TOOL | CRITICAL SHIFTS

The Critical Shifts Tool is invaluable in developing a common agenda to guide the work of collaborative partners. Using this tool facilitates a process for identifying, and reaching consensus, around the specific problem or priority spaces that a collaborative effort intends to focus designing solutions for.

CURRENT STATE	FUTURE STATE
Many youth don't have networks of support to help them navigate hard times	Youth can easily connect with elders and community members for mentorship and support
Youth in the community are not involved in decision that impact the community's future.	Youth are actively involved in community decision-making on a continuous basis
Youth do not have enough mental health supports available in the community.	There are accessible and culturally safe mental health supports for youth in the community that address their needs.

Source: Co-Creative Consulting

USING THIS TOOL WILL HELP YOU:
- Identify specific problem/priority spaces to focus on designing solutions for
- Build consensus to clarify our shared intent and focus
- Confirm and prioritize **specific** and **actionable** changes to achieve together
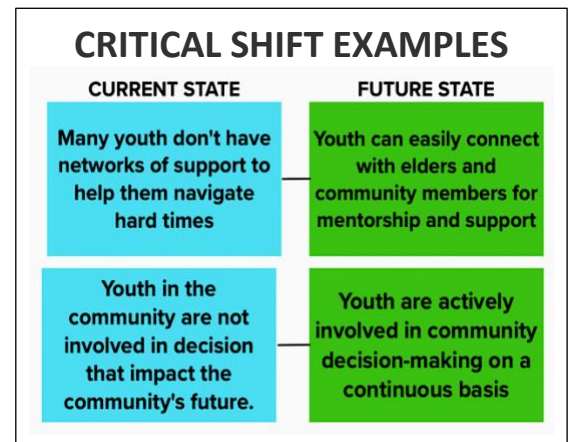
OVERVIEW

The task of reaching consensus on a common agenda to guide their collaborative effort is one of the most important – yet challenging – tasks of strategic partners who are developing a Collective Impact Initiative. This tool offers a simple, yet effective, method for accelerating this work.

Critical shifts are specific "problem or priority spaces" that stakeholders agree to focus on designing solutions for through their Collective Impact initiative. The task of defining and prioritizing critical shifts helps partners to identify how best to bridge the current reality to their shared aspiration. It also helps narrow and focus the scope of their collaborative work on very tangible priorities when developing a shared Action Plan for their common agenda.

Each Critical Shift has two parts – a succinct description of a specific part of the system that is NOT currently working – and a description of the ideal future state of that part of the system. When drafting critical shifts, it is important to remember to use neutral language to avoid blame or judgement. It is also important to avoid including any potential solutions in your description. This helps to ensure that the group's focus remains on reaching consensus about **WHAT** the group intends to do together without getting caught up in discussing **HOW** it will be achieved.

TOOL HOW-TO

1. **Brainstorm** – Invite participants to take several minutes to individually generate possible critical shifts related to their issue.

2. **Share, Clarify and Synthesize Critical Shifts** – Invite participants to share their critical shifts. As they are posted, allow folks to ask clarifying questions. Be sure to edit any Critical Shifts to remove any suggestions of blame or any advice about implementation. Cluster like Critical Shifts together and title the cluster.

CRITICAL SHIFT EXAMPLES

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3. **Prioritize** – Invite participants to review all Critical Shifts and use the following agreed-upon criteria to prioritize the ones that should be explored and implemented first. Possible criteria may include:

   - What critical shift will advance our common agenda most powerfully?

   - What critical shift, if we achieved it first, would enable other shifts to happen more easily or more powerfully?

   - What critical shift would NOT happen without a collaborative effort like ours to move it forward?

   - What critical shift would generate broad energy, enthusiasm and leadership with stakeholders and the community?

4. **Gather Feedback & Refine** – Once the group has prioritized their Critical Shifts, they may want to engage other key stakeholders – both within and in addition to their own organizations or groups – to gather further input and feedback on their proposed priorities. This provides an excellent opportunity to broaden engagement and identify other interested people who can help advance and/or join the group's collective work.

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To learn more about Critical Shifts:
- Check out Co-Creative Consulting's **12 Tools to Foster Alignment** (Critical Shifts is #4)
- Visit the Co-Creative Consulting website

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