



COLLABORATIVE CHANGE **FIELD GUIDE**

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AN INTRODUCTION TO COLLABORATIVE CHANGE



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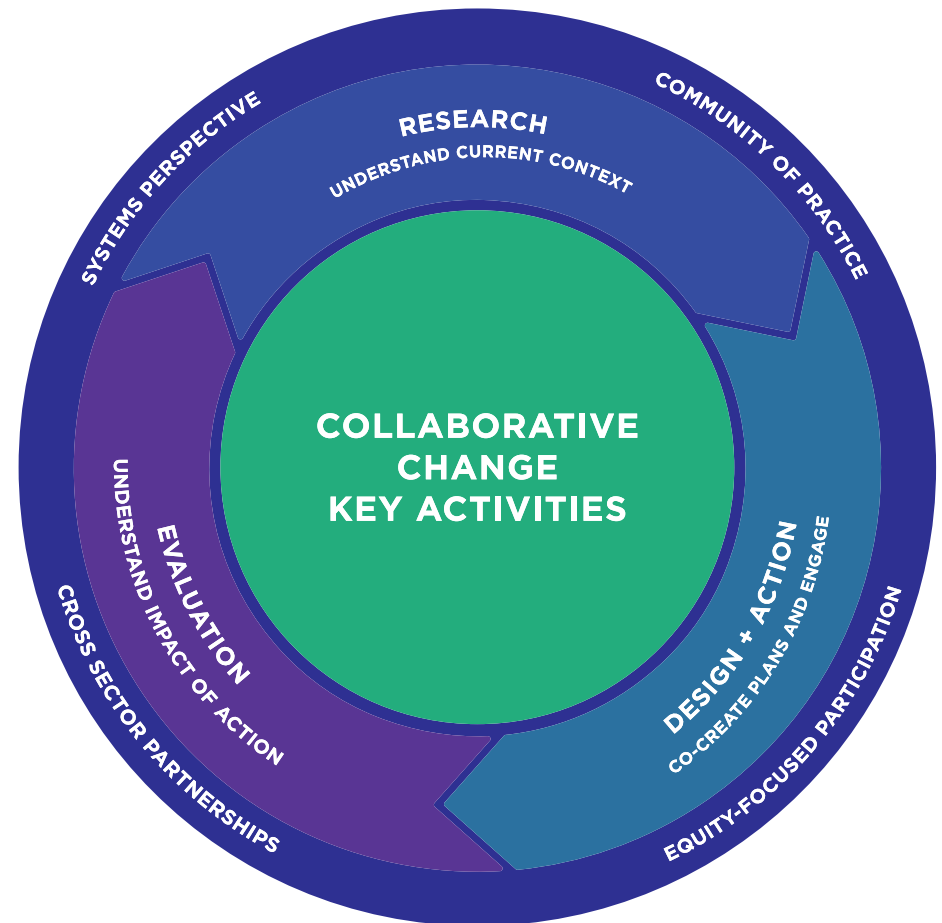
WHAT IS COLLABORATIVE CHANGE?

Collaborative Change is a framework and collection of participatory practices that engage people and the systems around them to drive community outcomes. It emerged out of recognition that deep participation (or engagement) is frequently missing in collaborative impact approaches. When collaborative change is implemented effectively, community members are viewed as valuable owners and experts instead of being seen as disinterested or unqualified partners. All mission-critical partners need to be equitably involved in all aspects of the process.

Collaborative Change is a social action process with dual goals of collective empowerment and the deepening of social knowledge. Executed successfully, collaborative change has the potential to increase the rigor, reach and relevance of research to action.

KEY ACTIVITIES

A key component of the Collaborative Change framework is its inclusion of three activities: Research, Evaluation and Design. To enact effective systems change, collective impact backbone organizations must commit to understanding the current context (Research), co-creating plans and engaging in action with partners and stakeholders (Design) and continuously working to understand the impact of action (Evaluation).



CRITICAL DRIVERS

The Collaborative Change framework recognizes four critical drivers to systems change: (1) Systems Perspective; (2) Cross-sector Partnerships; (3) Equity-Focused Participation; and (4) Communities of Purpose. Importantly, when these critical drivers are missing or superficial, the outcomes of collective impact typically are not achieved or are only achieved superficially.



SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE

A paradigm involving a focus on the whole picture and not just a single element. To enact systems change, backbone organizations must possess an awareness of the wider context and an appreciation for interactions among different components.



CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

To bring about systems-level change, backbone organizations must engage in cross-sector partnerships and bring people together across disciplines and practices toward a shared goal. Importantly, this must include community-members whose lived experience is invaluable if true transformation is to occur.



EQUITY-FOCUSED PARTICIPATION

It is not enough to bring people together to action around an event or project; we must bring people together with a commitment to equitably engaging, immersing, and empowering them to move toward action and impact. This means valuing the contributions and gifts of everyone at the table and making an explicit commitment to not replicating harm and inequality in your work.



COMMUNITIES OF PURPOSE

Communities of purpose refers to the intentional cultivation of relationships that work collectively and creatively toward a common purpose.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles provide a framework for how to approach Collaborative Change in a way that is people-centered and rooted in equity and systems change. Systems change cannot be done alone and requires a long-term, sustained investment and commitment. Our efforts must be directed at achieving social justice versus sustaining a broken system. We must acknowledge the historical and contemporary context of systemic inequities including race, gender, sexual orientation, income-inequality, etc. while simultaneously acknowledging the assets, strengths, and resilience that community holds. Respecting this history means that we must collaborate with one another in a mutually beneficial partnership.



CENTER ON RELATIONSHIPS

Building and sustaining relationships is at the heart of collaborative change. This takes time and needs to be constantly cultivated through ongoing communication and engagement. Intentional time and investment should be made to ensure mutually beneficial relationships are forged and sustained with a diverse range of communities, partners, and stakeholders. Collaborative structures must be co-designed with a wide range of partners and community members to ensure the creation of transparent values, mindsets, processes and activities aimed at building a culture of trust and collective action.



MAKE POWER TRANSPARENT

Power impacts our decision-making processes and how we are able to build a common and mutually beneficial agenda for partnership. This is true for formal power imbalances as well as those caused by social systems such as racism, sexism, class stratification, etc. By identifying power structures and making them transparent,

we can understand their impact on the processes of collaboration which then allows us to engage in the redistribution of power necessary to achieve collective change goals.



STAY ACCOUNTABLE TO COMMUNITY

The voices, gifts, and contributions of those most impacted by the problem have to be at the center of solution-making. Collaboration needs to involve and honor these individuals. There should be a clear alignment between community input, activities, outcomes and impact. All stakeholders - including those most impacted by the problem - should be informed about progress and work on an ongoing basis.



ENGAGE COMPLEXITY IN PROBLEM & ASSET FRAMING

Framing a problem inclusively and acknowledging the complexity of potential challenges and opportunities is an essential step in approaching systemic problems. To do so, you must first engage and include a diverse range of stakeholders, constituents, and partners. Next, identify a known, shared purpose that is rooted in collaboration, and then determine where that collaboration is needed and at what level change is desired.



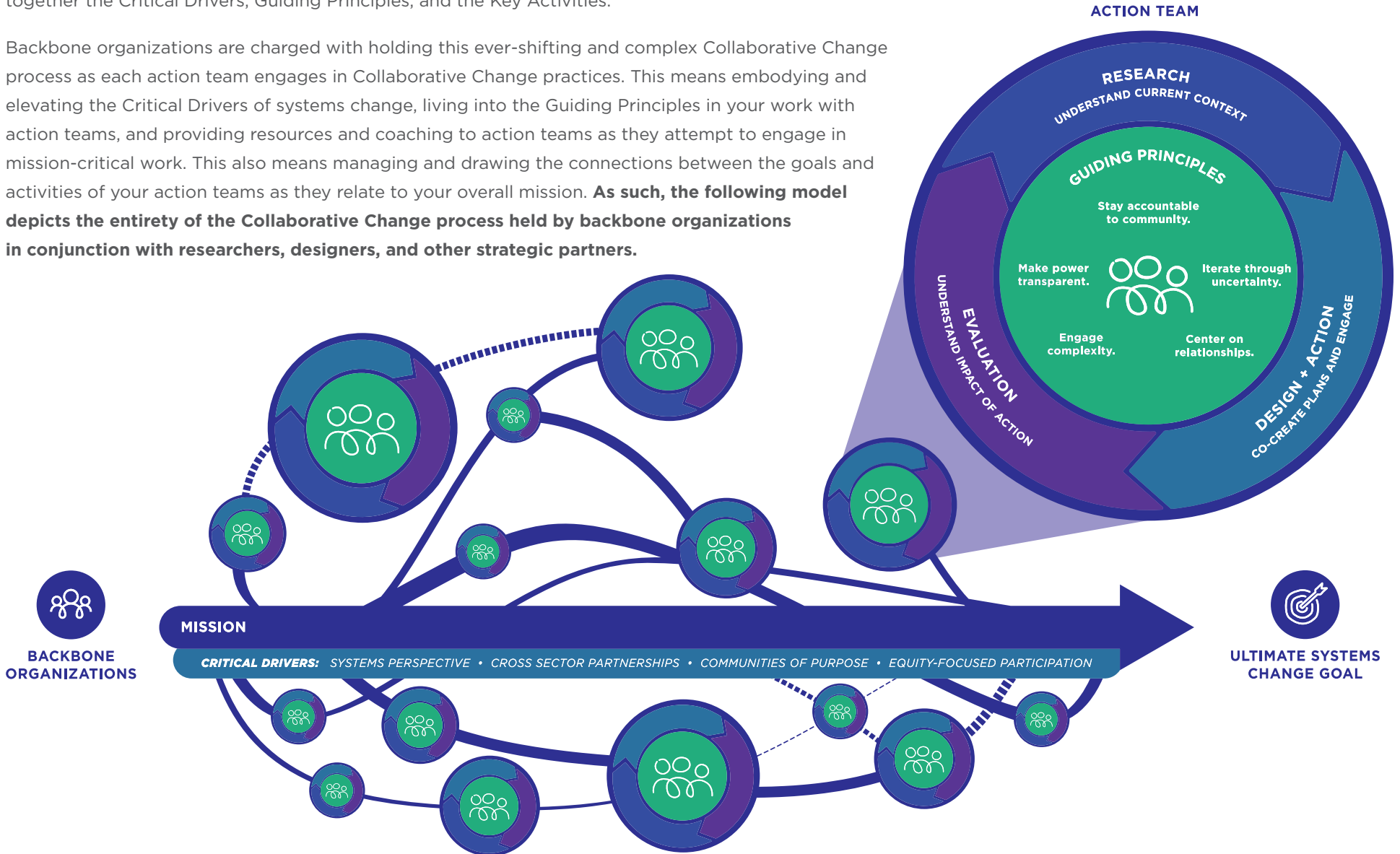
ITERATE THROUGH UNCERTAINTY FOR LEARNING

Embrace multiple stages of work with an understanding that the journey is as important as the destination. Working through cycles of action, feedback and reflection enables networks to develop as learning systems which are able to adapt to complex, changing, or uncertain environments. Maintain a posture of openness to multiple channels of feedback and perspectives of the work.

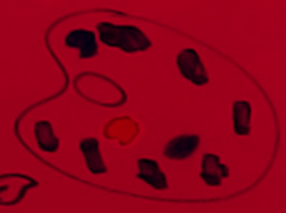
A MODEL FOR COLLABORATIVE SYSTEMS CHANGE IMPACT

The Collaborative Change model depicts the complexity and multi-faceted nature of participatory, people-centered, and equitable systems change. Using this model, backbone organizations can begin to better understand, articulate, and engage in their mission-critical work. Importantly, the model brings together the Critical Drivers, Guiding Principles, and the Key Activities.

Backbone organizations are charged with holding this ever-shifting and complex Collaborative Change process as each action team engages in Collaborative Change practices. This means embodying and elevating the Critical Drivers of systems change, living into the Guiding Principles in your work with action teams, and providing resources and coaching to action teams as they attempt to engage in mission-critical work. This also means managing and drawing the connections between the goals and activities of your action teams as they relate to your overall mission. **As such, the following model depicts the entirety of the Collaborative Change process held by backbone organizations in conjunction with researchers, designers, and other strategic partners.**



TERMS of ART



HELP CREATE A COMMON VOCABULARY by COLLABORATING to DEFINE TERMS COMMONLY USED in the COLLABORATIVE CHANGE SPACE

LISTENING

TESTING ASSUMPTIONS

PATIENCE & URGENCY
RADICAL TRANSPARENCY

From: A FEW SENTENCES ON HOW YOU

COLLABORATIVE CHANGE TOOLS

CHANGE

mindsets, relationships, system alteration
Is this the right term? -> maybe we need to measure it to know.

UNITY
- sense of purpose, connection, identity, shared purpose, and social support
WE ARE COMMUNITY

COLLABORATIVE CHANGE

EQUITY

re allocation of resources, power, voice to ensure full healthy lives

INFUSED INTO PROCESSES, TOOLS OUTCOMES, & IMPACT

POWER ANALYSIS

BACKBONE

SUPPORT

EMPOWERING STAKEHOLDERS TO ACHIEVE SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

AUTHORITY INCLUSION

representation, visibility, diversity

ASKING QUESTIONS TO CHALLENGE BIASES

ASSESSMENT

REFLECTION, CRITICAL REFLEXIVITY, LEARNING

DIVERSITY

individual/group differences, social location, personality, prior knowledge, life experiences, migration, nationality, citizenship, etc.

COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

MODELING



SHARING DATA



SYSTEMS



HAPPENING ALL OVER

COLLABORATIVE CHANGE PRINCIPLE CARDS

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CCRED GUIDING PRINCIPLES

USING THE PRINCIPLE CARDS

The principle cards are a quick and easy way to engage in reflection or conversation around the core tenets of successful collaborative change. This activity can be done individually or facilitated with a team.



Number of People: 1-6



Time Consideration: 30-60 min



Materials: Cards

GUIDE:

Step 1: Lay the cards on the table in front of you and take a few minutes to read them.

Step 2: Rank the principles from the one you feel strongest in to the one you feel weakest in.

Step 3: Which principle are you strongest in? Give a specific example of how you do this?

Step 4: Which one is missing most in your work? What are barriers to embodying this principle?

Step 5: How did this activity make you feel? What actions should you take based on this activity?



COLLABORATIVE CHANGE CRITICAL REFLECTION MATRIX

INTRODUCTION:

The Collaborative Change Critical Reflection Matrix is a quick reference guide for engaging the Guiding Principles of Collaborative Change in your work. It is meant to guide practitioners through a reflective process and is meant to be revisited throughout the duration of a project. The questions included are just a beginning to deeper consideration and conversations that should take place in an intentional Collaborative Change process.

The matrix is structured with the five collaborative change guiding principles intersected with individual, action team, community and systems levels of consideration. These levels are defined as:

- **INDIVIDUAL:** Questions for the individual practitioner to consider how their own identity and experience connect with the work.
- **TEAM:** Questions for those driving the processes to consider how they relate to each other and the work.
- **COMMUNITY:** Questions for individual and team to consider when engaging with those most impacted by the work.
- **SYSTEM:** Questions for the individual, team and community to consider how their work interacts with, and changes, the system.

On the pages following the matrix you will find guides for applying this tool in individual, team and community settings.

CRITICAL REFLECTION MATRIX

	INDIVIDUAL	TEAM	COMMUNITY	SYSTEMS
CENTER ON RELATIONSHIPS	<p>How are you measuring your collaborative relationships?</p> <p>What barriers do you have to building trusting relationships?</p>	<p>How are relationship efforts being supported? What are the challenges?</p> <p>What is your plan for thriving through personnel transitions?</p>	<p>Which relationships are currently missing and need to be developed?</p> <p>How do we strengthen our community through trust building?</p>	<p>What are the fundamental purposes of relationships?</p> <p>What relationships are inequitable or exhibit unequal distribution of power?</p>
MAKE POWER TRANSPARENT	<p>What power do you have? Do you lack?</p> <p>How will you communicate the use of that power?</p>	<p>How does the common agenda balance power?</p> <p>How is the balance of power checked? How do we make decisions?</p>	<p>Are you clear with your partners about where funding is coming from?</p> <p>How are exploration of power structures encouraged in this collaboration?</p>	<p>How might funding/resources influence your collaboration?</p> <p>Where is power obvious? Where is it unseen?</p>
STAY ACCOUNTABLE TO COMMUNITY	<p>What are you accountable for within the community?</p> <p>How will you communicate those responsibilities – successes or failures?</p>	<p>How are we regularly getting feedback on our direction?</p> <p>Is our team reflective of the community we are serving?</p>	<p>How is community defined or bound?</p> <p>How can we elevate community voice and create community ownership?</p>	<p>Do the system's decision makers represent the community?</p> <p>Who is driving change in the system?</p>
ENGAGE COMPLEXITY IN PROBLEM AND ASSET FRAMING	<p>How are you embracing mistakes as important learning opportunities?</p> <p>How does your positionality effect your orientation to the problem?</p>	<p>How are we acknowledging and addressing systemic inequities?</p> <p>What are our shared hopes and fears?</p>	<p>What are the community's assets and strengths; stories of success and points of pride?</p> <p>What are community perspectives on this issue?</p>	<p>Which systems can be leveraged to contribute to the success of the project?</p> <p>Who can leverage these systems and how?</p>
ITERATE THROUGH UNCERTAINTY FOR LEARNING	<p>How do you utilize conflict for productive growth?</p> <p>How do you respond to positive and negative change?</p>	<p>Where does our work have flexibility? Where does it not?</p> <p>How do we deal with failure?</p>	<p>How does the community translate experiences and challenges into broader collective learning?</p> <p>Are there failures that are not acceptable to the community?</p>	<p>How tolerant is the system to change?</p> <p>How do we know what impact our work is having on the system?</p>

CRITICAL REFLECTION MATRIX: INDIVIDUAL DIAGNOSTIC REFLECTION

This tool should be used before beginning a collaborative change process to assess your individual strengths and weaknesses for doing the work. The goal of this tool is to support the practitioner in considering where they will need support to be successful.



Number of People: 1



Time Consideration: 30-60 min



Materials: Matrix, pen, paper, highlighters

GUIDE

Step 1: Read through the INDIVIDUAL Questions in the matrix. Consider both your previous experience and the emerging work and write answers to each of the questions.

Step 2: Review your answers. Highlight statements that represent strengths. Using a different color, highlight areas that represent weakness.

Step 3: Continue to reflect and write answers to following questions:

- What strengths do I bring to this work?
- Where do I need to lean into my team and community for support?
- Who do I need with me to do this work?
- In what ways do I hope to grow through this work?

Step 4 (optional): Share your reflection with a team member and get their feedback on your assessment.

READY TO LAUNCH CHECK-LIST

This tool is designed to support a kick-off or early team meeting on a collaborative change process. The goal is for the team to have meaningful discussion about their work with a focus on surfacing points of difference between team members and identifying action steps for moving the work forward.



Number of People: 3-9



Time Consideration: 90-120 min



Materials: Matrix, easel post-its, regular post-its, markers

GUIDE

Step 1: Write TEAM, COMMUNITY and SYSTEM, separately, at the top of three easel post-its.

Step 2: Have your team review the matrix and select the three most important questions from each category. Write these under the title on each easel post-it. Leave space for comments/smaller post-its under each question.

Step 3: Break your team into three groups. Each group is responsible for discussing and answering the questions on one of the post-its.

Step 4: Each team shares out their answers. The whole group discusses the answers for each group with the intention of identifying where they are aligned and where there are gaps in the team's consensus.

Step 5: After each team has shared out discuss the following:

- Do we need to align on our gaps before moving forward? If so, what do we need to learn in order to align?
- Based on this activity what are the next steps for moving forward?
- If community is not already represented in the room, when and how will we begin to engage community?

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION STARTER

This is a way of using the matrix questions to begin to engage the community in your work. The goal of this activity is to raise awareness of your work, get direct input from community and to recruit members into your collaborative. The application of this tool can vary widely based on the community context that you are working in.



Number of People: 12-100



Time Consideration: Any



Materials: Banners, Hand-outs, Markers, Post-its, Tape

GUIDE

Step 1: Before a community event or meeting, prepare banners. One banner should have, “What are we proud of as a community?” written on it and a second should have “Who is our community?”. A third banner should have a clear question related to the issue, such as “How can we get better access to quality pre-school?”.

Step 2: At the meeting hang the banners on the wall and introduce that you are hoping community members can help you answer the questions.

Step 3: Have a team member at each banner to encourage interaction and to help explain what you are doing. Be sure to have markers and post-its available at each banner.

Step 4: Team members should actively engage in conversations and have a hand-out about the collaborative. If possible, this hand-out should provide ways for community to get further involved in the process.

Step 5: After the event, Team members should debrief and identify themes and learning from their conversations and the posters.

Step 6: The themes and learning should be recorded and given back to the community in an appropriate format and in a timely manner.



PRINCIPLE-BASED METHODS AND RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION:

The Principle-Based Methods and Resources are meant to guide your process of integrating the Guiding Principles into your Collaborative Change work. The Guiding Principles are key to engaging in Collaborative Change in a way that is people-centered and rooted in equity and systems change. As such, it is important to find meaningful ways to operationalize them in your work and ensure they are embodied on all levels.

INCLUDED ON EACH PRINCIPLE ONE-PAGER IS THE FOLLOWING:

- Description of the Guiding Principle.
- Key questions to ask yourself throughout your work.
- A series of resources that can aid your adoption of the necessary mindsets and orientations needed to operationalize the Guiding Principle.
- A series of methods and techniques that may aid your integration of the Guiding Principle into your work.



CENTER ON RELATIONSHIPS

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KEY QUESTIONS:

- How are you measuring your collaborative relationships? Dosage, depth and outcomes?
- How are you supporting relationship efforts? (time, money, personnel, professional development)
- What are the fundamental purposes of relationships: to bring about change through political means, to create and implement novel alternatives, or to develop coalitions?
- Which relationships are currently missing? (Who is not included? Which relationships need to be initiated and developed?)
- Who do you need to partner with to ensure a diverse collaborative community?
- What is your plan for thriving through personnel transitions?

RESOURCES:

- **Community Engagement Toolkit:** [This community engagement toolkit](#) from the Collective Impact Forum provides a comprehensive set of tools for planning and executing a community engagement process.

- **Equitable and Inclusive Civic Engagement:** The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity outlines six [principles for equitable and inclusive civic engagement](#) that may be used to guide how you develop meaningful relationships with community and partners.

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES:

- **World Cafe:** The World Cafe method is a proven way to simply and effectively host large group dialogue. Check out [the official World Cafe website](#) which includes a how-to guide.
- **Hosting a Community Meeting:** [This one page guide for hosting a community meeting](#) provides essential tips for creating a welcoming and inclusive space for community meetings.
- **Stakeholder Mapping:** A [stakeholder map](#) provides a way to visualize people and organizations who are involved or interested in the result of your work/project, and the connections that exist between them.
- **One-to-one meetings:** This [community organizing strategy](#) is great for helping to build deep relationships with stakeholders so that you can more easily organize them to work together for a shared cause.



MAKE POWER TRANSPARENT

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KEY QUESTIONS:

- Are you clear with your partners where the funding is coming from?
- Who is dependent on whom for resources?
- What's the check and balance of power? Where does the decision-making live?
- How are you making space to explore power structures in your collaboration?
- How are you developing your common agenda?
- What will you do if funders or resources pull your network in a direction out of line from your work? Do you have a partnership prenup?

RESOURCES:

- **Deconstructing White Privilege:** [In this video on deconstructing white privilege](#), Dr. Robin DiAngelo overviews white privilege and how to unpack whiteness and privilege as a white person.
- **Intersectionality:** Watch a [short video on intersectionality](#) featuring Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw who developed the theory.

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES:

- **Power Mapping:** One of the ways to make power transparent in systems is through [power mapping exercises](#) which illuminate how various stakeholders influence the larger system.
- **Power Spectrum:** The [Power Spectrum worksheet](#) is a reflective exercise where each individual reflects on their relationship to power and how that relationship can be leverage within the collaborative work.
- **Ladder of Engagement:** Using this [ladder of engagement worksheet](#), your team can make explicit the various levels of power and engagement stakeholders have in your work.



STAY ACCOUNTABLE TO COMMUNITY

The voices, gifts, and contributions of those most impacted by the problem have to be at the center of solution-making. Collaboration needs to involve and honor these individuals. There should be a clear alignment between community input, activities, outcomes and impact. All stakeholders - including those most impacted by the problem - should be informed about progress and work on an ongoing basis.

KEY QUESTIONS:

- How do you define, or bound, community?
- Does your board represent your community?
- How are you defining community?
- Are you including those impacted among your community to whom you are accountable in addition to funders and organizational partners?
- Who are you getting feedback from regularly?
- How are you constantly analyzing who's voice is missing?

RESOURCES:

- **Ladder of Engagement:** Using this [ladder of engagement worksheet](#), your team can make explicit the various levels of power and engagement stakeholders have in your work. By outlining this, you can stay abreast to the various players you should remain accountable to in your work.
- **Equitable and Inclusive Civic Engagement:** The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity outlines six [principles for equitable and inclusive civic engagement](#) that may be used to guide how you develop meaningful relationships with community and partners.

- **Feedback Loops:** [Feedback Loops](#) allow you to evaluate progress towards your goal and course correct in real time to meet them. By integrating this with community you stay accountable to their needs and desires.

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES:

- **Community-Based Participatory Evaluation:** The following [guide to engaging in community-based participatory research](#) provides a map for how your organization can stay accountable to the community by engaging community throughout the collaborative change process as designers, actors, and evaluators.
- **Co-Creation & Representation:** A recent Stanford Social Innovation Review article outlines [the power of co-creation and community inclusion](#) in cultivating innovative solutions.



ENGAGE COMPLEXITY IN PROBLEM & ASSET FRAMING

Framing a problem inclusively and acknowledging the complexity of potential challenges and opportunities is an essential step in approaching systemic problems. To do so, you must first engage and include a diverse range of stakeholders, constituents, and partners. Next, identify a known, shared purpose that is rooted in collaboration, and then determine where that collaboration is needed and at what level change is desired.

KEY QUESTIONS:

- What are your community's assets and strengths?
- What are your communities narratives of success and points of pride?
- How are you directly acknowledging systemic inequities?
- How are you embracing mistakes as important learning opportunities?

RESOURCES:

- **Social Labs:** A [Social Lab](#) was developed by Zaid Hassan as a collaborative format for problem solving.
- **Asset Based Community Development:** [Asset Based Community Development](#) is an approach where communities drive the development process by identifying and mobilizing existing, but often unrecognized assets.
- **Systems Thinking:** This [Medium post on systems thinking](#) presents six tools for developing a systems-level mindset. Systems thinking is a way of understanding the complexity of the flow of causality and how people and institutions interconnect and influence one another.

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES:

- **Root Cause Analysis:** This [Root Cause Analysis tool](#) helps break down complex issues to identify areas where change is possible.
- **Abstract to Concrete:** A big part of framing involves the formation of a project scope. This [abstract to concrete tool](#) helps teams contextualize abstract ideas into concrete actionable opportunities.
- **Community Asset Mapping:** There are many ways to map a community's assets. [This community asset inventory worksheet](#) provides a simple way for teams to think creatively about the strengths and opportunities in their community.
- **Lean Six Sigma five whys methodology:** [The Five Whys framework](#) is useful for helping to define the problem you are attempting to solve. It helps groups get below surface-level explanations for complex problems.
- **Design Methodology:** [Design thinking](#) is a way of working that employs empathy, creativity, and rationality to define, explore and solve problems.



ITERATE THROUGH UNCERTAINTY FOR LEARNING

Embrace multiple stages of work with an understanding that the journey is as important as the destination. Working through cycles of action, feedback and reflection enables networks to develop as learning systems which are able to adapt to complex, changing, or uncertain environments. Maintain a posture of openness to multiple channels of feedback and perspectives of the work.

KEY QUESTIONS:

- How do you engage conflict for productive growth?
- How do you respond to positive change?
- How do we respond to negative changes?
- How quickly do you translate experiences and challenges into broader collective learning?

RESOURCES:

- **Accepting Uncertainty is Key to Agility:** This article highlights how through accepting uncertainty we can begin to iterate now and move with fluidity in our work. Learn more about [accepting uncertainty as key to agility](#).
- **Growth Mindset:** A growth mindset thrives on challenge and sees failure not as evidence of unintelligence but as a heartening springboard for growth and for stretching our existing abilities. Read more about [Carol Dweck's growth mindset framework](#).

- **Embrace Ambiguity:** Navigating complex systems requires us to get comfortable with not knowing how our actions will impact the overall system. [IDEO's article on how to embrace ambiguity](#) has simple techniques to help you get started.
- **Group Formation Theory:** Group formation theory outlines the process of group formation new teams undergo. Learn more about the [stages of group formation](#) here.

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES:

- **PDSA Cycle Testing:** [Plan-Do-Study-Act](#) is a structure for rapidly testing and adapting ideas based on direct feedback from users. This tool is helpful for learning through action.
- **Service Blueprint:** A [service blueprint](#) is a diagram that displays an entire process by listing all the activities and roles involved. This tool is helpful for quickly getting feedback on concept processes and services.
- **SBI Feedback:** When using the [Situation-Behavior-Impact-Feedback approach](#), you capture and clarify the situation, describe the specific behaviors, and explain the impact that the person's behavior had on you. This tool is helpful for facilitating direct conversations with partners.

