



**CREATING THE FUTURE**  
Change the Questions. Change the World!

## **What Is Creating the Future Working On? Status Overview: October 10, 2018**

**Creating the Future** is a collection of people around the world, supporting each other in their efforts to create a more humane world.

### **Our Mission:**

Experiment with systems change from the inside out, to ensure that the systems we all encounter are bringing out the best in people in any situation.

### **The experiment:**

We all encounter systems every day – the habits, rituals, customs and rules that make up “just the way we do things.” Those systems are actually answers to questions (e.g. What should we do about X?). The experiment at the heart of Creating the Future’s work is to see how much more humane the world could be if the questions at the heart of those systems were aimed at bringing out the best in people. This ten year experiment began January 1, 2017.

### **Our Programs:**

To accomplish our mission, our work takes two interrelated approaches:

- 1) Experiment with organizational systems change** ourselves, to learn and demonstrate what is possible. This includes demonstration projects with others as well as experimenting with our own organizational systems. We focus on organizations because people spend most of their time at work, with those “ways we do things” spilling over into their personal lives.
- 2) Share what we learn**, creating conditions for others to learn and experiment in their own lives. We do that in several ways:
  - **Structured education programs.** Providing people with knowledge, skills and practice to create their own systems change.
  - **Sharing Stories** of what works to bring out the best in people within systems. Learnings are shared via our blog, via social media, via videos, our eJournal, and any other means of anecdotally sharing what we are learning.
  - **Connecting, Convening and Building Community** Creating and holding space for people to support each other in practicing new ways of being. An “open participation” mandate for all strategy meetings to be open to anyone who wishes to watch and/or participate. And modeling what it takes to create & maintain such spaces.

As we scale from a founder-driven start-up in proof-of-concept mode (Phase 1), to a community-driven global experiment applying the concepts that have proven successful in our formative years (Phase 2), we hope this overview inspires you to experiment alongside us!



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Change the Questions, Change the World!

## **Experimenting: Research and Development**

2018 has been a busy year for experimentation at Creating the Future.

- Demonstration project with the Nevada Department of Education
- Experimenting with organizational structure via Creating the Future's own restructuring
- Experimenting with new formats for delivering education programs (and pricing them)
- Experimenting with funding via partnership
- Founder succession

### **Nevada Department of Education**

Creating the Future is in the middle of a demonstration project that began at the end of 2017, working with the Department's Office for a Safe and Respectful Learning Environment, under the leadership of Creating the Future fellow, Christy McGill. As part of the goal set by Governor Sandoval that Nevada will be the fastest improving state in the nation, one of the strategic goals set by the Superintendent of Education has been to address the culture and climate within the department.

Our work has included helping to structure the entire initiative; training their team (13 people from the departments and its partners are currently taking our 101 Intro to Catalytic Thinking immersion course, and 7 people took our new self-paced Survey course this summer); facilitating the Climate and Culture team in both process design and developing their action plan. Through a partnership with Creating the Future fellow Deborah Loesch-Griffin and her company, Turning Point, Inc., we will be documenting the results of this effort, with the goal of turning those results into evidence upon which "evidence-based work" can be based.

This current phase of the Climate and Culture effort will be completed December 31 of this year.

This project is the next phase in a larger project throughout many systems in the state of Nevada. At present, 30 people in the fields of behavioral health and education in Nevada have taken classes in Catalytic Thinking. We are excited to document what that critical mass has been making possible.

### **Restructuring Creating the Future**

Since mid-year 2015, Creating the Future's board has been exploring the question of structure as the organization begins the 10-year clock of our mission. *What organizational structure will serve as a vehicle for propelling our work forward, to accomplish our mission?*

For the first 18 months of this project, the board wrestled with laying theoretical foundation for whatever actions we would take. In 2017, the board focused on developing and adopting the Statement of Our Values in Action, which will guide all the work that structure will support.



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Change the Questions, Change the World!

## **Restructuring Creating the Future** *(continued)*

2018 has been the year of logistics. Board members Hildy Gottlieb and Justin Pollock have worked with Creating the Future's attorney, Ellis Carter and with a compliance expert from Harbor Compliance (Creating the Future fellow and faculty member, Ifeoma Aduba). They have had long conversations with people in key organizations globally who are leading the charge on rethinking organizational structure (P2P Foundation, Enspiral, Enlivening Edge, and the organizational design firm, The Ready). In addition, Hildy completed the review draft of a white paper detailing both the reason for the restructuring and the scope of the project.

It is our intent that by December 31, the board will have adopted this new structure. Next steps include writing and adopting bylaws, recruiting new board members for the board's new compliance-focused role, and finding partners to help build out the structure that will ultimately support our mission.

## **Survey Course: Experimenting with New Delivery Systems, and Pricing that Fits Our Mission**

Beginning in 2018, we embarked on an experiment to leverage our existing education programs, to create a self-paced introduction to Catalytic Thinking, for people who are ready to put a toe in the waters, but are not ready to dive into our immersion course. (More about the content in the Education section below).

We BETA tested two complete sections of the class, with 74 people participating as students in those test classes. The course itself was 4 modules over 3 months.

The non-educational experiment was the pricing structure, because it is our mission and our values make it clear that it is more important that people learn than that we monetize and squeeze the pennies out of every activity. From that perspective...

- We encouraged people to sign up team members by offering the opportunity to register an additional person (or 2, or in one case 5) for the same \$199 tuition. 8 teams took us up on that offer. (4 additional teams paid full tuition). This allowed people who work together (and in 2 cases, family members) to learn together – which has led to changing language within their teams, and importantly, changing approaches those teams are taking to their work.
- We offered tuition assistance that ranged from payment plans to full scholarships. Because the BETA was by invitation, and because the self-paced nature of the course meant there was zero additional cost for an additional person, it was more important to us that people take the course than that we worry about the dollars. 12 individuals (16% of the total participants) were on some form of tuition assistance. Several of those individuals have chosen to become more involved with Creating the Future's work, in part due to their participation in that course.



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Change the Questions, Change the World!

## **Survey Course** *(continued)*

- Because we know that people get busy and aren't always able to fulfill their own expectations when a course is self-paced, we offered the people in the first BETA the opportunity to take the course over during the second BETA, at no charge. Again, with the course being self-paced, this meant deepening their skills at no additional cost to us – and the ability to live our mission. 10 people (27% of the first BETA cohort) took us up on that offer.

As we move forward to develop more self-paced classes, we will be keeping the lessons learned from this experiment in mind as we consider pricing structures and opportunities to deepen learning.

## **Funding Partnerships**

Because Creating the Future drew a line in the sand re: walking the talk of our values of equity and relationship (vs. money power dynamics and transaction), we have to date eschewed seeking major funding for our work. That has meant depending on approximately 20 monthly donors, earned income strategies (classes) and demonstration projects as the primary source of revenue.

It has also meant that all the work Creating the Future has accomplished during these initial proof-of-concept years has been done by 3 full time volunteers (Hildy, Rebecca and Dimitri) working for small stipends, 3 additional faculty (also working at stipend wages), and approximately 10 additional volunteers. This work has been our investment in self-funding the start-up of this effort.

As we build out our work to accomplish our mission in 10 years, we are seeking partners to make that happen – not “silent financial partners,” but true partners, who want to be part of experimenting alongside us.

To that end, in 2018, a small team of volunteers have met weekly to develop a plan and begin implementing that plan. The Creating the Future Road Tour (see the Convening portion of this report, below) is a direct result of that work, taking the founders on the road for 2 months, to connect with potential partners across California.

The experimental part of this effort lies in the nuance that we are not seeking money but full partnership, which requires that first we develop relationships of trust. We know this will be a slow process, but we also know there is much to explore as we do so.

With faculty led by Rebecca making it possible for Hildy to step away from teaching, and with the first phases of the restructuring complete by December 31, Hildy will be stepping into this effort as her primary focus beginning in 2019. And we will be documenting what we learn along the way. (See “Sharing Stories” below).



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## **Founder Succession**

Part of what we are documenting and exploring regarding founder succession goes beyond the logistical nuts-and-bolts of documenting what the founder does. Yes, we are mindfully creating plans for having teams take over the work that Hildy has been doing over the years – the eJournal, leading our online communities.

Hildy will also be documenting the realities of what founders bring to organizations, so that that essence can be handed over as well. Organizational effectiveness experts know that there are often huge swings in focus once a founder leaves, with organizations often becoming less visionary and risk-taking, more bureaucratic. While those effects are chalked up to “Organizational Life Cycles,” that is not necessarily a fact of nature but instead a fact of habit – the way we’ve done things to date in both business and community benefit orgs.

The experiment will be to explore whether the role of holding space for the vision and values of what is possible can be transitioned, and if so, what it would take for that to become the norm. (In the business world, the example of Steve Jobs being brought back to Apple to restore its soul – its place in the world.)

As part of stepping into the role of finding partners, we will be documenting what it takes for the founder to leave while the essence remains.

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## **Structured Education Programs**

In addition to the eJournal and our communities of practice, this has been a HUGE year for curriculum development, with a range of new educational materials and classes.

### **New Video Classes**

- Overview of the Science behind Catalytic Thinking (50 minutes)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siQ7zdAeAgo&t=3s>
- Overview of the Practices of Catalytic Thinking (10 minutes)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rd5YogJFTuk>
- Introduction to Catalytic Listening (40 minutes)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tFDca7ECMo>
- Introduction to Catalytic Decision-making (50 minutes)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7kb6oiHUQA>



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Change the Questions, Change the World!

## **New “Introduction to Catalytic Thinking” Survey Course: Self-Paced**

Our experiment with turning our 3-month immersion course (weekly 3 hour sessions) into a self-paced course, for those who are curious and want to begin their exploration of Catalytic Thinking.

The course we experimented with included 4 modules – an overview of Catalytic Thinking, Catalytic Listening, Catalytic Decision-making, and Collective Enoughness. For each module, students received

- Video classes (including those above plus others that were created last year)
- Study guide (text) with detail on the information in the video class plus practice exercises (averaging 20 pages each)
- Live interactive 2-hour discussions with instructors for all modules but the overview.

74 students participated in 2 BETA classes, with invaluable feedback. We will be publicly sharing the learnings from those BETA classes in the next few months, while we use those learnings to craft the actual class. We currently plan to launch that class in 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of 2019.

## **Curriculum Development: Reworking the Catalytic Listening Course**

After 3 separate BETA sessions of our 102 Immersion Course, Catalytic Listening, Rebecca Hurd and Nancy Iannone spent 7 months this year taking what they learned from teaching those BETA's, to develop the “real” course.

This fall, 6 students (our maximum) are taking that class, having experienced the 101 last year. 2 of those students are part of an early cohort from the Nevada Department of Education, which further deepens the potential of that project.

## **New Partners**

This year started with a new partnership – Fresno State is using our self-paced Collective Enoughness class as part of their Humanics / nonprofit management program! In this pilot effort, 22 students learned these concepts as part of their fundraising course.

We are looking forward to creating many more partnerships like this, with other academic institutions and nonprofit management support centers in 2019.

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## **Sharing Stories to Document What is Possible**

Because our mission is to share what we learn in as many ways as possible, it is imperative that people be able to find stories of how Catalytic Thinking might be able to address some of the issues they face in their own lives.

To that end, a team of volunteers has been meeting since early this year, using Catalytic Thinking to develop systems for sharing those stories.

The team is currently focused on creating the internal systems that will need to be in place to support that program, including website changes that make it easy for people to both share their stories AND importantly, search for stories that might be meaningful to them. In addition, the team has been working to develop templates that make it easy to share stories in ways that will be applicable to the issues we all face in our daily lives.

In addition to having a platform for documenting everyday stories, it will also be important for us to have systems in place for documenting the impact of large projects (e.g. Nevada Department of Education, tracking progress from people who take our courses, the ongoing progress of our restructuring, just to name a few). It will be critical in the near future to have qualified researchers turn these stories of success into evidence that can be used when people are seeking evidence-based approaches for their own work.

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## **Connecting, Convening, Building Community**

Much of our work this year has been focused in this area. The following are highlights.

### **Online Community of Consultants to Community Benefit Organizations**

Our Facebook community for consultants has grown to over 600 participants as of this report. Community members consistently cite the group as their go-to resource for their consulting work, and as a support to them personally.

This will be no surprise to people familiar with Catalytic Thinking, as the group's infrastructure is rooted in an emphasis on listening, bringing the whole person to the work, creating causality, and a deep sense of Collective Enoughness.

Efforts are underway to transition the facilitation of that community to fit with the networked approach of our restructuring – teams to ensure each function is supported, coming together in hubs to learn from each other and find the resources they need to do that work. The bulk of that effort will happen in 2019.



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Change the Questions, Change the World!

### **Catalytic Thinking Community of Practice: Facebook group**

The Catalytic Thinking community (450 members) has become a place that is highly facilitated, with questions posed to get people thinking about their practice. The energy that arises when people share their stories of success is palpable.

As the facilitation of that effort transitions to a team of people already active in the group (slated for 2019), we anticipate more structure, consistency, and activity in that group.

### **Convening Community in Florida: Partnership with The Patterson Foundation**

This fall, Hildy spent a week in Sarasota with The Patterson Foundation, at the invitation of their core team. This is significant for several reasons.

1) The CEO of The Patterson Foundation, Debra Jacobs, had been part of the original BETA of our immersion course back in 2015, when the first cohorts helped us transition from in-person immersion to an online experience.

From there, when we did BETA tests this spring of our new self-paced Survey course, Debra had her two key staff people attend that class (both of them chose to take the class twice, to embed their learning!). When it came time for the foundation to host its annual retreat for the consultants who work on their teams, it was those two staff people who suggested that they bring Hildy to teach Catalytic Thinking to all 33 of their consultants!

2) In addition to working with all those consultants, Hildy taught an overview of Catalytic Thinking to 100 community leaders who are all part of the community's Campaign for Grade Level Reading. This is another area where working with The Patterson Foundation to document and share the results of just that one session could be immensely meaningful, especially given the enthusiasm of the participants. (You can watch that response in this 2 minute video, created by the foundation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBLzFKrJ66c> )

3) The ripples of that work have already been felt.

- Several of the consultants have joined Creating the Future's Facebook community for consultants.
- The video noted above has had almost 200 views in just one month
- The local newspaper did a story about the Grade Level Reading event <https://www.heraldtribune.com/news/20180906/suncoast-campaign-rallies-regional-leaders-to-boost-third-grade-reading-scores>
- With Twitter being The Patterson Foundation's main social media tool, there were 90 tweets about the two events, with an astounding 1,100 retweets, likes and comments.





## CREATING THE FUTURE

Change the Questions, Change the World!

### **Taking to the Road: Creating the Future's California Road Tour**

On October 13, Hildy and Dimitri will begin a 2 month road tour across the state of California, spreading Catalytic Thinking in every way imaginable. At present, there are approximately 20 stops planned, with more being added every day. Some of those activities include...

- Guest lectures at universities
- Community-wide workshops
- One-on-one meetings with key influencers
- Workshop at a regional conference
- learning session for a progressive consulting firm
- Salons in people's homes

The coordinators in each community are Creating the Future fellows, and in the case of Alex Budak, a former board member. It is exciting to have our fellows so involved in sharing our mission. And it is exciting to think about the potential ripples of each of these events.

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We hope this overview of 2018's activities to date gets you energized to see where you might plug into the work we are doing. Here is a short list of just some of the ways that can happen:

- » Join the [Catalytic Thinking community of practice](#) on Facebook
- » Experiment with your own projects, and let us know what happens (the Facebook community is a great place to share that!)
- » Participate in our open meetings, where you will get to see Catalytic Thinking in practice with real issues. Subscribe to our eJournal to be alerted when we are getting together.
- » Take a class. Our course offerings are here <https://creatingthefuture.org/education/>
- » Help out with anything that has intrigued you in this list. Help develop our website, or be part of a facilitation team. Or bring us to your community to convene as we are doing in California or like The Patterson Foundation had us do.
- » Start a community of practice in your own community.
- » Partner with Creating the Future in your workplace, to do a demonstration project together, like we're doing in Nevada.
- » Or a million other ways to share who you are and what you have. Just drop us a line and let's brainstorm what is possible <https://creatingthefuture.org/contact-us/>

In these times when so many societal systems feel as if they are unraveling, our mission is even more important than ever. We hope you will join us in bringing forward the message that we can do better. We can absolutely create a more humane, healthy, joyful future for our world.