**Tactic: Step in Circle**

*Build connection and empathy by surfacing shared experiences and identities—revealing both common ground and the richness of difference—through a physical, energizing game that brings the group into movement.*

**When to Use It:**

Use as an intentional opening or early-session icebreaker. It’s particularly helpful when participants come from diverse backgrounds or haven’t met before, or when grounding in values and lived experience is important to the work ahead.

**How it Works:**

**Step 1 (2–3 minutes) | Set the circle**Invite all participants to stand in a large circle. The facilitator may stand in the center or just outside the circle. Explain that you’ll read a series of prompts designed to help the group see one another in new ways.

If the room you’re convening in isn’t set up for a single circle of participants (i.e. a theater or auditorium), you can adjust this exercise by having participants “Stand up” instead of “Step In”.

**Step 2 (10–15 minutes) | Begin the “Step In” round**Inadvance of the convening, customize **prompts tied to participant experience,** including questions like:

* *“If your organization is working on this issue right now…”*
* *“If you’ve faced a barrier related to X…”*
* *“If you’ve piloted a solution in the last year…”*

**Other generic sample prompts**:

* Live in a city
* Live in the country
* Consider yourself a scientist
* Consider yourself an artist
* Consider yourself a troublemaker
* Consider yourself a smoother-over
* Would rather sing than talk
* Would rather dance than walk
* Have a daily practice
* Work in government
* Have a dog
* Are an optimist
* Are a pragmatist

Read the prompt aloud using the format: *“If this is true for you, please step into the circle.”*  Participants step into the circle if the statement applies to them. Pause briefly so people can look around and take in who’s with them. Then say: *“Thank you, please step back.”*

Repeat for 8–10 prompts, building from light to deeper reflections.

**Step 3 (5–10 minutes) | Invite participant-generated prompts**

Open the floor to the group: *“Would anyone like to offer a prompt of their own?”* This encourages shared ownership and deeper vulnerability.

**Step 4 (5 minutes) | Facilitate a brief reflection**

Ask: *“What did you notice? What surprised you? How do we want to carry this awareness into our work?*

### **Helpful Tips:**

* **Start light, then go deeper.** Begin with easy, low-stakes prompts (e.g., “If you had coffee this morning…”) to build comfort before moving into more reflective or identity-based questions.
* **Frame it as a scan of collective experience.** Let participants know this is a fast, embodied way to assess perspectives, priorities, or roles in the room—useful for grounding future strategy discussions.
* **Use it as a rapid needs or assets assessment.** Tailor prompts to map who’s bringing what into the room—expertise, challenges, resources, or decision-making power.
* **Keep energy up.** Use a brisk pace and confident tone to maintain momentum. This helps the activity feel dynamic and purposeful, rather than overly emotional or introspective.