Instructions:

Use this scaffold individually or collectively to reflect on how people *feel*, *behave*, and *relate* within the organisation. Encourage openness and curiosity rather than defensiveness. Capture insights for cultural improvement.

1. Values in Action

- Which of our core values are most visible in everyday behaviour?
- Which values feel aspirational rather than consistently lived?
- What recent examples illustrate value alignment — or misalignment?

2. Energy and Engagement

- What is the general emotional tone or morale within the team?
- Where is energy high and where is it low?
- What motivates and sustains people right now?

3. Communication and Trust

- How freely is information shared?
- Are people comfortable speaking up, offering ideas, or admitting errors?
- What recent events have built or eroded trust?

4. Inclusion and Belonging

- Whose voices are most heard, and whose are missing or marginalised?
- Do people feel psychologically safe and valued for their differences?
- How inclusive are decision-making processes & celebrations of success?

5. Learning and Adaptability

- How do we respond to mistakes or feedback — with blame or curiosity?
- What recent experiences show our capacity to learn and adapt?
- Are reflection and experimentation encouraged or constrained?

Prompts:

- If our culture were a living system, what signals suggest it's thriving — and what signals suggest it needs care?
- What small shifts could strengthen alignment between what we say we *value* and what we *actually do*?



Purpose: To assess how well current team or organisational culture aligns with stated values, goals, & lived experience — identifying strengths, tensions, & opportunities for cultural growth.

Used for: Periodic team reflection; leadership retreats; project reviews; or mentoring sessions focused on team dynamics, morale, inclusion, & alignment with mission or values.

Timebox: 20–30 minutes for individuals; 40–60 minutes for teams or groups



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A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD

Feedback Harvest



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Instructions:

Use this scaffold soon after feedback is received. Capture your first reactions, analyse the meaning beneath the words, and identify recurring themes or opportunities for development (ensuring confidentiality & psychological safety).

1. The Feedback Landscape

- What feedback did I/we receive? From whom, and in what context?
- What was the feedback purpose (informational, corrective, appreciative, developmental)?
- What first reactions or emotions did it trigger?

2. Patterns and Themes

- What key messages or themes emerge across sources of feedback?
- Where is there alignment or contradiction between perspectives?
- What do these patterns reveal about my/our strengths and growth areas?

3. Reflection and Interpretation

- What feels accurate or resonates strongly — and why?
- What feedback do I resist or find surprising?
- What assumptions might have influenced my interpretation?

4. Integration and Action

- What specific changes or experiments can I try given this feedback?
- How will I measure or notice improvement?
- What support or resources do I need to act on this insight?

5. Gratitude and Forward Connection

- What am I grateful for in this feedback process?
- How can I close the loop by acknowledging and engaging stakeholders?

Prompts:

- What patterns in this feedback point to who I am becoming — and who I wish to become next?
- How can feedback become not a judgement, but a mirror for growth?



Purpose: To systematically gather, interpret, & learn from feedback — turning diverse perspectives into actionable insights that enhance performance, relationships, & self-awareness.

Used for: After receiving formal or informal feedback (e.g., performance reviews, project debriefs, mentoring conversations, peer reflections, or survey data). Suitable for both individuals & teams.

Timebox: 20–30 minutes (individuals) or 40–60 minutes (teams/groups).



A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD

Learning Log



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Instructions:

Complete this scaffold after a relevant event or activity. Keep entries concise but consistent — regular reflection builds cumulative insight. Review past entries periodically to identify themes, growth, and recurring challenges.

Learning Log Template

Date / Event	What happened? (Description)	What did I learn or notice?	Why is this significant? (Insight / Connection)	How will I apply this learning? (Next Steps)

Prompts:

- What patterns do I see across multiple entries?
- How is my understanding, confidence, or effectiveness changing over time?
- What next learning goals or adjustments are emerging from these reflections?



Purpose: To record, track, & consolidate insights gained from experiences over time — linking events, observations, & lessons learned to ongoing professional & personal development.

Used for: Capturing short reflective entries after meetings, projects, training, or mentoring sessions; identifying learning patterns across time; building evidence for performance reviews or professional portfolios.

Timebox: 5–15 minutes per entry (longer for synthesis reviews).

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Advanced Reflective Scaffolds

(Deepening reflection through models of metacognition, experiential learning, and transformation)

Advanced reflective scaffolds extend the process beyond review into meta-reflection—thinking about how one thinks, learns, and changes.

They help practitioners move from event-focused reflection to systemic awareness, integrating identity, cognition, and purpose.

These tools are particularly valuable for educators, mentors, and leaders seeking to cultivate reflective depth and adaptive expertise.

Mini-Index (with links):

1. [**Metacognition Prompts**](#) – Observe and regulate your own thinking before, during, and after complex tasks.
2. [**Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle**](#) – Connect experience, reflection, conceptualisation, and experimentation.
3. [**Gibbs' Reflective Cycle**](#) – Follow a six-step sequence for structured post-event analysis.
4. [**4 Lenses of Reflective Practice \(Brookfield\)**](#) – View experiences through the perspectives of self, peers, stakeholders, and scholarship.
5. [**Input/Output Model of Reflection \(Moon\)**](#) – Convert experience (input) into action and learning (output).
6. [**Mezirow's Transformative Learning Process**](#) – Challenge core assumptions and re-shape identity through deep learning.
7. [**Rolfe's Reflective Model \(What? So What? Now What?\)**](#) – Simplify reflection into three guiding questions for sense-making and action planning.



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Use the “Return to Core Index” button to access that mini-index (p.28)

Use the “Return to Advanced Index” button to access this mini-index (p.40)

Metacognition Prompts



A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD



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Instructions:

Use these prompts to monitor your thinking at three key stages — *before*, *during*, and *after* an event or task. The aim is to recognise how you think, not just what you think, and to adjust your strategies accordingly.

Before the Task – Planning and Awareness

- What is the purpose of this task or decision?
- What do I already know about it?
- What strategies or approaches might work best?
- What possible difficulties or biases might I encounter?
- How will I know I'm succeeding?

During the Task – Monitoring and Regulation

- Am I staying focused and organised?
- Is my current strategy working?
- What am I noticing about my reactions or thinking patterns?
- Do I need to adjust my approach, pace, or attention?
- How am I managing emotion, uncertainty, or distraction?

After the Task – Evaluation and Transfer

- What strategies worked well, and which didn't?
- What did I learn about how I think or decide?
- Were there moments of insight, confusion, or bias?
- How will I approach similar tasks differently next time?
- What changes could improve my future performance?

Prompts:

- What have I learned about *how I learn*?
- How does metacognitive awareness enhance my professional judgment and adaptability?



Purpose: To strengthen awareness & regulation of one's own thinking, decision-making, & learning strategies — turning implicit mental processes into explicit insight.

Used for: Enhancing problem-solving, decision-making, or learning effectiveness in professional, educational, or leadership contexts. Useful before, during, & after tasks that require analysis, planning, or reflection.

Timebox: 10–20 minutes (or shorter bursts during active tasks).



A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD

Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

SEE: Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.



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Instructions:

Move through the cycle after any significant learning experience.

1. Concrete Experience

What did I do? What happened? (facts only)

2. Reflective Observation

What did I notice? What patterns stood out?

3. Abstract Conceptualisation

What theories, concepts, or insights can I connect to this?

4. Active Experimentation

How will I test or apply this learning in practice?

5. Conclusion

What else could I have done?

Prompt

Am I completing the whole cycle, or do I tend to skip a stage?



Purpose: To turn experience into learning by cycling through reflection, conceptualisation, & experimentation.

Used for: Reviewing learning experiences, training activities, & practical projects.

Timebox: 15–20 minutes



A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

SEE: Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*. Oxford: Oxford Polytechnic.



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Instructions:

Work through each stage in sequence after an event, experience, or decision.

1. Description

What happened? (facts only)

2. Feelings

What was I thinking and feeling?

3. Evaluation

What was good and bad about the experience?

4. Analysis

Why did things happen the way they did?

5. Conclusion

What else could I have done?

6. Action Plan

If this happened again, what would I do differently?



Purpose: To provide a structured, step-by-step process for reflecting on an experience and planning future action.

Used for: Systematic post-event reflection in education, healthcare, and professional settings.

Timebox: 20–30 minutes



A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD

4 Lenses of Reflective Practice



ADAPTED FROM: Brookfield, S. D. (1995).
Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.



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1. The Lens of the Self

- How did I perceive the situation?
- What assumptions, values, narratives, or emotions shaped my actions?
- What personal patterns do I notice repeating?

2. The Lens of Stakeholders/Clients (formerly “students”)

- How might those I serve or affect have experienced this?
- What feedback (direct or indirect) reflects their perspective?
- Were their needs met, overlooked, or misunderstood?

3. The Lens of Colleagues/Peers

- How might peers, colleagues, or collaborators interpret this event?
- What alternative approaches or critiques might they suggest?
- Who could I consult to test my interpretation?

4. The Lens of Scholarship/Professional Knowledge (formerly “theoretical literature”)

- What frameworks, evidence, or professional standards apply here?
- How does research or theory shed light on my experience?
- Where does my practice diverge from best practice guidance?

Prompts

- Which lens felt most natural for me? Which was most challenging?
- Did looking through multiple lenses shift my perspective?
- What assumptions became visible when comparing the lenses?
- How will I adjust my practice based on these insights?



Purpose: To uncover assumptions & blind spots by viewing an experience through multiple perspectives.

Used for: Any professional role — leaders, managers, colleagues, consultants, nonprofit workers, or healthcare practitioners.

Timebox: 15–30 minutes



A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD

Input/Output Model of Reflective Practice

ADAPTED FROM: Moon, J. A. (1999). *Reflection in Learning and Professional Development: Theory and Practice*. London: RoutledgeFalmer



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1. Input (What went in?)

- What was the event, task, or experience?
- What prior knowledge or expectations did I bring?
- What feelings or contextual factors influenced me?

2. Process (How did I work with it?)

- What did I notice?
- How did I interpret or make sense of it?
- What connections did I make to previous experiences or theory?
- What assumptions did I question or reinforce?

3. Output (What comes out?)

- What new understanding have I gained?
- What changes in behaviour, practice, or identity do I foresee?
- What actions will I take next time?

4. Meta-Reflection (Extended element)

- How has this reflection changed how I learn from experience itself?
- Are there systemic, relational, or ethical factors I should also consider?

The model emphasises that reflection involves:

Inputs → experiences, tasks, prior knowledge, feelings, context

Processes → noticing, making sense, relating to prior knowledge, questioning, reinterpreting, reframing

Outputs → changed awareness, reframed understanding, possible actions, new learning, deep learning



Purpose: To systematically convert experience (input) into learning & action (output).

Used for: Individuals or teams seeking to turn raw events into structured insights.

Timebox: 15–25 minutes

Mezirow's Transformative Learning Process



SEE: Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD

Instructions:

Work through the following steps, allowing time for critical questioning and new perspective-taking.

1. Disorienting dilemma

Identify the event or situation that has unsettled your assumptions.

2. Self-examination

Notice your feelings (fear, anger, guilt, shame, uncertainty).

3. Critical assessment of assumptions

Ask: what beliefs or frames of reference are being challenged?

4. Recognition of shared experience

Explore how others may experience similar dilemmas.

5. Exploration of new roles/options

Consider new ways of acting, thinking, or being.

6. Planning a course of action

Outline steps you could take if adopting this new perspective.

7. Acquiring knowledge and skills

Identify what you need to learn to pursue the new course.

8. Provisional trying of new roles

Experiment with small changes in behaviour or identity.

9. Building competence and confidence

Practice the new role until it feels authentic.

10. Reintegration

Incorporate the new perspective into your life, identity, or professional practice.

Prompt:

Which assumptions feel most difficult to question? What possibilities open if I do?



Purpose: To surface & challenge underlying assumptions & frames of reference, enabling deep, identity-shaping learning.

Used for: Situations involving major challenges, disorienting dilemmas, or when questioning core beliefs & perspectives.

Timebox: 45–60 minutes (may be spread over multiple sessions)



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A REFLECTIVE SCAFFOLD

Rolfe's Reflective Model



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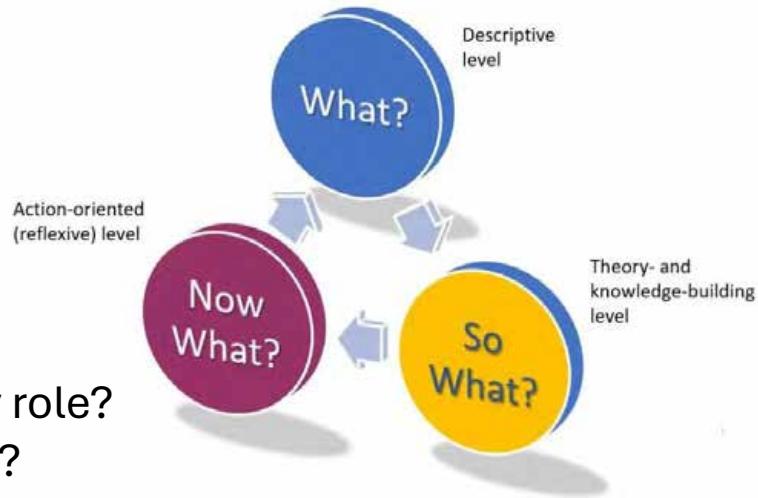
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Ref: Rolfe, G., Freshwater, D., & Jasper, M. (2001). *Critical Reflection in Nursing and the Helping Professions: A User's Guide*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Levels of reflection



Instructions:

Work through each stage in order, keeping responses concise and focused on insight rather than detail.

1. What? — Description

- a. What happened?
- b. Who was involved and what was my role?
- c. What outcomes or results occurred?
- d. What facts or observations are relevant?

2. So What? — Interpretation

- a. Why does this experience matter?
- b. What did I learn about myself, others, or the system?
- c. What worked well or poorly, and why?
- d. How did my assumptions or emotions shape the situation?

3. Now What? — Application

- a. What will I do differently next time?
- b. What specific actions or changes will I implement?
- c. What support or resources do I need to improve practice?
- d. How will I measure progress or impact?

Prompts:

What key insight stands out from this reflection?

How does this learning connect to my broader goals, values, or identity?

What one change will have the greatest positive impact next time?



Purpose: To guide structured reflection on an event or experience using three sequential questions—*What?* *So What?* and *Now What?*—that move from description to meaning-making and forward action.

Used for: Post-event reflection by individuals or teams to clarify what occurred, why it mattered, and how learning will be applied in future situations.

Timebox: 15–25 minutes (individual) or 30–40 minutes (team discussion).

9. Recommended Reading on Reflective Practice



Foundational Thinkers & Origins

Dewey, J. (1933). *How We Think*. Boston: D.C. Heath. (*Philosophical roots of reflection as the bridge between experience and learning.*)

Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1974). *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1978). *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Schön, D. A. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books.

Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Generic Reflective Cycles & Models

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*. Oxford: Oxford Polytechnic.

Rolfe, G., Freshwater, D., & Jasper, M. (2001). *Critical Reflection in Nursing and the Helping Professions: A User's Guide*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Johns, C. (1994). *Nuances of Reflection*. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 3(2), 71–75.

Argyris, C. (1991). *Teaching Smart People How to Learn*. *Harvard Business Review*, 69(3), 99–109.

Transformative & Critical Reflection

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brookfield, S. D. (1995). *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Boud, D., Keogh, R., & Walker, D. (1985). *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning*. London: Kogan Page.

Moon, J. A. (1999). *Reflection in Learning and Professional Development: Theory and Practice*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Raelin, J. A. (2002). “I Don’t Have Time to Think!” versus the Art of Reflective Practice. *Reflections*, 4(1), 66–79.

Therapeutic & Psychological Approaches to Reflection

Beck, A. T. (1976). *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders*. New York: International Universities Press. (*Introduces cognitive reflection through thought records.*)

Ellis, A. (1962). *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy*. New York: Lyle Stuart. (*Origins of the ABC model of reflective self-examination.*)

White, M., & Epston, D. (1990). *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends*. New York: Norton. (*Narrative therapy and re-authoring as reflective practice.*)

Perls, F. (1969). *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*. Moab, UT: Real People Press. (*Includes the “empty chair” technique as structured reflection.*)

Grant, A. M., & Cavanagh, M. J. (2007). Evidence-based coaching: Flourishing or languishing? *Australian Psychologist*, 42(4), 239–254. (*Bridges reflective practice with coaching and positive psychology.*)

Leadership & Organisational Applications

Heifetz, R. A. (1994). *Leadership Without Easy Answers*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (*Encourages adaptive leadership through reflection.*)

Kegan, R., & Lahey, L. L. (2009). *Immunity to Change: How to Overcome It and Unlock the Potential in Yourself and Your Organization*. Boston: Harvard Business Press. (*Uses reflective scaffolding to surface hidden assumptions.*)

Senge, P. M. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday. (*Connects organisational learning with reflective disciplines.*)



Index of Related Articles on the Taking Care of the Present Blog

The Taking Care of the Present blog includes a series of posts that explore the principles of reflection, deliberation, identity, and governance which underpin this resource collection. The articles listed here extend or illustrate the concepts embedded in the three clusters of scaffolds: **Reflective Governance**, **Deliberative Practice**, and **Reflective Practice**. All posts are authored by Garry Pearson OAM and may be freely accessed online.

Reflective Governance Scaffolds

(Institutional reflection, MELD learning loops, temporal metacognition, and board renewal)

[Reflective Governance: The MELD Model](#)

Introduces Measure–Evaluate–Learn–Direct as a continuous learning cycle for governance systems.



[Continuous Reflective Governance](#)

Describes how reflection can be built into the everyday rhythm of board work.

[Temporal Sensemaking and Reflective Governance](#)

Examines how boards interpret time and continuity, linking temporal metacognition with foresight.

[How Effective is Your Board? – Part 4](#)

Applies the MELD cycle as a reflective framework for assessing board effectiveness.

[The Curious Director](#)

Explores curiosity as a reflective disposition fundamental to ethical and adaptive governance.

Deliberative Scaffolds

(Planning, framing, decision preparation, and foresight before action)

[Quality Question Quest](#)

Discusses the art of designing generative questions that strengthen collective deliberation.

[And So, We Turn Our Attention to ... Attention Itself](#)

Reflects on the role of attention in thoughtful decision-making and situational awareness.

[Frames, Framing Effects, and Reframing](#)

Explains how cognitive framing influences deliberation and how reframing supports better sensemaking.



[Prompts and Algorithms for People \(Not Just AI\)](#)

Introduces human “prompt design” as a reflective–deliberative method for improving thought quality and dialogue.

[Tag Index: Deliberation](#)

Aggregates all posts tagged *deliberation*, covering decision framing, moral foresight, and collective reasoning.

Reflective Scaffolds

(Post-event reflection, metacognition, learning from experience, and identity development)

[Reflective Practice Using Identity Mode Processing – Part 1](#)

Introduces the Thinker–Watcher–Learner–Decider–Actor (TWLDA) model as a reflective practice framework.

[Reflective Practice Using Identity Mode Processing – Part 2](#)

Explores applications of identity modes with other reflective and developmental models.

[Hurry Up and Slow Down](#)

Considers pacing, rhythm, and timing as integral to reflective awareness and self-regulation.

[Tag Index: Reflective Practice](#)

Compiles all blog entries exploring reflection, identity, and learning in action.

[Frames, Framing Effects, and Reframing \(cross-listed\)](#)

— Reinterpreting earlier experiences through new frames; relevant to both reflective and deliberative learning.



10. About the Author

Garry Pearson OAM FIML MICDA



Garry is a seasoned consultant, director, and CEO, with extensive experience in the non-profit, for-purpose, and public sectors. Since 2017, he has provided consulting and advisory services to various organisations, including associations, charities, public agencies, and community organisations. Consulting work has also been undertaken as an Associate with [Intersect Global Partners](#). Garry mentors current and emerging leaders – with a strong reflective practice focus.

His [blog articles](#) and curated collection of policy, governance, and leadership resources on [Pinterest](#) have a wide international following. (*The QR code that appears on most charts in this resource collection links to Garry's Pinterest resources*).

His expertise includes troubleshooting projects, strategic reviews and planning, governance enhancement, risk management, situational and stakeholder analysis, member/client engagement, liaison with directors and managers, report preparation, and drafting or reviewing governance and operational documents.

Recent consulting projects include advising on board and director effectiveness, governance and compliance system reviews, organisational effectiveness and structural reviews, strategy development and execution, merger due diligence, and risk management. Recent clients include the Victorian Multicultural Commission, Monash Health, Brimbank City Council, Community Languages Victoria, and the Institute of Managers and Leaders.

Garry is Chair and Co-Founder of Japer Technology Pty Ltd, an information security company.

He is a Fellow of the Institute of Managers and Leaders and a Member of the Institute of Community Directors Australia. Garry was the CEO of the Australian Dental Association Victorian Branch Inc. (ADAVB) from 1991-2017.

He established the eviDent Foundation (supporting practice-based dental research) in 2011 and served as its CEO until 2016, alongside his role with the ADAVB. Garry's earlier roles include Secretary to the Board and Director of Corporate Services at the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board (VCAB), which was responsible for the Victorian Certificate of Education.

Garry was inducted into the Associations Hall of Fame in 2017 and awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 2018. He has also received several honours from the dental profession.

His work continues to explore how reflective and deliberative practices can strengthen the moral, temporal, and systemic dimensions of governance and leadership.



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/garry-pearson-1119101/>

CONTACT: pearsongl@gmail.com

