

? WHAT

🔍 WHY

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## What

Facilitating collaboration is at the heart of effective community building. Successful collaborations don't often just happen, they require purposeful facilitation to ensure a deep collective understanding, shared purpose and mutually reinforcing processes. Effective collaborations in communities develop through intentionally designed processes that bring people together towards a shared goal.

## Why

The role of a facilitator who intentionally supports collaboration and network weaving in neighbourhoods is an essential community building role that is often missing; it is a function rarely formally recognized or funded. Lack of intentional coordination and facilitation can result in fragmented and siloed projects, programs and initiatives; this fragmentation can frustrate and reduce the effectiveness of local efforts. Yet, it is increasingly recognized that meaningful [community engagement and collaboration matter now more than ever](#). Collaborative processes are at the heart of good network weaving, and good network weaving is at the heart of connected communities.



# How

## Key Question(s)

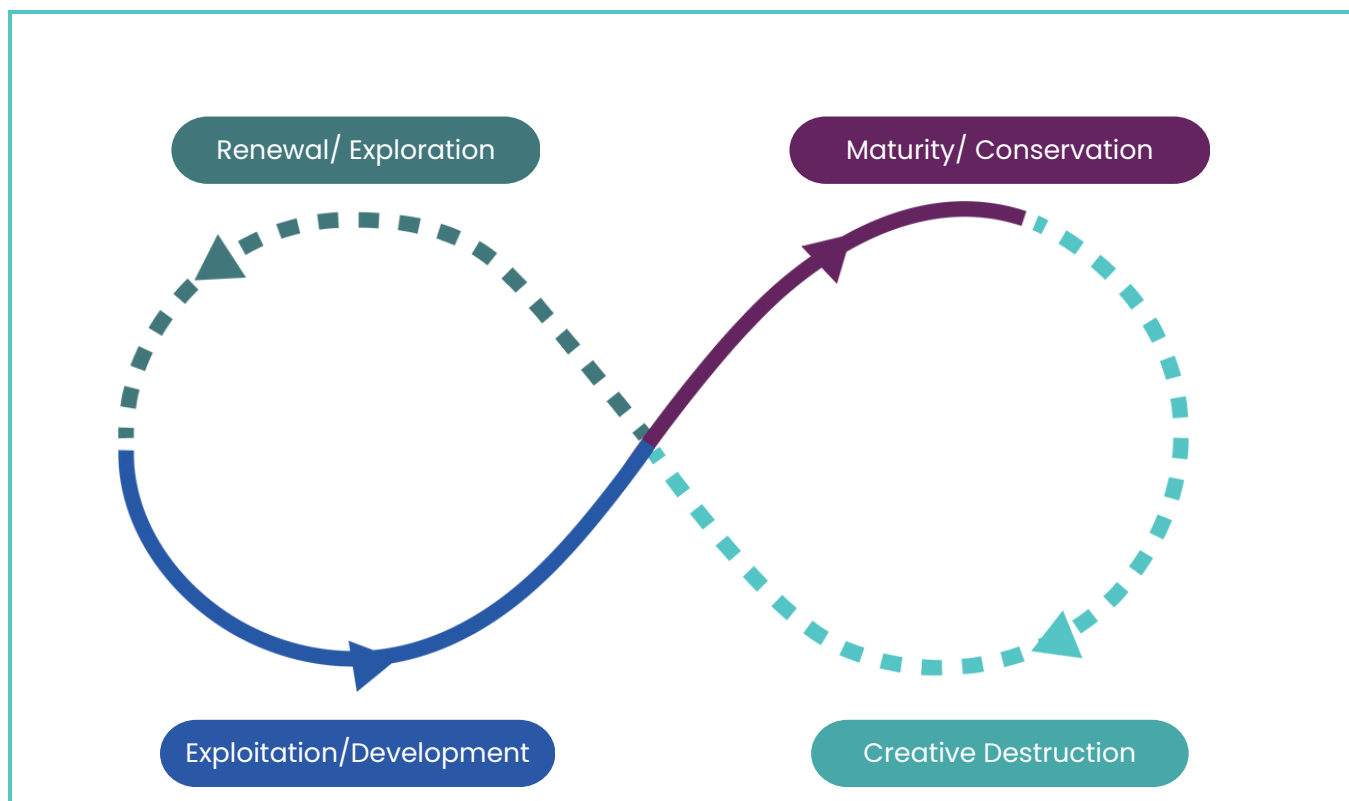
- What are you facilitating and why?
- Are there existing networks/collaborations in the community? What are they? Who is facilitating them? How can you best support their work?
- How might you embed facilitation as a core competency in community processes?

## Actions

- Start with why. Learn how to use your Theory of Change to build shared understanding and ownership among project collaborators and evolving networks. [Mastering Your Theory of Change](#) provides some excellent insights on how to do this.
- Remember that all effective relationships, including professional collaborations are based on trust. Before engaging in any action, ask yourself [key questions that will help you foster that trust](#) among the network of players.
- Make sure that people understand your role. Be clear about your purpose. If you intend to be a supporter, facilitator and strategist to help the network co-create, articulate that. If you have an agenda outside of that of facilitator, be sure to be clear about what you are trying to achieve.
- When you bring people together, be intentional about [designing effective, inclusive and engaging meetings](#).
- [Liberating Structures](#) provides dozens of tools to support facilitators to create conditions where diverse groups of people can share their creativity and insights towards a common question or challenge. Activities such as [1-2-4-All](#) and [Impromptu Networking](#) are the recommended starting places when using Liberating Structures tools to unlock ideas and increase engagement in groups.
- Network mapping helps you identify the relationships between players in the local ecosystem. Knowing who is connected to whom in the community is an important first step to facilitating effective networks and collaborations. This [Post-It Note Mapping Module](#) is a useful starting place. There are also lots of digital network mapping tools available: other Workforce Integrators have found [Kumu](#) to be a great, free online tool.
- Remember there are different ways to work together. Over the course of time, within the network there may be opportunities for more formalized partnerships, the network itself, however, will evolve and change over time. This [document provides several distinct types of structures](#) in which people and organizations work together.
- Understand [Network Basics](#): Systems change is accomplished through network weaving. Understanding how networks form and evolve can be extremely helpful in intentional network weaving processes. This slide deck provides a basic overview of the principles that underpin networks. [Stages of Network Maturity](#): A 1-page tool which illustrates 4 stages of a network's growth.
- Think about the ways in which local players may be involved in the network over time. Networks are dynamic and people's involvement will change over time. [Heavy, Medium, Light: Gauging the Involvement of Your Network Members](#), is a tool to help you better understand the participation levels and what can be expected from network members.

## Indicators of Success

- ❑ Groups connect with a common understanding and shared purpose over the long term, forming their own collective identity and ownership around the collaborative.
- ❑ Local actors can describe their role and the roles of others in the local ecosystem.
- ❑ A shared communication system across all players actively keeps everyone engaged.
- ❑ Local players have connections across sectors and find ways to support one another.
- ❑ Network members are independently introducing ways to strengthen the network and live into the Theory of Change.



## Reflection Questions

- How was the shared purpose of the collaborative co-created? How invested are the players in the network? Is the network at a place where it needs to regroup itself in its context and purpose?
- How has the behaviour of the players in the collaborative changed over time? Are they becoming more invested in collective processes? Is there a positive energy and flow when you meet? Are there tensions or underlying assumptions that could or should be addressed?
- Who has been invited into the network and why? Who is missing? Why are they missing? How are they connected to each other?

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](http://www.connectedcommunities.ca) or email [agloger@catalystscircle.ca](mailto:agloger@catalystscircle.ca) for more information