

CREATING CONNECTED COMMUNITIES FROM THE INSIDE OUT



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What

Healthy, nurturing organizations and groups are fundamental to a connected community. Investing in the wellbeing of the people doing the work will ultimately mean greater impact. The Connected Communities Approach is designed for systems change; navigating systems change is difficult work that requires the building of authentic relationships, trust and mutually beneficial processes. The culture you and your organization/ network create needs to be strategic, equitable, supportive, compassionate, and most of all human. Paying attention to how the people engaged in systems change is critical to success: internal support mechanisms including supervision, policies, and processes will have a profound impact on your capacity to create effective and meaningful strategies in the community.



Why

Cultivating strong and healthy organizations can vary from workplace to workplace and network to network. Many players in community ecosystems play critical roles in the social, economic and environmental health of a community but they are not all supported or have the capacity to prioritize their own wellbeing equally. Grassroots groups and local networks are often under-resourced and are “side of desk” efforts led by those closest to the issues of poverty and marginalization. Others, such as government divisions/departments, institutions or social organizations may be experiencing internal tensions or structural and systemic issues of power hoarding, siloed work, racism and/or poor internal communication. By designing your efforts focusing on Connected Communities from the inside out, you and [your team/ network are in a unique position to model healthy work practices](#) as fundamental to successful community building.



How

Key Question(s)

How can you best create a culture that supports you and your team to balance the various aspects of your life?

Actions

It is beyond the scope of this workbook to provide detailed operational strategies for creating positive organizational culture, here, however, are a few tips to get you started:

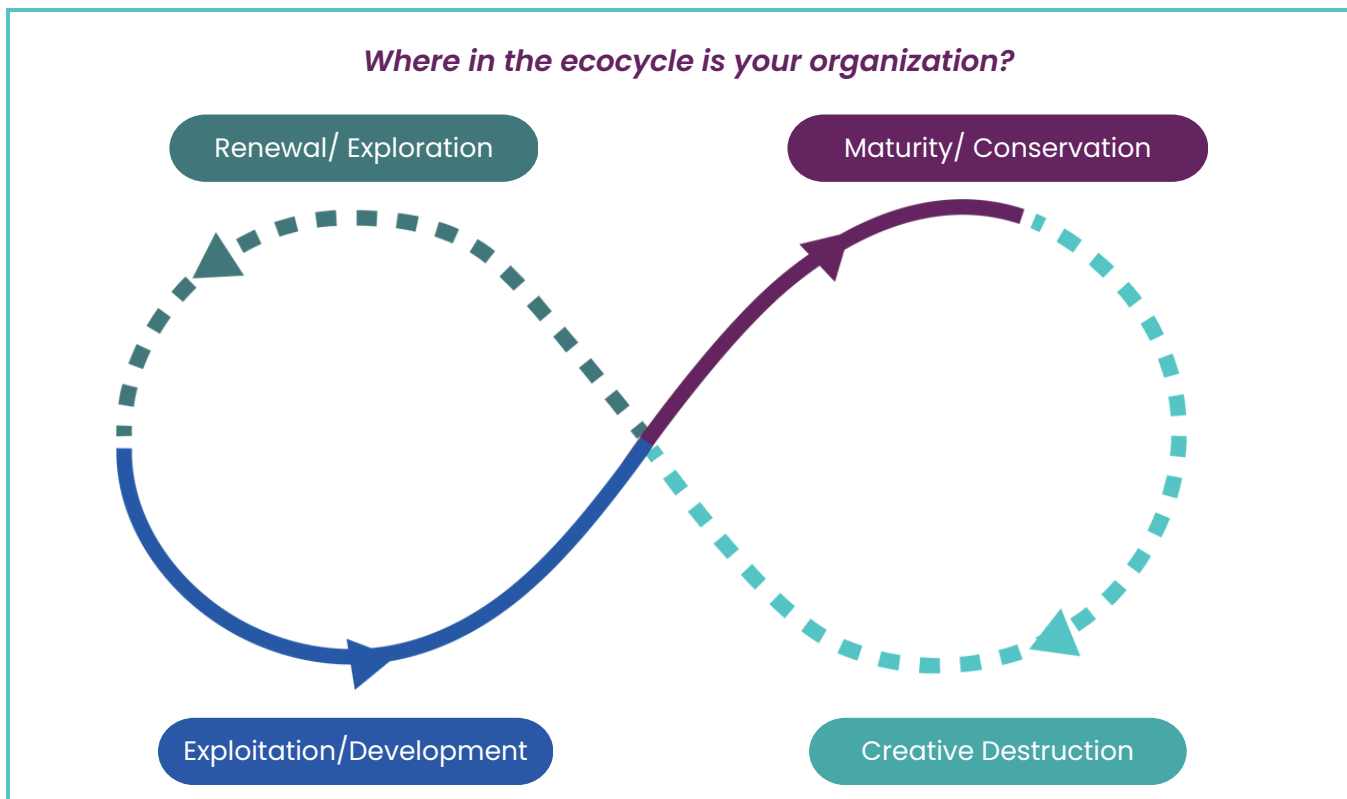
- Use the 10 keys to unlocking the potential of a connected community internally as well as externally using a [10 keys organizational review](#).
- Many of the CCA resources can be used with staff, for example: [dismantling white supremacist culture](#), [active listening](#), and [effective meetings, perspective empathy](#).
- Inspire people around a shared vision...use that [shared vision to understand how you want to treat each other](#)
- Be [intentional about the culture](#) you are trying to create
- Connected Communities from the Inside Out means prioritizing the health and wellbeing of staff. Make sure you are creating the norms and systems to support them: adopt organizational policies and practices which include providing [regular support and encouraging learning](#).
- [Prioritize your own self care](#); you cannot support meaningful community building if the work does not nourish you (even when it's hard)
- Make sure that each new person in your team or network has a positive grounding experience when they start working with you. What would your team say was [your organizational culture](#)?
- Staff relationship with their immediate supervisor is one of the most important indicators of positive organizational culture. Create a culture of asset based supervision and performance review to support staff to do the work of Connected Communities.

Indicators of Success

- ❑ Staff, leadership and network members feel supported in their community building work; they have a strong sense of the purpose and have fun doing this work.
- ❑ The creation of positive culture for the leadership team, steering committee or board; they/you take active steps to create the kind of culture conducive the facilitation of positive community building
- ❑ White supremacist norms are identified and strategies are developed to avoid duplicating these harmful practices
- ❑ Staff, volunteers are actively involved in intentional knowledge sharing, they feel connected to the purpose of their work, and help to foster a healthy work culture.

Reflection Questions

- What are the orthodoxies, philosophies and assumptions which are embedded in your work/the work of ecosystem players that strengthen/weaken organizational cultural practices?
- What do you do when you feel tired, frustrated or stuck? Who do you turn to?
- What practices are in place to support a healthy organizational culture? What is missing?
- What does your organization/team or network do to support its leadership? Are meetings generative and inspiring or causes of tension and stress? Why?



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