

? WHAT

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☑️ HOW

What

Learning feedback loops are what strengthen a community over time; intentional learning can help everyone (grassroots groups, institutions, organizations, funders etc.) learn how the community works, the impact of specific interventions, and what people care about so that synergies can be found and decisions can be grounded in learning. In this way, initiatives and ideas build on each other over time.

Why

Embedding learning and knowledge sharing strategies in a community can support a collective approach: ensuring that the right players have access to the right information at the right time, and that learning from the past and present will inform the future. Each person holds a piece of the puzzle, which collectively, can improve the understanding of how context-specific strategies can be most effective. The challenge that exists in most communities is that there are few intentional strategies for mobilizing, sharing and exchanging the knowledge that exists within the ecosystem. Many of the tools and processes that exist are predicated on the “expert” extracting information from a community in order to design interventions. In CCA, we work with tools and approaches that help [foster understanding](#).



How

Key Question(s)

- What role does learning play in your strategy? How do people know about, get involved and share their wisdom in the work that you do? Whose knowledge is centred?

Actions

- The development of community building strategies in the community gives you the opportunity to intentionally develop a culture of learning. This [short article provides some tips on embedding learning](#) as core to your work.
- It is important to capture significant moments as learning opportunities. [This brief 4-minute video](#) offers 3 tips on how to make room for learning in times of crisis.
- People learn through stories. As your relationships, network and processes evolve, make sure that you carve out time to create and share narratives. [This resource guide can help you to craft “sticky” stories](#), the ones that get told over and over and form the foundation of learning over time.
- In fostering a connected community over time, it is important to understand the purpose of evaluation. We often think about evaluation as something we do to prove the worth of a project for funding, or for finding a formula that works so it can be replicated. In the Connected Community Approach, the primary reason we evaluate our work is so that we can learn what works, what doesn't work and gain insights from multiple perspectives. [Developmental evaluation](#) is an evaluation approach that centres learning. This is [a practical guide to using developmental evaluation in your work](#).
- To learn another person's story, listening is foundational. An intentional [listening and learning process](#) can help ground you in the purpose of asking for someone's story.
- A good grounding for developmental evaluation is appreciative inquiry. This [appreciative inquiry](#) tool can be used to help establish relationships, develop understandings of success, and identify the best of the past — to build on the future
- Intentional learning events are great ways to galvanize the network, facilitate in-person relationship building, support network mapping efforts, and create the space where players can learn from each other. The focus of this kind of event is [knowledge exchange](#) rather than knowledge dissemination or one group educating another.
- Remember to make learning meaningful for everyone. In this [article, people who live in marginalized communities speak out about the harm extractive research can do](#). Every time you seek information from the community, make sure that you share information back with people, ask them what they would like to learn from you and, whenever possible, compensate people for their time.

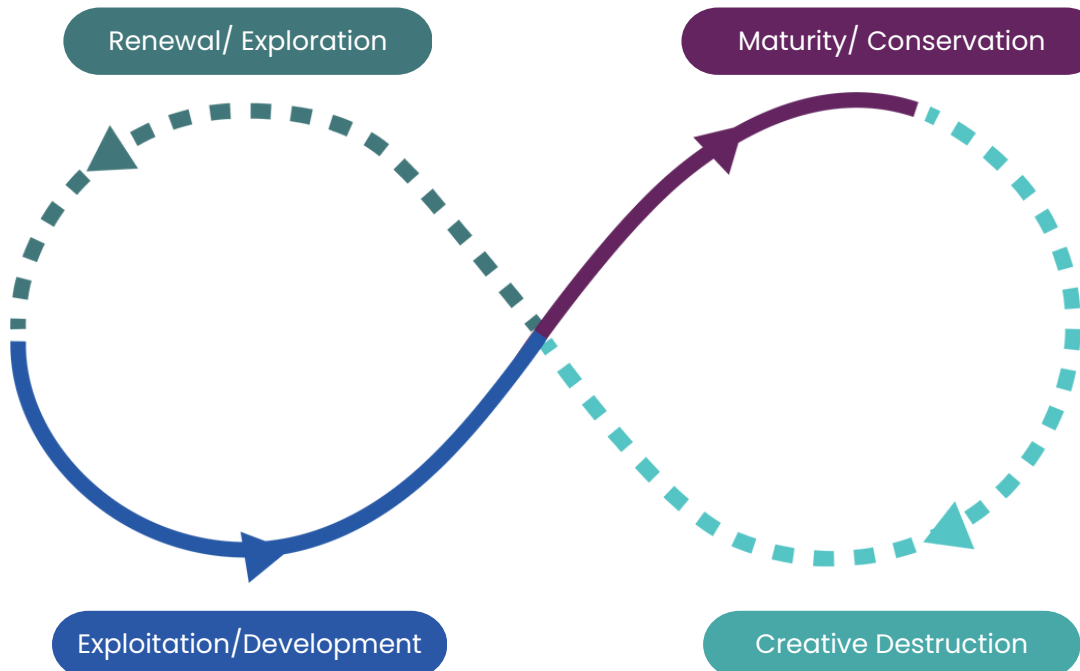
Indicators of Success

- ❑ Each player understands that they hold a very specific perspective and knowledge which contributes to the process of collective solutions
- ❑ Each player recognizes the unique perspective and contribution of other players involved
- ❑ The practice of capturing and sharing learnings becomes a normal part of creating workforce pathways.
- ❑ There are shared narratives about the evolution of community building efforts and how collective processes have emerged is cited by various players at various times.
- ❑ Accessible documents chronicle the learnings in your community over time are used regularly.

Reflection Questions

- Who produces and consumes knowledge in the community?
- What practices and tools of learning together have been effectively received? What knowledge sharing or dissemination has been less successful? Why?
- Have people's perceptions about the community and the people in it shifted? How? What influenced that shift?
- What stories are emerging about community building? Who is telling what stories about the collective work?

Where are you on your journey to embed a learning agenda in your community building work?



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
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