



# CALIBRATING COMMUNITY CONDITIONS: “FOR A BETTER COMMUNITY”

## Instructions

1. Take a few minutes to read the material below.
2. Using the descriptions from Stages of Community Life (page 5.5 in the Public Innovators Lab Workbook), determine which stage this community is at.

**For a Better Community**, your organization, has been hosting Community Conversations for the past 3 months. People from across diverse parts of the community have participated. The team leading this work has created a summary Community Narrative of what you have heard in the voice of the community.

### Community Narrative

We want our community to be a place where we “make room for people” and are open and inventive about how to engage diverse voices and ideas. We want a safe community, which means different things depending on where you live in the community. We want to make sure that there are more and equal opportunities for people to have good jobs and a quality education. A few things are getting in the way. We “do too much to people versus with people.” People are afraid to speak out, to fail, and there is a lack of trust in each other and our ability to move beyond “turf.” There aren’t enough people and leaders who are able to work together to make things happen. People talk about being divided and disconnected. People on the east side of the community want to find a way forward but don’t seem to know how to connect. There appear to be few organizations able to move the community forward and few leaders are seen with credibility on both sides of the community. What needs to change to reach our aspirations? We need a new mindset, a willingness to act together and take ownership and commit to doing this together. If we do this, we will give people hope.

# MOVING FROM ASPIRATIONS TO ACTION

## Step 1: Take Effective Civic Action—Working Document

Fill out the chart as completely as possible. Do not get bogged down on questions you cannot answer.

Strategy Element	Public Knowledge for Community of Focus	Implications for our organization
<b>Name of Community:</b> _____		
<b>Shared Aspirations</b>	<p>What are the shared aspirations for our community? (List from the Community Narrative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>How does our current work help address people's shared aspirations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Main Concerns &amp; Specific Issues (Sweet Spot)</b>	<p>What are the main concerns &amp; specific issues? List concerns &amp; related issues from the Community Narrative. For communities in Waiting Place or Impasse, this may be sketchy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p>Is there one main concern and/or specific issue that has surfaced above others? (Note: If the community is at Waiting Place or Impasse, you can work on almost any issue and achieve good results.)</p>	<p>What do the main concerns and specific issues identified by the community tell us about where to focus our work?</p> <p>How does our current work fit with what's going on in the community?</p> <p>Does the public knowledge match with our assessment of the issues based on local data and expert knowledge?</p> <p>Do we need to adapt or adjust our current strategies, action plans or programs based on the public knowledge gained?</p>

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Strategy Element	Public Knowledge for Community of Focus	Implications for our organization
<b>Name of Community:</b> _____		
<b>Stage of Community Life</b>	What stage of community life is our community in? (Determine from the Community Narrative and Community Rhythms tool.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• generally</li> <li>• on main concern and/or specific issue &lt;&lt;name&gt;&gt;</li> <li>• on main concern and/or specific issue &lt;&lt;name&gt;&gt;</li> </ul>	What are realistic expectations for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The speed of change?</li> <li>• The scale of change?</li> <li>• How many pockets of change should we work on at one time?</li> <li>• The degree of coordination we should attempt?</li> </ul> What types of action we should focus on? (Note use chart on page 5 as a guide.)
<b>Public Capital Factors (Sweet Spot)</b>	What are the 2 or 3 most important Public Capital Factors to work on? (From the Community Narrative and Community Rhythms tool.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	How does our current work support these Public Capital factors?

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Strategy Element	Public Knowledge for Community of Focus	Implications for our organization
<b>Name of Community:</b> _____		
<b>Boundary Spanning Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Given the work that needs to be done, what boundary spanning function(s) do we think is/are needed at this point? E.g. convener; funder; researcher; storyteller; catalyst, etc.</li> <li>Consider Public Knowledge and information you have gathered using the Community Rhythms tool, and which Public Capital factors you have chosen.</li> </ul>	<p>Can our organization take on any of these functions? At this time?</p> <p>Does taking on this/these function(s) make sense given the work of other organizations, partners and institutions in the community?</p> <p>Given the impact we are trying to create in and with the community, we also need partners who can take on the following boundary spanning functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: The answers to the above questions can be summarized as "the space you want to occupy in relation to the community."</i></p>

If you left a cell blank due to insufficient information or Public Knowledge, ask yourself:

- Do we know enough to get started?
- If not, who do we need to talk with to gain this knowledge? What do we need to know or learn?

## Community Rhythms Implications for Change Chart

Stage	Speed	Size	Consensus	Coordination (See Collective impact note)	Pockets of Change	Actions for Changed Conditions
<b>The Waiting Place</b>	Slowly	Small	No, people can't name the problem	No	Create	Help people name the aspirations, concerns, issues and changed conditions. Demonstrate small signs of progress.
<b>Impasse</b>	Slowly	Small	No, people may be angry, but don't agree what's an issue	No, these will fail	Create	Discover shared aspirations. Identify taboo issues. Help people imagine alternate future. Create organized spaces for people to convene.
<b>Catalytic</b>	Quicker, particularly in pockets	Small	Yes, but it's not wide-spread	No, but you can form informal networks	Create and Loosely Connect	Try lots of small things in pockets. Encourage informal networks and new leaders. Help share the emerging narrative. Model desired community norms.
<b>Growth</b>	Quickly	Broad	Yes	Yes, particularly to address systemic issues	Connect and Coordinate	Work community wide. Coordinate and accelerate collective action. Highlight new narrative. Bring in new leaders.
<b>Sustain and Renew</b> (5th stage) — is rare and not included in this tool.						



## Step 2: Selecting Pockets of Change

Listening to gain Public Knowledge and then sharing it broadly is an essential first step to community change. While listening and sharing are actions in and of themselves, they will need to be coupled with other actions that give people a sense of momentum and possibility. In the Harwood practice we call these “pockets of change.”

### **What is a pocket of change?**

A targeted action that:

1. Moves a community towards its shared aspirations; and
2. Creates momentum and energy that encourages and inspires others to engage.

Public Capital Example:      Creating informal networks; convening people who would not otherwise get together; offering space for groups to gather.

Concern/Issue-Specific:      Education in the Waiting Place stage; creating small, time-bound opportunities for people to demonstrate their willingness to work together, such as painting a school

Example:      Education/Literacy in the Impasse stage; raising awareness about the importance of adult mentors in school success and recruiting volunteers for a reading buddy program

Blended Example:      Convening individuals and organizations interested in providing community support to schools

Reminder:      To achieve the Sweet Spot, you need to be working on concerns/ issues and Public Capital AT THE SAME TIME.

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***How do you start thinking about pockets of change?***

No one starts with a blank slate! Every organization and every community has pre-existing work underway. The key is to use the Take Effective Civic Action tool to calibrate:

1. How you can adapt or adjust your current work to better fit the community aspirations and conditions.
2. Whether some of the work you do is not substantively contributing to community aspirations and conditions. (This signals the need to make an intentional choice about continuing with that work. It may warrant continuation or be a candidate for work you stop doing.)
3. What new work you want to take on, by yourself or with partners.

***Questions to help you select pockets of change***

<b>Public Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does Public Knowledge tell us is a good place to start?</li> <li>• Is there a concern and/or issue yet?</li> <li>• In two sentences or less, what are we trying to accomplish? What is the essence?</li> </ul>
<b>Other External Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given the above, what is already underway in the community that can be enhanced or built upon?</li> <li>• Where is there energy and will to work together?</li> <li>• What can we win at collectively (creating proof points, building confidence and momentum)?</li> <li>• What does Expert Knowledge suggest we consider if a concern and/or issue has surfaced?</li> </ul>
<b>Internal Considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are our aspirations for our organization in relation to the community's shared aspirations? What space do we want to occupy?</li> <li>• What knowledge and skills do we have to contribute? Are these issue-specific?</li> <li>• Is there a main concern or specific issue that resonates for us more than others? (Again, a place to start)</li> <li>• What's realistic? What is a good blend of adapting, stopping and adding work that makes sense for us right now?</li> </ul>

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Taking these factors into consideration, we think the following pockets of change are a good place to start: (List)

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## Step 3: Creating a Decision Summary for Our Organization

Our organization is working towards these shared aspirations in the community:

\_\_\_\_\_.

The essence of our strategy is \_\_\_\_\_ (from Step 2 above).

*Initially*, we are going to focus on this main concern \_\_\_\_\_, this specific issue \_\_\_\_\_ (if relevant), and these community conditions \_\_\_\_\_ (Public Capital factors).

The space we want to occupy in the community is \_\_\_\_\_ (describe in relation to the answers above).

We think we need these partners: \_\_\_\_\_ (by name and/or boundary-spanning function).

The initial pockets of action we want to focus on are \_\_\_\_\_ (list), because they will \_\_\_\_\_ (simple statement about why these are important).

To do this, internally we will need to pay attention to \_\_\_\_\_ (internal considerations from Step 2).

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## Step 4: Creating an Action Plan

- (a) Create a simple, bulleted list to implement Step 3 and the person who will take the lead on fleshing out a plan.
- (b) Work in 90-day blocks of time.
- (c) Order list in sequence, as appropriate.

*Example:*

*Schedule calls/meetings with the top three potential partners to share Public Knowledge and explore interest in working with us. Lead: Jane. Completion by: Feb. 1.*

Action Plan for _____ (90-day period)		
Action	Lead	Completion by