TOOL | SPECTRUM OF COMMUNITY-LED APPROACHES TO CHANGE

TIME REQUIRED: 1 HOUR

There has been a marked increase in the demand for Community-Led approaches to change as community organizations and some governments want to work more closely with the community. As we embrace these approaches we need to be intentional about what Community-Led means so that communities are not inadvertently acted-upon, and instead are empowered through leadership. Use this tool to understand various Community-Led approaches, help determine what level of community leadership is most appropriate, and what kind of engagement approaches are needed.

USING THIS TOOL WILL HELP YOU:
- Understand various community-led approaches to change
- Discuss and determine what level is mot appropriate depending on the outcomes you and the community seek
- Plan for how to engage and invite community leadership

OVERVIEW

Community-Led approaches are those that are led not by an organization or other outsiders but by a collective, community process. It has become an essential way of working to combat power imbalances that exist between traditional 'authorities' and the communities who are facing inequities.

This tool is designed for leadership teams to distinguish between Community-Led approaches and to develop a more discerning understanding of various engagement strategies and their effectiveness in cultivating community leadership. These discussions are most effective when community representatives are involved to develop a shared intention, understanding of roles, and commitments.

THE TOOL

The Spectrum of Community-Led Approaches compares the benefits, risks, and engagement practices associated with each approach. Use this tool together with a leadership group to determine what approach is most appropriate for an upcoming project or initiative.

Step 1: Individually, reflect on what level on the spectrum seems most appropriate for the work ahead of you. See the full Spectrum of Community-Led Approaches table on the following pages for a more in-depth reflection. Ask each person to place a coloured dot or use a marker to indicate their desired level.

Community Owned	Community Driven	Community Shaped	Community Informed
Local visions for change are defined and implemented by the community, who are in control of all resources, parameters and decisions.	Local visions for change are created in partnership with community members and organizations, who share resources and collaborate to set parameters and make decisions.	Local visions for change are defined by the community within a set of parameters that are provided by an organization to achieve shared goals.	Visions for change are adapted to suit the local context through community consultation.

← COMMUNITY-LED   ORGANIZATION-LED →

A few definitions: For the purposes of this tool, 'community' refers to the residents of a geographically defined area. 'Community members' refers to both individuals and community-based organizations led by individuals from the community. 'Organizations' refers to any institution or organization that holds a formal role in delivering programs or services in benefit of the community. This includes municipalities, schools, healthcare, not-for-profit organizations, funders, and provincial and federal government.

Step 2: Discuss similarities and differences about the placement of dots. Dialogue questions could include:

- What are the benefits and risks of this approach within our community?
- What is our history in working with this community? Is there a difference between the way we want to work with this community moving forward compared to how our organization has traditionally worked?
- How comfortable is our organization with giving up control and empowering others?
- In what situations can the community do for themselves and when have they asked for our support?
- Has our organization developed trusting relationships with the community? Is there any pre-work we need to do to build trust?
- What ways of working and methods of engagement are most appealing?

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EXAMPLE:

Together with a US-based private foundation, we used the Spectrum of Community-Led Approaches to validate the desired way of working. The Foundation was seeking to re-imagine their philanthropic work so that it is guided by, responsive to, and connected with the community in order to increase impact. The Foundation has defined its organizational mission and the geographic population it wishes to serve, and has then said—we are ok with any solution the community decides as long as it aligns with our mission.

Having this discussion and using this tool validated a Community-Shaped Approach. A co-design process was then used to work with a representative group of community members to make recommendations for the purpose, structure, and implementation of the Foundation's work in the community.

PRINCIPLES FOR USING THIS TOOL

- **Ensure a diverse and representative group is involved in this discussion** – In order to not perpetuate any existing power differentials and to understand the community perspectives on how change should occur.
- **Ensure readiness for an open and honest dialogue** – Discussing power can be tense. Consider setting group commitments or expectations to ensure healthy dialogue.
- **Adapt the process to suit your needs** – For example, consider having multiple smaller dialogues with diverse community members and partners, and then aggregate the findings for a deeper discussion.

How comfortable is our organization with giving up control and empowering others?

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- Read the paper – <u>Understanding Community-Led Approaches to Change</u> for a deeper look into each of these levels and insights to deepen your community-led practices.
- Read <u>Turf, Trust, Co-Creation & Collective Impact</u> – Authentic community change moves at the speed of trust. This paper explores the intricacies of trust, how to build it and what to do when trust is broken.

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Benefits	• Completely community-owned, unique solution • Solutions have high efficacy • Leverages community assets	• Likely to be sustainable due to local leadership and adequate resourcing • Adaptable to changing local context • Builds community capacity • Often focused on systemic change	• Leverages local context and expertise • Can be used when more rapid solution generation is needed • Clear and defined goals and process	• Leverages organizational resources and capacity • Fosters organizational leadership & commitment
Risks	• Highly dependent on the energy and skills of community champions • Can be restricted by lack of resources	• Requires community champions with a vision and longer-term commitment • Often requires movement-building activities and wider community participation • Relies on social capital and developing trusting relationships between partners • Can be difficult to navigate diverse opinions among community members to reach consensus	• Needs to be paired with other approaches to ensure sustainability and ongoing community involvement • Community is dependent on organizations	• Often engages input from only motivated community members • Community is reliant on the organization and long-term support is not guaranteed • Uniqueness of solution and likelihood for success depends on efficacy of consultation • Decision-making criteria and how community perspectives will shape the solution often unclear. This can result in community dissonance or anger if solutions do not reflect community desires.
Conditions	• Community identifies issues and how to address them	• Guided by a shared community vision & aspiration • Collective, community focus • Work shaped by guiding principles • Multiple sectors work together • Long-term commitment • Community defines the issue, the action, implementation & evaluation. • People with lived experience are key actors • Community leaders are part of governance structure	• Scope is clearly defined • Often has a program or service focus • Medium to long-term commitment • Engages local leaders for the duration of the initiative • Involves people with lived experience to share their perspectives and co-develop solutions	• Scope is clearly defined • Likely has a program or service focus • The process is organization-driven • Short to medium-term commitment • Should not be used for complex problems • Invites input from community members, ideally those with lived experience

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Power	• Community holds the power	• Community holds power • Organizations engage with humility	• Organizations hold power • The community is given control	• Organizations hold power • Community members provide input
Roles	• Community members assume leadership	• Community drives the project and is the decision maker • Community-wide participation • Organizations can act as catalyst, facilitator, co-learner, funder	• Organization defines and leads process • Diverse & representative community members participate in a defined process • Shared decision-making is preferred, but the organization is the ultimate decision-maker	• Community members are invited to respond to questions asked by the organization • Organization defines and leads process, and has decision-making power
Ways of working	• Grassroots community organizing • Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)	• Community-Led Development • Collective Impact • ABCD (with organizational leadership)	• Co-Design • Advisory Groups • Representative Deliberative Processes • Community Mobilization	• Community consultation
Methods of engagement	• Relationship building • Working groups/ action teams • Recruiting • Training	• Community members hired to lead initiatives • Leadership comprised of community members • Relationship building • Learning about the local context through data and asset mapping • **Capacity building** – training, coaching, mentoring • Participatory engagement, action planning, and evaluation • Inclusive, dialogue-oriented approaches • Working groups/action teams • Training	• Representative community members recruited • Learning together ensures all participants are well informed • **Sharing perspectives** – small group discussions, presentations + discussion, storytelling • **Aligning on a shared vision or goal** – workshopping, visioning • **Building ideas** – ideation, discussion, ranking, voting • **Deciding on solutions** – workshopping, deliberation, scenario testing, ranking, • Action planning • Training	• Focus groups, kitchen table talks, online forums • Interviews • Surveys, polls, voting, comment boxes • **Mass communications** – emails, newsletters, social media

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