Session 4: Engaging and Collaborating with Others
Job Aid: Rose Bud Thorn

Tool – Rose Bud Thorn (RBT)

Aim or objective: To collaboratively document opinions on a situation in terms of being positive, having potential, or being problems in order to understand the scope of the data available and thus the ability to conduct a quick analysis.

About the tool/activity: The Rose Bud Thorn is a problem framing method to help groups understand all of the issues involved. The group generates all of the known information about a topic and then clusters and sorts the issues and ideas into the following categories:

- **Roses** (Pink sticky notes): Issues and/or ideas that are positives or successes.
- **Buds** (Green sticky notes): Issues and/or ideas that have potential to be more positive than negative
- **Thorns** (Blue sticky notes): Issues and/or ideas that are negatives or challenges

Time: 60 to 75 minutes

Instructions:
- Using the trigger questions have the participants individually and independently respond to the trigger questions with one comment/thought per color-coded sticky note. After 5-7 minutes of silent ideation, have the participants gather into groups of 4/5 and post their ideas on a large white board. One way to do this is to have the first participant read aloud each of their ideas and post. As this is done in Round-robin, cluster like themes or topics. For example, if one person has “currently we fund formal classroom training, yet performance enhancements come from experiences” as an idea, any other ideas related to this can be posted with that idea.
- Post all ideas in round-robin format
- Review the various groups to see if there are redundancies or overlaps.
- Label the clusters.
- Discuss the clusters – and their inter-relationships. What are the themes? What are the successes, the opportunities, and the major challenges for each cluster?
- This is an ideation exercise and not a time for solution.

Variants and/or additional ideas:
- Have a large board divided into three sections labeled Roses, Buds, and Thorns. Using sticky notes have participants post the issues accordingly.
- When working on one project or concept a variant of this type of analysis is the Wellbeing North Star activity found at [http://innovationgames.com/wellbeing-north-star/](http://innovationgames.com/wellbeing-north-star/)

Materials needed:
3x3 sticky notes in pink (rose) blue (bud) and green (thorn)
Sharpies with black medium point

Caveats:
- Make sure the trigger question is clear and understood by all participants
- Roses are successes. Buds are the most difficult to identify, because they are not successes, but they are not severe pain points either. Thorns are most definitely the challenges and the pain points.
- The purpose is identification of all issues and sorting into the three categories. Fixing the problem or talking about options for solutions is not part of this exercise.

Credits: LUMA Institute, *Innovating for People: Handbook of Human-Centered Design Methods*, 2012