

WHAT IS A BRAINTRUST



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Who

A Braintrust should be made up of people from the various parts of the ecosystem. Every effort should be made to ensure that people who are often marginalized from governance spaces will make up the majority of the braintrust, including and especially people from Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities and/or people living in poverty.

People in the community:

local residents/businesses who benefit from Connected Communities strategies and projects.

Local community builders:

members of grassroots groups or organizations who have contributed to initiatives to improve the local community; local donors who give where they live.

Policy/institutional players:

philanthropists, foundation staff, academic institutions, consultants, governments etc. who may not be located in the community, but who are invested in local initiatives.

There is no limit to the number of members you can have Braintrust.

What

Braintrust activities include:

- Attending 2-3 braintrust gatherings. Braintrust gatherings can be virtual or in person and involve fostering a sense of connection and momentum among diverse players and facilitated discussions on key strategy questions.
- Providing advice to those facilitating or leading initiatives on an ad hoc basis (via email or, upon request by phone or in person)
- Consider participating at a deeper level by serving on committees

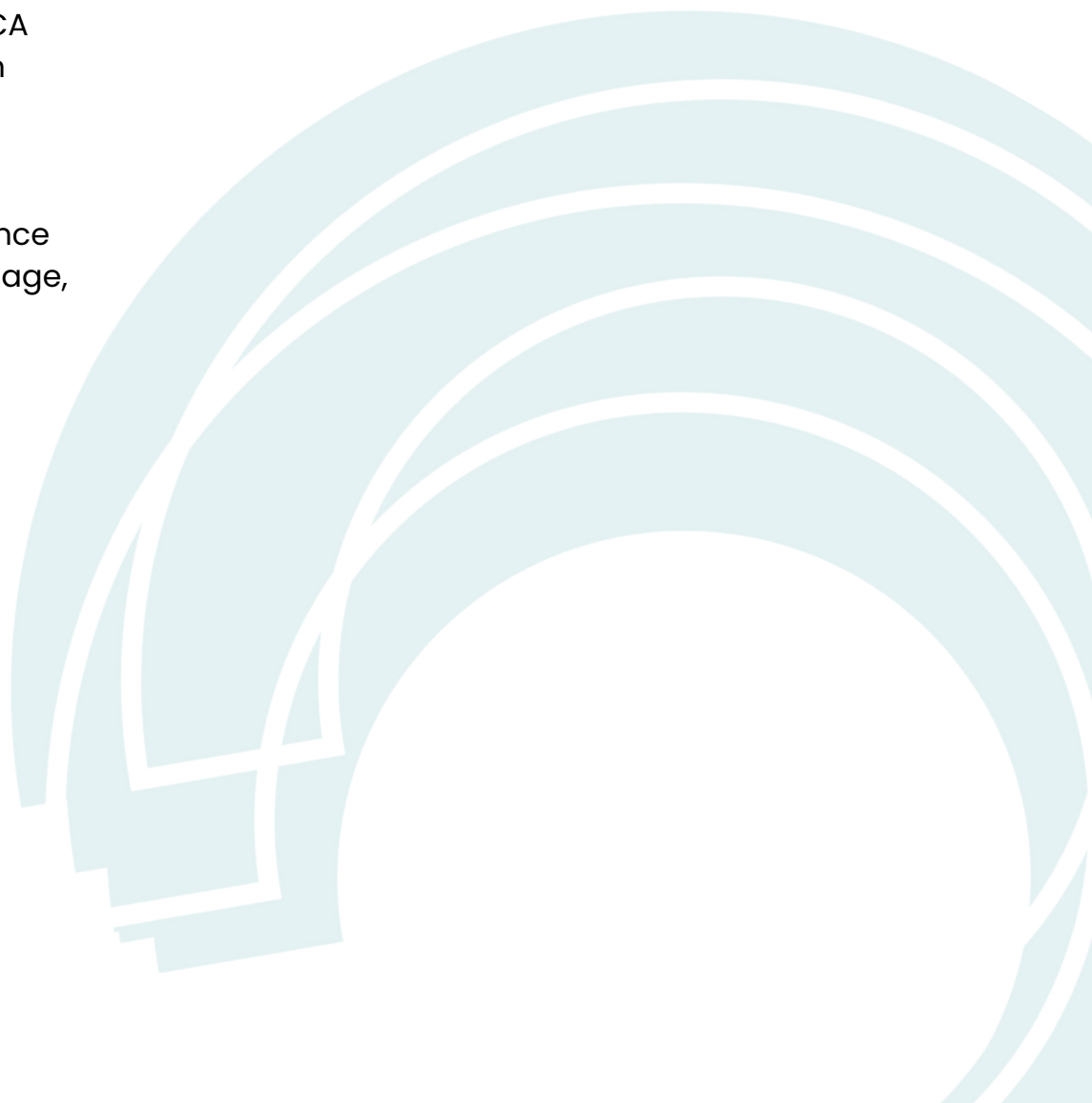
You can use a “light”, “medium” or “heavy involvement” approach to support multiple ways of participating. In providing options for light touch involvement you make participation accessible. (An example of light involvement might be a minimum criteria of response to at least one request for advice and attendance at one gathering per year.)

Why

The Connected Community Approach is predicated on the idea that communities are ecosystems of diverse people, organizations, institutions and businesses and that they all have something to bring to community building efforts.

The organizations and institutions that engage with CCA have legal and fiduciary obligations which, to a certain extent, define the role of the organization's board of directors.

A Braintrust is a way of expanding the idea of governance by bringing a diversity of perspectives (racial, cultural, age, experience, location) to decision making.



How

Braintrust gatherings:

Braintrust gatherings are interactive and designed to:

- strengthen the Braintrust network – help members get to know each other
- increase the Braintrust's knowledge of community building work in the ecosystem
- Can serve as a member's meeting or Annual General Meeting that elects an organization's board
- engage in discussion about key strategy issues

Examples of how a Braintrust can help shape an organization that facilitates Connected Communities:

- Creating or refreshing the Theory of Change of an organization or group facilitating Connected Communities
- Adopting/adapting strategic directions
- Data sense making – insights into data collected on a specific project or issue
- Connecting what is happening in a broader context to the evolution of local community building strategies

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