

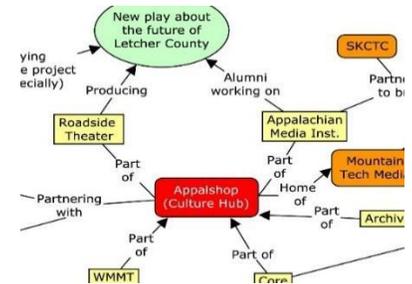
PERFORMING OUR FUTURE

HOW TO START ORGANIZING – IN FIVE PHASES...

NOTE: In practice, these phases will inevitably overlap, shift, and deviate. This work is always a journey of discovery, innovating through collective energy, intuition, reflection on actions, and action on reflections.

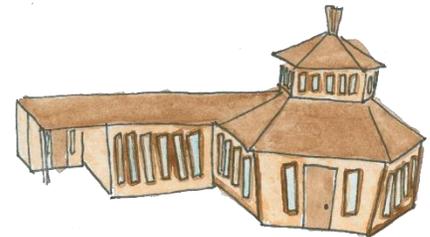
1. Assemble a planning team, and make a power map.

- Make sure the planning team includes an ANCHOR INSTITUTION for initial support and a LEAD ORGANIZER.
- Get together and make a POWER MAP that identifies the (1) *institutions*, (2) *individuals*, and (3) *initiatives* that you could draw on for support, and how they're connected.



2. Find where communities are already organizing themselves, and build strong relationships with their leaders.

- FREE SPACES / COMMUNITY CENTERS OF POWER = organizations controlled by ordinary people, where everyone in the community can be co-creator and consumer.
 - They often include community centers, volunteer fire departments, churches, cultural organizations, grassroots action groups, and locally-owned businesses.
 - They typically do not include governments, health and welfare providers, and formal educational institutions.
- LEADERS = people (1) with a *following*, who others in the community look to for leadership, and who (2) are working to *develop those followers into leaders themselves*. They don't have to have official titles, positions, or degrees.
- ONE-TO-ONE RELATIONAL MEETINGS = face-to-face meetings with those leaders, where the organizer asks questions and shares stories to identify mutual self-interest, including cultural values, personal drives, material needs, and spiritual hopes.



3. Make space for those leaders to make things together.

- ART/CULTURAL WORK = a deliberate expression of how people make meaning together through their shared intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and material traditions and features (their culture).
- Making plays, stories, songs, dances, writings, paintings, food, and/or other cultural work together creates a group that knows and trusts each other well enough to act together. An effective starting point is a STORY CIRCLE, where leaders share personal stories and start recognizing the values and interests they share.



4. Start projects to build wealth, based in partners' mutual self-interest.

- Ideas for new projects will soon emerge: collective projects, done by multiple partners together, and individual projects, done by single partners with support from the group.

- Every project idea is a good idea, as long as it (1) comes from partners' own values and interests; (2) grows the community's collective VOICE, AGENCY, AND OWNERSHIP; and (3) works toward building COMMUNITY WEALTH, directly or indirectly.
- Start building a PARTNERSHIP FUND, to offer seed money for projects in the shared interest of the group.
- Make sure to keep art/cultural work in the mix of projects, to keep the work grounded, reflective, imaginative, and inclusive.



5. Keep growing and deepening the relationships, and the work.

- Stay connected, accountable, and responsive by meeting regularly—as a whole group, in smaller working groups, and for one-to-one relational meetings.
- Keep the door open to new partners who see their values and interests reflected in the work, with the goal of embodying the community's full diversity and complexity.
- Make space for leaders to step up, taking on new and more challenging projects and leadership opportunities, toward increasing the group's collective POWER.



...AND FIVE “BEST PRINCIPLES”

1. We own what we make.

Our work is rooted in collective and inclusive voice, agency, and ownership. Before taking on a new partner or project, do a gut-check: are they committed to “we own what we make”?

2. Work from the grassroots up.

The work's base is communities' centers of power / free spaces, where everyone in the community can be co-creator and user. Non-grassroots groups can be involved, but they can't be in control.

3. Start from stories.

Sharing stories—in story circles, art/cultural work, and ongoing reflective meetings—allows everyone to interact in safety and on even footing, and to develop shared understandings and values.

4. Build collective power out of shared self-interest.

POWER = the ability to act = *organized people + organized money + organized ideas*.

SELF-INTEREST = the values, drives, needs, and hopes that make us tick.

5. Embrace productive tension.

Our work is about making change toward a future where everyone's voice is valued and everyone's contribution counts. As change happens, there will be tension—among folks with different approaches to making change, and with folks interested in maintaining current inequalities. Remember: tension (as in a rope) can mean something's ready to move!