

FOUR CRITICAL ENABLERS

OF COMMUNITY-CENTERED DESIGN

CHANGE SELF TO CHANGE SYSTEMS

Commit to the self-work necessary to situate oneself in justice work with awareness and reflection around the power, privilege, positionality, and identity one holds.

How might we consider our individual and organizational roles in enabling or preventing a just world?

STRUCTURE FOR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Prioritize ways of working that shift power and ownership to impacted communities. Include, engage, and center a diverse range of community members, stakeholders, and partners to create equitable approaches that practice the redistribution of power necessary to achieve collective change.

How might we prioritize community leadership as a vital component of our work?

CENTER RELATIONSHIPS FOR MUTUAL TRUST

Sustainable and effective change work relies on mutual trust that takes time to develop. Honor lived experience as a form of expertise by centering relational approaches that are trauma-informed, healing centered, and rooted in respect, agency, and accountability.

How might we center relationships as a key feature of our sustained change efforts?

MOVE BEYOND OUTPUTS TO OUTCOMES

Ensure there is clear alignment between community input, activities, outcomes, and impact so that processes advance community-led priorities. Build sustainable outcomes such as increased community power, resources, access, funding, policies, or practices that benefit communities directly.

How might we focus on outcomes that tangibly or immediately benefit the community?



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE SELF?

IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS WORK



Consider:

Who are you and how do you show up?

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WHY IDENTITY MATTERS

- Although we construct our identities to some extent, society does, too.
- Our identities affect the way we interact with the world and the way the world interacts with us.
- Having awareness of our identities and how they show up in our interactions with others is particularly important when we hold privilege and power.



WHY DO WE START WITH OURSELVES?

“[We] are all actors in the systems [we] are trying to change, and that change must begin from within. The process starts with **examining biases, assumptions, and blind spots**; reckoning with **privilege** and **our role in perpetuating inequities**; and creating **the inner capacity to let go of being in control.**”

– *“The Relational Work of Systems Change”*
by Katherine Milligan, Juanita Zerda & John Kania

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How will you use your privilege to advance issues important to your community partner?
- What are your motivations for partnering?
- How does your identity show up in this work?
- Are you prepared to change your mind or change course?
- How are you embracing mistakes as important learning opportunities?
- How does your identity affect your orientation to the challenge?
- Where might we encounter trauma? How are we prepared to center healing and compassion in addressing it?

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUR TEAM?

IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS WORK



Consider:

The importance of relationship-building with your team.

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How will we create space to build trust and connection?
- How might you create opportunities for community members to share their strengths, passions, and assets?
- How will you work together (community agreements)? What are your common interests and shared goals?
- How might you engage community in setting the agenda? What does community actually need and want?
- How might you honor what community has already shared? How can your activities help you understand root causes?
- How can you show up with consistency & accountability?

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUR COMMUNITY?

IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS WORK



Consider:

- Identity awareness and relationship building with community lays the foundation for redistributing power to communities
- The importance of building accountability measures and developing ways to hold yourself and your organization accountable to the community

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How might we ensure that the community drive problem framing and co-creates the plan? (community core team, peer researchers, co-creation, etc.)
- How does our process share decision-making power?
- How can we elevate community voice and create community ownership?
- How might we value lived experience as a form of expertise through this process?
- How are we compensating the community for their time and expertise?

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What knowledge, data & financial resources can we leverage for community gain?
- How will we share our learnings?
How will we act on what we learn?
- What support and capacity building is both viable and desirable?
- Who defines progress and how will we measure it?
- What are the community's desired outcomes?
- How will we share our learnings?
How will we act on what we learn?
- What might community-powered sustainability look like?