

# **PUBLIC INNOVATORS TOOLKIT**

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## **ABOUT THE HARWOOD INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC INNOVATION**

The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that teaches, coaches and inspires individuals and organizations to solve pressing problems and change how communities work together. With a proven 30-year track record the Institute's approach to change – the Harwood practice – has spread to thousands of communities across the U.S. and to groups in more than 40 countries.

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Videos to accompany these tools can be found at  
[www.youtube.com/harwoodinstitute](http://www.youtube.com/harwoodinstitute).



# TOOLKIT QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

TOOL	USE WITH	BENEFITS	TIPS
Lab Step-by-Step Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board, staff, partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps people see what is taught at Lab</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use to get other staff and partners interested in being trained so you have allies</li> </ul>
Essays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board, staff, partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help people understand basic concepts behind Turning Outward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use to get other staff and partners interested in being trained so you have allies</li> </ul>
Ask Tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual community members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quick way to engage people/gain public knowledge</li> <li>• Can be done by numerous people at once where large numbers of people gather</li> <li>• Creates good buzz</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combine with public knowledge gained Community Conversations</li> </ul>
Aspirations Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board, staff, partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orients individuals/groups to Turn Outward</li> <li>• Shifts frame of conversation from problems</li> <li>• Create focus on what can be done together to change underlying conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use especially when needing to align people/groups create sense of common purpose</li> <li>• Done in 30–60 minutes</li> </ul>
Turn Quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board, staff, partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shifts orientation to Turning Outward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop habit of using this daily</li> </ul>
3A's of Public Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board, staff, partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides touch-stones for Turning Outward</li> <li>• Helps create discipline/habits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use quarterly as refresher and guide</li> </ul>
Turning Outward Across Key Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board, staff, partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides way to apply Turning Outward to different functional areas of organization/group</li> <li>• Helps develops Turned Outward culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on concrete behaviors/put into action</li> <li>• Start with functions that get quick wins</li> <li>• Build up over time</li> </ul>
Community Rhythms: The Five Stages of Community Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board, staff, partner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates common frame for where the community is and provides sense of how to strategically accelerate and deepen change</li> <li>• Liberates people from believing they must do everything and makes people more accountable for what they need to do</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small/large groups</li> <li>• 60–90 minutes depending on group size</li> </ul>

**Use the videos from the Lab in your community!**  
**Videos from the Lab to accompany these tools**  
**can be found at [www.youtube.com/harwoodinstitute](http://www.youtube.com/harwoodinstitute).**

# THE LAB :: WHAT YOU'LL LEARN STEP-BY-STEP

<b>FIVE KEY AREAS</b>	<b>STEPS YOU TAKE</b>
<b>Understanding My Community</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Focus on public knowledge</li> <li>2. Ask the right questions</li> <li>3. Apply new knowledge to making sound decisions</li> <li>4. Understand what I am learning – and how to listen</li> <li>5. Share what I am learning to build community ownership and allies</li> </ol>
<b>Being Turned Outward</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make the personal choice to Turn Outward</li> <li>2. Apply being Turned Outward to my daily choices</li> <li>3. Embed Turning Outward across key functions</li> </ol>
<b>Creating Conditions for Change and Sustainability</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Know the stage of my community and its implications for effective action</li> <li>2. Identify the right conditions to accelerate and support change</li> </ol>
<b>Deciding on the Right Path</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify my sphere of influence</li> <li>2. Choose the best path to win</li> <li>3. Create an action plan</li> </ol>
<b>Making an Agreement with Myself</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create a personal covenant</li> <li>2. Identify what rejuvenates you</li> </ol>

# BEING A PUBLIC INNOVATOR

By Rich Harwood

***public innovator; {noun}***: Individual who holds ideals that guide him or her; who is pragmatic in his or her work; and who understands what it means to take risks

Many people do good work across the country in public life and politics, and yet there is a small percentage of people who stand out because of the meaningful change they are able to generate. More prevalent than social entrepreneurs and less heralded, these engines for the public good are one of the great untapped resources in our nation.

The Harwood Institute calls these people public innovators.

Public innovators are pragmatic idealists. They hold a deep understanding of the reality of their community and at the same time incessantly tap their imagination to see a path for a brighter future. Public innovators are dogged in their determination to make progress; and they are risk-takers, when necessary. They have learned to innovate from within whatever structure they operate.

Public innovators also understand that real and sustainable change only occurs in a community over time, as the effects of civic actions ripple out and eventually connect with one another. Their knowledge of the community guides their strategies and helps them calibrate when it's time to push ahead and when to be patient.

Public innovators hold no specific title, and there is no single mailing list or website to visit. Public innovators can be found in a range of public, private and nonprofit organizations in a variety of roles; their title is not necessarily indicative of the change they are able to effect.

In a highly divisive, fragmented and sometimes cynical society, we need public innovators as they can be counted on to make progress. They fundamentally believe in the possibilities for change in public life and politics, and in the ability of people to tap their own potential to make a difference and join together to forge a common future.

# "THE TOP 10 REASONS WHY I LIKE THE HARWOOD APPROACH"

*By Susan Taylor Simpson, Harwood Certified Coach*

In a community meeting, I was asked to give an overview of Turning Outward. So, I created my Top Ten List of reasons why I like the Harwood approach and how it benefits communities:

**1. The value proposition:**

- If we are Turned Outward and make intentional choices, we are more relevant to our communities and we can have a greater impact.
- When we Turn Outward we can find the right solution, at the right time, with the right people – a much better approach than relying solely on “best practices.”

**2. It puts people first:**

- Turning Outward means we value public knowledge, we know how to gather it, and it guides everything we do. We also understand the difference between public and expert knowledge.

**3. Rich Harwood is not just a pretty face:**

- Rich has been guiding organizations and communities in Turning Outward for over 30 years and is the founder of the nonprofit Harwood Institute for Public Innovation.
- Rich has made hope real under the most challenging circumstances, such as in Newtown, Connecticut, after the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy and in communities that have faced dire economic and social decline.

**4. I know this approach works:**

- I’ve been involved as a coach and partner in many communities that have used this approach. And, I can testify that it has been transformational for those communities and leaders, including a three-year initiative with four United Ways in Ontario, Canada; an 18-month initiative with the Indiana Association of United Ways and 11 local United Ways from across the state; a three-year Beacon Community initiative in Battle Creek, Michigan, involving six local partners and broad community involvement; and a two-year initiative with a regional association and 30 local community center organizations from and around Sydney, Australia.

**5. I get to go to exotic places:**

- I’ve been to such exotic locales as Battle Creek, Michigan; Indianapolis, Indiana; Sault Sainte, Marie Ontario; and Sydney, Australia. Ok, they may not be exotic, but the point is, this approach works in communities all over the world because it is driven by people’s hopes and aspirations – no matter where they live.

**6. It is practical and doable:**

- The Harwood approach comes with many tools and processes.
- There is rigor and structure to the approach. And with the support of coaches and the Institute's extensive resources, the practice is customized to local conditions and situations.

**7. It's not just the flavor of the day:**

- The approach is premised on building a strong foundation of the necessary conditions for change – ensuring sustainability even after project funding ends.

**8. It meets you where you are at:**

- Concepts such as Stages of Community Life, the Sweet Spot, and others all provide theoretical underpinnings to match efforts with local conditions AND guide strategies that will deliver impact over the long-term.

**9. It fits with my values and keeps me grounded:**

- While the 3A's of Public Life (Authority, Authenticity and Accountability) are an intentionality test for our work with communities, they are also an equal match to the beliefs and values that I aspire to on a personal level.

**10. It puts people first:**

- This is a repeat of reason #2 because it is so important it bears repeating!
- By listening to people tell us about their aspirations and what they believe needs to change in their community, we can create strategies with them that truly meet their needs – and have real impact in people's lives.

# THE CHOICE TO TURN OUTWARD

By Rich Harwood

**Turn Outward; {verb}:** 1. The act of seeing and hearing those in the community, and acting with intentionality to create change. 2. A reorientation toward the public; a posture 3. A framework for making choices about public life.

## Turning Outward calls us to action.

As with all turns in life, there is something basic, fundamental, and hopeful about making a turn outward. Only then can we truly see and hear one another; only then can we have a shot at understanding reality for what it is and deal with its implications and ramifications; only then can we discover our shared aspirations and have a real chance to make progress together.

Each of us makes a choice about the direction we face when we seek to make a difference. We may not always think about this choice, but it is there.

Each of us has clear reasons to Turn Outward because that is where the challenges and aspirations we wish to affect live. Without Turning Outward we will never have a true shot at having our work be relevant or significant. Only when we gain a deep and authentic understanding of the nature of a community and people's lives can we understand the conditions we must create for change to come about. It is only then that we can forge the relationships and trust we need to have a fighting chance to make a lasting difference. The choice we make about the direction we face is fundamentally about our very posture, our stand, our orientation toward the community; it will determine if our actions can make a difference and if we can fulfill our own aspirations for the life we seek.

Conventional wisdom urges us to look inward, to narrow our sights, to take on an array of activities and look busy. But current conditions in public life beg us to face a new direction. They summon us to put our community and nation on a new trajectory.

## Step forward and choose to Turn Outward.

# ON TURNING OUTWARD AND BEING INTENTIONAL

*By Rich Harwood*

**Turning Outward is fundamentally an orientation** – it is a stance we assume, a posture, a mindset. Only when you are Turned Outward can you truly see and hear others. Only then can you have reality in your line of sight. It is when we are Turned Outward that we can discover our shared aspirations and make progress together.

But nothing is automatic. Too many of us have chosen to turn inward, away from one another. Sometimes this happens without us even knowing. The concerns and hopes of people in our communities can get obscured, even pushed aside. The desire to position ourselves or our own organization or group takes priority. Our daily lives become consumed by creating long lists of activities. At times we can lose our sense of purpose.

All of us are in search of a path that allows us to make a difference in the world, become part of something larger than ourselves. We all want to achieve a sense of meaning in our own lives. But to find that path – and make it real – you must Turn Outward. After all, you cannot pursue your true desires if you are facing in the wrong direction.

## **But once you Turn Outward, then what?**

You must become more intentional in the choices that shape your actions. Each of us must decide whether we will pursue the path of the status quo that too often is filled by division, disappointment and frustration – or choose an alternate path of possibility and hope. For instance, will we choose to authentically engage people, or simply offer lip service to such engagement? Will we focus on issues that matter to people, or mostly pursue some other agenda? Will we produce positive impact in people’s lives, or become consumed by endless activities? This alternate path is about stepping forward and accounting for the pledges and promises we make.

Being intentional means becoming more deliberate in your actions. It is to make choices about whether to take one course over another. It is to be more attentive to your surroundings – that you hold a greater awareness about who we are, who we want to become and the kind of change you seek to generate. In these ways, being intentional is about being more directed.

But I am moved most by the following definition of intentionality, which comes in two parts. The first involves what I think of as “wakefulness.” I love this word. I encourage you to consider its meaning and potential for your own engagement. Wakefulness suggests that we are alert. That we come to the world awake! Our eyes are wide open, our hearts are open and we are willing to see and hear that which is around us. In being wakeful, we are ready to engage,

to be with others. Such wakefulness stands in direct contrast to the blinders we sometimes put on so that we don't have to worry about certain issues or matters, and the great lengths we sometimes go to take-in only that information that confirms what we already know or believe. Wakefulness is the opposite of inwardness. It is about being present, especially for those things we may not like or want.

The companion to wakefulness is "moral accountability." All actions have consequences and ramifications. So, while we cannot control everything in our lives, we must recognize – and embrace – that we actually exercise power over much of what we do. This isn't an absolute power, of course, but enough that we must account for our actions. We must know that we have the potential to positively (or negatively) impact people and our surroundings. That each of our small efforts matter and have ripple effects. So, moral accountability is with each judgment and choice you make. One reason why I so cherish the notion of moral accountability is, that when we live into it, we begin to see our own potential to shape the world around us. We become actors, not mere spectators; shapers, not bystanders; builders, not complainers or claimants.

Each day we make scores of choices, and while we cannot control everything, if we become more intentional about the choices we do make, then we can have far greater impact and fulfill our own personal desires. There are six "Intentionality Tests" that sit at the core of Turning Outward:

- **Turn Outward:** Am I Turned Outward toward the community?
- **Aspirations:** Are my actions rooted in people's shared aspirations?
- **Authority:** Could I stand up on a table and talk to people about their community, their aspirations and concerns, and would they believe me?
- **Authenticity:** Do I reflect the reality of people's lives and do they believe I have their best interests at heart, even when we disagree?
- **Accountability:** Am I living up to the pledges and promises I have made?
- **Urge Within:** Am I staying true to my urge within?

The idea and practice of intentionality lives throughout the Harwood approach. It is about what we choose to make of ourselves. It is about what we choose to do with ourselves. It is about how we bring our full selves to be in relationships with others. In this spirit, when I speak of intentionality, my goal is not for you to adopt wholesale my ideas – or anyone else's. That would be the very antithesis of intentionality. Instead the process of deepening your own intentionality requires you to take ownership of the judgments and choices before you. You must find, and declare, your own sense of purpose. You must choose your own course of engagement with those around you.

**What I am asking you to do is to seize this intrinsic power within you.**

# THE ASK TOOL

Use this tool to engage individuals in quick three- to seven-minute interviews.

**Directions:** Start by introducing yourself by saying, “Hi, I’m part of [name of organization] and we’re trying to learn more about people’s aspirations for the community. Would you be willing to answer four quick questions?”

1. WHAT KIND OF COMMUNITY DO YOU WANT TO LIVE IN?

.....

.....

2. WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT TO YOU?

.....

.....

3. HOW IS THAT DIFFERENT FROM HOW YOU SEE THINGS NOW?

.....

.....

4. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT NEED TO HAPPEN TO CREATE  
THAT KIND OF CHANGE?

.....

.....

# ASPIRATIONS EXERCISE

**Directions:** Ask people to take a few minutes to fill out each question on their own. Then go through people's responses one question at a time and identify the key themes.

**ASPIRATIONS.** MY ASPIRATIONS FOR MY COMMUNITY ARE:

.....

.....

.....

.....

**CHALLENGES.** THE CHALLENGES WE FACE IN REACHING THESE ASPIRATIONS ARE:

.....

.....

.....

.....

**NEW CONDITIONS.** THE CHANGES NEEDED IN MY COMMUNITY TO REACH OUR ASPIRATIONS ARE:

.....

.....

.....

.....

# ARE YOU MOSTLY TURNED INWARD OR OUTWARD?

**Directions:** Review the two columns below and think about the work you do every day and where you spend the majority of your time. For each row, choose the word that best describes the predominant focus of your work or efforts in relationship to the community.

## *I am generally focused on:*

Activity vs.  Action

Program vs.  People

My Organization vs.  The Community

People as Consumers vs.  People as Citizens

Process vs.  Progress

Outreach vs.  Engagement

Public Relations vs.  People's Reality

Inputs vs.  Impact

Claiming Turf vs.  Coming Together

# HOW CAN I TURN MORE OUTWARD?

1. Identify three ways you are already Turned Outward and why each is important to you:

**WAYS I AM TURNED OUTWARD**

**WHY IT IS IMPORTANT**

.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....

2. Identify three opportunities for you to Turn Outward and why those are important to you:

**OPPORTUNITIES**

**WHY IT IS IMPORTANT**

.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....

3. What will you need to do differently in order to Turn Outward in each of the areas listed in your answer to Question 2?

.....

.....

.....

.....

# TURNING OUTWARD ACROSS KEY FUNCTIONS

This chart will help you think about ways to embed the Turning Outward approach across your organization.

## BEING TURNED OUTWARD

VS.

## BEING TURNED INWARD

### *Engaging the Community:*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go beyond the “usual suspects”</li> <li>• Hold a deep understanding of people’s shared aspirations and concerns</li> <li>• Engage without feeling obligated to have the answer and/or to take ownership of the solutions</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk to people we know and/or feel comfortable with</li> <li>• Focus on “problems” or visioning or getting feedback to ready-made plans</li> <li>• Feel nervous engaging people without having the answer or ownership</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

### *Managing Relationships + Partnerships:*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share deep knowledge of the community with partners and potential partners</li> <li>• Choose partners – “who we run with” – that are Turned Outward and share common aspirations for the community</li> <li>• Shed partners that are holding us back so we can focus on the right partners</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don’t often think about this possibility. Often hold close whatever knowledge we do have</li> <li>• Choose partners based on legacy, tradition and who we think we are “supposed” to pick</li> <li>• Keep partners over time. Fear repercussions of letting go</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

### *Develop + Implement Strategies:*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop strategies, plans and programs using people’s shared aspirations and concerns</li> <li>• Develop strategies that fit the community’s Stage of Community Life</li> <li>• Develop the underlying community conditions needed for strategies and plans to work effectively (work in “The Sweet Spot”)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make decisions based on history, funders, data and best practices</li> <li>• Focus primarily on factors that impact your organization and/or partners</li> <li>• Spend our time on programmatic strategy and implementation</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

### *Generate Resources – Human and Financial:*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Root fund-raising strategies in people’s shared aspirations and concerns</li> <li>• Connect people to relevant opportunities to take action on their aspirations – even if that means connecting them to other groups</li> <li>• Treat people as citizens who want to be a part of the solutions and have the ability to make a difference</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask people from the get-go for donations, time and support</li> <li>• Provide opportunities that serve the organization and seek to hold onto names. Veer toward window dressing at times</li> <li>• See people largely as consumers (or donors) who want problems fixed for them</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

### *Measure, Evaluate and Communicate Results:*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set realistic expectations about potential impact and change</li> <li>• Focus on whether underlying community conditions are improving</li> <li>• Tell stories that reflect the community’s progress – and not just our own organization’s</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create expectations that we cannot meet</li> <li>• Focus just on moving the needle on an issue</li> <li>• Toot our own horn</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

# THE 3A'S OF PUBLIC LIFE

Based on years of research and work, The Harwood Institute has developed a set of touchstones for thinking about and making daily choices when it comes to being Turned Outward. We call these touchstones The 3A's of Public Life – Authority, Authenticity and Accountability. Each “A” comes with its own “Intentionality Test.”

## **AUTHORITY**

**Intentionality Test:** Could I stand up on a table and talk to people about their community, their aspirations and concerns, and would they believe me?

**In our daily lives, to hold authority means to:**

- Hold a deep knowledge of the community – people’s lives, aspirations and concerns
- Actively apply knowledge about the community to the work we do

## **AUTHENTICITY**

**Intentionality Test:** Do I reflect the reality of people’s lives, and do they believe I have their best interests at heart, even when we disagree?

**In our daily lives, to be authentic means to:**

- Reflect the reality of people’s lives in what we do and say
- See and treat people as citizens (members of a larger community) rather than only consumers (or donors or members)
- Deeply listen to the community in an ongoing way

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Intentionality Test:** Am I living up to the pledges and promises I have made?

**In our daily lives, to be accountable means to:**

- Set realistic expectations about potential impact of the work and promises made to people in the community
- Pursue actions that are meaningful to people – avoid window dressing
- Build on what came before, and create a foundation for what might follow

**Directions:** Consider the following questions and discuss them with others. Pay special attention to the implications for what you do in your daily work in relationship to the community.

## AUTHORITY

**I can stand up on a table and reflect back to people in the community their shared aspirations and concerns – and they would believe me.**

- What would it take to do this in the community (or communities) where you are doing your work?
- Whom would you need to talk with (with whom would you need to talk (vs.) with whom do you usually talk)?
- What would you need to do with the knowledge you gain from the community in your daily work?

## AUTHENTICITY

**I reflect the reality of people's lives, and people believe I have their best interests at heart, even when they disagree with me.**

- What would it take for you to reflect the reality of people's lives in your work?
- What does it mean to have people's best interests at heart even when they disagree with you?
- What does it mean to have affection for the community in what you do? What challenges might you encounter?

## ACCOUNTABILITY

**I am living up to my pledges and promises.**

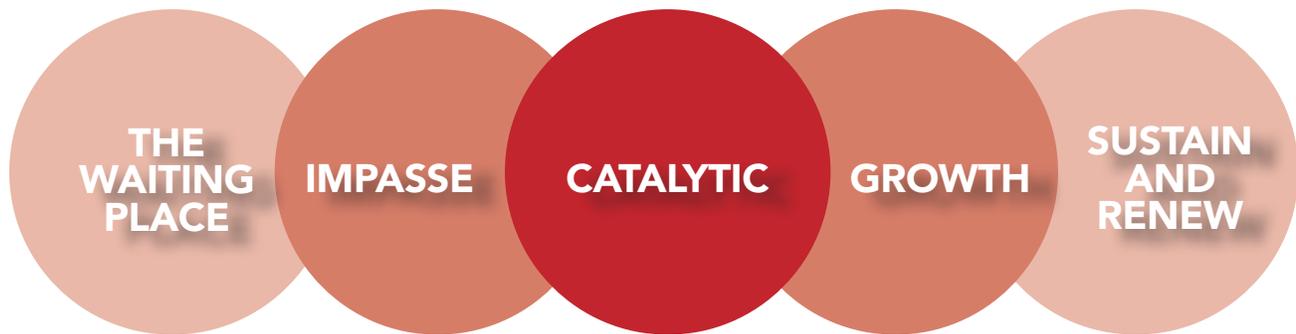
- What is required to live up to one's pledges and promises while working in a community?
- What prompts us at times to raise expectations beyond what can be reasonably achieved? What effects do you think that has?
- What do we need to do when we can't live up to our pledges and promises? What does this require of us?

# COMMUNITY RHYTHMS: THE FIVE STAGES OF COMMUNITY LIFE

Why is it that some communities make progress and others don't? And why is it that when we implement an initiative in one community, complex area or school, it creates great success, but in another community, complex area or school it doesn't seem to gain any traction?

Communities of all sizes and shapes go through stages. There are five stages The Harwood Institute has discovered, which we call Community Rhythms. They are listed with descriptions in the chart on the following page.

We often calibrate our strategies and solutions as if we are in one of the later stages such as Growth or Sustain & Renew, yet most communities, complex areas and schools are in one of the first three stages. If we don't calibrate our strategies to the stage of community life, our efforts are doomed to fail.



# THE STAGES OF COMMUNITY LIFE

## THE WAITING PLACE

- In the Waiting Place, people sense that things are not working right in their community, but they are unable to clearly define the problem; the feeling could be described as a "felt unknown."
- People feel disconnected from leaders and from different processes within the community for making decisions; the community itself is fragmented; discussion about common challenges is infrequent and/or highly divisive.
- Community discussion about challenges is infrequent and/or highly divisive. People want to create change, but negative norms for public life keep them locked into old patterns.
- People often are waiting - for issues to become clearer, for someone else to "solve" their problems. People in this stage often say, "Everything will be better when we get the right mayor to save the community!" So, people just wait.

## IMPASSE

- At Impasse, the community has hit rock bottom, and people can be heard saying, "Enough is enough! It can't go on like this any longer!"
- In this stage, unlike in the Waiting Place, there is a sense of urgency in people's voices; people are tired of "waiting." But while people want change, they lack clarity about what to do.
- The community's norms and ways of working together keep the community stuck in an undesirable status quo. The community is mired in turf wars; it lacks leadership at different levels and people seem fixated on their own individual interests.
- People's frustrations have hit the boiling point, but the community lacks the capacity to act.

## CATALYTIC

- The Catalytic stage starts with small steps that are often imperceptible to the vast majority of people in the community.
- Small numbers of people and organizations begin to emerge, taking risks and experimenting in ways that challenge existing norms in how the community works.
- The size of their actions is not the vital gauge. Their actions produce some semblance of results that gives people a sense of hope.
- As this stage unfolds, the number of people and organizations stepping forward increases, and links and networks are built between and among them.
- A key challenge in this stage is the emerging conflict between a nascent story of hope and the ingrained narrative that "nothing can change." Even as change appears, the old narrative will still dominate people's communication and outlook until more progress is made and trust builds.

## GROWTH

- During the Growth stage, people begin to see clearer and more pervasive signs of how the community is moving forward.
- People in the community are able to name leadership at all levels and where such leadership is expanding and deepening - from the official level to neighborhoods, within civic organizations and nonprofits. Networks are growing, and a sense of common purpose and direction are taking deep root.
- People feel a renewed spirit of community. More people are working together. Efforts are taking place across the community and are targeted to more concerns.
- A feature of this stage is that you can randomly ask people on the street what kind of community they live in, and they provide similar answers. A common story has emerged about the community.

## SUSTAIN AND RENEW

- In Sustain and Renew, the community is ready to take on, in a deeper and more sustained way, the tough, nagging issues that may have been tackled before but were not adequately addressed.
- Such issues might include the public schools, racism and race relations and economic growth in all neighborhoods; change on these concerns typically requires sustained, long-term effort.
- Lessons and insights and new norms that have emerged over time now pervade the community.
- But, the community may be struggling to maintain its momentum. It must find new ways to bring along a new cadre of leaders, civic groups and active citizens, as others tire or move on.
- There is a danger that the community will fall into a new Waiting Place as it comes to rest on its laurels.

## STAGES OF COMMUNITY LIFE :: DO'S AND DON'TS

### THE WAITING PLACE

#### Be Careful Not To

- Inflate expectations by announcing grand plans
- Start visioning exercises that fail or don't have enough community support for action
- Try to engage people by making them feel guilty if they are not involved
- Rely on one-shot projects

#### What To Do

- Create forums for conversation and interaction where people feel they belong and crystallize feelings of frustration
- Connect community actions to realities in people's lives
- Demonstrate small signs of progress
- Keep working, despite feelings of limited progress

#### What To Think About

- Do you really know how committed your partners are?
- What small things could help us move forward?

### IMPASSE

#### Be Careful Not To

- Inflate expectations by announcing grand plans
- Convince yourselves there are strong networks and organizations to support new civic work
- Shut out citizens because they are frustrated
- Try to develop action plans too quickly

#### What To Do

- Let people share their concerns and discover common aspirations for something different
- Identify taboo issues that contribute to impasse
- Find language that helps people imagine an alternative future
- Look for windows to pull people into small efforts

#### What To Think About

- What issues are citizens most immediately concerned about – are those issues being worked on?
- What is being done to bring people back into public life?

### CATALYTIC

#### Be Careful Not To

- Coordinate activities too quickly, stifling innovation and action
- Rush to visioning exercises before the community is ready
- Do too much, too fast

#### What To Do

- Try lots of small things with room for failure, emphasize learning
- Build Boundary-Spanning Organizations that can generate change
- Encourage informal conversations, networks and new engagement norms
- Develop a new cadre of leaders
- Tell authentic stories of progress over time

#### What To Think About

- What is motivating folks to work together?
- Where are the Boundary-Spanning Organizations in the community? Who supports them?
- What are we learning?
- How do we know if our work is grounded in the community's aspirations?

### GROWTH

#### Be Careful Not To

- Miss parts of the community left out of progress
- Let "official leaders" drive the action
- Neglect the need to continually strengthen networks, leaders and organizations that can keep the community moving forward
- Ignore underlying community issues

#### What To Do

- Use community-wide engagement activities to coalesce and spring forward from the Catalytic stage
- Do bigger projects, building on natural progress and collaborations that have come before
- Reinforce positive norms for working together and continue to develop Boundary-Spanning Organizations and new leaders

#### What To Think About

- Who is doing the hard work? Are citizens involved?
- Are new people getting involved in the efforts?
- How are the new efforts connected to the work done before?

### SUSTAIN AND RENEW

#### Be Careful Not To

- Think "success" has been achieved
- Assume others know the story of progress and norms for action that have been built
- Become arrogant and feel you have solved it all
- Start to rest on laurels

#### What To Do

- Develop new leaders across the entire community and new Boundary-Spanning Organizations to create progress
- Continue creating opportunities to bring citizens into processes –especially new residents
- Look for challenges not yet tackled to focus energies, and use lessons learned to expand progress

#### What To Think About

- Who are the new leaders?
- Who is still missing from the community's progress?
- How are we feeling about ourselves: proud, humble or smugly self-confident?
- How are we consciously strengthening our norms of working together?

# THE COMMUNITY RHYTHMS QUESTIONS

**Directions:** On your own, answer the four questions that follow. To answer these questions, make sure you have a particular “community” in mind – which can be a geographic community, a state, a neighborhood or part of town, a network that exists across communities or a community of interest (e.g., one that focuses on a particular issue or agenda).

1. How broad and deep is the leadership - at all levels of the community (including official leaders, quasi-official, people on neighborhood blocks, connectors between organizations), who understand the true concerns of the community as a whole, and who hold strong credibility and trust?
  - A. Not much depth beyond some official leaders and civic leaders (if they even meet the definition above).
  - B. A core group of such leaders starting to emerge.
  - C. Core group expanding; depth within the community starting to form.
  - D. Rich supply of leaders at all levels of and throughout the community.
  
2. How strong and constructive are the community norms for public life - that help guide how people and organizations act individually, interact and work together?
  - A. Stuck in old patterns such as finger pointing; looking for ways to place blame; turf battles; mistrust; divisive, frustrated, or non-existent community conversations.
  - B. While old patterns still exist, can see new ones starting to develop. People starting to work more toward solutions, hold more constructive conversations, take greater personal responsibility. Seeds of trust appearing.
  - C. A common sense of direction and purpose flourishes throughout community; people in the community work well together; things get done; constructive community-wide discussions are the expectation. Trust exists.
  
3. How broad and deep are the "informal networks and links" that connect various individuals, groups, organizations and institutions together to create a cross-fertilization effect of experiences, knowledge and resources in the community; where people carry and spread ideas, messages and community norms from place to place?
  - A. Tattered.
  - B. Forming, but not yet strong, broad, and deep.
  - C. Strong, growing, widespread, functioning really well.
  
4. How strong is the collection of boundary spanning organizations - those that help engage people in public life, spur discussion on community challenges and marshal a community's resources to move ahead? These organizations help lay the foundation for community action - often convening different groups and resources - but once an initiative is up and running, they move on to the next challenge.
  - A. We've got lots of organizations but can't really see more than one or two boundary spanning organizations - and I'm not sure if they're even the real thing.
  - B. We've got one or two true boundary spanning organizations but they're often overworked and/or overwhelmed; they often tend to have a hard time keeping their focus.
  - C. We've got a real handful of true boundary spanning organizations; you can feel their presence and good work. They enjoy strong credibility and trust across the community.



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