USDA Forest Service
Forest Inventory & Analysis National Program

LEADER AS CONVENER WORKSHOP

How can we as convening leaders engage and integrate diverse voices in our collaborative work?

LCW RESOURCE BOOK

March 13-17, 2023

Gilburg Leadership Incorporated

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome

The Leader as Convener workshop (LCW) invites you to explore how intentional engagement of diverse people, by hosting meaningful conversations around the issues affecting that group, can lead to courageous and collaborative action.

Convening conversations that matter is a core leadership competence that leads to significant change at both individual and collective levels.

The convening models and practices shared in this resource book draw upon the experiences of an international network of convening practitioners, recognized worldwide for its ability to address the increasing need for building collaborative coalitions and networks to address adaptive challenges in organizations and communities alike.

What is Leader as Convener?

Leader as Convener represents a participative approach for leading and listening. It relies upon a growing collection of models, methodologies, and practices designed to help groups engage in meaningful and strategic conversation, deliberate collaboration, and group-supported action in service to shared goals.

It is a response to an increasingly complex and fragmented world, where durable solutions and innovation lie not in one leader or expert viewpoint, but in the bigger picture of our collective intelligence and capacity for cooperative action.

It is an invitation to evaluate and change the way we work and perceive the world. It is an experiment for those seeking to find effective modes for leading, organizing, innovating and interacting to bring about the outcomes needed.

It is wiser decision-making and leadership mindset that accounts for the good of the whole, with an assumption that human beings have enormous untapped resourcefulness and resilience. Sustainable solutions can be found in the wisdom between us.

Currently, the ability to tap into human potential within an organization or community is crucial. Inviting everyone to participate with their diverse perspectives is the key to releasing this potential. Convening practices can create a productive environment where all feel safe to contribute their best.

In our three days together we invite you to deepen a practice of being present with one another, focusing on questions that matter, listening to each other and to what we create together, harvesting key output, and considering what actions you can take forward. It is an opportunity to reflect upon and practice doing the important work that needs to be done in your forest, region, organization and the communities/stakeholders you serve.

Resource Book Overview

This resource book is intended to be a personal reference journal, to help you remember, focus and deepen your learning. It shares the basic assumptions and concepts behind the Leader-as-Convener approach, as well as several models, tools, methodologies, resources and examples that we hope you find relevant, clear and helpful.

These are for you to use, improve upon, and share.

Also included are additional references to books, articles, links and information that can guide you further in your learning about collaboration and participatory conversation or "convening."

In this workbook you will find:

- Information about Participatory Leadership and the nature of the shift from traditional leadership approaches
- Core concepts, patterns and principles behind convening meaningful and inclusive conversations
- Key elements that that support successful convening as part of your "convening toolbox"
- A collection of open source convening methodologies and other practices
- Other helpful resources, articles, books and links

Acknowledgements

Many of the convening materials within this resource book have been adapted from the work of Maria Scordialos (Greece), Monica Nissén (Denmark), Valmae Rose (Australia), and the broader **Art of Hosting** network, an international cohort of practitioners convening conversations that matter. The contents represent information and materials derived from a number of sources, most of which are cited in the text.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge the **Berkana Institute** and the **Art of Hosting** network whose pioneering vision and fortitude have helped to make the practices of participatory leadership accessible and achievable for all who are ready to try a new way. Visit artofhosting.org to learn more!

This workbook was assembled and edited by Gilburg Leadership Incorporated, January 2023 GilburgLeadership.com

Workshop Purpose

The Forest Inventory Analysis LCW is designed to support the needs of the PNW staff, with specific outcomes related to:

- ★ Strengthening a culture of cross-program collaboration within the station
- ★ Developing more capacity to co-produce research with external stakeholders
- ★ Learning tools and techniques for collaborative science leadership

As a training the overarching focus of the LCW is:

HOW DO WE AS CONVENING LEADERS ENGAGE AND INTEGRATE DIVERSE VOICES IN OUR COLLABORATIVE WORK?

The intended outcomes are:

- ★ Exposure to and greater understanding of collaboration tools and practices
- ★ Increased clarity on mindset needed to collaborate more effectively
- ★ Greater connection between PNW LCW participants
- ★ Clear next steps for applying workshop learning at an individual and collective level

Even though you are attending this workshop as a participant, we consider you the subject matter experts of your work and your world. The Convening Team are process experts, and will be facilitating to access your collective expertise as we experience and learn about the methodologies and practices we will be showcasing. Our hope is to enrich your understanding of the work you have in front of you and what might serve in regards to collaborative/participatory leadership.

Workshop Overview

The workshop, delivered in 6 virtual sessions, is designed to provide you with an introduction to and an experience of various convening methods and practices, as well as an overview of the underlying philosophy and science behind them.

The content we will be exploring within the structure of these practices begins with defining the current reality this group is facing, moving onto considering new ways of looking at or thinking about what is possible, to finally focusing on what it will take to bring some of what you've learned home and put it into practice.

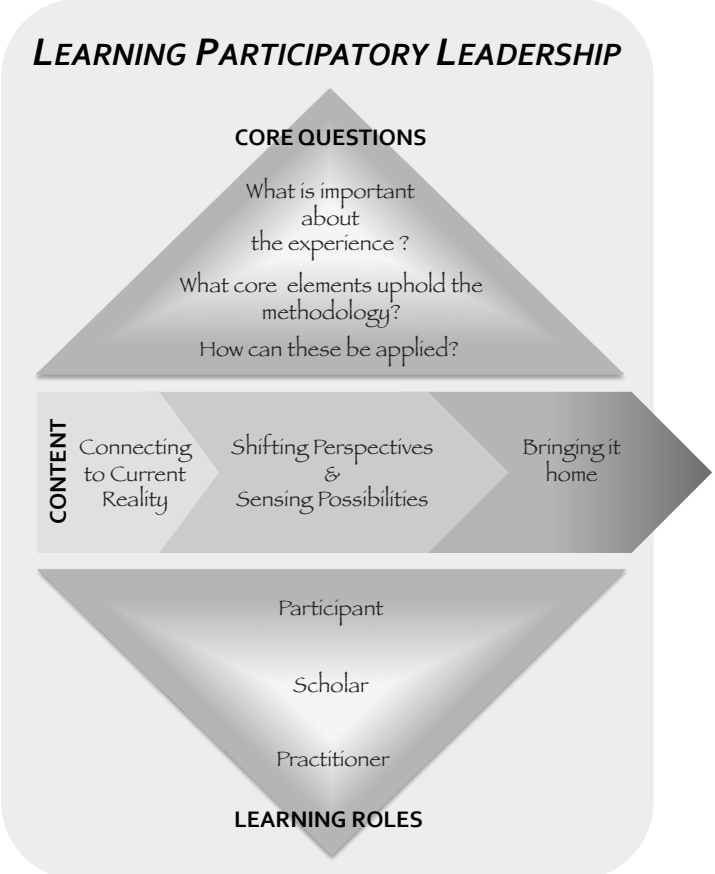
We will be exploring core questions throughout the program:

- **Content:** What is important about the experience itself? What are we learning from the conversations we are having?
- **Process:** Why and when does this methodology work? What core elements uphold the process?
- **Application:** How can these core elements be applied generally or to specific situations?

As a participant, you will be asked to be in three learning roles throughout the program, perhaps simultaneously at certain points:

- **Participant:** learning by immersing yourself in the experience or the method/process we are using
- **Scholar:** learning by thinking, analyzing, questioning before, during and/or after the experience
- **Practitioner:** learning through deeper dive discussions with the convening team about potential applications of your learning.

By designing multiple learning modes into the workshop, we hope to offer ways for you to engage and learn at your speed so that you will take away what serves you best.



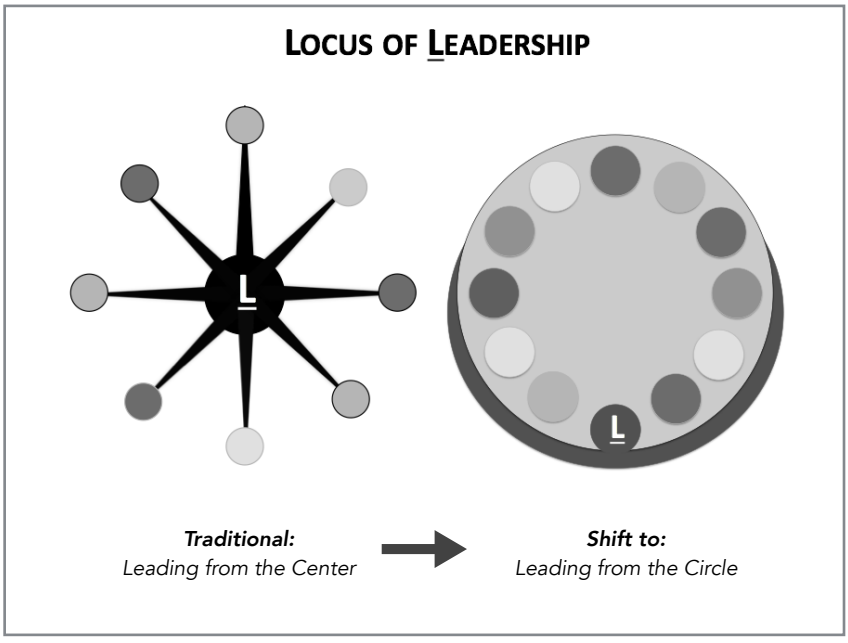
THE SHIFT TO PARTICIPATORY LEADERSHIP

What is Participatory Leadership?

> Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.
>
> ~Margaret Mead

Participatory Leadership is a general term used to describe an approach to leadership that respects and engages others, taps the energy of each person, and helps groups work collaboratively on shared endeavors. Considered a more egalitarian and inclusive style of leadership, it is particularly effective for addressing complex, adaptive challenges; it strives to build community and shared stewardship, honor and tap into diverse perspectives, and foster shared responsibility for action.

At the heart of participatory leadership is the ability to **convene meaningful conversations** using the conversational methods, techniques, practices, and tools that enable more equitable participation and distribution of power. Convening diverse people with an interest or stake in the work at hand, in safe, inclusive environments, enable people to explore challenges together, develop strategic visions, learn from one another, create cross-functional networks and teams, and collaborate on projects. This approach can complement hierarchical structures by helping to shift mindsets, stimulate innovation, and bring more collective wisdom into decision-making.

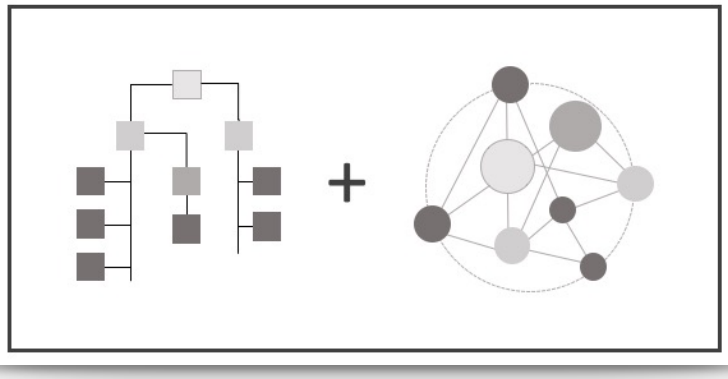


This approach often requires a shift in mindset away from traditional, top-down, command-and-control, hub and spoke approach, where the leader sits in the center as the decision-maker who maintains all control and authority over the decision-making. This shift to "leading from the circle" does not mean abandoning the functionality of a hierarchy; rather it suggests inviting more participation and collective input from those impacted by the challenge and/or whose engagement is important for creating a sustaining solution.

Complimenting Traditional Leadership

In many ways the shift to participatory leadership can complement traditional ways of working, and address problems that traditional ways of working cannot. If a group, team or organization is struggling to adapt and keep up with the pace and scale of change, taking a more participatory approach can get much better outcomes (see Adaptive vs Technical challenges, page 28).

Traditional ways of working	Participatory leadership as a complement
Top-down – directives & decisions	Bottom-up – data, experiments, adaption
Top-down agenda setting	Set agenda together
Silos/hierarchical structures	Networks & collaborative groups
Executing procedures	Innovating processes
Individuals responsible for decisions, regardless of whether they have answers	Using collective intelligence to inform decision-making
Communication is one-way, need-to-know, written	Communication is transparent and inclusive, through dialogue and asking questions
Trust level in group is not primary focus	Increased trust is an outcome
Broadcasting, inefficient, boring meetings	Highly productive meetings where every voice is heard and participants feel energized & focused



CORE CONVENING CONCEPTS

A Few Assumptions

New solutions are needed

The concept of convening is built on the assumption and experience that the increasing complexity in the problems we face compel us to find new solutions for the common good, whether in corporations, government, education, non-profits, communities, or families. These solutions are more comprehensive and more readily found and owned if they are co-created by stakeholders.

New solutions grow between chaos and order

If we want to innovate, or work with change, we have to be willing to let go of what we know and step into not knowing. In nature, all innovation happens in the uncertainty between chaos and order, where new connections are created, and new possibilities emerge. The path to and through any major change requires that we allow ourselves to learn at a deeper, more transformative level, in order to discover more sustainable, durable solutions and equitable solutions to the challenges that confront us.

Conversations matter

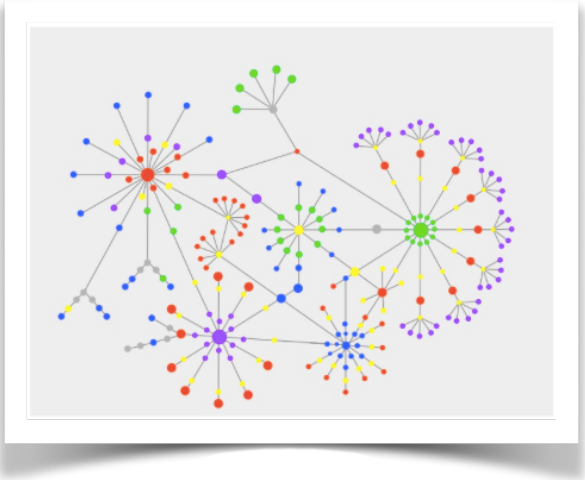
It is common sense to bring more people together in conversation. It is the way we have connected throughout history, in generations past, gathering round fires and sitting in circles. Conversation is the way we transform our thinking and make meaning together. It is the way we build strong relationships that invite real collaboration.

Meaningful conversations lead to wise actions

We as human beings pay attention to what is meaningful to us. Conversations that surface a shared meaning foster ownership and responsibility, especially important when ideas and solutions must be put into action. Actions spurred by shared meaning and collective clarity are therefore more likely to be sustained.

Organizations are living systems

When human beings join together in an enterprise or organization, they are more like a living system than a machine. Living systems are intelligent, creative, adaptive, capable of self-organizing and often generate their own unique solutions. The way you "lead" a living system is radically different from operating a machine.



Core Convening Principles

At the heart of all convening practices and methodologies are core principles that are foundational to this approach. Together they inform a mindset that hinges on the belief that expanding our individual understanding, perspective and awareness of a challenge occurs when we interact openly and authentically with others. This is the starting point for creating equitable relationships and more inclusive, innovative and collaborative environments. The three convening principles are *inquiry, problem-defining before problem-solving, and power-sharing.*

1. **Inquiry over advocacy**

   Learning what others are seeing, their perspectives, interests and deeper needs is the primary objective of conveners. Inquiry—versus advocacy, where convincing others of your position is the goal—opens us up to learning and seeing more of the whole or system, and helps us build relationships, learn more about the impact of our behavior on others, and find common ground among differing needs, values and perspectives.

2. **Problem defining before problem solving**

   Our culture prizes problem-solving, and we tend to jump right to solutions before taking the time to really understand the true nature of a problem. Divergent exploration of a problem or situation allows groups to grasp complex challenges from a broader, more comprehensive outlook. Collective problem defining transcends individual perceptions—limited by one's personal experience, values and beliefs—and triggers expansive thinking and insight within the group, crucial when seeking innovation. When it's time to implement solutions, the engagement of stakeholders and their perspectives throughout the process builds the collective buy-in needed for taking action.

3. **Power sharing**

   Sharing power is the heart of convening and collaboration. ***Power resides with those who get to decide what happens***. Power is experienced and exercised through human interactions that make power visible. If we want to invite others to collaborate, for it to be genuine collaboration, we need to find ways to equitably and transparently distribute control and power in the collaborative process. We are also sharing power when we relinquish control over outcomes and allow the group's solution or perspective to emerge. It requires creating more egalitarian process wherein those impacted have influence on decisions or outcomes. Examples of power sharing include: learning to "share the air," giving the group space to interpret and make meaning from data and information, and inviting traditionally marginalized and unheard voices into the conversation in a way that grants those voices equal weight to others at the table.

Together, these core principles help us to convene and collaborate more authentically and productively, so we can: effectively tap collective wisdom and energy; unleash innovation and creativity; identify and address 'wicked problems'; gain buy-in for cohesive, sustained action

(implementing the solution); share the risks, and the work; and deepen trust to build stronger relationships and communities. These are significant outcomes when managing complexity and change within human systems of our communities and organizations.

Power Sharing and Convening

Why does power matter?

If your goal is to create inclusive, collaborative environments, then you must begin to understand where power resides and how it must be shared and/or disrupted to create a more equitable process in service to new, sustainable solutions. Power dynamics are present in all groups, and these dynamics have considerable impact on how groups function. Learning to recognize and manage power dynamics in a group is key to one of our goals as conveners: enabling more inclusive and equitable conversations. Said another way, power sharing is at the heart of convening. When groups collaborate to guide the content flow, work side-by-side to develop deeper understanding, tackle a challenge and/or identify meaningful solutions, for them to do so equitably they must make clear to all where and how power is shared.

Talking about power is tricky, however. Power tends to lie with socially dominant groups and is often invisible, especially to those with the power, which makes it difficult to identify and hard to talk about.

What is power?

If you want to know where power lies, look to who decides what happens.

When we talk about power we are referring to several different kinds: personal, positional and social identity. How we recognize and express power is influenced by the cultures we grow up, live and work in.

- **Personal power** relates to the personal qualities, strengths, confidence and competence that an individual acquires during their lifetime, regardless of having any formal authority. This intrinsic form of power has the ability to attract and inspire others. It can come from self-knowledge, emotional intelligence, personality qualities like honesty and courage, spiritual grounding, and other practices that foster a healthy sense of self.
- **Positional power** refers to the authority one wields by the virtue of their position in a hierarchy. This is the most visible kind of power in our culture, as most organizations rely heavily on positional authority to make decisions and get things done. While it has its benefits, the effectiveness can fall short when those with positional power require others to change for a solution to work. When leaders share some of that power by inviting others into the work of exploring challenges and creating solutions, they may find themselves in tension with a cultural "all or nothing" assumption about authority — that giving up some control amounts to giving up one's positional authority.
- **Social identity** in this context refers to a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s), which includes distinctions of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion

and innate personality characteristics like introversion and extroversion. Power dynamics around social identity are very subtle, even invisible, especially to members of dominant or privileged groups. For example, in the case of introversion and extroversion, both traits have value, and are generally present in a group. However, our workplace culture tends to have a bias in favor of extroverts, especially when we meet together. Those who are quick to speak, are comfortable sharing in groups, and can effortlessly verbalize their thoughts, tend to take most of the airtime and therefore have a kind of "power" within a group.

None of these characterizations of power need be about personal intentions or beliefs. In fact, often what one wants is the opposite of what one's behavior may be inadvertently reinforcing. An extrovert is quick to verbalize her thoughts, keeping engagement high and the conversation moving, and may be unaware that she is not "sharing the air"; a leader bears a heavy responsibility to make good decisions, and believes asking for help is abdicating his authority; a white man meeting with others to combat racial oppression, takes control of the agenda (well intended), unconsciously exercising his social privilege and power. Those of us who are members of dominant groups (ie: white, male, heterosexual, extroverts) have to entertain the probability that we are using our power, which is often invisible to us, in ways that may undermine our good intentions.

How does power sharing impact convening?

When we are seeking to convene others to work together and to include diverse perspectives, we are ultimately seeking to share power—to work in a more egalitarian manner. Helping groups to share power can foster stronger, more collaborative relationships, transformative learning, and the discovery of durable and innovative solutions to complex challenges. This means as conveners, we many be required to make visible what is normally hidden and to daylight and interrupt conscious or unconscious behaviors that perpetuate existing power imbalances. If we don't illuminate or disrupt these behaviors we will be favoring members of dominate groups, and by default, marginalizing others.

A simple but high-leverage example of such an interruption is a ground rule or agreement about sharing airtime. Inviting those with the authority or inclination to speak less frequently, to hold back and count to 10, while also encouraging those less likely to speak to lean in and take a risk, can

override a default power pattern that may have not been visible before. An often overlooked commodity—airtime —can apply not only to who speaks during group conversations, but also to who creates an agenda, delivers a presentation, or is asked to provide input or feedback.

Sharing power as part of convening can be in tension with traditional views of authority. We have discovered that in the case of those with positional power the concepts of authority and control become conflated; there is often a belief that if you give up control, you are ultimately abdicating your authority. This is not a binary choice; rather, these concepts lie on a spectrum. To truly invite diverse perspectives, one may need to use her authority to give some control to others to ensure their interests are part of the conversation. It is important to be transparent about where power is shared (i.e. creating the agenda), and where the sideboards of authority still lie (i.e. the final decision).

Power Sharing Through Process

In our work as conveners, we often make a distinction between **content** and **process**. A meeting agenda—the topics that get talked about—we consider "content". *How* the meeting is run, including whether ground rules are in place and well-enforced, falls under the heading "process." One way to express this distinction is seeing that content is the *what* and process is the *how*—including the who, the where, and the when. Referring to meetings, this means *who* is invited and who attends, and *where* and *when* the meeting is held—which influences who attends, among other things.

Why is this content v. process distinction important? Two reasons: one—process affects content; two—process, which is largely invisible in many groups, when unexamined, benefits the dominant or privileged group(s) involved.

Process Affects Content

Keeping with our example, when and where a meeting is held will affect who comes; how the meeting is run affects who speaks and what they're willing to say. Both of these affect the conversations had and the decisions made at said meeting. A few years ago a planning partnership conducted meetings throughout the region as part of a multi-year planning effort to learn from residents how best to "create and maintain a sustainable, economically competitive, and equitable" region. Instead of

holding these meetings in central locations, they worked with existing community organizations—such as religious and spiritual groups, community development organizations and the like—and asked to be brought into their spaces to meet with their groups. This simple choice led to far greater turnout and diversity of attendees because they "went to the people," rather than expecting people to come to them. This translated into planning that represented more of the people's needs and aspirations.

Default Process Generally Benefits those with Power

When "process" is invisible or not transparent, when it is the default and not deliberately chosen, it will generally benefit those in power, the dominant or privileged group. For example, when there is no ground rule about sharing the air, the dominant group, generally extroverts, benefit from the lack of attention to process. Depending on the situation and the mix of people in the space, other "beneficiary" groups might include males, white people, people with rank (salaried vs. hourly or line vs. staff), people with power (money and/or political sway) and others.

In many circumstances, the default process (how meetings are designed and run—typically with auditorium seating vs. café tables) often benefits the dominant group, generally those with authority, by keeping power and control in their hands—even as they consciously strive to welcome the perspectives of others.

When we don't notice or talk about process, the status quo prevails. If what we want is to foster more robust public engagement or to hear from more people at our events and meetings, a powerful lever for doing so is process. As conveners, we attend to process, in large part *so that* voices and perspectives that typically and historically have been unheard or silenced will be heard.

Paradoxes at Work

> One of the most telling signs of maturity is the ability to hold yet greater and greater paradoxes in tension without having the need to resolve the tension by embracing one side or the other.
>
> ~ Attributed to: Carl Jung

In convening strategic conversations we operate in a world that is not black or white, but multi-hued and kaleidoscopic. We need to be able to operate in and hold paradoxes. For example:

- Chaos and Order
- Leading and Following
- Advocating and Inquiring
- Content and Process
- Action and Reflection
- Individual and Collective

Paradox creates tension, and in and of itself, can be cause for anxiety. We tend to crave a clear sense of order and solid understanding of the world around us, and our role in it. However, in times of great complexity and uncertainty, collapsing too far in one direction or the other keeps us from learning and moving forward; without going to the edge of what we know, we cannot innovate, create or discover what is possible.

Convening strategic conversations is a powerful way to navigate the paradoxes we face. Armed with a compelling purpose, we are better able to collectively hold the tension in order to explore the grey area in between—where new ideas, concepts, perspectives and possibilities emerge.

The Life Cycle of Systems

Adapted from article "Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale."

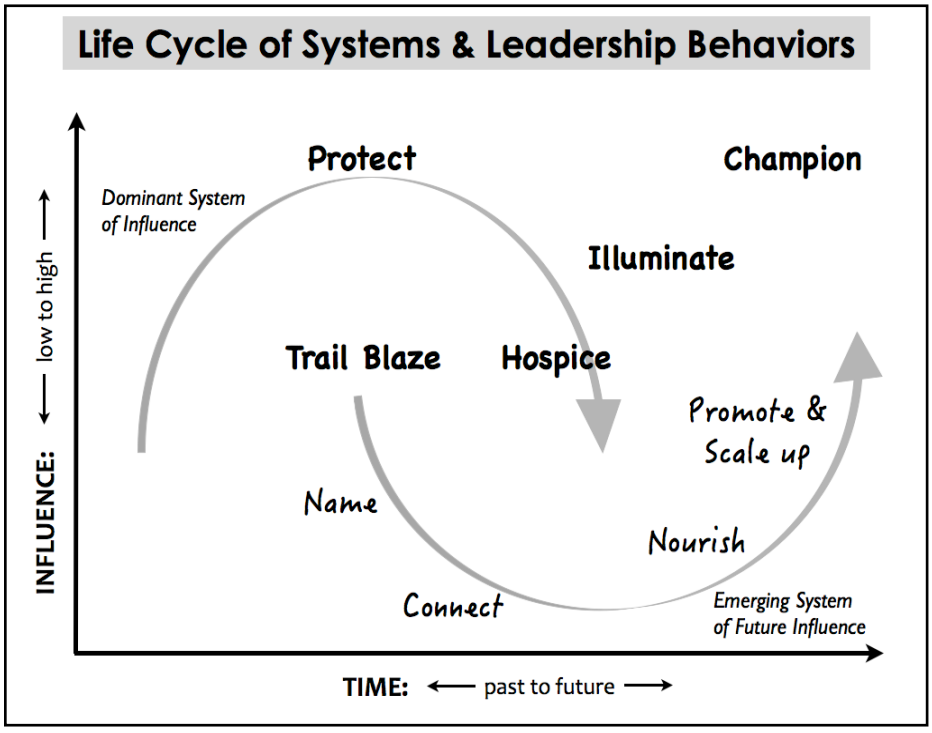
~ Margaret Wheatley & Deborah Frieze

In living systems change happens through emergence. In nature, change never occurs as a result of top-down, preconceived strategic plans, or from the mandate of any single individual or boss. It is often born of necessity and in response to the reality of the moment, as living organisms adapt to survive. Human systems are no different, however as individuals, many of us may be unaware of changes in the systems we live in—what is declining or dying, what is starting to emerge, what innovations are taking hold—and the leadership behaviors we can enact during these transitions. Recognizing the way change occurs and our relationship to those changes can help us navigate the uncertainty that ultimately accompanies a time of great transition.

Systems have life cycles. They have a beginning, middle and end—and then a new system emerges. But this isn't just a rolling sin curve, where one system waxes and wanes then morphs into the next. Rather, we've come to see that the old and new overlap, the old way making room for the new emerging way when it can no longer sustain itself in the complexity of the times. Throughout history, we've seen this cycle of change many times, as new ideas and perspectives coalesce, take root, rise up as a new system, enjoy a period of dominance, and gradually fade, to be replaced by what is needed next.

Leadership Behaviors During times of Systemic Change and Transition

The map/model depicted here is one way of looking at the life cycle of a system and the leadership behaviors we can enact in response to change, particularly at a time when the system we are part of starts to decline, and the new emergent system has not yet become clear or visible.



The vertical axis on the left represents the level of influence of the current system, while the horizontal axis represents the passage of time. In the many conversations we've had with groups about this map, it is clear that during times of

systemic change and transition (when the time line is frozen on the map), there are key leadership behaviors that have both important qualities that support transition (Value), and blind spots that, intentionally or not, can hinder the process (Shadow). While all leadership behaviors are important during such times, when we become more intentional and mindful about the impact of the behaviors we enact, we can better aid the challenging and uncertain process of change and transition for our organizations and the people dependent upon them.

- **Protect:** *Value* – upholding and protecting the existing system of influence from collapse; can be for the sake of those dependent on that system, and/or to "buy time" for that which is emerging and needs time to strengthen. *Shadow* – failure to see the plight of those groups who are not powerful or privileged within current system, and are therefore marginalized or under-served; failure to acknowledge the importance of other leadership behaviors like Trail Blazing and Illuminating; can be rigid, focused on the past, and have the consequence of squashing new ideas and contributions that might be viewed as potential threats to one's power or control.

- **Trail Blaze:** *Value* – inventive, creative, innovative; seeking alternatives and new ways within and outside the current system of influence; often gives initial voice, shape and name to what is emerging. *Shadow* – arrogance, disdain for leveraging institutional power; exclusive of non-trail blazers; can co-opt contributions from systemically marginalized groups who are generally first to recognize the limitations of dominant system.

- **Champion:** *Value* – using current power and influence to nourish, support and accelerate what is newly emerging and starting to take hold. *Shadow* – delegating risk to protect one's high profile; overlooking value of Hospice and the strategic need to help people process transitions.

- **Illuminate:** *Value* – building bridges and lifelines between the declining system and emerging one; translating, communicating and guiding people "across" to what is starting to take hold. *Shadow* – impatience with Hospice; over zealousness for "new way", over committing to what is not yet clear.

- **Hospice:** *Value* – Caring for what is declining or dying in system of influence; helping people let go, grieve, and move on. Needed where pain is most acute in the system; where there is a need to process grief and loss; can have a powerful influence on the pace and resilience of transition. *Shadow* – wallowing, undermining, sabotaging, or bitter due to fear of losing something that matters.

Leadership Behaviors that Support Emergence

What does it mean to work the "bottom curve?" To be part of ushering in the new way? The world changes when networks of relationships form among people who share a common cause and vision of what's possible. Rather than worry about critical mass, foster critical connections. We are starting to

see what this might look like, and the steps leaders can take to support the emergence of the next system.

- **NAME** the unmet need, those who are not being served by the dominant system, and what is emerging—what you are seeing; the experiments, efforts, and innovations;. If you are focusing on the emergent curve, you may be the first to see it!
- **CONNECT** people and build networks; as you recognize others who also see, want, or experience the same thing, who have the same unmet need, convene to build relationships and networks among those people to fuel courage and commitment.
- **NOURISH** what is growing and expanding. Develop and/or support communities of practice, encourage ways to learn together, lessons learned, both successes and failures. Share new knowledge and practices; pool resources to nourish and support what is benefiting shared interests and needs.
- **PROMOTE/SCALE UP** when there is some success, do more of what's working. Tell the story! Make it known and scale up where possible. Create more "scaffolding" for what's emerging as it strengthens and grows.

As leaders, when we are seeking something new, determining what can grow, blossom and thrive, we need to be mindful of the conditions , perspectives and behaviors that support emergence. This is the work of a participatory leader. No one person can change a system; its not the work of heroes but the work of communities — acknowledging collective reality; mourning what might be lost, taking shared responsibility; discovering common interests, resources and possibilities; committing to concerted action; and experiencing shared benefits.

Questions to Explore:

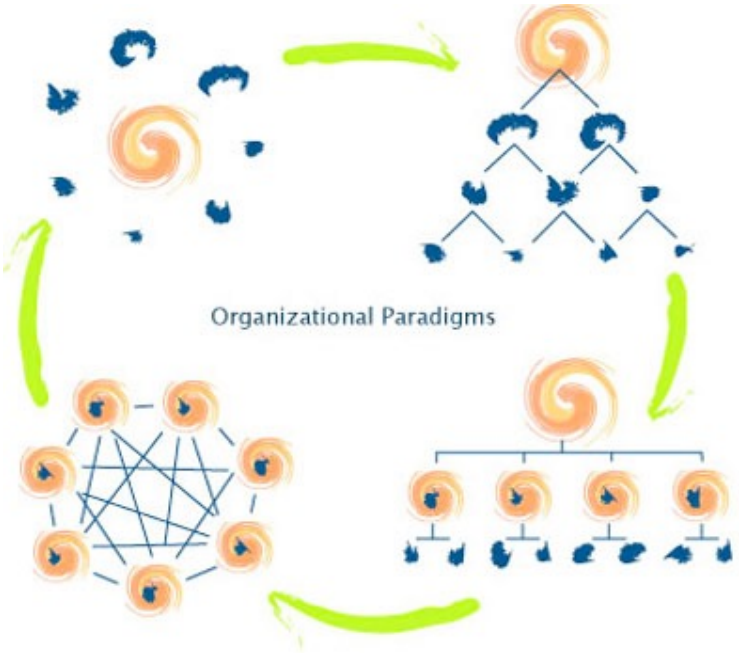
- What leadership behaviors do you enact currently? What is the wisdom from this place?
- What leadership behaviors does your organization need more of?
- How can you be more intentional about the leadership behaviors you enact to provide more value and mitigate potential blindspots?

Organizing Patterns

Over the millennia, human beings have developed many different ways of organizing together. Each new age of civilization has its signature form of organization. All paradigms have a value and a purpose, however in times of great complexity and uncertainty it may be true that no single paradigm alone is adequate. One of the questions at the heart of participatory leadership is: "What are the organizational concepts that are actually good for us, and are good for this time?"

Adapted from the work of Margaret Wheatley & the Art of Hosting community.

Four Organizational Paradigms



Circle

As nomads we lived in small groups. The circle became the mother of all our organizational forms—humans started sitting in circle as soon as they invented fires to sit around. We told stories, held elder councils and solved problems in this way. This form is very useful for reflection, storytelling, being together. Purpose is in the centre—it is shared.

Hierarchy (Triangle)

As we stopped our nomadic wandering and settled in one place, we developed agriculture. Our communities grew bigger. The clergy (for ritual) and the warrior or soldier (for protection) classes emerged. We began to develop hierarchies and organized in "levels" where one person or group of people had power over others. The triangular form of hierarchy is very useful for action, for getting things done. Purpose is held at the top level.

Bureaucracy (Square)

Simple hierarchies are extremely unstable in the face of the unexpected. The industrial age brought change and more complexity. Bureaucracy became the predominant organizational model, specializing horizontally and embracing hierarchy, which controlled vertically.

Together they managed much greater complexity than either could do alone. Bureaucracy is fantastic for stability, optimizing and maintaining the status quo, and for managing complex situations to a certain degree. However, as complexity and speed increases—the bureaucracy is not agile enough to

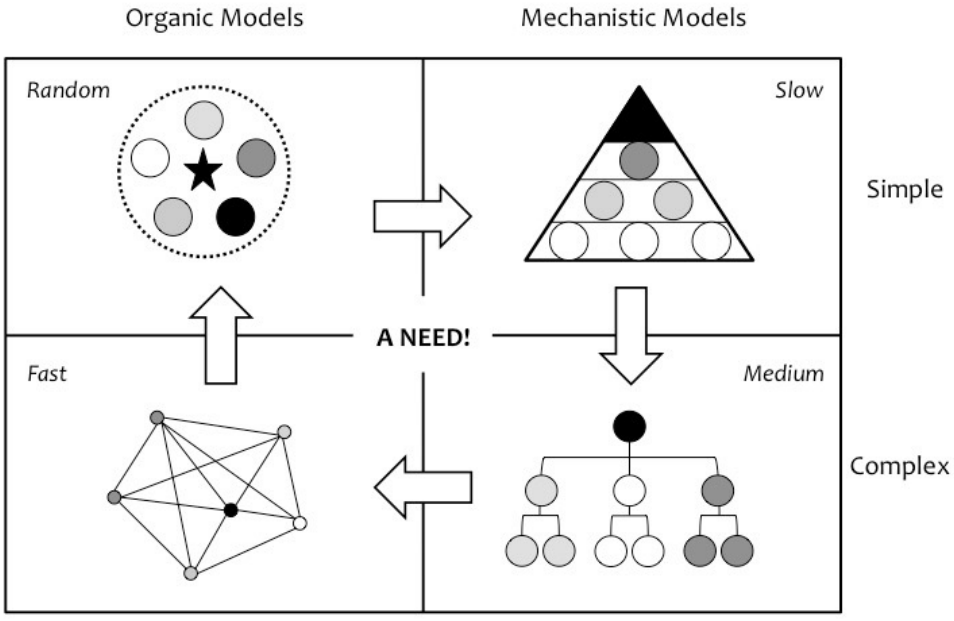
respond quickly. It typically moves slowly in the face of change. Purpose in the bureaucracy is also at the top, but there may be other purposes in the middle.

Networks

> [For] traditional hierarchies...to address the challenges produced by mounting complexity and rapid change...a second operating system... that uses an agile, network-like structure and a very different set of processes [can assess and react]...with greater agility, speed, and creativity than the existing one. It complements rather than overburdens the traditional hierarchy... and accelerates strategic change.
>
> *~ Adapted from "Accelerate!"*
> *by John Kotter HBR Magazine, Nov 2012*

A more recent organizational form (first described in the 1970's), networks emerged in the information/communication age as a response to: the growing complexity and interdependency of many challenges; the need to organize and reorganize quickly and flexibly; and the call for rapid communication and a broader reach.

Networks are collections of connected nodes —individuals, groups (circles) or organizations (triangles and squares). Networks can link all types of organizations, and while we rarely find networked collections of bureaucracies, networks can and often do spring up inside them. Networks are great for building relationships, enhancing innovation, increasing communication flow, and for getting things done fast. They promote rapid growth, the diffusion of ideas, and have a "small world reach" in their



ability to spread into corners and hard-to-access areas of our world/organizations. Networks can bring knowledge to and from these areas and create diverse connections that cut across traditional communication boundaries (I.E. silos, disciplines, interests, geographical locations, cultures, etc), and generate action.

The connection within a network is guided by individual purpose aligning with a collective purpose. The different nodes are connected together because their respective purposes need each other. Once the need is no longer there, the network connection will most often lapse. Learn more about building networks on page 53.

Response to Change

When a new organizational form emerges, the older ones do not disappear. Each form has both advantages and shortcomings—each is good for different things.

When we want to start an organization ourselves or organize something in our lives, which one of these organizational forms do we choose? What we are starting to see is that we need to build structures that can use any of these forms at the right time. Being intentional about how we are organizing can give us greater flexibility and allow for multiple modes of operating. As need arises, how are we able to respond with the most useful organizational form?

When something needs to get done, then triangle is great. When we need to stop and reflect, circle is useful. When we need stability and structure to deal with some degree of complexity, it is good to have a bureaucracy. When we need to innovate, or gather and disseminate information, networks work best. So what is the next level of organizational form that can hold all of these? And is that form emerging already?

Agile Networks within Hierarchies

Given the challenges facing the department, the Director wanted to stage an all-hands retreat. In order to adapt to supervisor vacancies, we decided to create a planning/action team with representatives that cut across the department, from administration to management. This team helped to convene the day-long, all-hands event, then met the following day to sift through the output and identify steps to address collectively identified concerns and opportunities. Empowered by the Director and guided by principles of inclusion, transparency and collaboration, they defined their purpose—to identify the challenges which they could influence and make recommendations to address them, by way of a solution or an experiment.

A great example of empowered networks adding value to traditional hierarchies by bringing flexibility, innovation, and hope that change can happen from within. See information about networks on page 53

Working with Collective Vision and Purpose

Vision—Where do we want to go? What is our ideal future?

> It is not what the Vision is but what it does, that is important.
>
> ~ Peter Senge

A vision statement is often defined as a picture of an organization's future, successful state. When the vision is developed collectively by those who will ultimately be part of creating that future, it can be the inspiration and reminder of our personal motivation for working towards the future we desire, and set the framework for all subsequent strategic planning.

A collective vision statement may apply to an entire organization, a single division or department, or a highly aligned network. It answers the question, "Where do we want to go? What are the dreams and hopes for our group?"

While it is not a plan, a collective vision statement reminds us of what we are trying to build.

Purpose—Why we are all here collectively?

Discovering purpose is to discover why something exists. Often we hurry to get into action before we properly understand why we need to take action. Gaining clarity on purpose—especially gaining collective clarity—is setting the right course for taking action. A purpose, therefore, becomes a navigational tool like a compass, as it helps us to discover the direction of our efforts, allowing us to answer the question, "Is this effort in line with our purpose? Will it serve the vision?"

> Collective clarity of purpose is the invisible leader.
>
> ~ Mary Parker Follett

When working with complexity (paradoxes, adaptive challenges, uncertain futures), Purpose is often more tangible and therefore more practical than a Vision alone. When we are not sure of the solution, or even what the real problem is, purpose can be the way to connect, understand, and start taking initial steps.

Purpose can also be described as 'the glue' that brings people's contribution and efforts together. This is because it defines why we are working towards something and why it is worth working on this together. In fact, purpose becomes an invisible leader as it both connects different actions taken and helps everyone understand why their contribution is valuable.

As a useful navigational tool in seeking the way forward, Purpose contains three elements:

1. **Higher Intent/Value** – Clarity about why action supports the greater good and the future that we claim to want, for example: "We are not forming coalitions of states, we are uniting men" - Jean Monnet

2. **Statement of Purpose** – Why effort is needed here and what is being pursued so that direction of action can be set; this does not define the destination, rather it invites and inspires others to participate with clarity about why this purpose might be important to them

3. **Intention** – Willingness to pursue the higher value through the actions we take, recognizing that it will mean confronting the challenges that might arise

When these three elements are aligned and collectively understood – the greater good of why we need to take action, the clarity of what we are pursuing, and the intention to remain in service to the higher intent/value regardless of the conditions – then purpose becomes a powerful attractor that allows people to put their individual efforts to work together on making a difference for all.

In an organization or a community, many purposes co-exist, and often not enough effort is given to connect these purposes. They are often perceived in the context of their own special interests, and can appear diverse and conflicting. For example, consider the possible diversity between the purpose of:

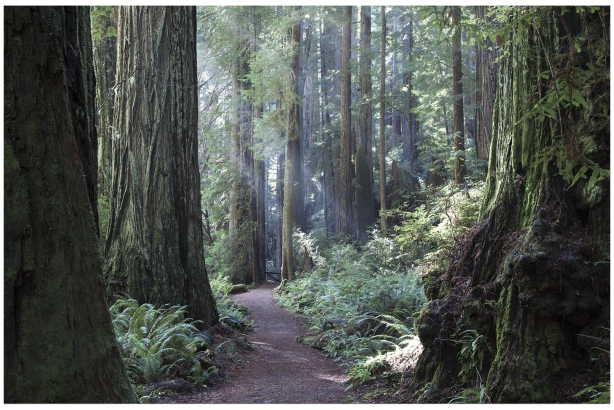
- The stakeholders that the organization serves
- The whole community / organization
- The core group
- Each member of the core team

In the light of this, the following questions may inspire collective inquiry into areas of shared purpose:

- What endeavors do we share? What is our collective purpose?
- What is the purpose of our function, team, project?
- How do my purpose and our collective purpose align?
- What is the purpose that is at the heart of this work? What will align us all to accomplish it?

Gaining collective clarity on individual and shared purpose prior to embarking on a pursuit or initiative is a key strategic step. When overlooked, it can lead to entanglements, confusion, misunderstandings and possible conflicts, rather than the achievement of outcomes that make a difference. However, clarifying purpose is not a one-time effort. As action is taken and more is discovered, taking time to check in with the original purpose, and redefine it as needed, is important.

Are we still on course or are we seeing a new, wiser path emerge?



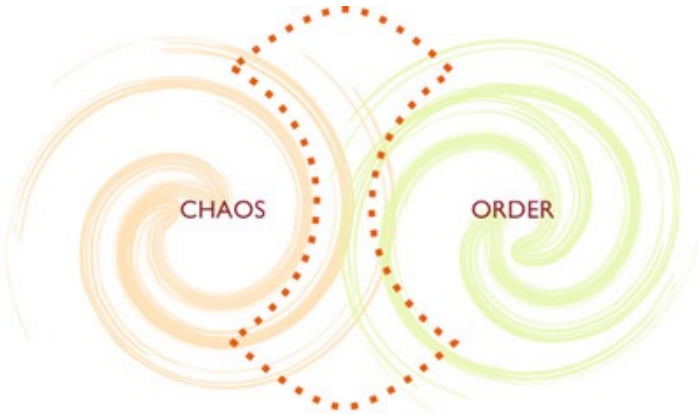
Walking the Line Between Chaos and Order

Adapted from the work of *Margaret Wheatley* & the Art of Hosting community.

Chaos—Order—Control are different states of being and experiencing. We tend to feel safest in the state of order, or for some people, in control. Being out of control is scary if we are looking for predictability. If we believe only in Mechanistic organizations (hierarchies, bureaucracies) the tendency will be to stay within the realms of order and control, where things are predictable and stable—and where we produce status quo or "more of the same"—which in some cases is exactly what is needed.

The world and times we live in are, however, neither predictable nor stable, and call for more flexibility as "more of the same" solutions are not meeting the challenges. If we are looking for innovative, new solutions we will find them in a place between chaos and order—what some call the chaordic path.

The chaordic path is actually the story of our natural world—form arises out of nonlinear, complex, diverse systems. "At the edge of chaos" is where life innovates, where things are not hard wired, but are flexible enough for new connections and solutions to occur. New levels of order become possible out of chaos.



"The Chaordic Field"

As in nature so in organizations, the path between Chaos and Order leads us to the new —to collective learning and real-time innovation. Instead of relying on controlling every detail in our organizations or communities from the top down, many leaders today see the need to access the collective intelligence and collective wisdom of everyone, which can be, at times, a "messy" process until we reach new insight and clarity.

In order to lead our organization on the chaordic path we need "chaordic confidence," the courage to stay in the dance of order and chaos long enough to allow the new, collective intelligence and wise action to emerge.

As we tread the line between chaos and order, individually and collectively, we move through confusion and conflict toward clarity. It is in the phase of not knowing, before we reach new clarity, that the temptation to rush for certainty or grab for control is strongest. We are all called to walk this path with open minds and some confidence if we want to reach something wholly new.

When we allow for this emergence, we leave our collective encounters with something that not one of us individually brought into the room.

The art is to stay in the fine balance between chaos and order. Straying too far to either side is counterproductive. On the far side of chaos is "chamos" or destructive chaos where everything

disintegrates and dies. On the far side of order is stifling control—where there is no movement which eventually means death. When we move toward either of these extremes, the result is apathy or rebellion—the very opposite of chaordic confidence. Staying on the chaordic path is being in balance; it is where life thrives.

Convening Compass: A Way to Navigate the Field

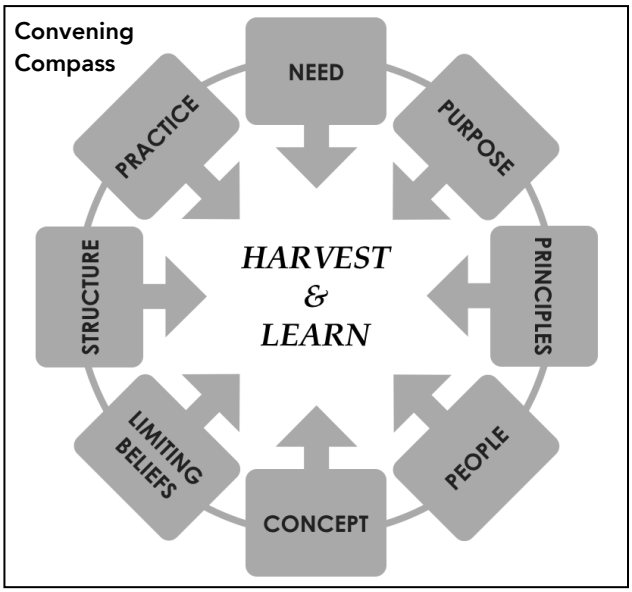
There are clear strategic elements that help us navigate the murky terrain of the chaordic field, managing the uncertainty while tending to emergence. These different elements bring just enough structure and order into the chaos to keep us moving forward gradually, giving our project or organization more form as we progress. Like a compass on a map, these elements can help orient a group, provide guidance and direction for moving through roadblocks, and help chart next steps. They can also serve as simple structure for designing meetings and engagements, a tool for reflection, and a strategy for participatory leaders who wish to engage and convene others in collaborative work.

There is no particular order. We can orient ourselves anywhere on this compass, go back and forth across the center, or engage in simultaneous efforts. Below, however, we discuss the different elements in a linear order. For a list of questions associated each element, see Convening Compass Questions on page 62.

NEED: Always a good place to start, the need is the compelling reason for doing anything. Surfacing the need is important to designing a meeting, organizational structure, or change initiative, to ensure that what you are trying to accomplish is relevant. Often there are many needs—an "ecosystem of needs"—from organizational to personal, and its important to identify them all.

PURPOSE: When commonly understood, a clear purpose can bind a group in a worthy pursuit. Born of the need, it is the often an answer to why this meeting/engagement/initiative/organization. It is important that purpose is commonly understood. When a group can't agree on the purpose, it can be helpful to jump into practice and start trying things to see what happens. This can be a good strategy when a network is trying to become more structured and focused, but have not really had much experience working on one thing together.

PRINCIPLES: What will guide the work and relationships? Principles are the aspirations groups strive for. There can be principles of work (i.e. timely, efficient, using available resources, etc.) and principles of cooperation (i.e. how we work together, parameters, agreements, etc.). Generally, principles reflect shared values and support the purpose. It is best when principles are created collectively. They can include behavioral guidelines or ground rules (see page 32 for some examples), but those need to be "owned" by the group versus assigned to them, as they are really about protecting the relationships which enhance collaborative work.



PEOPLE: Who should participate, help plan, be consulted, be invited — it is important to identify all the usual and unusual suspects. It may not be possible to include everyone all at once. Seek to engage those who are ready, then ask, who else? Including and connecting important networks will help increase access and reach as the project, idea or group is ready to expand. In addition, when planning an event or engagement, it is helpful to have a planning team that represents those you are hoping to engage.

CONCEPT: This refers to the high level ideas or plans for the group; what will this group do together? Sometimes a group has more clarity about the concept than the other elements. If this is the case, it may be important to ensure the concept is connected to a need and there is clarity about purpose. Even trying an experiment or pilot can help surface whether the concept is hitting the mark.

Limiting Beliefs: Inherent in any process is the importance of questioning our own thinking. Identifying hidden beliefs that might limit our perspective and blind us to what is possible, as well as any underlying assumptions that warrant testing can help to release us from outmoded thinking. In addition, a belief may be real to some but not others, thus interfering with our ability to identify common ground. Identifying limiting beliefs does not need to mean giving them up; we can explore the risks of changing as a first step. This is a good place to spend some time when groups are getting stuck, or unable to see clear to a next step.

STRUCTURE: How will we make this work? Preparing to implement means making a plan for how to organize and resource those who will do the work. For example will you require core teams to move work forward? Is there a need for a strategy group to keep an eye on what is happening? Will there be coordinators to keep communication flowing up and down? How will the group make decisions and what sideboards do people need to be aware of? It is important to develop only enough structure to support action, as too much structure can kill momentum.

PRACTICE: There is no substitute for experience when it comes to learning. Get to work and learn along the way by starting with scaled down pilots and experiments. Practice helps us see the connection to the need, and creates a through line between concept and experience. When there is success, scale up and do it again! When there are failures, learn from them and

HARVEST and LEARN throughout the process! "Harvest" means to collect, display and making meaning of high-level output. When working with emergence, it is very important to make sense of what you discover, to notice your impact. Make what you learn transparent and visible (see ways to harvest on page 83). It is important to highlight the threads of the unfolding story, to feed the learning forward! These elements are in the center because they should be happening at every step; it propels us forward when we are working on complex challenges.

The dynamic nature of this approach requires that movement occurs without clear outcomes in sight. It is an iterative, non-linear process that is in continual motion, each element integrating and including the others, and supported by the ongoing collecting and sharing of output. Working with these elements allows groups and individuals to be in both reflection/learning mode as well as an action/practice mode. Useful as both a planning tool and an assessment tool, they are woven into many of the participatory processes and methodologies shared in this resource book.

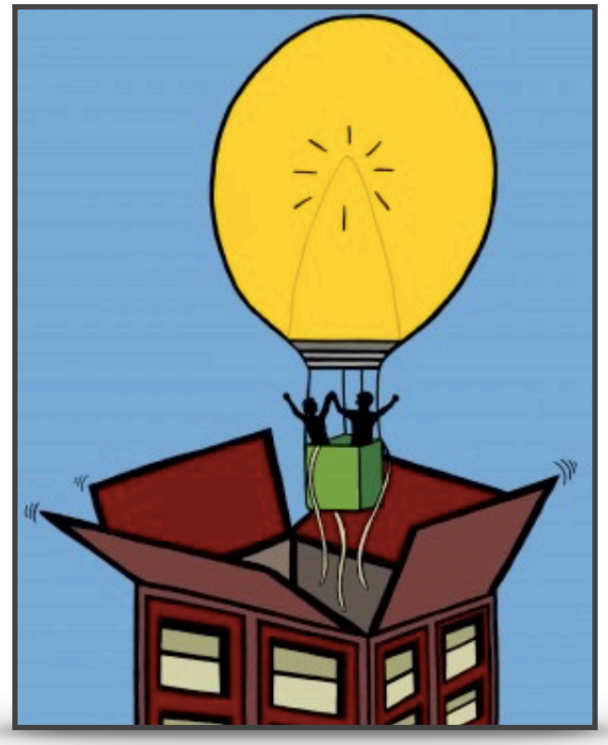
Adaptive Change

There is an increasing need today for organizations to adapt quickly in response to the pressures they face. This generally translates into people collectively changing the way they work, behave, perceive the problem or think about outcomes.

Typically, when faced with challenges, leaders and managers either determine solutions to a problem or assign this task to "experts" whose remedies are then rolled out. However, when challenges are adaptive in nature — requiring people to alter their behavior, perspectives or habits— this approach often fails. Efforts to get people to change are frequently met with an inordinate amount of resistance, frustration, diminished productivity and a host of unintended consequences—all of which require more time and attention to resolve.

The need for adaptive change calls for a different leadership approach, one that takes into account the deeper, more systemic operations of human nature and the motivators for change. People change because they find the will to do so, and even then, logic rarely plays a role when deep beliefs are at stake. For leaders, working towards adaptive change means first and foremost, dropping the veil of expertise and control, being transparent about the complexity and uncertainty of what's ahead, and bringing together the people who share the challenge to do the work of solving it.

At the root of adaptive change is cooperation, for it will take a collective shift in how things are done to see any lasting results. Cooperation is at its finest when people are able to pool resources and complementary skills to create innovative outcomes that serve all.



Technical vs. Adaptive Challenges

Understanding the differences between Technical and Adaptive challenges can help us determine when and where participatory conversation practices could be useful.

	Technical Challenges i.e. Payroll issues	**Adaptive Challenges** i.e. Diminishing resources/Culture Change
Distinctions	• Solved by experts • Logic & Intellect • Often quick & easy solutions • Easy to identify	• Cannot be solved by experts • Changes in values, beliefs, behavior, roles, relationships, & approaches to work • Difficult to identify & easy to deny
Nature of Solutions	• Requires change in one or few places, often within organizational boundaries • Solutions can be implemented quickly — often by edict • People generally receptive to technical solutions • Locus of Work: **AUTHORITY**	• Changes in many places, often across organizational boundaries • "Solutions" often require experiments & new discoveries • Implementation often takes time & cannot be done by edict • People often resist adaptive solutions • Locus of Work: **STAKEHOLDERS**
Role of Leader/ Authority	• PROBLEM SOLVER: solve or delegate to experts to solve • Implement solutions by edict, resource assignments, etc. • Focus on **SOLUTION**	• CONVENER: bring people together with the problem to do the work of solving it • Allow for long-term outcomes • Communicator: transparency • Focus on **PROCESS**
Strategy	**FIX IT!**	• Convene conversations necessary for group thinking (see Four Conversations for Working Adaptively, page 60) • Allow for experiments that explore opportunities or test assumptions • Prototype and scale up what works; share learning from what doesn't
Learning Required	• **INFORMATIVE Learning** • Bringing into mind new ideas, skills & content • Basic perception of self and world remains the same	• **TRANSFORMATIVE Learning** • Changing whole mind — perspective, perception, orientation • Feels unfamiliar, outside of comfort zone, risky • Requires courage & growth

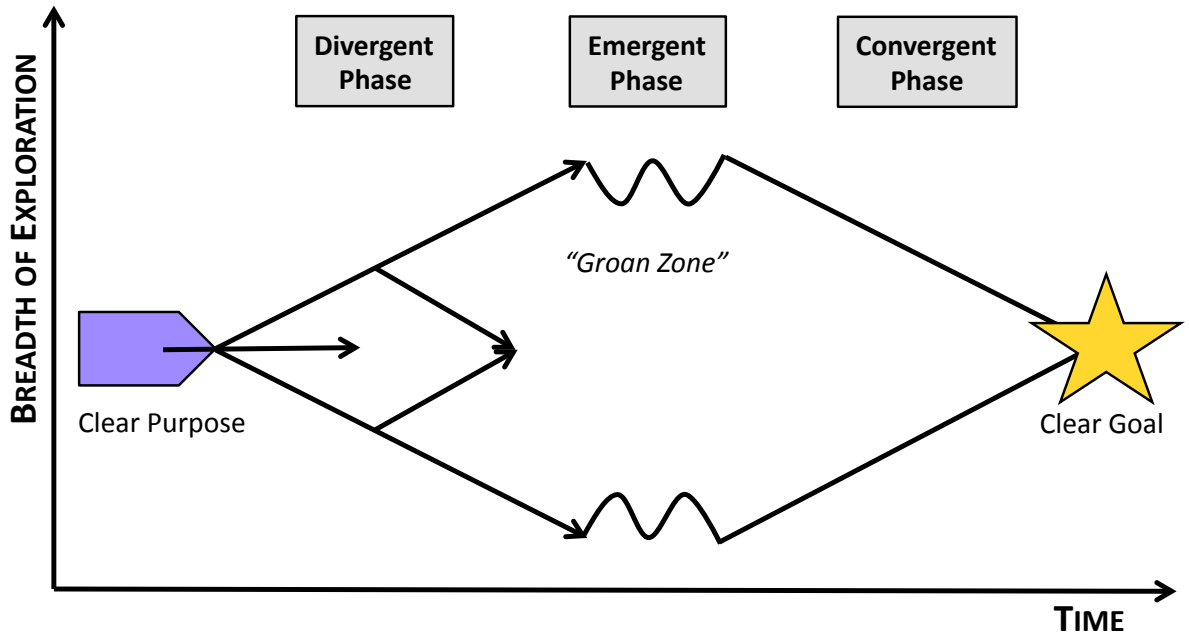
Adapted from the work of Ron Heifetz & Marty Linsky

Core Convening Pattern

Divergence, Emergence and Convergence

In many respects, convening is about supporting individual and group learning, particularly when the outcomes sought by the convener include greater engagement in exploring complex problems, developing innovative solutions, and/or adapting outmoded behaviors and mindsets to what is needed going forward. It is important to understanding the basic pattern or flow of thinking that enables learning at a transformative level—divergence, emergence and convergence. This pattern is a map that can guide the focus of inquiry for any convening process, as well as for the overall flow of an event that may involve multiple conversations.

Divergent and convergent ways of thinking and working are complimentary. The cycle of divergence and convergence is like a breath —breathing in and breathing out. Emergent thinking is the space in between and it is here that creation and innovation flourish. Progressing through these three phases creates a kind of momentum that can propel groups forward.



From the beginning, this pattern should be guided by a **clear purpose or intention**—why this group is coming together. Clarity on purpose or intention can be a navigational tool, helping to focus or inspire the direction of the group's efforts. A clear statement of purpose or intent does not define the destination, rather it provides a more compelling invitation. It tells prospective participants why the conversation might be relevant and important to them. Depending on the situation, a purpose statement can be broad, with room for a variety of output (i.e. identify topics for deeper exploration) or more focused (i.e. Identify, prioritize and determine potential next steps for taking action). As the group engages in learning together, the purpose may need to be refined as new insights emerge,

however the lack of a clear purpose or intention at the front end can undermine a productive engagement.

The **Divergent phase** of the pattern comes first, and assumes there are no clear solutions or conclusions yet. It is a nonlinear, "problem-defining" phase, where there is no pressure to define positions, make decisions or find solutions. The focus is on exploration and the development of a greater collective understanding of the nature and complexity of the issue, question or challenge, why it is important, to whom, and the interests at stake. In the Divergent phase of a process we focus the inquiry on helping the group connect to the value of the purpose at hand, and drawing out the diverse perspectives, interests, and insights in the room to define and broaden the group's understanding the challenge or issue. One way to think about when designing this phase of inquiry is to help the group develop a "360° view" of the current situation.

The complement to divergent thinking is the **Convergent phase**, which is structured to clarify collective learning, identify actions, and close out the engagement. Usually subject to time constraints, the convergent phase focuses on synthesis—narrowing in on key insights, and identifying doable next steps to develop or advance what participants are learning about their issue. This is also a time of closure, where the group can integrate new learning, appreciate one another, and perform rituals that help mark transitions.

In between divergent and convergent phases, comes the **Emergent phase.** This is where different ideas, perspectives and needs become integrated. We refer to it as the **"groan zone"** because it often requires us to stretch our own understanding to include other points of view. It can feel messy—an uncomfortable stretch—but it is also the phase where innovation, creativity, and new thinking emerges, leading to new opportunities and/or solutions not visible previously. The more transformative the learning is, the more of a groan zone the emergent phase can be. When we avoid this phase altogether and jump too quickly to convergence, we loose the opportunity to see the challenge or situation in a new way — rather, we tend to stay within the same thinking we started with. The groan zone is the price we pay for including diverse perspectives and discovering more innovative solutions.

Throughout all of these phases, the role of "**Harvest"** (synthesized output from group conversations) is key to moving the group's work forward. The harvest becomes a place holder for where the group left off — it is a form of convergence, though it may not represent the final phase of exploration for the purpose at hand. It is a collective record of the ideas generated, the themes and insights synthesized, the meaning made of the situation, and any next steps. It is an ending point and a starting point for future work. We often say that planning a process is really about planning a harvest, being clear about what kinds of information we want to glean, why it is important, and how we are going to do it. Read more about the art of harvesting on page 63.

Principles of Cooperation

> Scientists have discovered that the small, brave act of cooperating with another person, of choosing trust over cynicism, generosity over selfishness, makes the brain light up with quiet joy.
>
> ~ Natalie Angier
> Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times reporter

Humans are equally hardwired to cooperate or to compete in order to survive, even though the two approaches are often in tension with one another. Which approach is chosen in a given situation will depend largely on our individual perceptions of the challenges before us and the environment in which we are operating. As living systems, groups, organizations and communities often respond collectively to their environment, resulting in a cause and effect dynamic: the more we compete, the more competitive our environment becomes. Conversely, the more we cooperate, the more cooperative our environment becomes. The behavior we exhibit ultimately defines the conditions we operate in, thus reinforcing the survival approaches we use.

When complex, adaptive challenges are at issue, cooperation is, by the nature of the solutions needed, generally the more successful approach. However if we are operating in a largely competitive environment, cooperation at the scale needed may feel unattainable. As leaders, influencers and conveners, we can take strategic and deliberate steps to change this dynamic. By attending to the core principles of cooperation, we can, in fact, shift personal and collective responses to survival, and create an environment that supports and reinforces collaboration and shared effort.

Convening methodologies and practices are powerful tools for starting to make that shift, providing the structure and opportunity for people to explore collectively and discover for themselves the benefits to confronting shared challenges together.

Collaborative Environments

Collaboration is a sophisticated form of cooperation that asks people who work together to look beyond personal interests towards outcomes benefiting the whole. Collaboration is a great way to address complex, adaptive challenges, since it has the potential to tap communal creativity, unleash true innovation and earn genuine buy-in. However, our capacity to collaborate with others is dependent on how psychologically conducive our work environments are towards cooperation.

Despite an increasing desire for collaboration within and among organizations, effective collaboration is rarely occurring in many work environments, particularly where people are:

- Working independently, isolated in their silos of expertise
- In units, teams or interest groups where competitive behavior is the norm

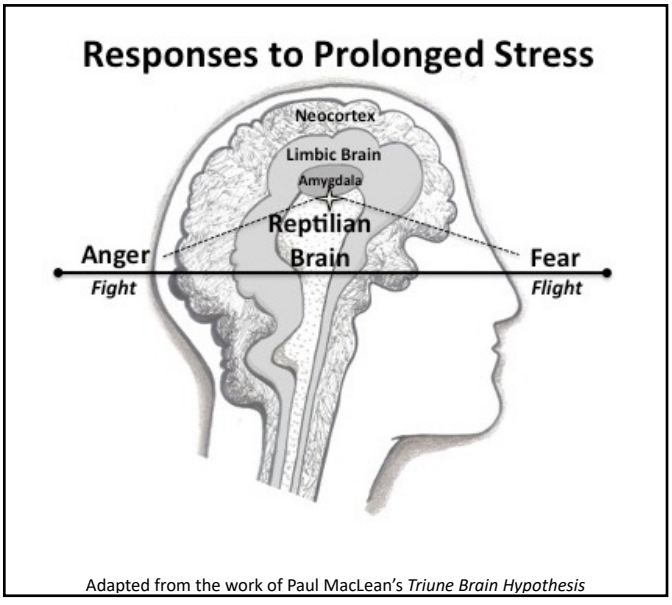
- Fearful of losing their jobs, their relevance, or their influence and thus are suspicious of others
- Struggling to work with 'differences' – be those differences cultural, political, racial, generational, gender based, or just 'not like me.'
- Feeling hostile (overt or passive-aggressive) toward perceived competitors: using argument, needless debate, gossip, character attacks, power plays and ultimatums to meet their own needs while ignoring or devaluing the needs of others
- Distrustful and/or cynical of leadership, new initiatives or joint endeavors, focusing instead on protecting self-interests versus investing in organizational or collective goals

Contributing Factors to Poor Collaborative Environments

The most elemental contributor to the anti-cooperative behaviors listed above is the human brain and its instinctual responses to emotional stimuli. Our growing scientific understanding of the brain has revealed that in prolonged high-stress environments, humans tend to experience a reduced capacity for creative, strategic thought and collaborative action.

Responses to Stress — "Redline Behavior"

Research has revealed that prolonged, low level feelings of anxiety, stress and powerlessness (gradients of fear and anger) can trigger the human psyche to respond with primitive survival behaviors similar to those of reptiles. Insidious and contagious, these feelings and corresponding fight/flight behaviors can infect a workplace and the people in it. These "redline behaviors" (our term) are the antithesis of collaboration. They limit our capacity for collective, creative problem solving as they increase distrust of others and draw forth our most primitive survival responses. In a modern day workplace, these responses show up as behaviors that include: avoiding emails and phone calls, knowledge hoarding, making ultimatums, competing internally for resources and status, callous gossiping, suspicion and distrust of others.



Adapted from the work of Paul MacLean's *Triune Brain Hypothesis*

Growing need for Interpersonal Skills

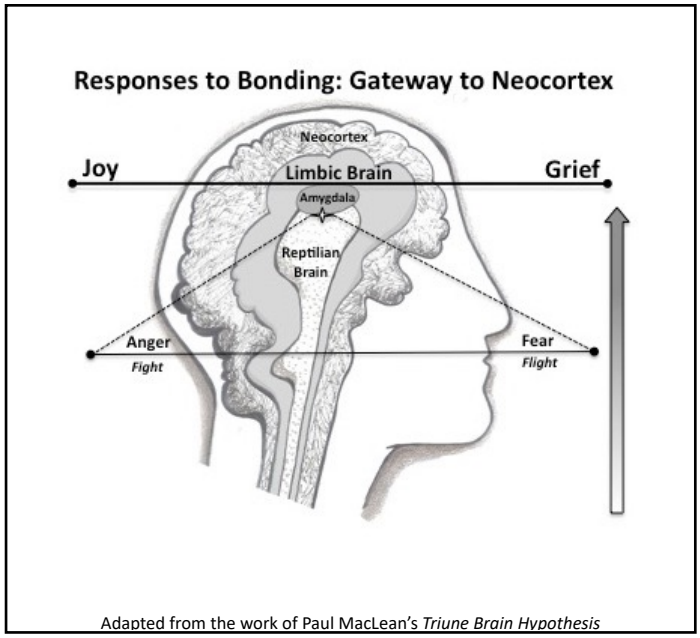
In addition to our behavioral responses to stress, our workplaces are changing, becoming ever more diverse and interconnected, calling for leaders and employees to become more skillful in building relationships, discovering compatibilities within difference, working within stakeholder networks, and promoting inclusive work environments. Proficiency in these skills requires time, attention, practice and reinforcement to take hold. For many organizations, particularly those with predominantly redline work environments, there is too little focus on the relational aspects of working together.

What Helps Create Collaborative Environments

Motivated leaders and influencers can have the greatest leverage for building collaborative capacity by focusing on the underlying systemic and environmental conditions rather than the surface symptoms. In our experience, talking about collaboration or requiring people to collaborate without addressing redline conditions and behaviors has limited results. The means for changing a "redline" environment and increasing cooperative outcomes can be found in modern brain research and through the application of participatory methodologies.

Responses to Bonding — "Greenline Behavior"

Unlike reptiles, human beings also have the ability to bond through shared feelings of joy and grief (and gradients of these emotions: camaraderie, compassion, etc.). This bonding is triggered by human empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. Historically, this survival skill has allowed people to cooperate when confronting challenges that affect the whole community (group, organization, industry). What is less known is that this instinctual bonding occurs not because of the *event* itself, but through the shared emotions we experience in response to it (shared grief/pain, joy/gain, fear/anger). It is in this state of felt connection that humans bond; when feelings are shared, empathy is triggered, trust increases, fear subsides, hope emerges, and true collaboration can occur. Thus, "greenline" (again, our term) experiences become the gateway to optimizing our executive brain function, the neocortex—the seat of creative, strategic, and innovative thought. Greenline experiences are interactive, communal, compassionate and supportive. They tend to occur in groups that set aside time for: meaningful dialog about values, shared interests and passions; collective naming of the current reality; honoring losses; and celebrating successes.



Adapted from the work of Paul MacLean's *Triune Brain Hypothesis*

When leaders invest in routine greenline experiences, there is often an increase in behaviors supportive of collaboration. Such behaviors include:

- Displays of camaraderie and willingness to help others
- Open expressions of diverse ideas and perspectives
- Spontaneous examples of cooperation & creativity to address immediate issues
- Listening to the viewpoints of others
- Willingness to share knowledge and generate ideas for mutual gain/success

- Investment in strategic, long-term planning efforts
- Laughter, honest conversation and greater acceptance of differences in others

Participatory methodologies and practices

The science of human bonding is at the root of participatory methodologies. The processes are valuable tools designed to create accelerated, collaborative learning environments, by tapping into our human instinct to empathize and connect around shared values, purpose, and/or challenges. When we take the time to identify what we have in common and where our diverse perspectives and skills can be complementary, we naturally seek more of the same.

Truth telling, collective understanding of the issues, and creative thinking and innovation are all are the result of participatory processes that promote: inquiry versus advocacy; common themes and perspectives over individual opinions, collective gain rather than individual loss, and the adaptive benefits of cooperation over self-interest and competition. Employing participatory methodologies as a means of building collaborative capacity within a group can overcome 'redline' behavior and draw forth our highest human capacity for discovering adaptive solutions and making needed change.

Studies on Empathy

Recent studies have revealed that our human ability to feel empathy (the ability to understand and share the feelings of another) can be effected by whether the other person is a stranger. When we are with strangers, we can feel stress, which blocks our capacity to empathize with the stranger. However, that stress is easily relieved when both parties engage in some low-risk, cooperative activity. In one study, empathy levels increased dramatically after two strangers played the video game Rock Band together for as little as 15 minutes.

When we want concerted action, we need to help people connect in ways that support the good relationships that enable cooperative work. Intentional relationship building can reduce stress and enable the bonding powers of empathy to flow, thus fueling and reinforcing a more collaborative, innovative environment.

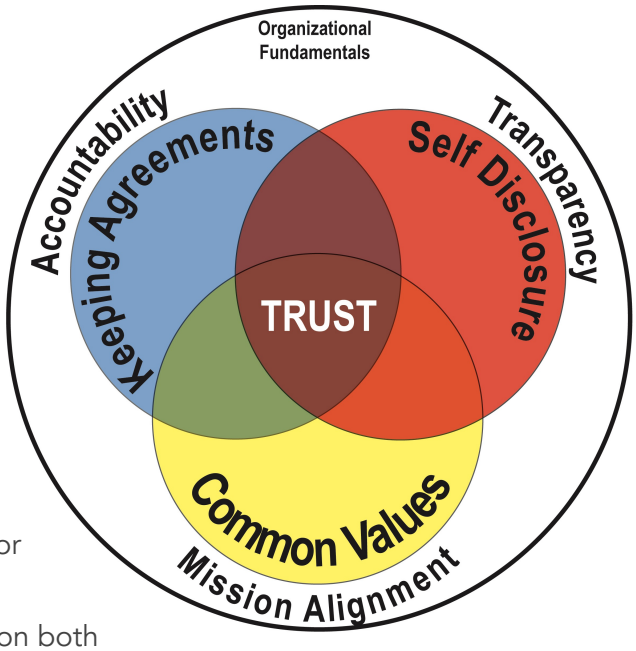
Trust

Trust is a key component for working cooperatively. When trust is low, it becomes increasingly difficult for people to engage, collaborate and work together effectively. The essential question is: **How much trust do people need in order to cooperate?**

There are lots of studies about trust and organizational efficiency. When trust is high, people are more willing to work together to find solutions to commonly felt problems. There is greater capacity to weather and overcome the inevitable disagreements and obstacles. However, there is little information

about how much trust is needed to embark on collaborative initiatives — how much do I need to trust you in order to work by your side?

In our experience, people have a variety of expectations, and what constitutes enough trust varies broadly. Often a small amount of trust is enough to start a conversation, and if that goes well, more trust can be a bi-product of that experience, thus fueling a next step. Trust is built, earned, demonstrated and reciprocated.



What builds trust for people may vary based on what people value most, however we see trust as comprised of three key elements, each of which can be applied at the interpersonal and organizational level:

- **Keeping Agreements/Accountability**
- **Self-disclosure/Transparency**
- **Common values/Mission**

We think people feel the most trust when they have all three.

Participatory engagements are powerful experiences for building trust within a group, department, network or organization, as they capture all three elements of trust on both organizational and interpersonal levels. Questions that access what we value most about our work, professions, or the topic at hand can lead to discussions that both reveal what is true and important to an individual participant, and then collectively to the convened group. Personal sharing is synthesized into common themes, providing first an"I" then a "we" focus. By following process guidelines we can keep agreements together, and in publicly creating next steps and follow up actions, participatory engagements allow for greater trust to be developed as the group starts to move forward on the important work it wants to undertake.

Creating a Container

When we embark on convening a group of people around an important and complex question, challenge, and/or opportunity, we must consider the environmental and behavioral conditions and characteristics that will ensure productive conversation. We call this kind of thinking and planning "creating a container"—defining where and how we will interact so there is enough safety to allow people to fully participate. Good questions to be considered are:

- What is the compelling reason that draws this group together?
- How do we invite people into inquiry when there is no clear definition of success, clarity of purpose, or history of successful collaboration in this group?

- How do we intentionally meet people where they are at with our language and approach vs. talk over people by using language that is so removed from their current reality?
- How do we create a welcoming and open space for respectful dialogue and inquiry vs. a space that creates barriers (e.g. circular tables for conversation, vs. stadium seating focused on one/ some content experts)?
- What kinds of explicit agreements or guidelines will encourage all people to participate fully and be respectful (e.g. important to hear from every person at your table, share the airtime, look for common themes, etc.)?
- How will we demonstrate our desire to actually hear from all (e.g. graphic recording of things that are said, questions that are relevant to all people in the room, allowing for differing views to be expressed, etc.)?
- Though we may not know solutions when we start, how do we communicate a process or intention that we hope to follow in our quest for the answers?

The underlying reason to intentionally nurture a strong container for convening work is to help us manage the tensions that arise when the solutions and direction we need to follow are unclear, and will need to emerge from our ability to engage and learn together. We cannot over structure the *content* in the emergent realm (e.g. here is the solution, here's how we will implement) as it will cut off needed innovation and new thinking. We can, however, apply some order and structure to the *process*, "how" we will work together, how we will speak to one another, how we will sit with each other, how we will communicate now and as we move forward together, how we can all expect to "be" together regardless of what we are talking about.

This intentional structure helps to balance the chaotic experience of emergence as we delve into the unknown.

Using Guidelines

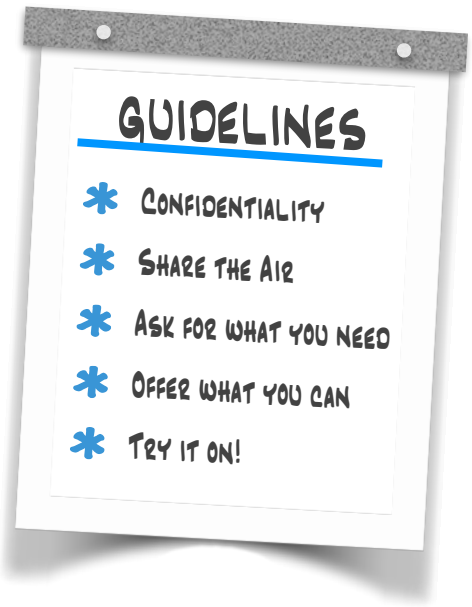
Having a clear, shared understanding of what behaviors are okay and not okay can help groups work more collaboratively together. Guidelines-or "working agreements" are part of creating a safe environment where trust and creativity can thrive. While sometimes ground rules or behavioral expectations might seem like "common sense," when these are not clear, transparent and commonly understood, behavior can and often does degrade, particularly when there are strong positions in the room.

Guidelines can come in many forms, and be developed for several different purposes. We often recommend that groups take time to develop the guidelines they want to work by, based on the group's purpose and goals and identified tensions and needs. Below are examples of ground rules that we have found very helpful in our work with groups.

Convening Guidelines

These are intended to help set the tone for collective exploration and learning during this event or meeting, and are basic to any kind of group engagement.

- **Confidentiality:** Personal stories are like personal property: I need permission to use someone else's
- **Share the Air Time:** Manage your tendency to either speak up or hold back - do more of the opposite!
- **Ask for what you need**: there are some breaks, but do what you need to do; call a "time out" if you feel yourself wanting to check out
- **Offer what you ca**n: bring your perspective and experience to bear, but hold your expertise lightly as it may or may not always fit the needs of the moment
- **Try it on:** we will be experimenting with new ways of working/thinking that may not feel comfortable or natural; we invite you to try it — you aren't obligated to "buy it."



Mutual Learning Ground Rules

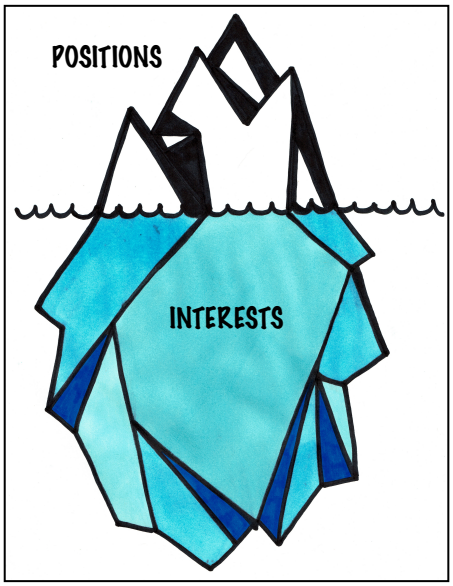
Focusing on specific behaviors, Roger Schwartz's ***Mutual Learning Ground Rules*** are intended to support teams engaging in robust communication and collaboration. They help to elevate key collaborative behaviors that can break down when strong opinions, positions or other forms of tension arise. Try introducing one or two and asking for volunteers to "monitor" the behavior, then take time at the end to reflect on how the presence (or lack of) those behaviors may have affected the outcomes.

- State views and ask genuine questions
- Share all relevant information
- Use specific examples and agree on what important words mean
- Explain reasoning and intent
- Focus on interests, not positions
- Combine advocacy and inquiry
- Test assumptions and inferences
- Jointly design next steps and ways to test differences
- Discuss un-discussable issues
- Use decision-making processes that produce the level of commitment needed

From **The Skilled Facilitator,** by Roger Schwarz. Developed to help groups create a mutual learning environment.

Interests vs. Positions

So often when we gather to discuss a situation or challenge, we start the conversation with the positions we believe should be taken, or the tactics we think are needed. Rarely do we start with a discussion about what our interests are, both individually and collectively, with respect to the issue at hand.



When seeking cooperative solutions, focus on interests, not positions. Interests help define the problem. They are the silent motivators behind positions and tactics. A position is what I've decided upon whereas interests are what have caused me to so decide. When opposing positions are expressed with respect to an issue without an understanding of the key interests at stake, the desire to cooperate is frequently stifled. However, behind opposing positions there often lie compatible interests, borne from shared needs, and it is from this field that the willingness to cooperate can be gleaned.

The most powerful interests are basic human needs. These are what we all have in common, and when we can identify these shared needs, it can help us perceive the issue differently, and open up more possibilities for wise solutions.

When convening groups to talk about a complex issue or challenge, starting the conversation by identifying the various interests at stake can go a long way to creating a more cooperative environment. What is my stake in this issue? What is our collective stake? When others stake out positions or strategies, we can move the conversation deeper with questions: Why do we think we need to take this course of action? Why not that one? What will this (position/strategy) give you/us? What is the need or interest it will address?

Strive to meet the deeper needs. When we target solutions to address a deep need, we can often effect change on multiple levels. Asking the question — What are the deeper needs we must meet? — can help solidify the higher purpose of a group and guide the discussion towards more inclusive, collaborative outcomes that serve all.

Feelings and Needs

When we understand the feelings and the basic human needs—our own and those of others—that are driving a given interaction, it can help us to resolve conflict, meet divergent needs and creatively solve problems peacefully and respectfully.

The following pages are based on the work of Marshall Rosenberg, PhD., Nonviolent Communication (NVC). NVC has been practiced in war-torn areas, economically disadvantaged countries, and prisons, and with military officers, educators, government officials, healthcare providers, and clergy.

NVC is based on two assumptions:

1. We are all compassionate by nature and that violent strategies—whether verbal or physical—are learned behaviors taught and supported by the prevailing culture
2. We all share the same, basic human needs, and that each of our actions is a strategy to meet one or more of these needs

NVC practitioners "have found greater authenticity in their communication, increased understanding, deepening connection" in addition to more effective conflict resolution. NVC is practiced in over 65 countries around the globe.

Feelings are...

- Not thoughts; they happen "south of the neckline"—in our body (as sensations and emotions)
- Good indicators of our needs; for example:
    - Sad = need to honor loss (grieve)
    - Mad = need to (re-)establish boundaries
    - Afraid = need for protection or support
- Undervalued in our culture; we value thinking over feeling; we're taught to ignore, bury or override feelings—especially in the "workplace"
- Intimidating to some of us—viewed as too irrational, uncontrollable and unpredictable; so we tend to skirt or downplay them
- Difficult for some of us to identify—we lack the ability to sense what we feel and/or the language to describe it

Naming Feelings:

Because it can be difficult to name our feelings, we have provided the following lists of feeling words. People we've worked with have found it very helpful to scan this Feeling Wheel to help them find apt words for what they are feeling.

The following Feelings Inventory are words we use when we want to express a combination of emotional states and physical sensations. This list was compiled by the **Center for Nonviolent Communication** (www.cnvc.org) and is neither exhaustive nor definitive. It is meant as a starting place to support anyone who wishes to engage in a process of deepening self-discovery and to facilitate greater understanding and connection between people.

There are two parts to this list: feelings we may have when our needs are being met and feelings we may have when our needs are not being met.

FEELINGS INVENTORY

Feelings when Needs are Satisfied

ENGAGED
absorbed
alert
curious
engrossed
enchanted
entranced
fascinated
interested
intrigued
involved
spellbound
stimulated

INSPIRED
amazed
awed
wonder

EXCITED
amazed
animated
ardent
aroused
astonished
dazzled
eager
energetic
enthusiastic
giddy
invigorated
lively
passionate
surprised
vibrant

JOYFUL
amused
delighted
glad
happy
jubilant
pleased
tickled

EXHILARATED
blissful
ecstatic
elated
enthralled
exuberant
radiant
rapturous
thrilled

PEACEFUL
calm
clear headed
comfortable
centered
content
equanimous
fulfilled
mellow
quiet
relaxed
relieved
satisfied
serene
still
tranquil
trusting

HOPEFUL
expectant
encouraged
optimistic

GRATEFUL
appreciative
moved
thankful
touched

REFRESHED
enlivened
rejuvenated
renewed
rested
restored
revived

AFFECTIONATE
compassionate
friendly
loving
open hearted
sympathetic
tender
warm

CONFIDENT
empowered
open
proud
safe
secure

Feelings when your needs are not satisfied

AFRAID
apprehensive
dread
forbearing
frightened
mistrustful
panicked
petrified
scared
suspicious
terrified
wary
worried

ANNOYED
aggravated
dismayed
disgruntled
displeased
exasperated
frustrated
impatient
irritated
irked

EMBARRASSED
ashamed
chagrined
flustered
guilty
mortified
self-conscious

AVERSION
animosity
appalled
contempt
disgusted
dislike
hate
horrified
hostile
repulsed

CONFUSED
ambivalent
baffled
bewildered
dazed
hesitant
lost
mystified
perplexed
puzzled
torn

YEARNING
envious
jealous
longing
nostalgic
pining
wistful

ANGRY
enraged
furious
incensed
indignant
irate
livid
outraged
resentful

DISCONNECTED
alienated
aloof
apathetic
bored
cold
detached
distant
distracted
indifferent
numb
removed
uninterested
withdrawn

DISQUIET
agitated
alarmed
discombobulated
disconcerted
disturbed
perturbed
rattled
restless
shocked
startled
surprised
troubled
turbulent
turmoil
uncomfortable
uneasy
unnerved
unsettled
upset

VULNERABLE
fragile
guarded
helpless
insecure
leery
reserved
sensitive
shaky

FATIGUE
beat
burnt out
depleted
exhausted
lethargic
listless
sleepy
tired
weary
worn out

PAIN
agony
anguished
bereaved
devastated
grief
heartbroken
hurt
lonely
miserable
regretful
remorseful

TENSE
anxious
cranky
distressed
distraught
edgy
fidgety
frazzled
irritable
jittery
nervous
overwhelmed
restless
stressed out

SAD
depressed
dejected
despair
despondent
disappointed
discouraged
disheartened
forlorn
gloomy
heavy hearted
hopeless
melancholy
unhappy
wretched

Developed by Center for Nonviolent Communication

Basic Human Needs

Often, when there is conflict, it is because people are trying to meet very different needs. Conflicts become more heated when these needs either are not clearly identified or aren't valued or honored.

When trying to bridge differences or resolve conflicts it can be very helpful to be able to identify the basic human needs that are at the root of the feelings, behaviors and spoken desires of the people involved. Learning to name basic human needs gives us the ability to go to the source of the conflict—the hidden aquifer, as it were—rather than fighting over the surface wells of conflicting strategies.

Other words we might use are "values," "interests," and "deep motivations". Needs are not strategies; strategies—which can be skillful or clumsy, direct or roundabout, winning or off-putting—are our attempts to meet our basic human needs.

Needs are...

- Universal: we all have them
- Undervalued: US/Western culture tends not to focus on needs (we don't want to be seen as "needy")
- Often hidden: most of us have difficulty identifying our needs, even when asked
- Powerful: unmet needs are usually at the root of strong feelings and most conflicts
- Connecting: recognizing a common human need in another makes it easier to be empathetic
- Our responsibility: each of us is responsible for meeting our needs and we can make requests of others to help us meet our needs
- NOT strategies, tactics or agendas; these are all ways we attempt to meet our needs

Naming Needs

Because naming needs can be challenging, we have provided the following Needs Inventory. This list is neither exhaustive nor definitive. It is meant to be a starting place.

NEEDS INVENTORY

Developed by Center for Nonviolent Communication

CONNECTION
acceptance
affection
appreciation
belonging
cooperation
communication
closeness
community
companionship
compassion
consideration
consistency
empathy
inclusion
mutuality

(Connection Con't)
intimacy
love
nurturing
respect/self-respect
safety
security
stability
support
to know & be known
to see & be seen
to understand
to be understood
trust
warmth

HONESTY
authenticity
integrity
presence
play
joy
humor

PEACE
beauty
communion
ease
equality
harmony
inspiration
order

MEANING
awareness
celebration of life
challenge
clarity
competence
consciousness
contribution
creativity
discovery
efficacy
effectiveness
growth
hope
learning
mourning

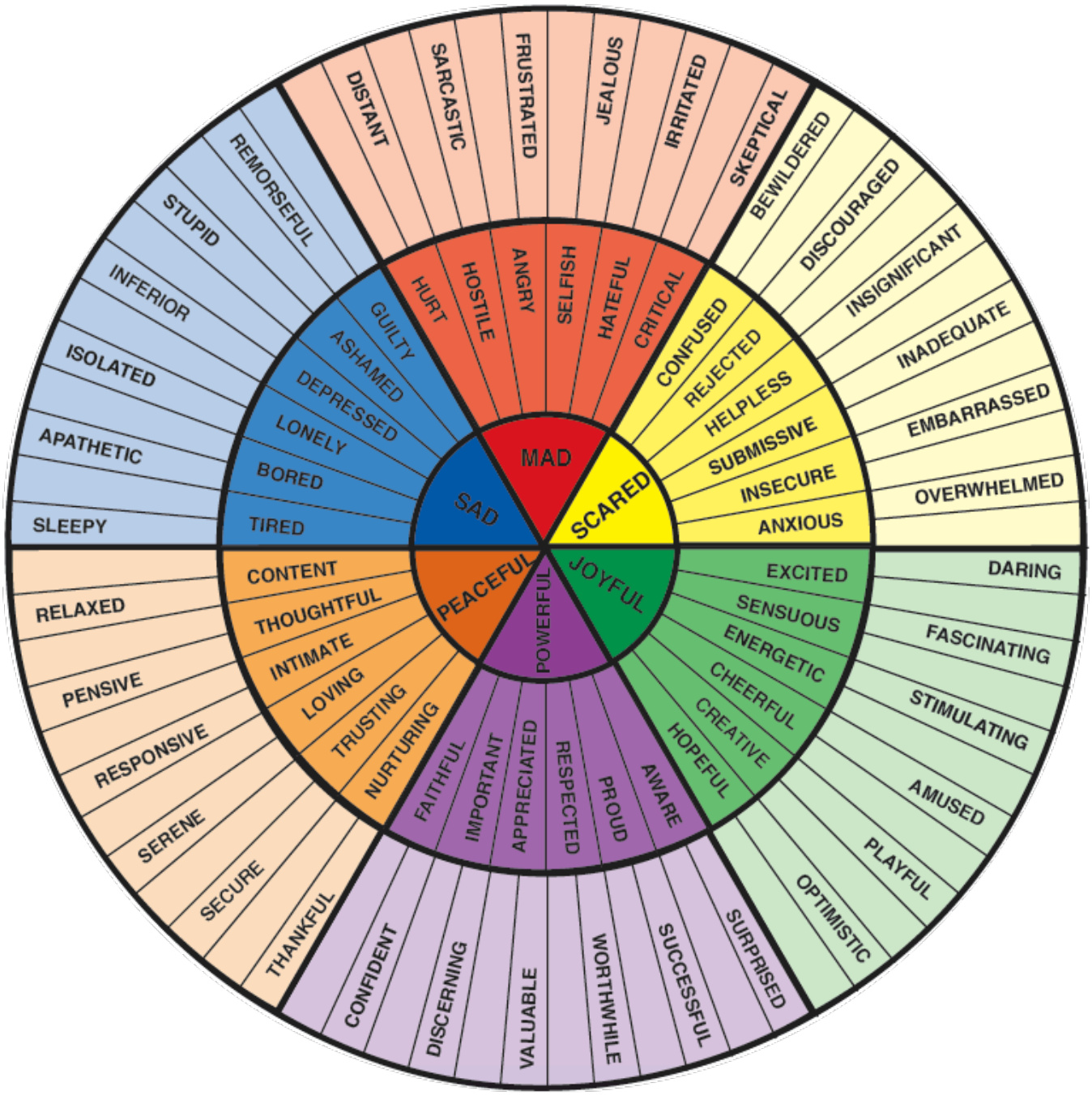
(Meaning Con't)
participation
purpose
self-expression
stimulation
to matter
understanding

AUTONOMY
choice
freedom
independence
space
spontaneity

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING
air
food
movement/exercise
rest/sleep
sexual expression
safety
shelter
touch
water

The Feeling Wheel

Our feelings and the words we use to express them stem from six core emotions. It can be helpful to note the core emotion attach to the feelings we're experiencing when we want to connect with others. This wheel can be a helpful tool for identifying those core emotions.



Launching New Projects in Unpredictable Environments

In a recent article in Harvard Business Review, authors Schlesinger, Kiefer & Brown summarize surprising new insights from research on serial entrepreneurs and how they initiate new, innovative projects in a climate of extreme uncertainty while minimizing risks. The following summary offers an excellent perspective for working adaptively.

Traditional process for new projects in a predictable world:

- Analyze
- Predict/Forecast
- Plan/Model
- Implement

Adapted from "New Project? Don't Analyze—Act," by L. Schlesinger, C. Kiefer & P. Brown; Harvard Business Review, March 2012

Different thinking of serial entrepreneurs in an unpredictable world:

- Act —before analysis,; quick, small, inexpensive steps
- Learn —instead of predicting
- Build —scale up from what works

Entrepreneurial Rules of Thumb

1. Use the means at hand. Use the people you know, the budget you have
2. Stay within your acceptable loss. Determine at each step how much you can safely afford to loose if this step should fail. Include dedicated time and reputation as "costs."
3. Secure only the commitment you need for the next step. There are four types of people; those who want your project to happen, those who will help make your project happen, those who will let it happen, and those who will keep it from happening. Don't waste your time getting buy-in from last two categories. Ask: what is the least amount of commitment I need to act? Where do I have freedom?
4. Bring along only volunteers. Look for volunteers only from the first two groups identified above. You can't compel innovation, only invite it. Share your passion and desire, act honestly, be transparent about the plan as well as good and bad news, demonstrate your willingness to collaborate by offering real work to others.
5. Link first steps to a broader organizational imperative. Produce early results, demonstrate how first steps can make a difference, and build from there. If the risks are too high, scale back to a smaller step.

6. Manage expectations. Don't over promise! These are just exploratory steps to generate evidence that will inform the next step.
7. Move quickly in the face of positive results: and embrace even negative results as information to improve your idea or as a nudge to explore a new opportunity all together before resources are wasted.
8. Understand when and how to use prediction. Forecast, plan and model where you can, using the evidence created to inform next steps. Augment traditional process rather than replace it
9. Know when to let go! Get clear on when to cut your losses and walk away. There is always another day!

Working with Limiting Beliefs

> Ideas mediate between us and the outside world. When we see a tree, the image produces in our minds an idea of a tree; we see the real tree indirectly. We don't see a tree, but our idea of a tree."
>
> *~ Adapted from "Philosophy of Language: The Early Modern Background" by Curtis Brown*

Whether in our personal lives or as leaders, the source of our fiercest limitations is also where we have the most leverage for learning and change. That source is the bastion of beliefs we hold—many of them unconsciously—about ourselves, the world and life itself.

These beliefs, assumptions and biases are the product of our upbringing, education and socialization. They serve us well as short-cuts for negotiating a complex world. Once we have learned and codified certain patterns—such as how to cross a street—we do not have to relearn them for each new situation. Taken together, these beliefs and biases function as a lens through which we take in the world around us. They can be limiting if we fail to re-evaluate, update or adapt them when we find ourselves outside of the context in which we formed them (as with a North American crossing a street in Great Britain).

Why it's Good to "Work" with Our Beliefs

Especially in the role of convening leader, the ability to recognize and shift our own limiting beliefs allows us to create more possibility for more diverse groups to co-create, and for more diverse thinking to emerge from that collaboration.

Holding our own beliefs and biases lightly—with humility and curiosity—allows us to learn, grow, change and adapt; to "think outside the box." When we fight to defend our deep beliefs, we can cut off connection, close our minds and hearts, and forfeit learning.

A simple practice leaders and groups can employ is periodically pausing to ask "What assumptions am I/are we holding?"

How to Recognize the "Grip" of Limiting Beliefs

> It's not our differences that divide us. It's our judgements about each other that do."
>
> *~Margaret Wheatley, Turning to Each Other*

As the terms "assumption" and "bias" imply, our own limiting thinking is often invisible to us; we don't even realize we're looking at things through a particular lens—one that is not universal, but the product of our life experience.

Usually these beliefs are ratified and reinforced by those around us—in our families, workplace, communities or society. So, without conscious curiosity and a little probing—or exposure to a very

different set of beliefs—they will likely remain invisible to us. And, unconscious that they exist, we don't have the option of questioning whether they remain valid and true for us or what negative impacts our deep beliefs may have on our work, lives and relationships.

So, how can we recognize when we're in the grip of a limiting belief? Here are a few hints on spotting your own limiting beliefs in the heat of the moment (or with the benefit of reflection):

In the "Grip"	Free to Think/Create
Rigidity	Flexibility
Certainty/Needing to be right	Curiosity/Humility
Strong emotions (fear/anger)	Flexible thinking, creativity
Feeling powerless or entrenched	Feeling powerful and generous
Feeling small/regressed	Feeling resourceful/present/adult

Examples of Limiting Beliefs

As a further aide in spotting the beliefs and thoughts that limit you, here are some examples:

- Remembered experience or inherited messages assumed to be valid in the present. For example: "People are trying to put me down" or "You can't trust anybody."
- Ways we learned to define ourselves and/or others that continue to seem accurate; as in "I am supposed to work hard—not be happy."
- Convictions about how things should be—"Avoid conflict at all costs."
- Any belief we hold defensively/aggressively and/or without curiosity/humility.

The Good News: We Can Choose Anew

"The existence of limiting beliefs...is good news. It means that reality, as we experience it when we are stressed or angry or stuck, is more malleable than it often feels." In other words, we have some leverage: we can work with our own thinking to free up our ability to see and act on options that already exist.

Thanks to Caitlin Frost, Art of Hosting Practitioner

caitlinfrost.ca

Sometimes just asking ourselves what assumptions we're holding frees up new thinking. We can also ask if there are alternatives to each of our assumptions—ones that would open pathways that our assumptions close. Enlisting trusted thinking partners or coaches may yield answers to the above questions we would not arrive at on our own.

The Polished Mirror

A metaphor I like for a skilled facilitator (or leader or convener) is the mirror—that gifts others with a clear and accurate reflection of who and where they are right now. When, as leaders, we get caught in

our limiting stories or assumptions our ability to reflect clearly gets compromised. We get distracted by the spots and smudges on the mirror. And our participants notice that we are no longer seeing and connecting to them wholeheartedly.

Cultivating a practice of working with our deep beliefs is one way to keep our mirror polished, so we can bring to our leadership our most flexible thinking and generous presence.

Uncovering Limiting Beliefs with Participatory Process

> The real voyage of discovery lies not in seeking new landscapes, but in seeing with new eyes.
>
> ~ *Marcel Proust*

As with individuals, groups form their own collective beliefs and assumptions that are often an unquestioned element of their culture. When seeking to address adaptive challenges, it is very important to uncover these assumptions and beliefs, illuminating any limitations or blind spots that may result. This is often where new possibilities emerge.

In our experience, using participatory methodologies to identify collective beliefs and assumptions can be highly effective because this work is done together. When the process makes space for such conversation, insightful perspectives that often go unheard or unnoticed rise up. Encouraging curiosity and inquiry, people become more open to sharing diverse perspectives and questioning the status quo.

Once we can name the assumptions we hold, it becomes easier to think about how we might test them, or try something new that did not seem possible. Consider the following questions to help groups uncover limiting beliefs and assumptions:

- What are the assumptions behind this course of action?
- How can we test the assumptions and see if they still stand?
- Why do we do things this way, and not that way? What might happen if we try it differently?
- What are the biases we hold? What blind spots do they create?
- What can we try that might help us shift our perspective?

Setting Whole-Hearted Goals

A method for deepening your resolve by honoring your internal resistance.

Developed by Joseph DiCenso

One of the essential acts of a leader is to answer the question, "What do I want?" Often, we find that leaders—and people in general—who know what they want have some internal friction or hesitation about going for it.

Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey (authors of Immunity to Change) call this "competing commitments"—we are committed, for example, to holding folks accountable and to

being liked. These two commitments can seem to compete with one another—to the point of neutralizing our efforts to act.

Yeah, BUT...

Another way to say it is that we have a "Yeah, BUT..." way of thinking about our goals.

> *"Yeah, it would sure be good for morale and team performance if I were holding folks accountable to their deliverables, BUT... I don't want them to think I've become the hard-hearted enforcer."*

Do you hear the competing commitments? Left at this stage we likely won't act or will only do so half-heartedly. That's because we've got it set up so that one part of us is advocating for our stated goal (an accountable team) and another part of us is just as strenuously cautioning us against action due to a perceived risk (being disliked or taking on a role we don't want). Let's call these two parts the Advocate and the Risk Manager. Here's the kind of internal tug-o-war we find ourselves stuck in:

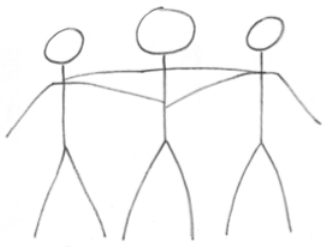
Advocate Leader Risk Manager

Yes, AND...

What if we could stop competing with ourselves and start listening to—and honoring—both internal voices, our internal Advocate and Risk Manager? We might call this a "Yes-AND..." way of thinking.

"Yes I want to foster a high-functioning team that follows through on goals and commitments AND...I want to do it in a way in which I don't take on the role of 'bad cop.'—by training the team to practice accountability as a regular part of our meetings."

Yes, AND... transforms internal antagonism into a collaborative effort. This, in turn, increases your resolve/motivation because you've lowered the risk of acting on your goal. Instead of a tug-o-war, you've got a team working shoulder-to-shoulder.



Advocate Leader Risk Manager

Steps to Whole-Heartedness

Here are five simple steps to move from internal friction to deep resolve:

1. Clarify your goal
2. Listen for risks, concerns or "competing commitments"
3. Discern what valid concern or risk your internal Risk Manager is most trying to attend to (the Yeah, BUT...)
4. Restate your goal so that it also attends to the competing concern (the Yes, AND...)
5. Make a plan that reaches for the goal WHILE managing the risk

The "Yes, AND..." Madlib

Here's a simple fill-in-the-blanks formula for you to use:

YES (goal)	"I _____ (Example: ...foster a high-performing, accountable team)
AND (manage risk)	AND _____ (...avoid the "bad cop" role)
BY (action plan)	BY_____" (...helping my team learn to hold itself accountable)

Working with Mindset

When seeking to engage others in the work that needs doing, we tend to focus on what we can see or measure, like mission statements, job descriptions, organizational charts, or a checklist of tasks. But there is an element that's harder to pinpoint or capture on paper that has tremendous influence on our thinking and behavior. It can affect our capacity to adapt, collaborate or problem-solve — even how we perceive the challenges in front of us. We call this influencer mindset.

Mindset in the context of participatory leadership is relevant at multiple levels. Initially, there is the mindset of a leader and how she might embrace the idea of bringing together those with the challenge to do the work of solving it. At a personal level, a convening leader will need to prepare herself by acknowledging that she does not have the solution or the absolute power to change others, a mindset that differs considerably from the more traditional belief that leaders should have all the answers and that top-down solutions are the only ones that work. This is why convening always starts with the self (see Joseph's thoughts on Hosting Oneself on the following page).

There is also the mindset of those being convened, whether they are employees, colleagues, stakeholders, community members, etc. Each of these groups may hold different collective mindsets about their role, and may resist seeing themselves as collaborators, problem-solvers, or accountable for the solution.

Convening methodologies can be effective at shifting mindsets. By design, the learning and discovery that occurs as a result of convening processes can broaden individual and collective perspectives, altering how participants see themselves and each other in relation to the purpose at hand. The inquiry-based nature of participatory process invites people to draw from the collective wisdom in the room — to which they have contributed — in order to see the greater whole of what is, and what's needed or possible going forward.

Working with mindset means meeting people where they're starting from – acknowledging the mindset currently at play by making it visible to all. From this vantage point, people are better able to determine whether this mindset is serving a mutual purpose or need that is also part of the current situation. There are several ways this can be done, depending on the intent of the gathering.

- **Use questions to surface the current state of things from many perspectives.** Focus on external and measurable as well as internal and cultural. What are the expectations here? What

Small	I am powerless, unable to act/matter
Separate	I am isolated, alone, "different" (don't belong)
Deficient	I am damaged, less-than, broken or "bad"

matters most to me? What is our culture like? What do we want it to be?

- **Consider barriers to trying something new.** What's at risk to think, work, or approach the issue differently? And what's at risk if nothing changes?
- **Back up when people seem stuck or uncertain about an idea or approach.** Explore more closely what the reluctance or uncertainty might be about. What is holding us back? What is at stake here? What smaller steps might feel more doable?
- **Reality check the purpose against the mindset people are starting from.** Are we being too ambitious? Will the purpose resonate and connect for those involved? Might it overwhelm them?

By designing conversations to include mindset — our own and that of the group being convened—we leverage one of the fundamental influences on the outcomes of such conversations. And we're much more likely to spawn ideas that address mindsets, meet people where they are and move a group closer to where they want to go.

Hosting Oneself: The Inner Game of Leadership

When you're "feeling"...	Look for how you're... *(shift thinking & behavior)*
small, powerless, unable	**BIG**, powerful, able
separate, alone, "different"	**CONNECTED**, belonging
deficient, damaged, bad	**WHOLE**, enough, good

Just as mental discipline is a vital practice for top athletes, we believe there is an inner game of leadership. This inner game is all about managing yourself so that you can be fully present and engaged and have access to your best thinking.

One aspect of this inner game is staying on your own side, no matter what. We call this being an ally to—or "hosting"—yourself (leveraging some of the same skills we use to host potent conversations with others). Here are three ways to be a good host or ally to yourself

1. Come Home to your Body

We've been taught to live in our heads. When we're anxious, many of us dissociate from our bodies. One aspect of self-alliance is to become more at-home in your own body. This anchors you in the present (vs. past or future)—like a tree that cannot be blown over easily. Here are some ways to do that:

- *Feel Your Feet:* Spread your toes and imagine you are sending roots down into the ground, connecting to your deep values, what you stand for.
- *Stand Tall:* let your spine be long and

1. Judge Other:	See/treat *other* as bad, wrong or at fault
2. Judge Self:	See/treat *self* as bad, wrong, at fault
3. Self-Empathy:	Listen for your feelings and (unmet) needs
4. Empathy for Other:	"Guess" about the other's feelings and needs

extended, lifting your sternum and ribs; this facilitates efficient breathing.

- *Breathe and Smile:* Enjoy full, long breaths, allowing your belly to be soft and to move with each breath.

2. Flip the Three Anxieties

Buddhist teacher and author Tara Brach names three common anxieties we humans tend to fall prey to:

When you are in the grip of one or more of these anxieties, a way out is, first to identify which of the three best describes your experience; then look for how you can shift your thinking and behavior to its "opposite."

Here are three examples:

1. From "small" to "BIG": Jan is feeling small/powerless after being passed over for a promotion. She realizes that, while she was powerless over the decision she does have power to seek information. She can meet with her boss and get clearer about his expectations and standards (shift in thinking). She begins making a list of the questions she'd like to ask(shift in behavior).
2. From "separate" to "CONNECTED": After a team presentation that did not go well, Chris is feeling separate. He's wondering if the other team members are thinking he let them down. He realizes he is thinking in isolation and may not have the full picture (shift in thinking). So he calls one of the team members he trusts to be honest with him, and asks for feedback (shift in behavior). In the end they decide to request a team meeting to debrief the presentation.
3. From "deficient" to "WHOLE": Ruki is feeling deficient after losing her temper at her three-year-old son. Over lunch with her neighbor, she gets a little help putting it in perspective (sleep deprivation, job stress, money stress, overbearing mother-in-law) and comes away clearer about her generally good parenting skills and where she can make a change (shift in thinking). She calls her husband and they set up a time to talk about their co-parenting later in the week (shift in behavior).

3. Practice Self-Empathy

According to Marshall Rosenberg, the developer of Non-Violent Communication, when we encounter differences or conflict, we have four basic options for how we respond:

Allying with oneself means moving from self-judgment to self-empathy. Practicing self-empathy means listening to the sensations and feelings in our bodies and the unmet needs those signals indicate. It means acknowledging that what you feel makes sense, given that a basic need of yours is not being met. Choosing self-empathy is a revolutionary act that breaks our cultural conditioning to think in terms of good/bad, right/wrong, and attack/defend. It helps us listen for the basic needs we (or the other) may be trying to meet.

Networks

A more recent organizational form (first described in the 1970's), networks emerged in the information/communication age as a response to the growing complexity and interdependency of many challenges; the need to organize and reorganize quickly and flexibly; and the call for rapid communication and a broader reach.

Networks are collections of connected nodes —individuals, groups (circles) or organizations (triangles and squares). Networks can link all types of organizations, and while we rarely find networked collections of bureaucracies, networks can and often do spring up inside them. Networks are great for building relationships, increasing communication flow, and for getting things done fast. Networks can bring knowledge to and from hard-to-access areas and create diverse connections that cut across traditional communication boundaries (i.e. silos, disciplines, interests, geographical locations, cultures, etc), and generate action.

Convening can help to illuminate the diverse networks and connect those who share a similar purpose, or are struggling with similar challenges. Connecting networks can rapidly amplify communication flow and help to build influence where purposes align. There has been lots of research on network building, and since the dawn of social media, we have seen networks do everything from swaying corporate policies and raising millions in disaster relief, to mobilizing social movements and toppling governments. While networks can be unpredictable and hard to control, they can also be created and sustained if network builders adhere to basic tenets and principles.

Building Networks

Networks are proving to be a useful organizational form for addressing adaptive challenges. Unlike hierarchies and bureaucracies, networks use distributed versus top-down authority to get things done.

Adapted from **Net Gains: A Handbook for Network Builders Seeking Social Change** by Peter Plastrik and Madeleine Taylor.

There are three basic kinds of Networks, and appropriately, these are intimately connected.

1. ***Connection Networks*:** Networks of their own, connection networks are also the essential base or platform for the other two types. They primarily focus on the flow of information and transactions between members, where ties are generally strong enough to open lines of communication, but too weak to enable joint action among members (i.e. professional networks)

2. ***Alignment/Affinity Networks:*** These networks use the connectivity among members to generate and spread a "collective value proposition," or shared reason for members to care about one another. Members of alignment networks have greater connectivity through

common experiences and/or interests, often sharing certain values and/or affinities, and therefore feel a greater level of trust for one another (i.e. alumni or umbrella networks)

3. ***Action/Production Networks:*** the most complex type of network, action networks require both high connectivity and clear alignment to foster joint action or pursue a specialized outcome. Actions can be collective, or can be decentralized and occur in smaller network hubs, or at the periphery of the network. Action networks are more challenging to maintain, as they involve more structured coordination and clear agreements about shared purpose, roles, decision-making, and actions (i.e. political networks)

While networks form organically, we can also be intentional and purposeful about building useful networks. There are many resources available, but regardless of whether a network forms organically or by intentional efforts, there are key imperatives to keep in mind:

- ***Networks are guided by individual purpose aligned with collective purpose:*** members are connected because their respective purposes need each other. There is mutual value given and received from being connected. When the collective purpose expires, or alignment with membership no longer exists, network connections will lapse. This means internal networks within a traditional organization need to be empowered to make decisions and act in ways that respond to the mutual alignment of individual and collective purpose.

- ***It all comes down to connectivity: relationship building, trust, transparency and communication.*** Theses are primary for any network. When trying to form a new network, or reform a lapsed one, builders always have to start with and maintain connection, and go from there to alignment, and if appropriate, action. There are no shortcuts to action, no ways to "enforce" network connections. It always starts with relationships.

Networks have their own internal operating principles, or "natural rules" that you violate at your own risk:

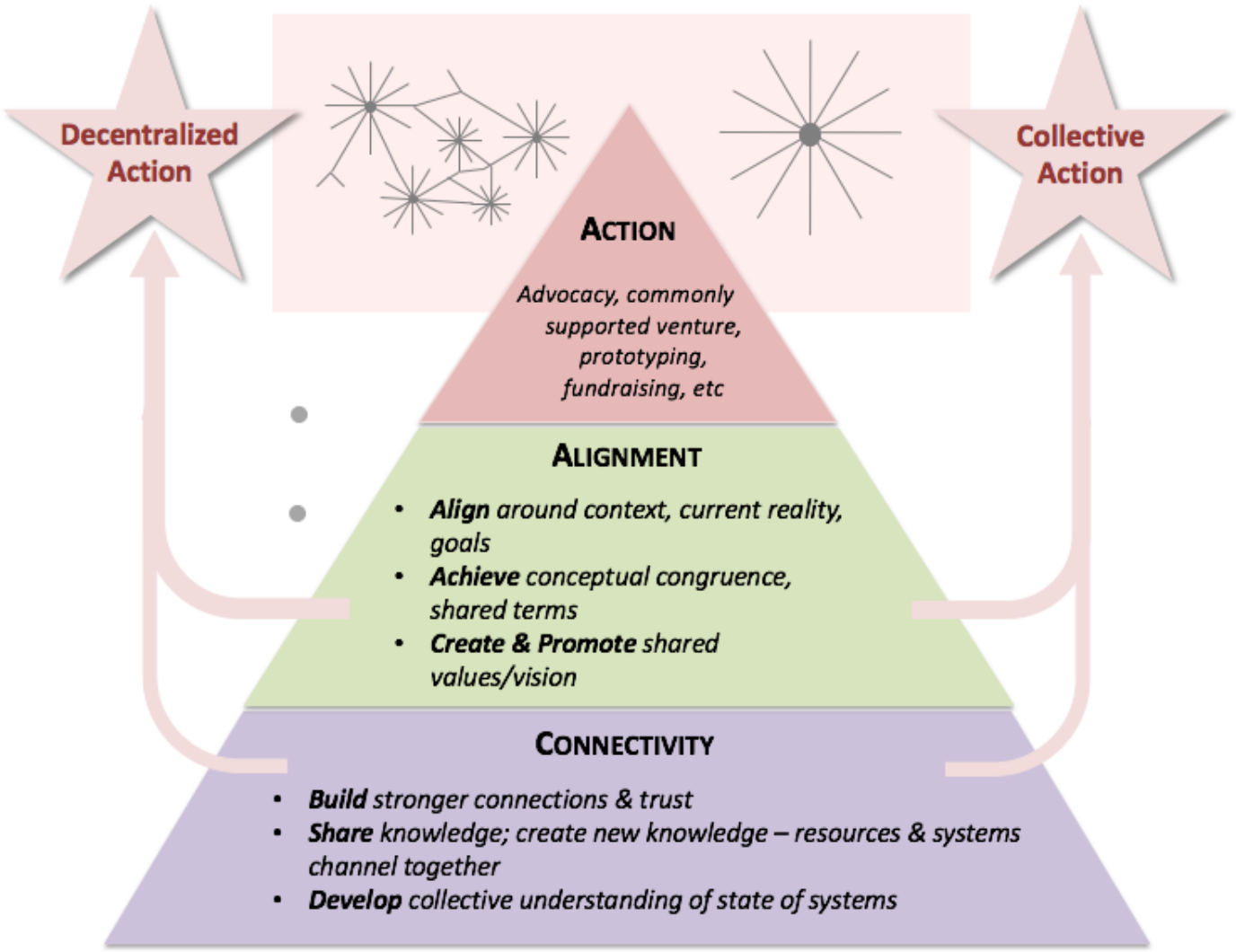
1. ***Make Networks do the work*** – networks are stronger when member collaborate to produce value; of course networks can hire staff, but those people work to build and manage the network, not perform the work/value of the network itself

2. ***Let connections flow to value*** – nodes in a network link to other nodes because they think they will receive value from the connection. Some nodes can be more "popular" by having a greater number of connections than "unpopular" nodes. Allow weaker nodes to die off rather than to try to support them. Network organizers should not make networks do things that members don't find valuable.

3. ***Use variations to strengthen Networks*** – members of a network need not be in "lockstep" on everything they do. Use diversity to create value versus forcing conformity. Not all members need to know about all aspects of the network, or be interested in all elements of the collective

value proposition. Consider undertaking several kinds of activities that might address a number of interests, or allowing for several different roles that members can fulfill.

4. ***Keep plans flexible*** – long-term planning is not practical with networks. Network structures tend to be provisional. Networks should focus on planning projects they will undertake, one at a time, and the development of the network as a whole.



Graphic created by Curtis Ogden, Interaction Institute for Social Change blog 10/22/14

CONVENER'S TOOLBOX

The Invitation

Adapted from the work of Chris Corrigan Art of Hosting Practitioner

chriscorrigan.com

Invitations are an important part of convening, not just as a tool for announcing the details of an event or meeting, but as a process and a practice that is elemental to the act of convening itself.

At the onset, invitation is about attracting and inspiring others to join you in what you are undertaking. Compared to compulsion, invitation connotes choice: people choosing to attend, choosing to being open and curious as to what will happen, maybe choosing to be enthusiastic and excited about what is possible. Compulsion tends to have the opposite effect, and can result in closed, defensive, apathetic and/or positional participation. For convening to be successful, it is important to create avenues for people to discover their own intrinsic motivation for being part of the process.

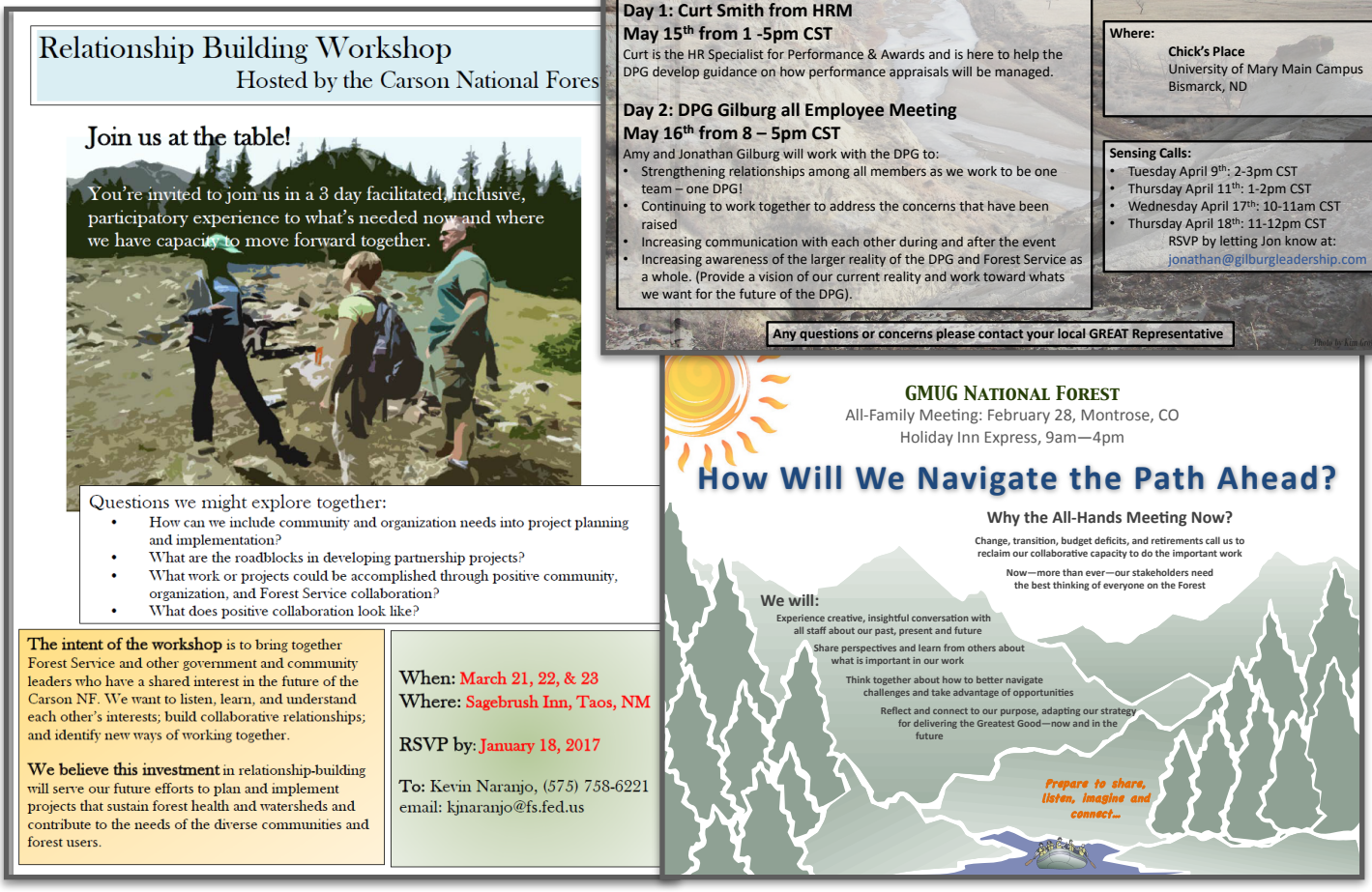
Working the concept of invitation into the convening process can be an art form in itself, often beginning well before any formal invitation is issued. When we are designing convening events we start early with discussions focused on developing the basis for the formal invitation. The goal of a formal invitation is to attract people to the event, and to do this well, it is important to take time to learn about the expectations, interests and needs of those you want to attend, in relation to the stated purpose. During the event itself, conveners are constantly inviting people into inquiry - using powerful, open questions to invite connection, exploration, discovery and commitment. After the event, there may be a need for inviting some form of follow up, or participation in next steps.

Here are some examples of how the practice of invitation can be integrated into designing a convening event.

- Take time early on to clarify the Need, Purpose and People This clarity then becomes the basis for the invitation process.
- Create an invitation list of people who are needed for the meeting or event
- Convene little conversations among those on your list to find out about their interests, needs and expectations if they were to attend, and what quality of invitation would attract them to this gathering.
- As the design progresses, issue small invitations like "Save the Date" to the growing list of invitees. If event details are not finalized, be clear about when they will be forthcoming, and ensure there is a contact listed for any questions. In some cases, we've developed an overview of our own planning process to share with those who want more information about what we are doing.

- Send out an invitation more than once. The more complex and important the event is, the more information may be required before hand. Often we set up "sensing calls," optional conference calls that participants can join, where they are invited to share their hopes and concerns about the upcoming event with members of the convening team. This can be a way to help participants connect early on with each other and feel more invited into the planning process. The more engaged you are with the participants before the meeting, the easier it is for participants to engage with one another at the event itself.
- Within the meeting itself, frame everything as an invitation. Using language that invites people to choose to participate so the participants are aware that the quality of the experience is up to them.
- Support follow up by inviting participants to connect to one another and/or stay connected to ongoing efforts. Enable event output or "harvest" (see page 76) to be shared with all, keep websites in place, and send out follow-ups and invite connection until the energy wanes and the project moves on. Being diligent and creative about keeping the invitation open can keep momentum going, particularly when follow up actions or next steps are needed.

SAMPLE INVITATIONS
from US Forest Service



Powerful Questions

> If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on it, I would use the first 55 minutes to formulate the right question because as soon as I have identified the right question I can solve the problem in less than five minutes.
>
> ~ **Albert Einstein**

Asking the right question

Asking the right question is the most effective way of opening up a conversation and keeping it engaging. A high-quality question focuses on what is meaningful for the participants, triggers our curiosity, and invites us to explore further.

Some guidelines for choosing questions

- A well-crafted question attracts energy and focuses attention on what matters. Experienced conveners recommend asking open-ended questions (often start with *what*, *why, where, how*), versus ones with a simple yes/no answer. Open questions can also be strategic in that they are crafted to focus attention in a particular direction, while leaving space for multiple perspectives.
- Good questions invite inquiry and curiosity. They do not need to promote action or problem solving immediately. In fact, it is important for questions to help a group develop more collective understanding of the challenges they want solutions to. Questions can follow a flow of inquiry that eventually leads to next steps.
- You'll know a good question when it continues to surface good ideas and possibilities, or helps people make connections and understand the nature of what's at hand on a more comprehensive level.
- Check possible questions with key people who will take part in a conversation. Does it hold their attention and energy?

A powerful question:

- Is simple and clear
- Is thought provoking
- Generates energy
- Focuses inquiry
- Challenges assumptions
- Opens new possibilities
- Evokes more questions

There are many examples of powerful questions - in the pages that follow we've listed several for different purposes. Consider their application to your concern, issue or challenge. When you are

tempted to ask a question that may be "leading" (forcing a narrow focus) or an opinion couched in a question, try pulling back and opening up the space for a variety of responses to keep the conversation inclusive and inviting to all.

"Questions for all Seasons" from The World World Café

Consider the following generative questions recommended by the World Café to stimulate new knowledge and creative thinking in a wide variety of situations around the world. Let these questions stimulate your own thinking about the best questions for your specific situation.

Questions for Focusing Collective Attention on Your Situation:

- What's important to you about (your situation) and why do you care?
- What draws you/us to this inquiry?
- What opportunities can you see in (specific situation)?
- What do we know so far? What do we still need to learn about?
- What are the dilemmas/opportunities in (specific situation)?
- What assumptions do we need to test here in our thinking about (specific situation)?

Questions for Connecting Ideas and Finding Deeper Insight

- What's taking shape? What's at the center of our discussions?
- What is emerging here for you? What new connections are you making?
- What had real meaning for you from what you've heard?
- What surprised you? What challenged you?
- What's missing from this picture? What are we not seeing? What do we need more clarity about?
- What's been your major learning/insight so far?
- What's the next level of thinking we need to do?
- What hasn't been said that needs to be spoken?

Questions that Create Forward Movement

- What could happen that would energize you/us about action on (specific situation)?
- What's possible here and who cares?
- What needs our immediate attention going forward?
- If our success was completely guaranteed, what bold steps might we choose?
- How can we support each other in taking the next steps? What can you/we contribute?
- What is the next conversation we need to be having?
- What seed can we plant today that might make a difference tomorrow?
- What's next?

Four Conversations for Working Adaptively

Tapping into the innate wisdom and motivation of those vested in the issues at hand allows leaders and influencers to employ a deeper strategy for adaptive change. There is a method, or flow, that supports collective thinking in service to the challenges at stake.

1 Connect to People & Value of Issue

PURPOSE

- Develop "enough" trust and safety for serious work on any issue
- Discover the meaning of the work for those in the room
- What is valued or important to each person in relation to the adaptive challenge

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- What is important or valuable about my work?
- Why is this issue important to me?
- How are we going to work together, e.g.: guidelines, roles, expectations, decision-making, etc.?

2 Mutual Understanding of Challenges & Goals

PURPOSE

- Make sense of the data, get clear on what we know, ID trends, themes, impacts, trade offs
- Sense what is already happening, what's working, what isn't?
- Must uncover other perspectives, reasoning and ideas
- This is needed before individuals can align, decide or coordinate effectively

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- What do we need to know about this issue? What's missing?
- Whom does it affect? What are the impacts? Who should be involved?
- What assumptions, blinds spots, biases and/or sideboards are present?
- What's already happening or working in regards to this issue? What isn't? Why?

3 Explore Possibilities

PURPOSE

- Innovative creative thinking based on all available facts, perspectives, and desires
- Generate ideas, look at the problem through a different lens, consider small moves that have a big impact
- Understand biases and assumptions, identify hidden hurdles in advance
- Consider experiments and pilots as first moves

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- What would be occurring if a solution were successful?
- What might be a way to experiment or pilot?
- What are the risks and rewards of each possible effort? What blind spots and hurdles must we account for?
- What is the low risk, high leverage move?

4 Make Commitments & Take Action

PURPOSE

- Generate decisions, commitments, coordinated actions
- Often the "default/first conversation"
- Falls short when commitment or decision is not clear or publicly known by group or individual
- Important to be as explicit and structured as possible
- More likely to converge easily when other conversations have taken place
- Collective action strengthens relationships

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

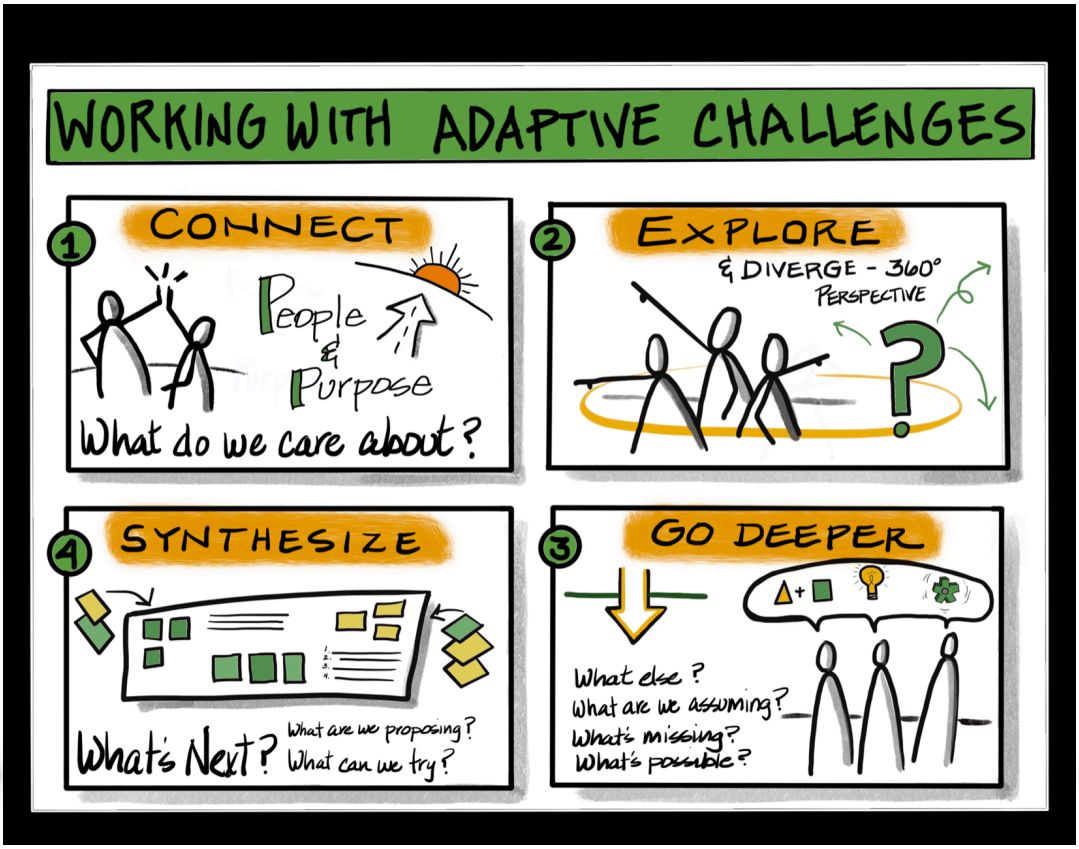
- What is clear? What are our first steps?
- What support is needed to move on this?
- What and how do we communicate our intentions? To whom?
- How do we document, track and assess our actions?
- Who will do what by when?
- When do we follow up on our progress?

Adapted from the work of *Nancy Dixon and Trish Silber,* this model reinforces the conditions that lead to cooperation, creative thinking and wise decision-making. The chart on the previous page illustrates the four phases of conversation.

We always begin with ***(1) relationship building***, aimed at getting people connected and generating enough trust so they can start working together on the issues at hand. For many, there is a tendency to skip this step and push onto the so-called "substantive issues." It is important to remember however, that without establishing or confirming the relationships in the room, people may not have enough motivation or trust to apply themselves freely to the issues at hand. Sometimes a simple "check in" is enough; other times more conversation is needed. Conversations that reveal what people care about or value help create that important connection and initial trust.

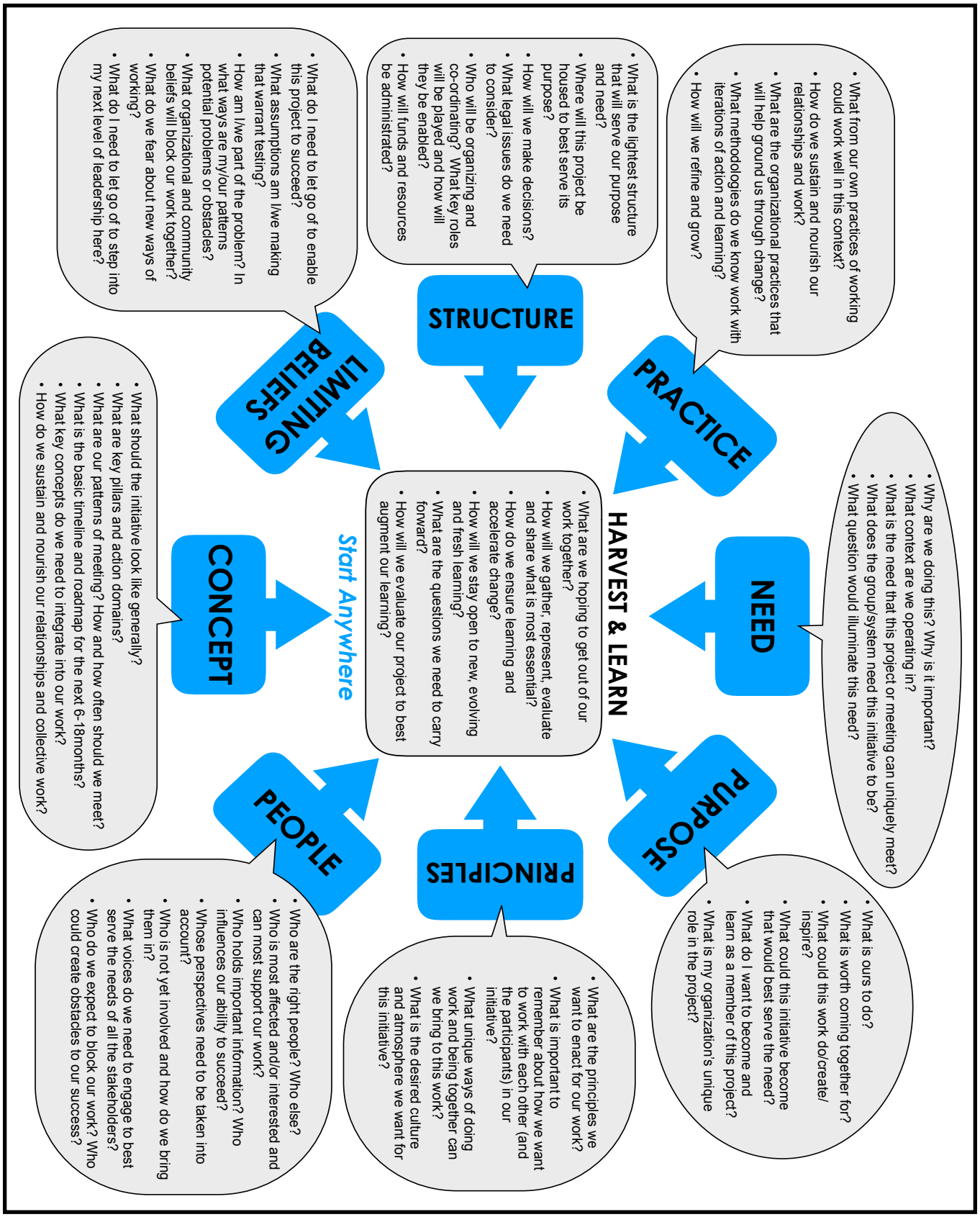
The next phase is developing a ***(2) common understanding*** of the challenges and goals involved. Forming a collective understanding is important - it is not just about what I know, but what we know together that matters. The next stage is ***(3) exploring possibilities***, what is evident and visible, and what might be obscured by assumptions and blind spots.

The final stage is ***(4) action***. Conversations can cycle back and forth between the first three stages as needed, however action plans are not made until the group has successfully moved through those initial stages. This increases the likelihood that decisions made and actions taken will be supported by the group and informed by the important thinking they've done together.



Convening Compass Questions

The following questions correspond with elements of the convening compass, described on page 25.



The Art of Harvesting

Harvesting is the art and science of capturing and making meaning of the ideas, themes, insights, and new perspectives that surface during a discussion, and reflect or support collective understanding and collaborative action.

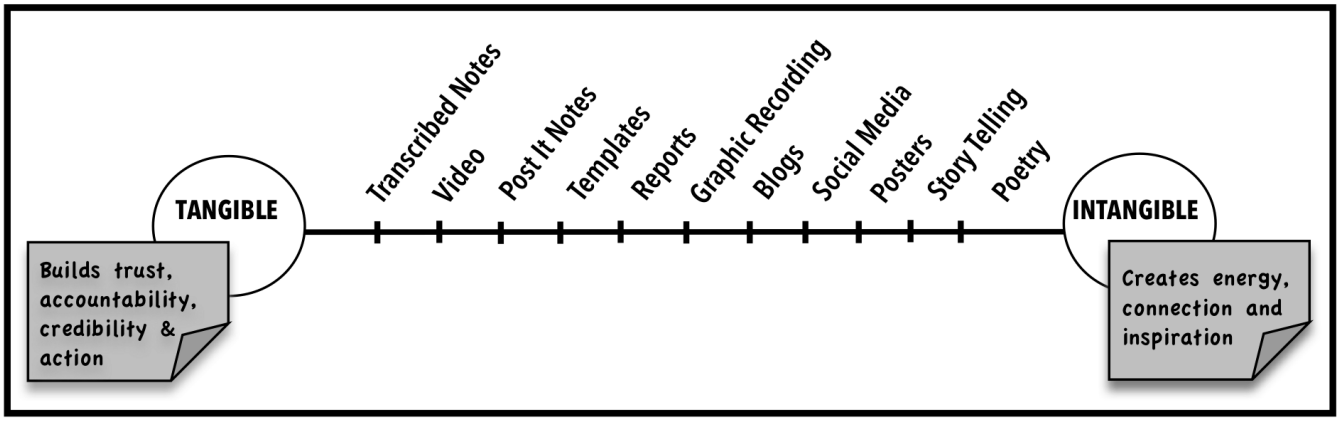
What is a harvest and why is it important? Many people take notes or keep records of meetings, transactions and conversations. This can be a formal process, like minutes at a board meeting, or more casual note taking, riddled with doodles. The value of tracking the key output of a meeting is well understood; it helps us to remember, organize, focus, follow up and communicate.

When working with groups on complex issues, it is valuable to make what the group is learning visible and clear. Capturing key output helps to tell the story of what has transpired and why it matters, helping to fuel motivation needed for follow up action. We call this type of output **"harvest."** Harvesting a meeting is more than just a written record; it involves capturing the "fruits" of conversations and interactions to remind participants what was discovered, learned and created together. It can also be a unique artifact that is shared with people who were not present for the event.

How to plan a harvest: Creating a strong harvest begins long before the actual meeting or gathering, and parallels the development and design of the process. Tending to the following questions will ensure that you reap the fruits of your labors!

1. **What is the purpose of the harvest?** It starts with understanding the purpose of the meeting and the outcomes desired by those planning the meeting. What is collected should reflect the experience of both the individual and the group, synthesizing salient ideas and actions to feed forward to future action.
    - How can you tell a story of the meeting that highlights the collective learning — the insights, themes, patterns, understandings?
    - What information, ideas, output or outcome will benefit you most now and in the future?
    - How can you add the most value to the work at hand — how will the harvest serve best?
    - What might take you and the assembled group to the next level of collective understanding and inquiry?
2. **Who is going to benefit from the harvest?** It is important to determine who the stakeholders in the discussion are. Clearly the people In the room having the conversations, but are there others in the present or future that would benefit from the harvest? Identifying who will be seeing the harvest informs what forms the harvest will take. Where do you want to take the harvest?

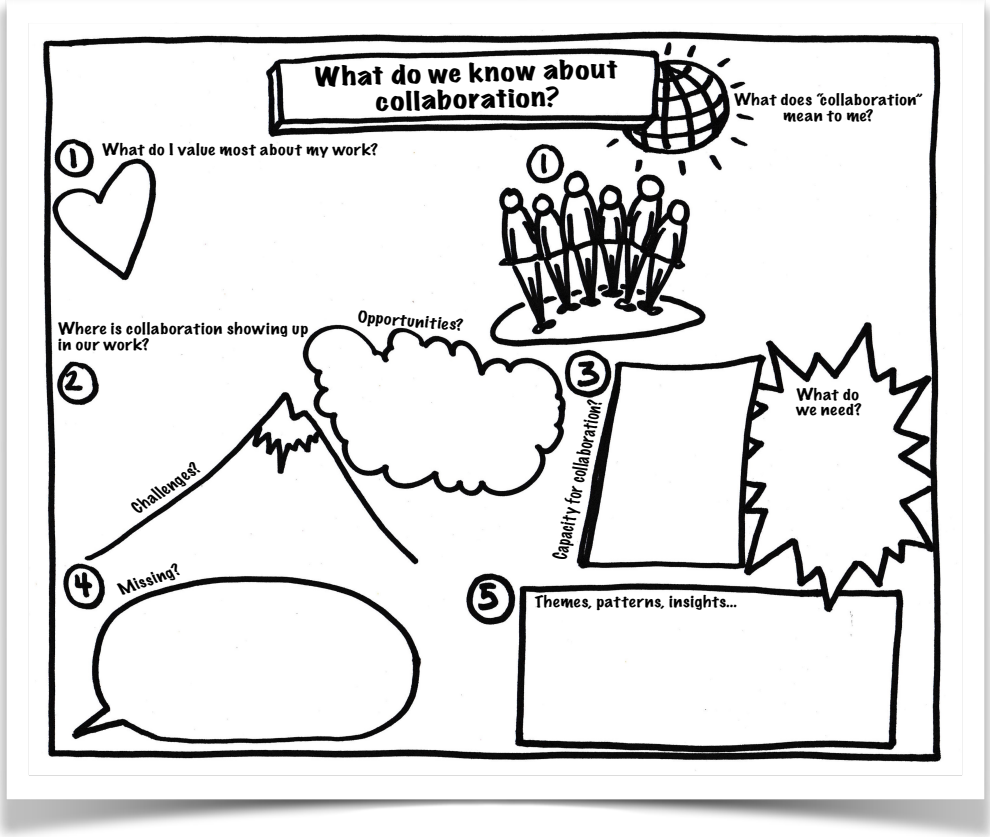
3. **When should we harvest? What is the right timing?** Timing does matter! A well-timed pause to reflect and share what people are learning or to identify themes that are emerging can shift a room full of people into a deeper understanding of the challenge, create a new collective perspective, or increase morale! A poorly timed 'harvest' can break the momentum of a process and feel burdensome.
    - What is most important information to capture?
    - When do people need to make a connection to the larger group—to see what they have in common or to hear what is emerging that is new?
4. **Who should capture harvest?** The best people to harvest are those that have a stake in the process and outcome. You can rely on a "note taker" to faithfully record every word said but a truly effective harvest requires the identification of patterns and themes and the ability to make meaning of those patterns and themes.
    - Who is good at noticing deeper meaning?
    - Who easily sees patterns and themes?
    - Who is good with a video camera, camera, technology, graphic recording?
5. **What form or what media will be most effective?** This is where harvest becomes exciting. There are many ways to collect what is being discussed and learned. Some methods you already use everyday and some are multimedia. The method you use should take into account your purpose, goals, audience, and abilities. The chart below shows a range of approaches from very tangible transcribed meeting notes to more intangible methods like story telling. One method is not better than another and often it is a blend of processes that work best.



6. **How will you share the output?** The collection and dissemination of output can bring closure to a meeting or experience in addition to inviting the next level of understanding and wiser individual and collective action, but you must make it accessible to all. Determine how materials will be available and ensure that everyone attending the meeting knows how to access them.

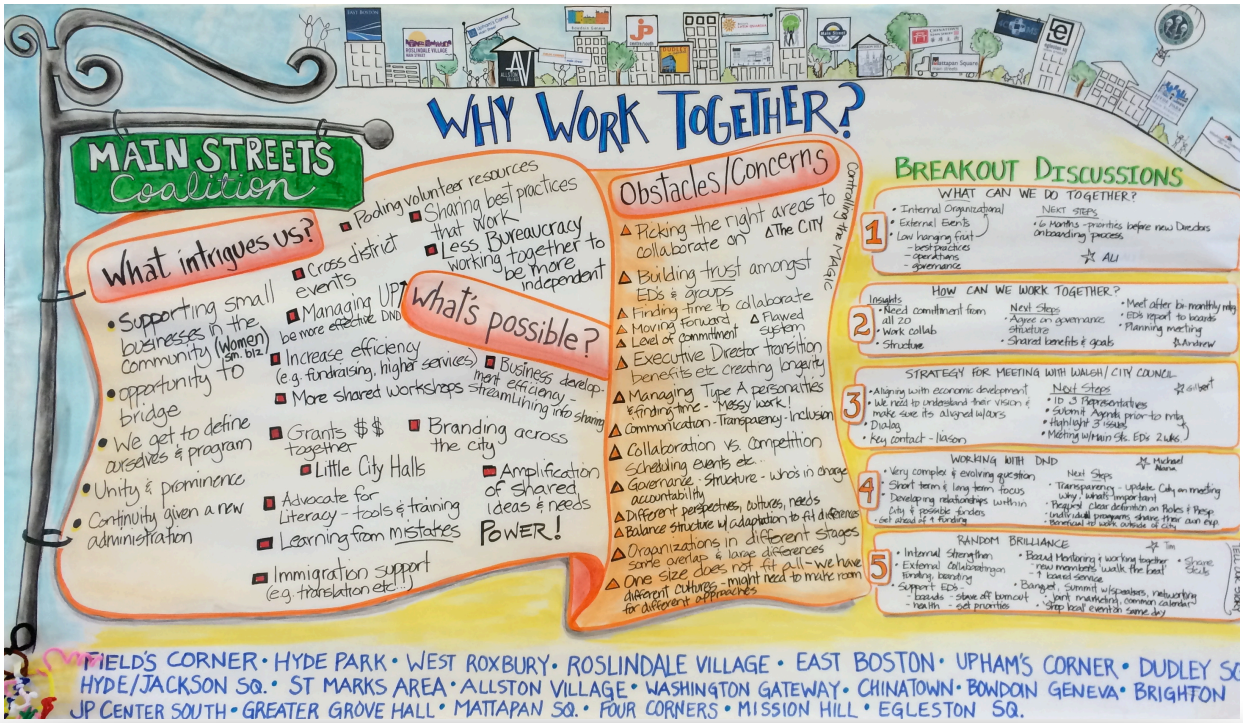
Examples of Harvests:

- **Templates (good for World Café, Open Space Harvest, etc):** Making a template to help groups organize information can be very useful, especially if you want to keep more of a record of the conversation or compare harvest from more than one event (i.e. a series of World Cafés on same topic).



- **Sticky Notes:** Using large sticky notes to capture ideas from break out conversations

- **Graphic Record:** capturing through words, images and color the highlights and flow of a conversation or meeting; can be created by group members using pre-designed templates (www.grove.com), or by a professional visual recorder.



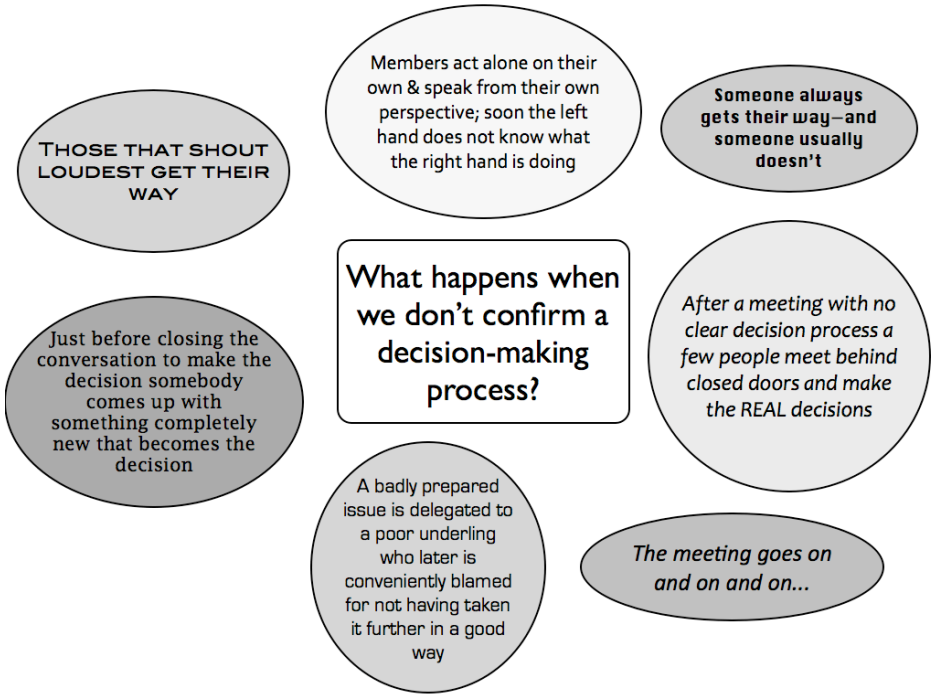
- **Wordles:** a free online tool that makes word clouds or puzzles from words that reflect frequency of iteration (www.wordle.net)

Decision Making

In working with participatory processes and the need for decisions to be made, it is important to confirm the decision-making process that will be employed ahead of time. Lack of clarity among a group about the decision-making process often leads to unrealistic and unmet expectations.. This can lead to diminished trust in the process and of one another.

What happens when you don't confirm a decision-making process?

Sometimes a group will move forward on their path and begin "making decisions" before confirming how such decisions will be made. This may work — or appear to work — at the onset of a process, but some difficulties can occur.



Participatory Decision-Making Methods

With any group decisional mode, there is a need for clear ground rules and structure as to "how" we will communicate and interact. What is okay and what is not? How will we disagree and yet stay engaged? How will we tend relationships to ensure lasting outcomes? How do we ensure that our primary purpose (the reason we are making a decision) is being upheld? With any group that is new to each other or has new members, these ground rules must be revisited and renewed frequently.

CONSULT: The designated leader makes the final decision. Because the decision will affect and/or require adaptive change on the part of others, the leader invites those effected to participate in

giving perspective, sharing information, reactions, expertise, et al. After considering the input from others, the leader makes the final decision, shares it, and conveys his or her rationale for the decision.

CONSENT: Similar to consultative, with a consent-based decision, the designated leader makes the final decision. This process works best when there is more complexity, and there is likely to be a distribution of "pain" as a result of the decision, even though it is for the best of the organization. The leader and/or team share one or more iterations of a proposed plan and invite input and comments by affected people in the organization.

After receiving feedback, the leader/team incorporates the relevant feedback and reveals another iteration of the proposed plan. (The level of complexity will determine the number of iterations necessary.)

People are asked to point out which parts of the proposed plan won't work, to demonstrate why that piece won't work, and offer an alternative solution intended to sway the leader and others. After all the parts of the plan are challenged and (potentially) modified to the satisfaction of the leader, the final decision is made by the leader who then invites everyone needed to agree to the decision as an action "they can live with and support".

DEMOCRATIC: A time honored decision-making protocol, the decision is made by a majority vote by the group. Good when action of some kind is required, groups none the less risk alienating members and fragmenting the group when commitment to collective action is important.

Emergence: Decisions are make not by a formal process, but by letting group members do what they want to do, as long as it doesn't negatively affect the existing work of others or the overall purpose of the group. In other words, decisions "emerge" in the aggregated actions taken by group members, what might be called "coalitions of the willing." This is a good model to use when seeking to empower networks and encourage experimentation.

Control vs Authority in Decision Making

Many of the groups we work with have the propensity to conflate the concepts of "control" and "authority" when considering the use of participatory process in situations where decisions will ultimately be made by the agency (i.e.. forest plan revision). When the agency or leaders within the agency have express **authority** for making a final decision, that authority cannot be delegated without regulatory or legal consequences. It does not mean, however, that leadership needs to **control** all aspects of the process.

With participatory process it is possible to maintain authority while relinquishing some of the control that the agency may have as a prelude to making a final decision. When decision makers are willing to share control with stakeholders/employees in determining the field of exploration, important interests, and the priorities going forward, they are not giving up their authority to make the decision, but allowing stakeholders to help define what that decision should encompass.

Establishing clear and transparent **"side boards,"** — the boundaries, minimal requirements and necessary parameters that a group must stay within — is a good way to exercise authority while sharing control of the process. It promotes active participation, encourages creativity and innovation, and ultimately leads to wiser, more inclusive decisions.

CONSENSUS: Leaders become members of the group for a consensus decision, in which all members of the group must substantially agree with the decision before it is enacted. Consensus decisions are needed when the full commitment and participation of all the group members is vital.

Consensus can be a very powerful model of participatory decision-making when it is considered to be a "win-win" process and held as integral to the purpose of the group. Although it is sometimes abandoned as being overly complex and time consuming, consensus decision-making in itself opens the process to careful consideration, listening, and negotiation.

Consensus should not be seen as giving power to a small group to veto a decision. Opposing a suggestion or decision also implies a willingness to take responsibility for moving the process forward with other ideas or possibilities.

Consensus can be falsely named, and can be present and yet not known. If people are agreeing up front but their actions demonstrate otherwise, this can be a form of false consensus. And sometimes there is disagreement about aspects of an issue but strong agreement about the underlying purpose and general approach, thus creating false disagreement. Leaders must be on the look out for both conditions.

If consensus is required in order for action to occur, then it is important that groups don't just go for the lowest common denominator, but truly seek the most sustainable solution for all. Therefore, the work of a leader is to help identify areas of false consensus, find ways to reframe false disagreement, and slowly expand the field of true consensus until it reaches a place where action happens.

Consensus

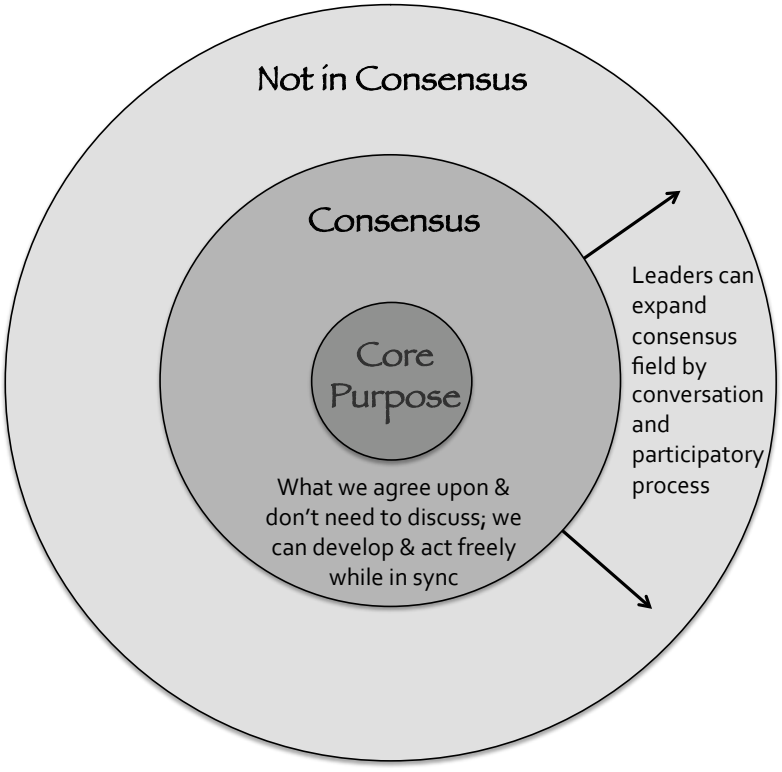
We have the same clarity & perspective about issue

False Consensus

Agree in theory, but not in practice

False Disagreement

We think we are disagreeing but in reality agree & don't know it



A simple process for consensus decision-making is outlined below:

1. First, clarify a proposal. A proposal is a suggestion for how something might be done. Have it worded and written and placed for all to see. Poll the group asking each person to offer their thumb in three positions. UP means "I'm good with it." SIDEWAYS means "I need more clarity before I give the thumbs up" DOWN means "this proposal violates my integrity...I mean seriously."
2. As each person indicates their level of support for the proposal, note the down and sideways thumbs. Go to the down thumbs first and ask: "what would it take for you to be able to support this proposal." Collectively help the participant word another proposal, or a change to the current one. People are allowed to vote thumbs down only if they are willing to participate in making a proposal that works.
3. Once you have dealt with the down thumbs, do the same with the sideways thumbs. Sideways doesn't mean "no" but rather "I need clarity." Answer the questions or clarify the concerns.
4. Repeat the THUMB vote to ensure that the new or altered proposal is OK

Check List for Design

Over the years, patterns and practices for designing strategic conversations have emerged. We've tried to summarize some key elements which we find can help ensure a good design for any kind of conversation — be it a routine meeting or a special event.

This check list captures basic elements in conversational process that can bring form and productivity and help us stay in the chaos of not knowing the answers. They help us to move through uncomfortable places together, like conflict, uncertainty, fear and the "groan zone," and to arrive at wise action.

1. Design with Others

As with the invitation, it is important that the design for a conversation meet people where they are. Sometimes this means seeking out intelligence and data about the needs, concerns and interests of the participants. Vet the basic design — especially the questions — with others who may have these insights, or a convening team with diverse perspectives. Like the outcomes of a participatory engagement, the designing is most effective when done collaboratively.

2. Get participants present

Inviting people to be present in the conversation before them is a core practice of convening. Often we call this a "check in," offering a question that serves to bring our hearts and minds into the conversation. Science has shown that talking about what we value — what's important to me — actually helps to relieve fear and engage our innovative thinking.

Some examples include having each person share:

- What's important to me regarding the theme/purpose of the meeting or gathering?
- One excitement and one concern about what's before the group
- What's my stake in this conversation?

Start well. Take time to let everyone check in.

3. Provide clear guidelines

How do you want the people in the room to behave? Providing participants with clear guidelines about what will happen and what is expected of them is important (see page 36). Most of the methodologies listed in this workbook contain guidelines specific to the process, however there are core guidelines common in all types of conversations.

- ***One person speaking at a time, others listening***: this is always a core aspect of positive, productive conversation. Whether you use a ground rule, a talking piece, or a more structured approach, this is a core practice.
- ***Respectful dialogue — inquire vs. advocate:*** in all conversational processes, respecting the diverse opinions of others is fundamental. Asking participants to be respectful and courteous, and tasking them with being curious — inquiring about other's thoughts, versus advocating for one perspective — can help establish that expectation.
- ***Everyone gets a chance to speak:*** In a timed conversation, people need to be brief during their turn, and make sure all are heard before speaking again. Even in less structured conversations, hearing from all around the table in response to a question — at least once — gets all the voices in the mix.
- ***Listen for common themes, patterns & insights:*** How we listen is important. Clarify what people are listening for and give opportunities to share those observations

4. Have a good question

A good question is aligned with the need and purpose of the meeting and invites us to go to another level. Good questions are at the center of the process, and keep the group focused on the work in an open-minded and respectful manner.

Developing these questions beforehand is important and can be part of the invitation or support the purpose of the gathering. As you dive into these questions, harvest any new questions that may arise. They can be a helpful guide for next steps when the time comes. See powerful questions on page 58 for more ideas about good questions.

5. Harvest

Never meet unless you plan to harvest insights and what is learned. The rule of thumb to remember: you are not planning a meeting, you are planning a harvest. Know what outcomes are needed and plan the process accordingly. Harvests don't always have to be visible; sometimes you plan to meet just to explore an idea, but support what you learn with good questions and a practice of harvesting (see art of harvesting" on page 63).

To harvest well, be aware of four things:

1. ***Create an artifact.*** Harvesting is about making knowledge visible. Use flip charts, draw pictures, take notes; whatever you do, create a record of your conversation.

2. ***Have a feedback loop.*** Artifacts are useless if they sit on the shelf. Know how you will use your harvest before you begin your meeting. Is it going into the system? Will it create questions for a future meeting? Is it to be shared with people as news and learning? Figure it out and make plans to share the harvest.

3. ***Be aware of both intentional and emergent harvest.*** Capture or harvest answers to the specific questions you are asking, but also make sure you are paying attention to what else may emerge in good conversations. Even if not anticipated, if there is real value in what's coming up, harvest it.

4. ***The more a harvest is co-created, the more it is co-owned***. Don't just appoint a secretary, note taker or a scribe. Invite people to co-create the harvest. Place paper in the middle of the table so that everyone can reach it. Hand out post it notes so people can capture ideas and add them to the whole. Use your creative spirit to find ways to have the group host their own harvest.

6. Next Steps

Make sure there is a time for talking about next steps, and clarity about what the conveners will be doing with the output of the meeting. If a decision is to be made, be clear about the process to be used. If your meeting needs to come to a decision, have a process in place for how. Capture next steps in the harvest and make sure that there is clarity about who is doing what by when.

Best Practices for Virtual Convening

- Clear Purpose & Process
- Questions to help people open their hearts in virtual space
- Guidelines for self-care & communication
- Breaks every 90-120 min; 3 hour sessions tops!
- VISUALS, i.e.
  - Zoom guidance
  - Output templates
  - Graphic recordings
  - Whiteboards, Slides
- Breakout groups with time for structured sharing out
- Dedicated chat-reading time
- Timer
- Templates
- Experiment with the technology
  - Mentimeter.com for crowd-sourcing input
  - File sharing in Chat
  - Collaborative work spaces (google, sharepoint)
  - Polls to get a read on group (i.e. Feeling Poll)
- Have fun!
- **What else?**

7. Follow up by Conveners

Once the meeting is over, make sure to follow up on commitments made. Share the harvest, publish the next steps (who, what, when), and take any intended action. If working with a convening team, it will be very important to debrief the meeting and plan for follow up together.

8. Encourage Networks

Relationships create sustainability. Encourage networks that are forming during a conversation to continue, whether in working together on next steps, for communicating and sharing information, or another purpose. The more people work together, the more accountable to one another they become. Networks can offer support for making adaptive changes, and provide important feedback on how things are going. Read more about networks and network building on page 53.

CONVENING METHODOLOGIES

Included in this resource book are several open source convening methodologies that we use all the time. These are presented in their original formats as offered by the creators, however they can be adapted as needed to fit the circumstances. When to use what methodology is discussed in Methods at a Glance on page 88. For more information please visit the websites and primary sources included with each process.

Circle Practice

Adapted from the work or **Christina Baldwin and Ann Linnea,** co -founders of PeerSpirit.

Resource: www.peerspirit.com

The Circle, or council, is an ancient form of meeting that has gathered human beings into respectful conversation for thousands of years. In some areas of the world this tradition remains intact, but in some societies it has been all but forgotten. PeerSpirit circling is a modern methodology that calls on this tradition and helps people gather in conversations that fulfill their potential for dialogue, replenishment and wisdom-based change. The formal version is spelled out below, however this process can be modified for many less formal meetings where hearing from all is an important goal.

Principles of Circle:

- Rotate leadership
- Take responsibility
- Have a higher purpose that you gather around

Practices of Circle:

- *Speak with intention*, noting what has relevance to the conversation in the moment
- *Listen with attention*, respectful of the learning process of all members of the group
- *Tend to the well-being of the group*, remaining aware of the impact of your contributions

Four agreements of Circle:

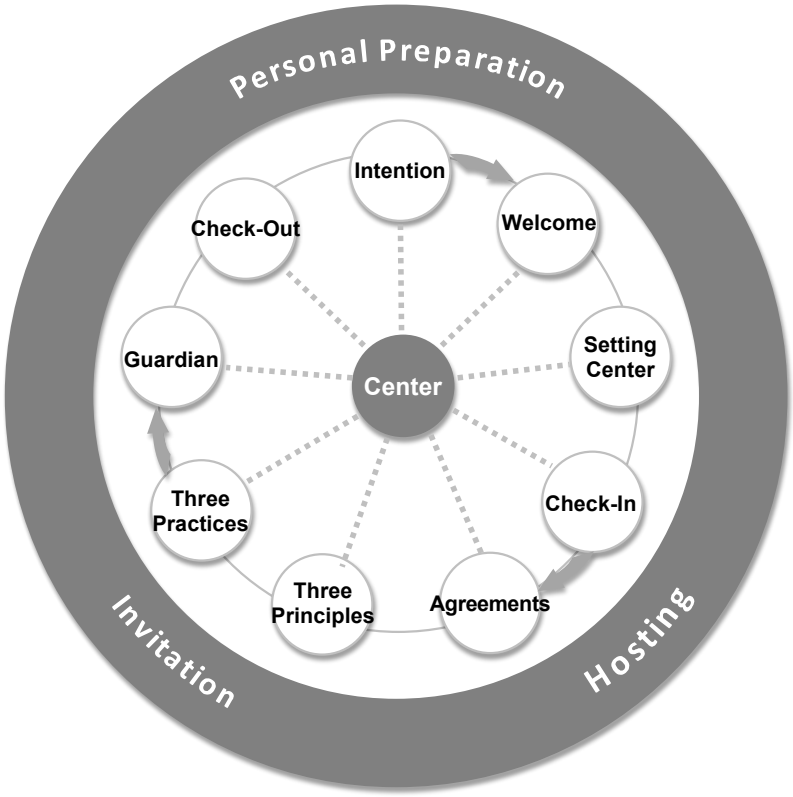
- Listen without judgment (slow down and listen)
- Whatever is said in circle stays in circle
- Offer what you can and ask for what you need
- Silence is also part of the conversation

General flow of the Circle

- Intention

- Welcome
- Get present and check-in
- Agreements
- Three principles and three practices
- Guardian of the process
- Check-out and farewell

The Components of Circle



Intention shapes the circle and determines who will come, how long the circle will meet, and what kinds of outcomes are to be expected.

The Center of a circle usually is a focal point; you might place the question(s) or objects that represent the intention of the circle there.

Check-in usually starts with a volunteer and continues around the circle. If an individual is not ready to speak, the turn is passed and another opportunity is offered after others have spoken.

The Guardian of the process, typically a circle member volunteer, supports the group's self-governance and brings them back to the circle's intention, as needed. This group member watches and safeguards the group's energy and observes the group's process.

Check-Out provides a formal end to the meeting, a chance for members to reflect on and share what has transpired.

What is Circle good for?

One of the beautiful things about circle is its adaptability to a variety of groups, issues, and timeframes. Circle can be the process used for the duration of a gathering, particularly if the group is relatively small and time for deep reflection is a primary aim. Circle can also be used as a means for "checking in" and "checking out" or a way of making decisions together, particularly decisions based on consensus. Be creative with circle and be ready for the deep wisdom it can unearth!

Materials Needed:

- Chairs arranged in a circle—folks should be able to view each other without impediments (i.e. tables or desks)
- Object for the center—this is to bring focus. It can be flowers, a poster stating the intention or purpose of the gathering, or any other object that has meaning.
- Talking piece—an object that is passed from speaker to speaker, this is to promote listening with attention, eliminate cross-talk and make clear when a person is done sharing.
- Chime, bell, or other instrument call everyone to attention
- Materials (notepads, index cards, easel, markers, etc.) for harvesting conversation

Putting Circle into Practice

At the heart of circle practice is the opportunity for everyone present to share their perspective or speak their truth. It can be helpful to use an informal version of circle practice as a way to host a meeting or more intimate conversation where listening to one another is a key goal.

Whether a talking piece is used or not, it is important that each person gets time to speak without interruption, and that the group hears from all with respect to the question at hand. It may be necessary to establish guidelines to this effect (page 36), and for the convener to remind people as the need arises.

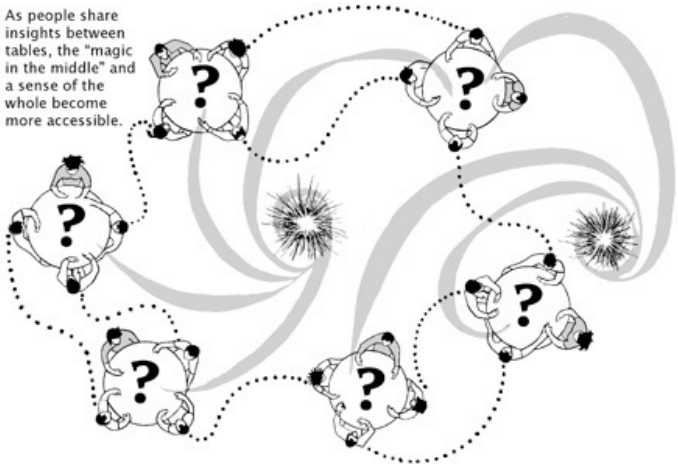
The World Cafe´

The World Café is a method for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions that matter in real life situations. It is a provocative metaphor...as we create our lives, our organizations, and our communities, we are, in effect, moving among 'table conversations' at the World Café. (From The World Café Resource Guide)

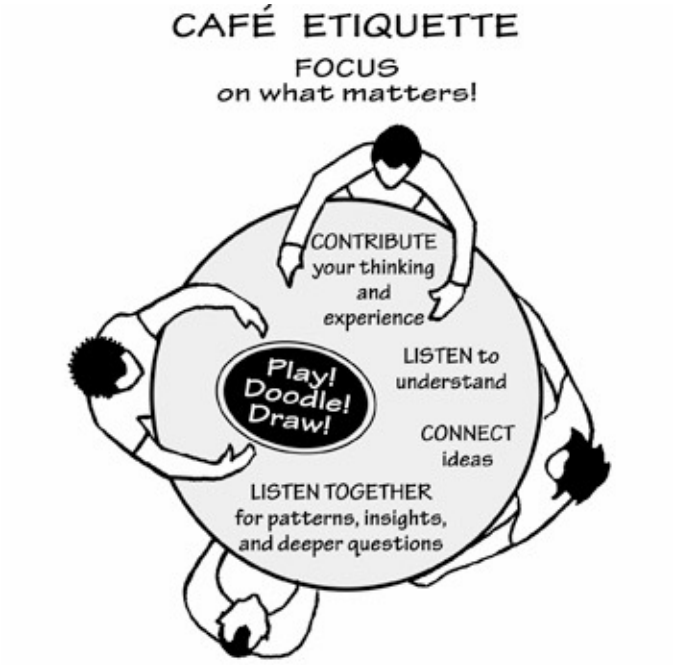
Resource:
www.theworldcafe.com

Operating principles of World Cafe:

- Create hospitable space
- Explore questions that matter
- Encourage each person's contribution
- Connect diverse people and ideas
- Listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions
- Make collective knowledge visible



Assumptions of World Cafe:



- The knowledge and wisdom we need is present and accessible.
- Collective insight evolves from honoring unique contributions; connecting ideas; listening into the middle; noticing deeper themes and questions.
- The intelligence emerges as the system connects to itself in diverse and creative ways.

General flow of a World Café:

- Seat 4-5 people at café-style tables orin conversation clusters.
- Set up progressive rounds of conversation, usually of 15-20 minutes each—questions should promote inquiry and be meaningful to the purpose at hand
- Ask one person to stay at the table as a "host" and invite the other table members to move to new tables as ambassadors of ideas and insights
- Ask the table host to share key insights, questions, and ideas briefly with new table members, then let folks move through the rounds of questions.
- After you've moved through the rounds, allow some time for a whole-group harvest of the conversations.

What is World Café good for?

World Café is a great way of fostering interaction and dialogue with both large and small groups. It is particularly effective in surfacing the collective wisdom of large groups of diverse people. The café format is very flexible and adapts to many different purposes—information sharing, relationship building, deep reflection, exploration and action planning.

When planning a café, make sure to leave ample time for both moving through the rounds of questions (likely to take longer than you think!) and some type of whole-group harvest.

Materials needed:

- Small tables (36-42" are ideal), preferably round
- Chairs for participants and presenters
- Tablecloths
- Flip chart paper or paper place mats for covering the tables
- Markers
- Flip chart or large paper for harvesting collective knowledge or insights
- Posters/table tents showing the Café Etiquette
- Materials for harvesting: sticky notes, cameras (video and still), markers
- If available, a graphic recorder is a wonderful addition to the Harvesting process

Putting World Café into Practice

World Café is an excellent introductory participatory process, especially for larger groups of people who may not know one another. Since the focus is on inquiry, it allows diverse groups to learn about each other and what they have in common.. Inviting participants share their perspectives with one another and "harvest" (page 64) for themes and patterns quickly draws them in and creates the conditions for more collaborative engagements going forward.

Open Space Technology

Resource:
www.openspaceworld.com

The goal of an Open Space Technology meeting is to create time and space for people to engage deeply and creatively around issues of concern to them. A kind of "pop up conference," the agenda is set by people with the power and desire to see it through. Typically, Open Space meetings result in transformative experiences for the individuals and groups involved. It is a simple and powerful way to catalyze effective working conversations and to truly invite organizations to thrive in times of swirling change.

Principles of Open Space:

- Whoever comes are the right people
- Whenever it starts is the right time
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could have
- When it's over it's over

The Law of Mobility:

The onus is on the individual to be in a conversation or place where they are either learning or contributing. If they are in a conversation where neither is occurring, it is their responsibility to go somewhere where it can.

The four principles and the law work to create a powerful event motivated by the passion and bounded by the responsibility of the participants.

Roles in Open Space:

- **Sponsor**—person, people or organization that is hosting the overall event: could be the boss, the conference convener, a person or organization that is taking lead on bringing others together to meet a critical need
- **Facilitator**—person or group responsible for planning for, setting up, framing and debriefing an open space event
- **Host** —announces and hosts a conversation
- **Join** —participates in a conversation
- **Move** (Bumble bee)—"shops" between workshops; pollenates different conversations with acquired insights
- **Pause** (Butterfly)—takes time out to reflect, perhaps with others, in an unstructured, "un-hosted" conversation

General flow of an Open Space meeting:

The group convenes in a circle and is welcomed by the sponsor.

The facilitator provides an overview of the process and explains how it works. The facilitator invites people with issues of concern to come into the circle, write the issue on a piece of paper and announces it to the group.

These people are "hosts." Each host places their paper on a “marketplace wall” (this will become the agenda of break out conversations for the Open Space session) and chooses a time and a place to meet. This process continues until there are no more hosted conversations.

The group then breaks up and heads to the agenda wall, by now covered with a variety of sessions. Participants take note of the time and place for sessions they want to be involved in.

Dialogue sessions convene for the rest of the meeting. Recorders (determined by each group) capture the important points and either post the reports on the news wall, or share their summary harvest with the whole group. All of these reports will be harvested or transcribed in some way and made available to the larger group.

Following a closing or a break, the group might move into ‘convergence'—a process that takes the issues that have been discussed and attaches action plans to them to "get them out of the room."

The group then finishes the meeting with a closing circle where people are invited to share comments, insights and commitments arising from the process.

What is Open Space good for?

Open Space Technology is useful in almost any context, including strategic direction-setting, envisioning the future, conflict resolution, morale building, consultation with stakeholders, community planning, collaboration and deep learning about issues and perspectives.

Open Space Technology is an excellent meeting format for any situation in which there is:

- A real issue of concern
- Diversity of players
- Complexity of elements
- Presence of passion (including conflict)
- A need for a quick decision

Open Space can be used in groups of 10 to 1,000—and probably larger. It’s important to give enough time and space for several sessions to occur. With a smaller group, conversations can be with 2, 3 or more people; with a larger group, good ratio is to plan for about 10 people per conversation. For example, you have 100 people present, invite up to 10 hosted conversations per round of about

an hour each, then take what comes up. The outcomes can be dramatic when a group uses its passion and responsibility—and is given the time to make something happen.

Materials Needed:

- Circle of chairs for participants
- Letters or numbers around the room to indicate meeting locations
- A blank wall that will become the marketplace or agenda wall
- A news wall for recording and posting the results of the dialogue sessions
- Breakout spaces for meetings
- Paper on which to write session topics/questions
- Markers/Pencils/Pens
- Posters of the Principles, Law of Two Feet, and Roles (optional)
- Materials for harvest

Putting Open Space Technology into Practice

We have found Open Space Technology (OST) to be most useful once a group has had a chance to do some exploration together and have identified several topics or questions that they wish to pursue. However, OST can feel a little unstructured and risky to some, so. we've found a nice adaptation that seems to help mitigate that discomfort. By referring to the process as a **"Pop-Up Conference,"** we can more easily make the connection between all the content the group has unearthed and the need to breakout into simultaneous conversations in order to tackle it. We also make the role names a little more practical, reinforcing the underlying premise that each person is responsible for her own learning, just like a conference, and allow partners to host. Making sure there is a "harvest" share from each breakout after the process is key to bringing what is learned into the plenary.

Pro Action Cafe´

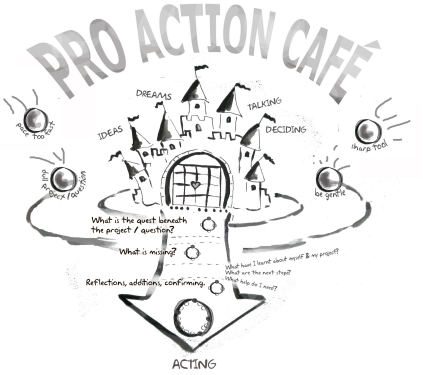
Adapted from Pro Action Europe Website

https://sites.google.com/a/pro-action.eu/pro-action-caf-/how-to-become-a-host/hosting-kit

The original concept of Pro Action Café is a blend from 'World Café' and 'Open Space' technologies. As a conversational process, the Pro Action Café is an innovative and pragmatic methodology for helping conversation hosts explore challenges, projects, questions with others, and start to define next steps or actions in service to their goals. Whether you are a host or participate as a contributor, this collaborative and creative mode of convening is great for strengthening understanding, resolve, commitment, and/or clarity for all concerned.

Hosted conversations link and build on each other as people move between tables, cross-pollinate ideas, and discover new insights into the questions, projects or issues presented by the hosts. Pro Action Café can be used for a broad number of people and/or as a methodology for specific groups to engage in productive and insightful conversations that lead toward action.

Roles and Expectations:



- **Hosts:** pre-determined number of people with a fairly clear idea of a project, event or challenge they are thinking about or engaged in, that would benefit from further planning, development and/or next steps. Hosts will have time to briefly present the challenge, event or project to the group at the beginning of the process, and will prepare a harvest report of the outcomes at the end.
- **Participants:** serve as thinking partners and contributors to the host's stated project, event or challenge. Participants will circulate among different hosts during the process, changing tables between rounds. Participants are encouraged to balance questions of inquiry aimed at helping hosts discover what they know, with offering a perspective, opinion or solution.
- **Facilitator:** Frames and facilitates the process

Materials and Set Up:

- Flip chart paper with 3 rounds of questions written on them
- Round tables seating 4-6 people, and enough to accommodate the number of hosts/ participants present
- Paper and markers on tables
- Talking piece (to mark who's speaking)
- Any table decorations, toys, snacks, etc to support conversations

- Paper and pens for host note-taking
- Bell, timer and name tags (if appropriate)

Pro-Action Café Flow:

- Arriving time with open reception, warm-up, getting to know the others informally.
- Overall framing of the process by a facilitator.
- Invite People with an issue, idea, project, challenge, and/or opportunity to name it and claim a small table; do that until all tables are claimed and fill in with participants (1 host per table, 4 or 5 participant).
- **3 rounds of sharing and conversation.** In between each round, allow the host to have 5-minutes of quiet reflection to integrate information and insights from the previous round.
- *Participants move to join a new host for round 2 then return to original host for round 3.*
    - **Round 1: The Set Up - Purpose/Intention/Need** [20-25 min]
        - What do I want to do and why?
        - Who is it for?
        - What outcomes/harvest do I want?

      Hosts digest their conversation - can stay or leave room (5 minutes)
    - **Round 2: Exploring All Sides** [20-25 min]
        - What's missing?
        - What assumptions am I making?
        - What are our sideboards? What are the risks to me? To others?

      Hosts digest their conversation - can stay or leave room (5 minutes)
    - **Round 3: Next Steps/What's the plan?** [20-25 min]
        - Who are my allies
        - What are my next steps? Be specific...
        - In what time-frame?

      Hosts prepare their report out (7 mins)
- Report out/Harvest: from the hosts [2 mins each]]

Adapting Pro Action Café to use with Teams

The flow of a Pro-Action Café process is easily adapted to teams when several topics need to be moved to action-steps. We call this a **Round Robin.** Rather than ask for individuals to volunteer a topic to host, we work with the team in advance to develop the break out topics they want action on. These become separate "stations," and we get volunteers to host each station. The rest move from station to station over four rounds, following the question prompts. The flow is similar to Pro-Action, with guiding questions to help the group focus on **: (1) What do we know and why is it important? (2) What's missing? (3) What's possible? (4) Prepare a harvest report and next steps** (see 4 conversations on page 60). After each station has shared their harvest report, the team finalized next steps, determining who will do what action by when.

Storytelling & Harvest

We tell stories all of the time. One could argue it is the most effective form of communication available to us. Storytelling has the ability to not only convey information, but to reveal underlying patterns, assumptions and cultural insights We have found an additional use, which is to help groups—through storytelling and intentional listening and response to stories—identify common cultural values and deepen their connection to one another and to their shared endeavors.

Original process, **Story Harvest**, came from **Mary Alice Arthur, Monica Nissén and Ria Baeck,** and we have adapted it here.

How does Storytelling and Harvesting work?

The process is fairly simple: the hardest part is identifying a storytelling prompt that is relevant to all members of the group. The prompt should be related to the purpose of the event or some shared circumstances of the group. See some examples related to building community connection below:

Tell a real story about:

- *What drew you to this community?*
- *What has shaped your opinion about community leadership/ involvement?*
- *What inspired/inspires you about this community? Forest? Etc.*
- *How has your opinion, attitude, and/or involvement in this community shifted?*
- *Other relevant story*

The group is asked to split up into groups of three. This number can be bigger, but you will require more time. We instruct the groups to allow each person to tell their story (in five to 10 minutes, depending on the timing) and after each story, listeners are invited to reflect back to the storyteller. This is an important step as we often jump into our own stories and fail to honor what we just heard. Some example prompts for this reflection are below:

- *What resonates or stays with me from your story? OR;*
- *I was right there with you when…*

When all have shared their stories and heard responses from their listeners, the groups are asked to Harvest from the stories they heard. We've used the following prompts:

- *What themes or highlights surfaced in the stories you heard? What is important to share with the whole group?*

Capture your themes, etc. on card stock with markers; write big, bold, bumper sticker style

Finally, we bring all the groups together to share their harvests in plenary. We gather in a circle and go around inviting each person who has a theme to share it aloud and place it in the center of the circle. As others follow they are invited to clump "like" themes together. At the completion of the harvest, we often debrief with the following kinds of questions:

- *What do these themes tell you about this group of people and this community?*
- *What does this harvest reveal about your motivations and values?*
- *What was it like to tell and hear stories?*
- *What role might story telling play in your work life, community life, etc.?*

Process Considerations

Framing: When framing this process, highlight the universal nature of storytelling and how we can glean tremendous amounts of knowledge and connection when we do so intentionally. Lay out the mechanics of the process (have visual aids: slides, flip charts, etc.). Be prepared to offer timing cues as needed.

Storyteller Prompt: It is important to know enough about the group to craft a meaningful, guiding prompt for the storytellers. Additionally, consider what the overall intention of the gathering is and how the stories told and the process can support those intentions. For example, when working with a diverse groups, it may be important to share stories that help reveal the connections they may have to the topic/purpose at hand. By hearing and visually representing these values, people can start to see what was commonly held and what was most important to the people in the room. These values became a guiding compass for the group as well as providing valuable context for why people do what they do. This can also help to increase the level of trust and connection among diverse interests represented in the room, which can pave the way for continued interactions and collaborations.

Debrief: Even though the visual harvest can be very informative to a group, it is critical for the group to collectively make meaning of what they are seeing and what they have experienced.

Again it is important to consider debrief questions that are relevant to the purpose of the gathering. If you have a large group and want to ensure greater participation in the debrief, have them go back into their triads (groups of three) and discuss some or all of the questions and then report back in plenary. If applicable capture (harvest) the responses to the debrief questions.

Other uses of Storytelling and Harvest

After Action Reviews: This is an adaptation of the process: invite people to tell their stories to a group of invested listeners about an event or incident. Listeners intentionally listen for specific kinds of information, e.g.

- Safety concerns
- Policy and procedures
- Best practices
- Lessons learned
- Mitigation and moving forward

After listeners have recorded and shared their insights, there is an opportunity for the group to have greater understanding of the incident itself, what happened or did not happen, what might have been done differently and what can be done moving forward. Again, the collective meaning making ensures that people are learning from a situation regardless of their direct participation in the event.

Project Refinement: As people are embarking on projects, and/or reflecting on what they have done, they can tell their story to a group of attentive listeners who are cued in to specific themes (like above), such as:

- Goal/purpose clarity
- Assumptions (stated/known and/or unstated/unknown)
- Strategic/tactical logic
- Relational/connective investment
- Capacity/realism
- Collateral impacts

Developing presentations and proposals: Similar to project refinement, the process could be adapted at the front end of a presentation or proposal, where the listeners are receiving a draft presentation or proposal and recording and sharing specific kinds of feedback and insights, e.g.:

- Relevance to audience
- Engagement of speaker/presenter: body language, voice, interaction with audience, etc.
- Impact of graphics, info presented

- Clarity of purpose, intent, etc.
- Length, duration, pace, etc.

In Summary

The elegance of this process (and the adaptations above) invites us to tap into something we already do naturally, but to do so with a little more intention or focus. Though using some structure might feel a little awkward, people find that the act of storytelling is really quite natural. And having attentive listeners who are reflecting information and insights back to the storyteller creates connection and deeper meaning for all involved. Consistently, we hear how meaningful and memorable Storytelling and Harvest has been for the groups we work with. And many have quickly seen and implemented relevant applications of this process in their work/communities.

Methods at a Glance

Process	Requirements Pre-Conditions	Best Uses
Circle Process *Page 74*	• Sound framing on why this process, why this group, why now • Clearly stated higher purpose for gathering • Clearly articulated ground rules to maintain safety and respect among participants especially if this kind of process is new to the group	• For reflecting on a question together, when no one person knows the answer • A way to quickly strengthen relationships and discover common purpose • Can be modified for a boardroom or a fire circle: efficient in smaller groups • Consensus decision-making
World Café *Page 77*	• Compelling purpose to motivate participants to attend and participate • Recognition that this process is designed to be divergent and inclusive of multiple perspectives vs. convergent on specific actions • Strong, relevant and open ended questions designed in advance with good understanding of the participants and the needs	• For discovering what the collective knows • Surfaces hidden knowledge of the system—making clear & transparent what is assumed, vague and uncertain • Elevates relational connection among large groups of people • Good introductory participatory process that sets up deeper convening processes later • Great for large, diverse groups; very accessible
Open Space Technology [Pop-Up Conference] *Page 79*	• Leaders/influencers have to let go of knowing or controlling the outcomes for this process to achieve its full potential • Enough trust needs to be present among participants or for the process to have willing hosts • Willingness to follow up on ideas, conversations, and/or themes that emerge	• For organizing work and getting people to take responsibility for what they care about • Fastest way to get people working on what matters by engaging them where they have the most energy • Great for conferences, symposiums, team/large group meetings • Good for helping groups synthesize & prioritize collective work into actionable steps

Process	Requirements Pre-Conditions	Best Uses
Pro Action Café **[Design Café]** [Round Robin for Teams] *See page 82*	• Enough specific topic hosts willing to share work with a group of people for input to further their thinking • Theme or common purpose among hosts and participants will yield more robust participation vs. disparate motivations • **Teams:** several topics that are ready to go to action	• Moving project ideas and possibilities off the drawing board and into action • Tapping into and harnessing people's individual wisdom & innate desire to be helpful and supportive • Efficient way to work several ideas/projects at a time
Storytelling & Harvest *See page 84*	• Good, relevant story prompts that are accessible to all participants • Clear process and harvest instructions so small groups can proceed independently	• After action reviews • Harvesting best practices and learning from a group • Connecting people and revealing common values • Helping an individual or group make meaning out of a complex situation

Low-Key Convening Practices

Convening is a mindset, and can be applied to many different kinds of engagements. There are all kinds of convening practices, not just big process methodologies. Introducing small elements here and there into the many different kinds of meetings and interactions you have is a great way to practice convening and introduce the concept to others, perhaps in subtler, less threatening ways.

The following are just a few examples, and we hope to add to this list as we learn from you and other conveners about stealthier ways to practice.

1. **Check-ins**

   Begin a meeting by having everyone take turns "checking in," perhaps responding to a question or prompt. Check-ins allow participants to fully arrive and be prepared to contribute to the purpose of the meeting, day, etc. It offers an opportunity for people to self-reveal, which is a way of building and strengthening relationships and trust. Check-ins can also be used to surface what people care about or value regarding the topics on the meeting agenda. Check-ins can be done in plenary or in twos and threes when the group is large. However, taking a few minutes to hear from volunteers after the smaller check-ins helps to bring the ideas into the room. Some example check-in questions or prompts include:

   - One reason I said "yes" to this event
   - What is in my head/heart right now?
   - What's most important to me about meeting/the topics we are covering?
   - One highlight from yesterday/this week/our time together
   - High/Low from this past experience (after a shared experience by the group)

2. **Check-outs**

   A compliment to the check-in, a check-out occurs at the end of a meeting. Check-outs help conveners take the temperature of the group and to learn what folks are appreciating, learning, concerned about. Similarly, check-outs help the group learn where others are at. They demarcate the end of the meeting/day, clarifying for all that we are finished. Example check-out questions include:

   - What stays with me from our conversation?
   - What question am I still holding?
   - What am I looking forward to?
   - What is one appreciation or regret I have?

3. **Meeting Feedback (or "plus/delta")**

   Taking a few minutes at the end of a meeting (before the check-out) to debrief how the meeting went is a high-leverage convening practice. First off, it invites others to share how the meeting went for them, providing the convener and the group a chance to learn together from their experience. In addition, meeting feedback can lead to innovations and improvements, helping make meetings more efficient and collaborative over time. Finally, it gives the convener more concrete data on what people liked about the meeting process, thus overriding a tendency to guess at how people felt, or take the actions or comments of a few as true for all. We offer a simple "plus/delta" as a debrief process, inviting people to name what they liked or want more of (plus) and what they would change or do less of next time (delta). Capturing this input in meeting notes helps to keep track of the feedback so it can be integrated, where appropriate, into future meetings.

4. **Including Open Questions on Agendas**

   Agenda are a great place to work convening practices into a meeting. Typically agendas are presented as topics, maybe with subtopics listed. What if the agenda listed topics as questions? Or open questions were listed under a topic to promote conversation? This is also a way to use appreciative inquiry as a practice — making sure the group is learning what is working, what matters most, or what people value in addition to identifying problems or concerns. Good, open questions can instantly change how our minds engage, signaling the option for more exploratory thinking. See Powerful Questions on page 58 for ideas and inspiration.

5. **Relationship Building as a Goal**

   As a culture, we tend to place a high value on work output as a goal or outcome of a meeting. In many circumstances, however, relationships may be new and/or there is low trust among the group that can hamper collaborative conversation or limit quality output. Making relationship building an explicit (or implicit) goal in those interactions, meetings, and engagements where people are meeting for the first time, struggling with trust issues, or holding strong feelings about the topic, is a good convening practice. Using a check-in to help people share a little about themselves, taking time to ask how those present like to work/interact, and what behaviors make them feel included, or having conversations to uncover the deeper interests in the room are all ways of focusing on relationships versus just getting to the work. Getting clear about where there are shared interests and how the group will work together is worthy output that will go a long way to supporting future collaborative work efforts.

6. **Harvest**

   Harvest, or synthesized output, is a core element of convening. It makes visible to the group what transpired in a meeting or engagement, and helps them digest and remember it. Whether your harvest is meeting notes, highlights, lessons learned, or next steps, making harvest a focus is a

great convening practice. Aside from meeting minutes, consider asking the group, "what transpired here that's worth capturing and sharing?" Harvest can also be used to make meeting outcomes more transparent, updating those who are interested or need to be on board by the next meeting. Experiment with different ways to harvest, recognizing that images and pictures can say a thousand words (see the art of harvesting on page 64).

7. Be Deliberate about the Convening Space or Environment

As humans, we make instantaneous and often unconscious decisions about how we will engage with others based on several first impressions, including the physical environment. When we walk into a room arranged with seating all facing a podium, we instantly start to prepare to listen (or not) to someone talking at us. Making the environment or convening space welcoming, arranging seating to promote conversation, or choosing a location that signals a different kind of meeting are all examples of being deliberate and thoughtful about the space. It may seem like a small thing, but it is a subtle and effective way to help orient and prepare participants for a more collaborative experience.

8. Host Yourself

Perhaps the most low-key, "stealthiest" way to use convening skills is to practice hosting yourself. Here are a few examples:

- Listening to your inner voices with an aim of mediating inner conflicts or resolving internal "competing commitments"—for example, wanting, on the one hand to be more outspoken while on the other hand not wanting to dominate
- Engaging in "grounding" activities—such as exercise, yoga, meditation, walks in nature; whatever helps you feel present, grounded, and as if you have filled your cup, allows you to be generous with others
- Looking and listening for the group's memes or default patterns and asking how you, as a convener, facilitator, or leader can resist being drawn into those that are unhealthy or unproductive. For example, not allowing the group's sense of "we have to solve it all today!" infect you; rather, staying grounded in your sense of what the group *can do today,* given it's capacity.
- Connecting with others—colleagues, friends, allies—who can support you in a variety of ways, such as:
    - Help you think through how you want to run a meeting or event
    - Reality-test for you something you think you may be seeing through your particular lens and thus distorting
    - Remind you of your strengths, smarts or gifts

CONVENING RESOURCES

Glossary

Vocabulary	Explanation/Definition
Adaptive Challenge	Challenges that will require people to change their behavior, perspectives, roles, relationships and/or approaches to work, in order to solve; cannot be solved by expertise and edict alone. See page 28.
Adaptive Change	When impacted groups adapt their behavior, perspectives, roles, relationships and/or approaches to address the changes needed. See page 27.
Check-in	Opening moment of a meeting, gathering, or conversation that aims to help participants transition from previous contexts and to become present with the group and focused on the topic at hand.
Check-out	Closing of a meeting, gathering, or conversation that aims to capitalize on individual and collective learnings and create a transition towards what's next.
Content	What is discussed, worked on, explored or learned.
Convening	Seeking to bring others into a purposeful conversation about a topic that matters using participatory practices.
Convening Team	A group of people who share a goal to convene a conversation about a topic that matters using participatory practices.
Convergence	Phases of closing down in brainstorming and creative reflection processes to focus in and make meaning of what is most important or needed now. See page 30.
Creating a Container	Focusing on the environmental and behavioral conditions and characteristics that will support productive conversation. See page 36.
Divergence	Phases of opening up, brainstorming or broadening thinking to explore an idea or topic. See page 30.
Dyad	Conversation with two people.
Groan Zone	Integration phase within a participatory process that may require participants to stretch their own understanding and include other points of view. Can be an uncomfortable stretch—but it is also the phase where the new solution emerges. See page 30.

Vocabulary	Explanation/Definition
Harvest/Harvesting	Making meaning of what we have collectively discovered by capturing key insights, outcomes and next steps in a way for all participants to see. See page 64.
Holding space	Being open and attending to everything that emerges from a situation; paying attention with intention.
Host/Hosting	Another term for Convener/Convening.
Informative Learning	Learning process that adds more data or information to what we know; learning from or about something.
Participants	The people who are being convened; generally all have a stake in the topic.
Participatory Conversation	Exploring topics through conversation in a manner that taps into the knowledge, perspectives and insights of everyone in the room.
Participatory Process	A collection of conversational methodologies, tools, and practices aimed at connecting people in small and large groups to work cooperatively on shared challenges.
Process	How we engage, work with and/or interact with one another.
Social technologies	Facilitation processes aimed at connecting people around what matters to them; another term for participatory process.
Technical Challenges	Those challenges that can easily be solved by experts using logic and intellect; often easy to identify, have quick and easy solutions, and can be solved using one's authority or expertise. See page 29.
Transformative Learning	Learning process that requires us to shift the way we think; can happen at a psychological, convictional or behavioral level; how we grow, develop, expand our thinking.
Triad	Conversation with three people.

Books and websites

Many resources are available—books, articles, websites, blogs, communities. We have included links to websites in the relevant section of this workbook.

As starting points or hubs for more extensive lists of resources, we suggest:

- www.artofhosting.org – a resource for practitioners of participatory process, developed by a global network of Art of Hosting practitioners.
- www.berkana.org –the pioneering organization founded by change agent Margaret Wheatley that puts into practice the art of hosting and convening with communities all over the world.
- http://revealedpresence.com – daily photographs and questions by photographer/coach Carla Kimball. Purchase her card/question decks here, or just be inspired by her daily postings.

Books and Links:

Baldwin, Christina:

Calling the Circle—The First and Future Culture

Storycatcher—Making sense of Our Lives through the Power and Practice of Story

The Circle Way—A Leader in Every Chair—Christina Baldwin and Ann Linnea

www.peerspirit.com

Brown, Brené:

Dare to Lead

www.brenebrown.com

Brown, Juanita with David Isaacs & the World Café Community

The World Café—Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter

www.theworldcafe.com

Cooperrider, David and Srivastva (2000)

Appreciative Inquiry: Rethinking Human Organization Toward a Positive Theory of Change

www.appreciativeinquiry.case.edu www.appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/uploads/whatisai.pdf

Corrigan, Chris

The Tao of Holding Space

Open Space Technology—A User's Non-Guide (with Michael Herman)

www.chriscorrigan.com

Diamond, Julie

Power: A Users Guide

www.diamondleadership.com

Goleman, Daniel

Social Intelligence: New science of social relationships

Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ

Heimans, Jeremy

How Power Works in our Hyperconnected World

Isaacs, William.

Dialogue and the art of thinking together.

Kaner, Sam et. al.

The Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making

Kegan, Robert

Immunity to Change

How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work

Menakem, Resmaa

My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies

www.resmaa.com

Meyerson, Debra

Tempered Radicals

Mindell, Arnold

Conflict: Phases, Forums & Solutions

Sitting in the Fire

Owen, Harrison

Open Space Technology—A Users Guide

Expanding Our Now—The Story of Open Space Technology

The Spirit of Leadership—Liberating the Leader in Each of Us

www.openspaceworld.org

Pink, Daniel

Drive: the Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us

A Whole New Mind

Plastric, Peter & Taylor, Madeleine

Net Gains: A Handbook for Network Builders Seeking Social Change

http://networkimpact.org/downloads/NetGainsHandbookVersion1.pdf

Sawyer, Keith

Group Genius: The Creative Power of Collaboration

Schuman, Sandor (editor)

Creating a Culture of Collaboration

Schwarz, Roger

The Skilled Facilitator: A Comprehensive Resource for Consultants, Facilitators, Managers and Trainers

Senge, Peter

The Fifth Discipline

The Fifth Discipline Field Book (with Ross, Smith, Roberts, and Kleiner)

The Art and Practice of The Learning Organization

The Dance of Change (with Art Kleiner, Charlotte Roberts)

Suarez, Cyndi

The Power Manual: How to Master Complex Power Dynamics

https://cyndisuarez.com

Wheatley, Margaret J.

Leadership and the New Science:

Turning to One Another

Walk Out, Walk On

Whitney, Dianna and Trosten-Bloom, A.

The Power of Appreciative Inquiry: a Practical Guide to Positive Change

There is no greater power than a community discovering what it cares about.

Ask "What's possible?" not "What's wrong?" Keep asking.

Notice what you care about.
Assume that many others share your dreams.

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.

Talk to people you know.
Talk to people you don't know.
Talk to people you never talk to.

Be intrigued by the differences you hear.
Expect to be surprised.
Treasure curiosity more than certainty.

Invite in everybody who cares to work on what's possible.
Acknowledge that everyone is an expert in something.
Know that creative solutions come from new connections.

Remember, you don't fear people who's story you know.
Real listening always brings people closer together.

Trust that meaningful conversations change your world.

Rely on human goodness. Stay together.

Margaret Wheatley
Turning to One Another