**Community Engagement Conditions for Success:**

**What our community members must have in order to jump in**

**US together / connectedness**

*In a world of us-and-them, what will create a big “us”?*

*1) Peer-to-peer = “I AM you” vs. “I HEAR you”*

- The mutual accountability of “us together.” Getting beyond savior complex. Giving the mic to the people who are most affected.

- Being IN community vs engaging THE community

- In community, we can influence the environment and each other

- To join, people must see themselves reflected in the group

**What will it take for people to feel / experience this from the start?**

Invitation must come from peers who are already feeling mutual accountability with Creating the Future

**POSSIBLE ACTIONS:**

- invitation coming from supporters of all kinds (volunteers, donors), fellows, students, cohort members (vs. just Hildy or board members)

- Create a team of inviters and welcomers

- Write invitation to reflect all the conditions listed in this document

*2) Learning / experiencing together something bigger than themselves*

- “WE engage YOU” vs. “We all come together / share power TOGETHER”

- Multi-directional connection vs. two way (“You” with “Us”)

- Exploring together new ways of being and thinking, ALL of us learning and having aha’s

- People connecting with each other and genuinely getting to know each other

**What will it take for people to feel / experience this from the start?**

- People must have mechanisms for connecting to EACH OTHER, with board and staff as part of that – all of us together vs. “you” connecting with “us.”

- All language, from invitation to ongoing, must reflect “all of us learning and practicing – no experts”

**POSSIBLE ACTIONS:**

- Define and create mechanisms for connecting (This is still to be done \_\_\_\_\_)

- Write invitation to reflect all the conditions listed here

*3) Mutual accountability*

- People have to feel this is authentic vs extractive

- True engagement lessens the load any individual needs to carry because we’re in it together

- The mutual accountability of “us together.” Getting beyond savior complex. Giving the mic to the people who are most affected.

- Changes accountability from us/them to WE / all of us to each other

- Co-owned. Don’t need “community buy-in” if it’s owned by the community

- It’s not about activating community voice. People are already talking. It’s also not about “us” listening to “them.” It’s about spaces for all of us to listen to each other, and make meaning from that together.

**What will it take for people to feel / experience this from the start?**

- See what it looks like in action (including participation by people in our meetings)

**POSSIBLE ACTIONS:**

- Share roles in the actual facilitation, small and large roles people can step into

- \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Power to decide**

*The only way to not do stuff TO people is to authentically include them as decision-makers. We will be modeling what it looks like to step away from our power to decide, and what it takes to have community decide what’s next. Authentically sharing the power to decide, ALL OF US TOGETHER, with no one having any more voice or authority than anyone else.*

- People must have the power to create change and FEEL they have that power

- Beyond our community members trusting Creating the Future, Creating the Future must trust them

- It’s not about activating community voice. It’s about LISTENING to what community members are already saying.

- Co-creating, co-designing – all of us together

- When I’m in community, I can influence people and environment. When I’m in an audience, I have no influence. I am just receiving what is given.

- If we ask people to create their future, they need to have power to do so

- Movements are about engagement and power

- Goal is not engaging the community; It’s people having the power to make change.

- Co-owned. Don’t need “community buy-in” if the community owns it

- What creates an environment that helps people feel they can take action?

**What will it take for people to feel / experience this from the start?**

- Authentically share power to make the decisions about what’s next for Creating the Future. Facilitate all of us together, all sharing ideas, wisdom, experience.

- See that in the invitation, to join in the first place

**POSSIBLE ACTIONS:**

- Design every step of the actual work to be mutual, deciding together

- Invitation to that process must authentically emphasize that “we” are not inviting “them” to “participate” – all of us together will create what’s next

- We don’t have the answer. This is NOT a focus group, with a predefined outcome and “what do you think?” YOU will make the decision about what’s next for our mission.

- If you’ve ever thought, “I wish Creating the Future would do X” or “I wish Creating the Future had Y,” YOU can make that happen. YOU Have the power to determine what’s next.

- Be part of shifting how work is done in the social change arena

**Outcome-focused**

*Outcomes are easier to unify around than tactics. We tend to agree / get excited by the WHY; tend to argue about the WHAT and HOW.*

- A sense of creating something bigger than themselves

- Creating a path in the chaos of the real world

- Focus is on the result vs. tactics (the WHY vs. the HOW)

- You will create what’s next for you AND the world (vs. “We want YOU to help US do a thing”)

- Talk about the things our community members care about

**What will it take for people to feel / experience this from the start?**

Every aspect of the design of what’s next must be focused on high-potential outcomes, from the invitation to be part of that design to the facilitation of those conversations.

**POSSIBLE ACTIONS:**

*For example, possible invitation language:*

- If you’ve thought, “I wish Creating the future would do X” or “I wish Creating the Future had Y,” YOU can make that happen. YOU Have the power to determine what’s next because YOU will be the ones most affected by whatever is decided!

- “Will Creating the Future have programs? Will we just be a resource library? Will we teach? Or will we provide resources for people who want to teach? Etc.”

**Meeting people where they are**

*Provide a variety of ways to participate that align with what people feel and want. Some people love Creating the Future’s work, others are intrigued and want to learn more. Some want to feel connected to something bigger than themselves, while others want to learn / practice Catalytic Thinking. Some are slow, quiet thinkers who prefer to respond on their own; others prefer group process.*

- People who engage by listening quietly and taking what they hear into their world

- Make sure there are ways to participate along the continuum

- You can effect change in alignment with what you’re passionate about

- Asking people and listening to understand their experience (vs. “putting yourself in someone else’s shoes”)

- Being mindful that people who we perceive as “Hard to reach” quickly become those who are simply easy to ignore

**What will it take for people to feel / experience this from the start?**

- Every aspect of the design of what’s next, from the invitation to be part of that design to the facilitation of those conversations, must consider the various ways people prefer to participate – true inclusion.

**POSSIBLE ACTIONS:**

- Determine and design the various ways people can participate

- Facilitated group discussion?

- Surveys with the facilitation questions?

- Blog the questions and encourage written responses for those who think by writing?

- ???????

- In the invitation, use the “strengths, values, aspirations” language of Catalytic Listening to reflect to them how much they have to contribute to the whole

*- For example, possible invitation language:*

- To meet people where they are, invite using language along [the Continuum of Potential](https://creatingthefuture.org/the-continuum-of-potential/).

- If you benefit from Creating the Future’s work…

- Sharing who you ARE / your wisdom as a contribution to the whole (vs. contributing to the cause with what you HAVE)

- Not just *meeting* people where they are, but *honoring* where they are

**WIIFM**

*People will participate in activities that have immediate & apparent benefit for them*

1) Energy, hope

- Engagement needs to provide energy

- Made me feel like I can make a difference

- Time speeds by when I’m engaged

**What will it take for people to feel / experience this from the start?**

- Invitation must convey energy

- Catalytic Thinking will provide energy during all facets of the facilitation / conversation

**POSSIBLE ACTIONS:**

- Video? Many voices?

- Be explicit re: this is energizing!

2) Connecting with others who care about what they care about

- COMMUNE with your fellow future-creators (we need a better word than this!)

- People want to be with people they know and admire (e.g. Join Maria, Joelle, Ricardo, and Mike for an opportunity to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)

**What will it take for people to feel / experience this from the start?**

- Clarity around the types of people they will be with (energetic, passionate, thoughtful, etc.)

**POSSIBLE ACTIONS:**

- Testimonials from people who have joined us and feel connected (cohorts, individuals who enjoy participating in our discussions)

3) Participating as a source of pride

- See themselves reflected in the result

- People want to point with pride – I did that!

- People FEEL for what happens. It matters what happens.

- Participation as an expression of who I am as a person

**What will it take for people to feel / experience this from the start?**

- See it in others

**POSSIBLE ACTIONS:**

- Be explicit about this in the invitation. “You will be able to point to whatever we create with pride…”

- Testimonials from those who DO point with pride to participating

4) Opportunity to learn and practice

- Space to practice stepping into their power. Confidence to engage and construct the world

- How to do collaborative decision-making in YOUR work. What creates an environment where people can take practical steps in THEIR community?

- Beyond contributing to shared knowledge, each person will learn and grow. Learning by DOING.

- Building the capacity of the group

- Practice constructive ways of disagreeing with each other

- Iterative – people need to see it again and again.

**What will it take for people to feel / experience this from the start?**

- Be intentional in providing opportunities to learn beyond just the meetings.

- Clear understanding of what they’ll learn – that this is an opportunity to learn

- People feel safe if they know the process ahead of time / know what to expect

**POSSIBLE ACTIONS:**

- Provide video classes, additional Q&A / discussions, etc.

- Invitation is explicit about what they will learn if they participate

**Other Notes**

- Othering: Engagement as outreach (telling vs. listening). We do it to GET something vs. all together as one big “us”

- Organization-centric vs. community-centric

- For Creating the Future, engaging IS our mission

- Engagement as a way of being

- Is community something other than ourselves? What does it take to engage myself / ourselves?