

The LEVERS project



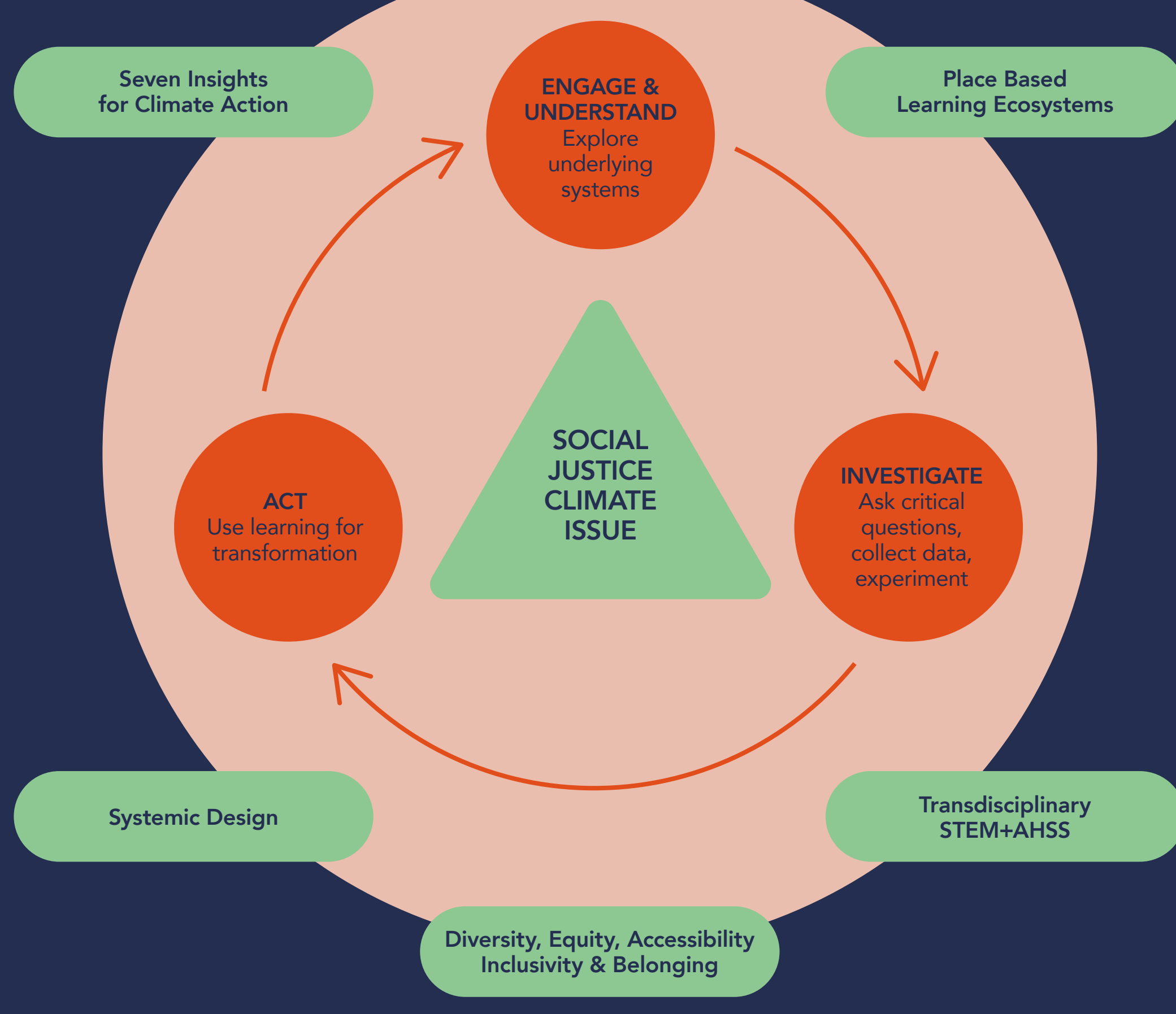
LEVERS², or Learning Ventures for Climate Justice, is a collaborative project engaged with delivering climate action learning initiatives to nine European locations, as part of the Horizon Europe programme.

LEVERS champions the creation of learning ecosystems, with the goal of building knowledge and skills to address locally significant climate challenges. It aims to be a catalyst for positive change through the use of transformational approaches and methods. Together these projects will build capable communities committed to climate justice.

THE LEVERS LEARNING FRAMEWORK

The first output of the project is the LEVERS Learning Framework: a comprehensive anthology of the ideas, approaches and methods which have influenced or are being used within LEVERS.

The LEVERS Learning Framework: The outer wheel details the foundational areas of knowledge and practice, while the inner wheel contains the cyclical actions each initiative is taking to address their local social justice and climate issue



THE LEVERS FIELD GUIDE

The LEVERS Field Guide² builds on the Learning Framework by documenting the progress of the nine very different initiatives or 'Learning Ventures'. These 'notes from the field' form a realistic and useful account of the projects as they develop from seed idea into proposal (Instalment 1) and eventually into operation (Instalment 2).



Image shows the Forth (UK) team meeting with Richard Galpin of Walworth Neighbourhood Food Model and Faye Walters of the Soil Association at Walworth Garden during their research and discovery phase in 2023.

The Field Guide

Instalment 1

February 2024

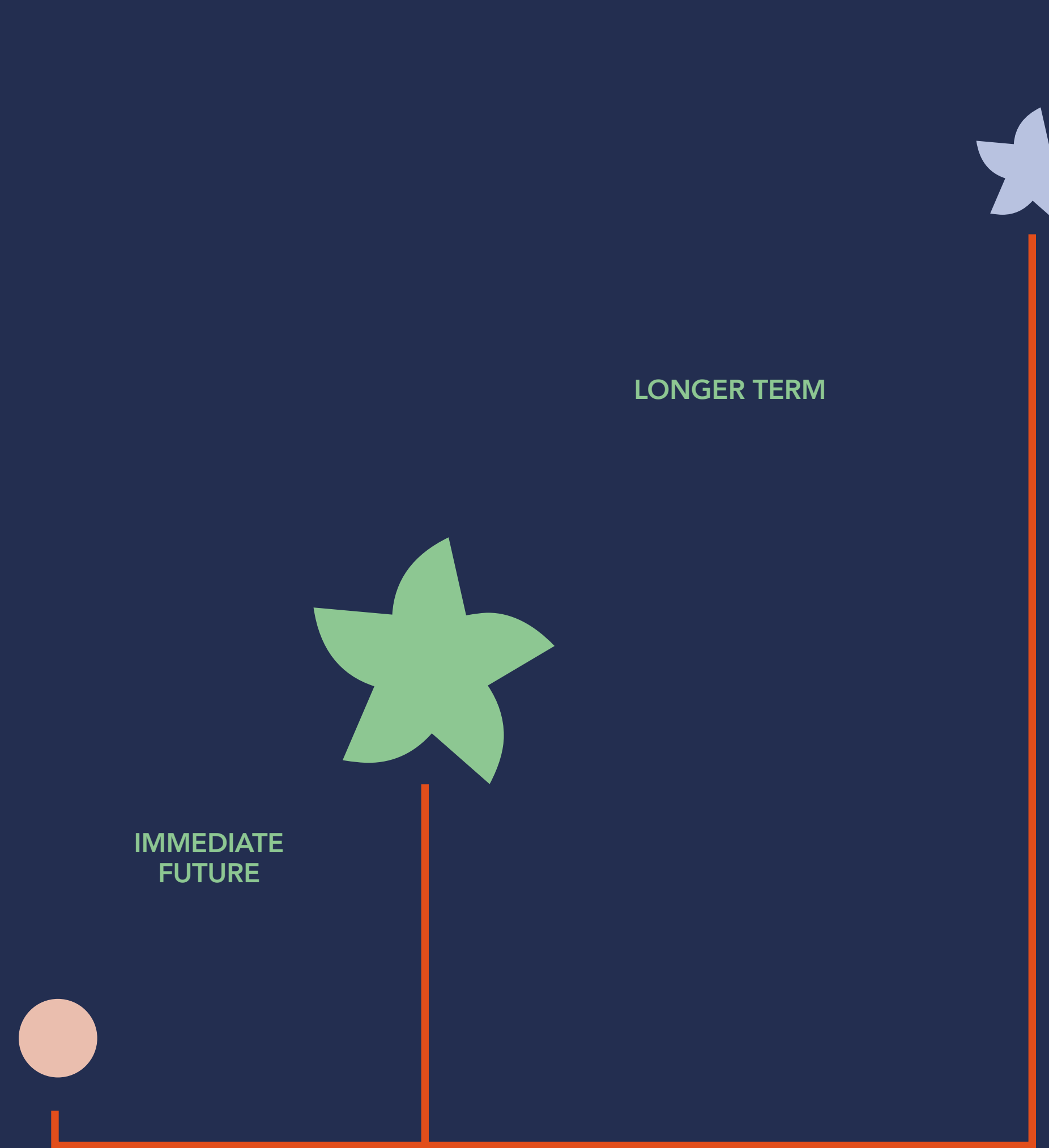
The first instalment of the Field Guide tracks the development of the Learning Ventures during their initiation in late 2023. This development journey was anchored in 4 stages, which model a systemic design process: *Vision, Understand, Design* and *Iterate*. The Field Guide mirrors this structure, with 4 chapters recounting the goals and important tools used during each stage of work.

Each chapter is accompanied by diary entries completed by each of the nine partners, offering direct insight into their different experiences. These allow us to observe how shared intentions and similar approaches can produce very different outcomes. Each Learning Venture aims to unlock (rather than impose) change, so the local setting – from local needs to resources, skills or timing – shapes their potential.

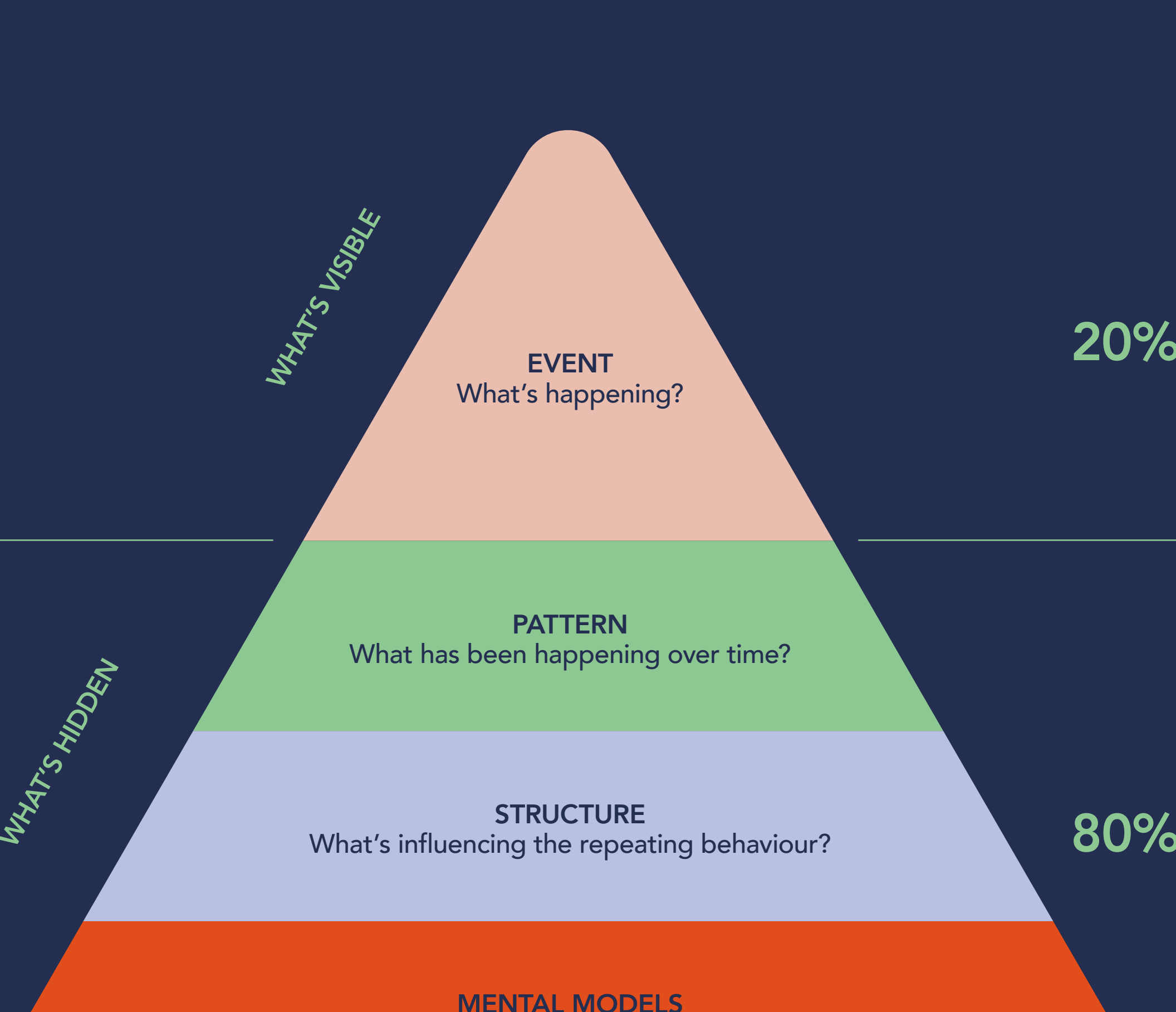
STAGE 1 VISION

The combination of ambition and urgency tempts us to jump to action, but climate related projects often address complex systemic challenges in which typical problem solving approaches don't apply.

In this stage of work² the nine Learning Ventures are setting a course, by expressing their ambition and finding shared goals. It's not about a preferred course of action, but describing – and interrogating – desired outcomes. This starting point can be revisited as the process progresses.



Guiding star / near star is a simple tool used to chart long term ambitions and define more immediate projects which progress toward that goal.



The iceberg model is commonly used in systems thinking as a prompt to think beyond the visible symptoms of a situation and investigate the underlying causes. It can be used as an analytical tool or to develop creative solutions.

STAGE 2 UNDERSTAND

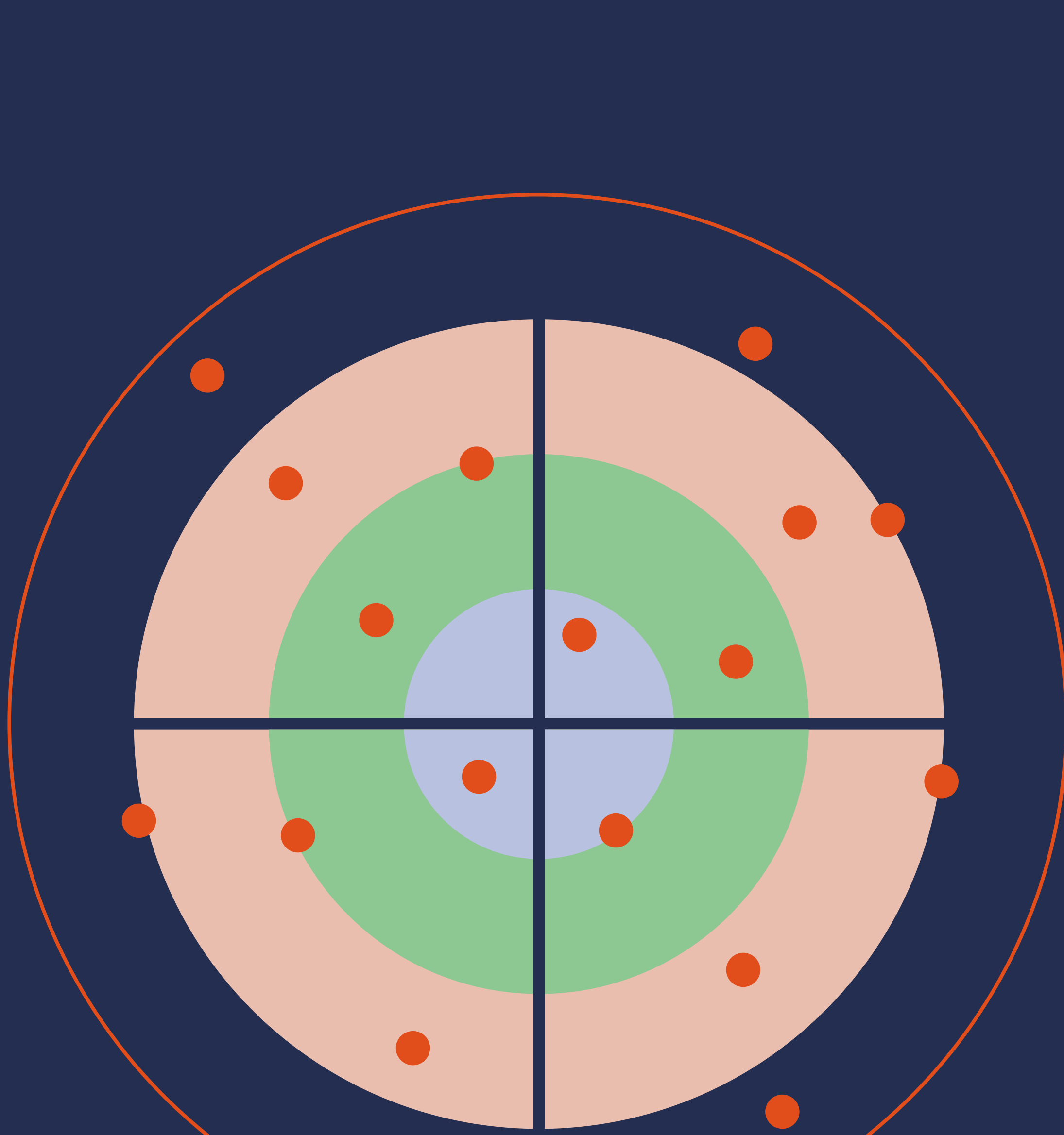
Climate related projects are often complex and interdependent. We need to understand the interrelated forces that shape the system before making any intervention that aims to change or influence it.

In this stage of work² the Learning Ventures take a step back to ask: what makes the existing system the way it is? Why is it not better already? Asking these questions helps identify where in the system we might work to maximise our impact, while recognising our intervention as a part of wider systemic efforts and accepting the limitations that brings.

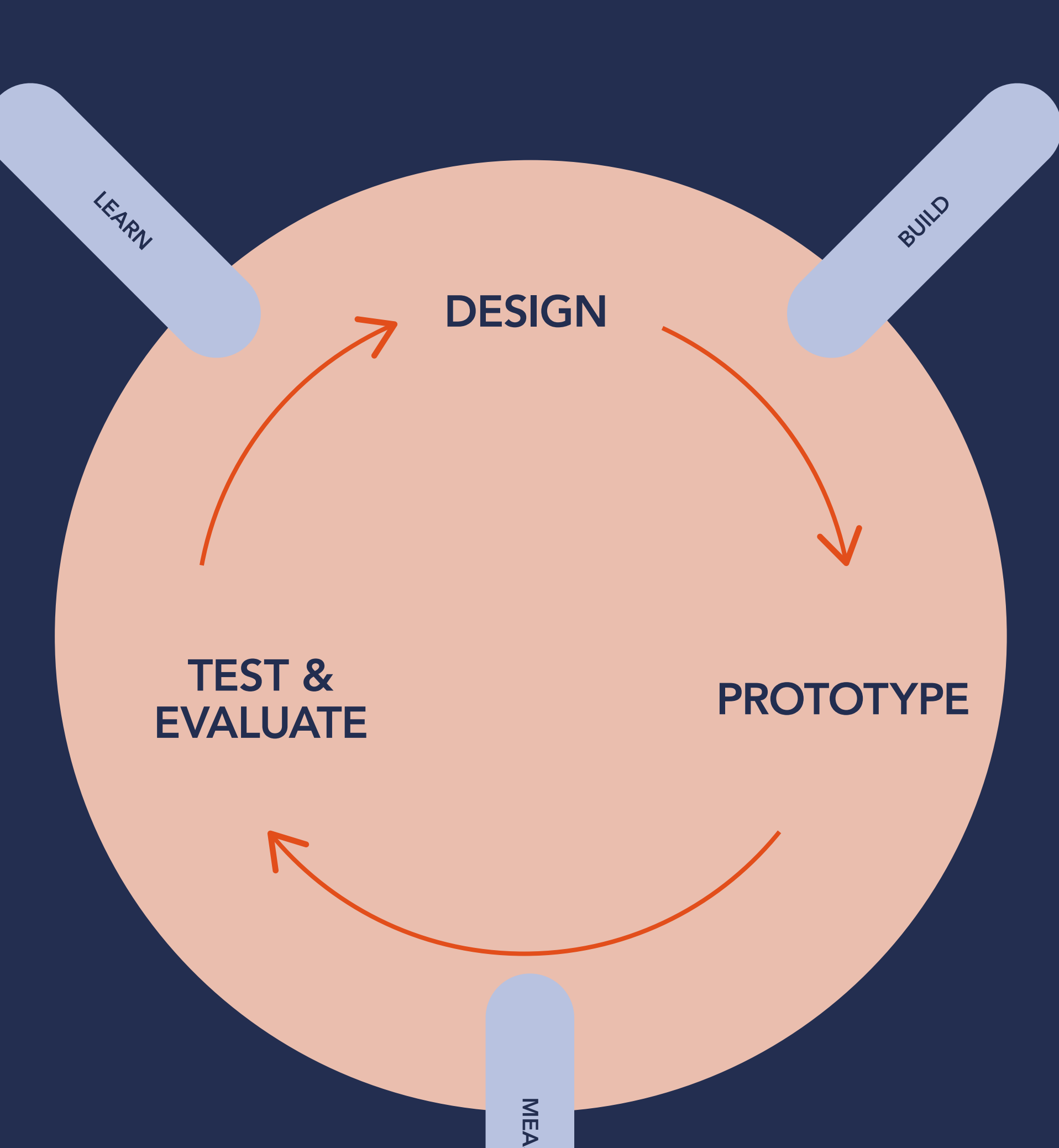
STAGE 3 DESIGN

In this stage of work², building on the ambition and knowledge accrued in the first two stages, we move towards ideas - the mechanisms that might be used to shift the system. This requires further study, of who this is for and who it might affect.

This stage lends itself to user-centred design approaches. But in a climate emergency when sustainability – both social and environmental – is centred, definitions of 'user' and 'stakeholder' become more expansive. Impacts on the planet and wider society need to be considered closely and integrated into any stakeholder study.



Stakeholder mapping is a basic process which can be adapted and used with a systemic design mindset.



STAGE 4 ITERATE

Creating anything new requires imagination and skills; it also demands the ability to manage uncertainty and risk. Systemic practice acknowledges this by working in flexible and agile ways.

This stage of work², which starts a process of prototyping, testing and iteration, can be challenging when commitments are to be made, budgets signed off and contracts entered into, all the more so when working in partnership. The nine Learning Ventures are now at varying stages of this firming up and commitment making process, reflecting how different scales of work and organisational contexts require different toolkits even within similar approaches.

The Field Guide is being updated periodically until December 2025. Keep up with the unfolding stories of these nine Learning Ventures and gain practical insights into the challenges and achievements along the way.