

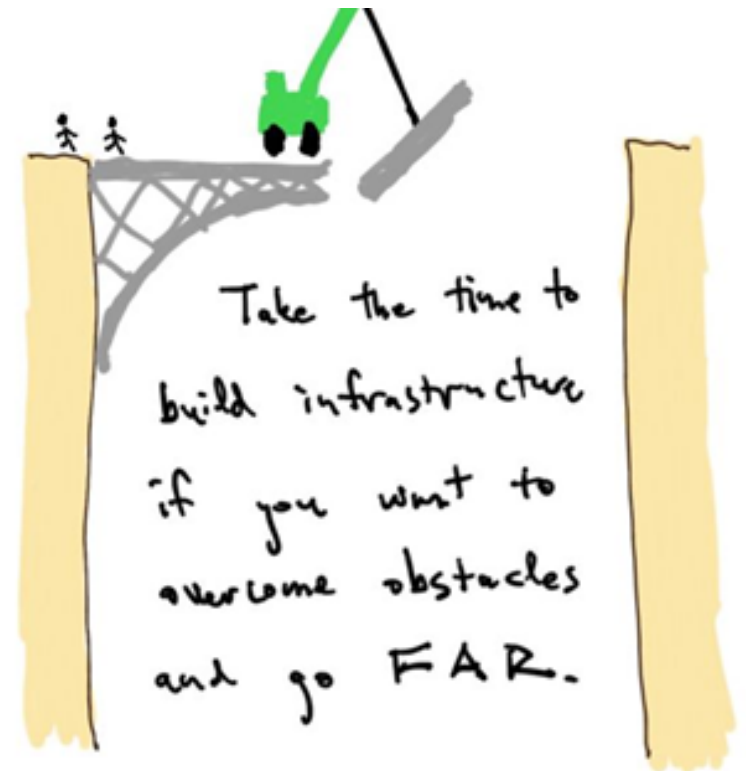
? WHAT

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What

A connected community requires intentional processes and systems so that the 9 other keys work together smoothly and seamlessly. Building Creative Infrastructure relates to the processes and structures that make connected communities possible. When talking about creative infrastructure in a physical community, creative infrastructure and social infrastructure may be used interchangeably. Creative infrastructure includes:

- How communication flows
- How information is stored and shared (who has access to it and how)
- How grassroots initiatives are supported
- Where and how people are able access services when they need them
- Where people gather and celebrate
- How people are engaged in decision making
- The processes that connect people to the land and their physical surroundings
- The processes in place so that local priorities influence government, organizational or institutional policies



EEK 6/22/2016

Why

Organizations have systems in place that both support administrative functions and facilitate their own processes. Organizations, however, are rarely set up to effectively support community-led, community wide and collective strategies. The kinds of social infrastructure that does get created tends to be solely focused on accessing services. [We have much to learn from Indigenous teachings](#), like how community development, economic development and land/ water stewardship are intrinsically interconnected. When thinking about the infrastructure your community needs, learning from Indigenous teachings can help you think about a holistic approach to social infrastructure.

Investing in the right kinds of spaces, communications and administrative systems, ensure that Connected Communities strategies have the foundations to be truly collective, sustainable and do indeed grow stronger over time.

Key Questions

There are so many ways to build social infrastructure: large scale, like a community hub or gathering space and smaller scale like a crowd sourced newsletter or strategically making spaces more accessible. What are the large scale pieces of social infrastructure your community needs and how are the day to day actions of you and your team contributing to the community's social infrastructure?



Actions

Your role as a network weaver, integrator, community backbone organization is in and of itself creative infrastructure. What other types of social infrastructure you support will be very much dependent on your context and the scale/phase of development. Here are a few examples of the various forms social infrastructure can take:

Supporting unincorporated groups:

There is usually very little intentional infrastructure designed to support grassroots efforts. This kind of infrastructure can make the difference between successful community building and interventions that are siloed and separated from what is really happening on the ground. [This framework can help an organization understand its relationship to resident community builders.](#)

One of the ways it is possible to support grassroots efforts is by leveraging your own administrative structure to support and resource grassroots initiatives. The administrative structures made available to grassroots groups, networks or other unincorporated entities have various names, including shared platforms and trusteeship. Shared platforms and trusteeships can be complex. It is important to enter into these kinds of roles with intention and an understanding of the complexities involved. This [learning document](#) and this [handbook](#) can help you get started.

Physical infrastructure for community building:

Community building and stewardship of the land are (or should be) intrinsically. [CCA 10 keys can help bridge silos](#) between environmental action and authentic community building as a way to connect/reconnect people to the land and their physical surroundings.

Where and how people are able access services when they need them Hubs (co-location of social services, arts, food services etc). There are a wide range of hub models. This tool can help you look at hub design from a Connected Communities perspective.

Where people gather and celebrate; Community gardens, sports courts, sacred places, healing places, public squares. This list can help you think about the different kinds of infrastructure that might be in your community or needed by your community.

Governance

In order for people to embrace the role of a network weaver, community backbone organization or community facilitator, it is important that there are meaningful ways for community members to be involved in decision making. [Community speaks](#) and [Brain trusts](#) are two examples of ways, outside of typical board and committee structure, you can offer people meaningful and ongoing ways to shape the organization and what it does in the community.

The intention with which you design your internal policies and procedures to authentically support a cross-sector, multiple scale community building agenda can go a long way in ensuring that community social fabric grows stronger over time. This [10 keys analysis tool](#) can help you to review your operations from with a Connected Communities lens.

Public consultation is just one way in which The processes in place so that local priorities influence government or institutional policies; Community planning boards, neighbourhood associations, tenant associations, issue based advocacy groups etc.

Communication

How communication flows intentional communication systems (newsletters, radio stations, community facebook page, telephone trees, What's App groups). As a facilitator in the community, think of these types of communication, not just as ways to communicate what you are doing, but also as ways to facilitate the flow of information among various people/ organizations in the community. One example might be a [crowdsourced newsletter](#).

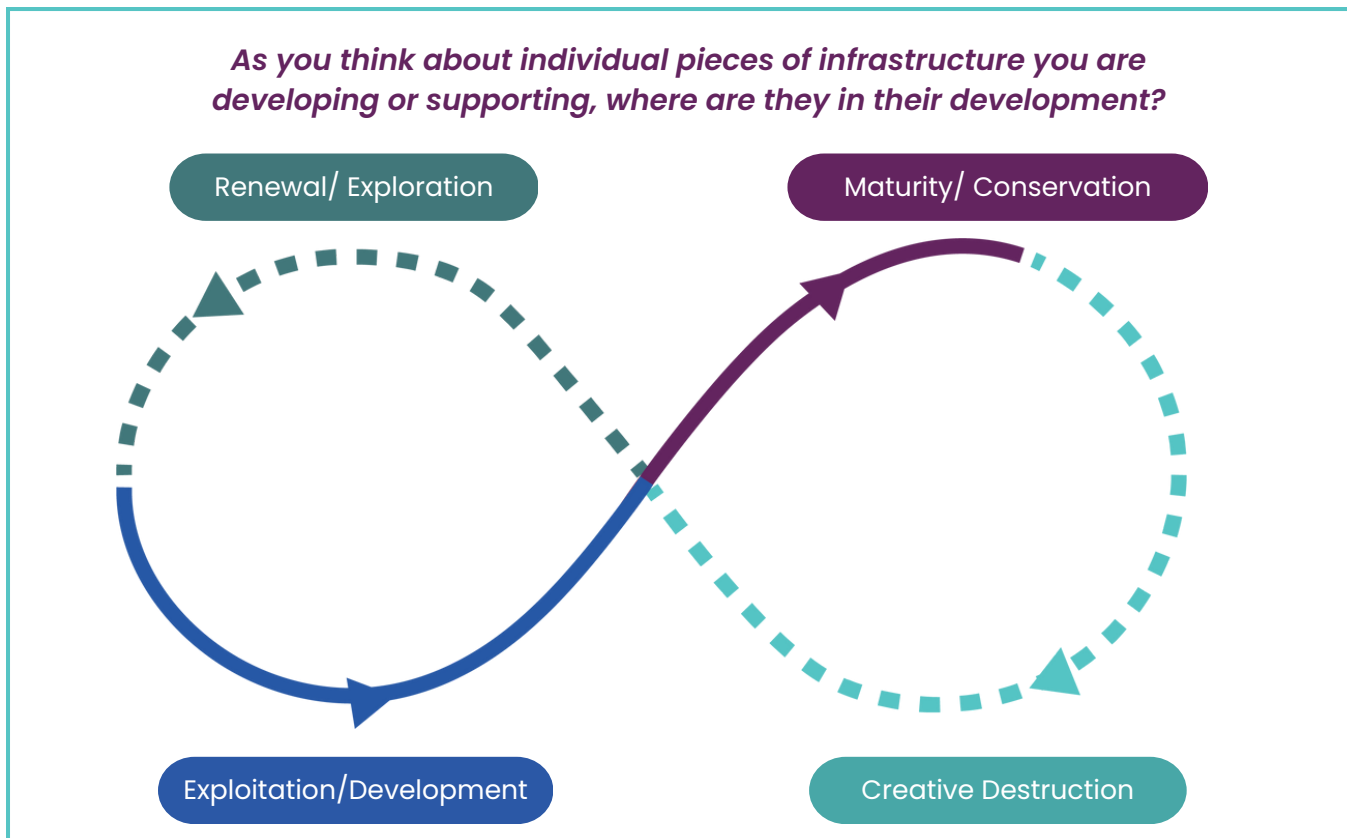
Finding the right community resource at the right time can be challenging for residents. In many communities, a community hub, information centre or library takes responsibility for keeping updated information about the various community services. Online information such as [211](#) can also be a useful resource, as can regularly updated [community resource guides](#). Wherever the information is housed, make sure it is well known and the information is accessible.

Indicators of Success

- ❑ Community building efforts have enough structure so that the work is supported, but is not bogged down by recreating structures that already exist.
- ❑ The development/ leveraging of social infrastructure is a key part of strategy development, knowledge sharing, accountability, shared data collection and evaluation.
- ❑ Grassroots groups, local organizations, institutions and government players all see the value in investing in collaborative systems and shared infrastructure

Reflection Questions

- What social infrastructure exists in your community?
- What kinds of social infrastructure would further enhance community building efforts?
- What are some creative ways in which that social infrastructure might be realized?



We hope you find these tools useful in continuing the momentum to build on local strengths, facilitated collaborative processes and learn together. Catalysts' Circle offers workshops, coaching and strategy design services that can further help you dig deeply into these keys and explore the others that can help you make a truly Connected Community.



Catalysts' Circle can be found at www.connectedcommunities.ca or email agloger@catalystscircle.ca for more information