

Sparking Social Change with Others: A Simple Frame and Some Concrete Practices to Get Started

Are you helping to lead a social change initiative?

Have you recently agreed to assume a new role in your community or your place of work, in partnership with other people? Is it a new role that requires you and your team to help spark some kind of social change in a local community setting? Is your task extra-complicated because the mission involves big issues like education, health, poverty, economic development, immigration, housing or crime? Are you feeling some fear around how to proceed or are you feeling overwhelmed by all the different ideas for how to proceed?

Are you and your team looking for advice and support in this role?

Trusted Space Partners invites you to consider joining a small group of fellow change agents in the Washington DC area to learn about a simple framework and some concrete practices you can use to help a team of diverse change agents stay grounded in an authentic and manageable change process.

Are we – Trusted Space Partners - a good match for you and your team?

Our offer to share a framework and practices grows out of our combined 60 years of being in YOUR SHOES and trying out a wide range of strategies along the way, some that worked and some that didn't. Through this trial and error methodology, we arrived at a set of common beliefs that undergird every step we now take when working in community with others.

- The people who live and work in a place have the talents and gifts needed to achieve change.
- A vision for community change must grow out of an authentic and shared story.
- Lasting community change occurs through networks of trusting relationships across boundaries.
- Experimentation and treasure hunting are the best vehicles for relationship building, uncovering answers and sparking innovation.
- Change is iterative and long term; change agents never get to see the full results of their contribution.
- It is important to have fun and to be kind to one another.

If you share these beliefs, we think we have specific advice and support that can help you move forward.

What is the framework and what are the practices?

Even with the solid ground provided by these beliefs, many well intentioned “change agent teams” get stuck, either by frustration among the team itself, or the fear of stepping into action when positive outcomes are not guaranteed. We have no one simple magic answer to offer. But, we've discovered that teams build powerful momentum when they can do two things at once: (1) pay close attention to the emerging narrative of their day to day work, be it successful or not AND (2) pay close attention to their internal/external relationship building processes, be they positive or not.

The process we offer is simple. We ask teams to periodically pause and ask four fundamental questions about their work and their relationships. And, we ask these teams to make careful and consistent use of

some story gathering, story telling and relationship building practices. And, if the team remains stuck, we offer four “tough love” questions for them to answer, as individuals and as a team.

Four Framing Questions at Periodic Pause Moments:

1. What is our shared story and our shared hypothesis?
2. What is our commitment and through what organizational form will we express this commitment?
3. How do we use action research and treasure hunting to broaden the story and our team?
4. What is our personal power and how do we share it with each other, especially when we are in a moment of conflict or challenge?

Ten Practices for Repeated Use:

1. Check In/Check Out
2. Map Exercise
3. Kernel of Power/Nibble Theory
4. What’s Our Honest Story and Invitation
5. Naming and Claiming a Network
6. On the Street Conversations
7. Neighbor’s Exchange
8. Offers and Requests
9. Design in Action Moments
10. The “Check Things Out” Tool

Tough Love Questions for Major Stuck Moments:

- Am I (are we) still committed, as a learner in action with others?
- Am I (are we) contributing my best personal power?
- Am I (are we) doing the best I can to receive the personal power of others?
- Would my (our) energies be better matched with another moment of opportunity?

How will we share this framework and teach the practices?

Our intention is to convene a small group of 6 to 8 people who are all from one geographic region for three half-day retreats over a two month period. (Please see the 2015 schedule below). Each person will bring to these sessions a specific community change initiative they are either participating in or about to embark upon. We will encourage participants to bring one other person to participate and serve as an on-the-ground support partner going forward.

The function of the retreats will be to introduce the framework and the practices in a summary fashion (with the help of one page tip sheets) and to use the remaining time for each participant to develop a plan – in the presence of their peers - to try out one aspect of the framework and/or the practices. We will provide up to four hours of coaching over the phone to each person in between the sessions and participants will have each other to call upon for peer support. We understand that it takes more than a short two month period of time to master the concepts and practices noted above. While we are

available to provide on-going team coaching, we understand that many community teams cannot afford this kind of intensive support. We firmly believe that many enterprising people – when they put their hearts and heads together - can inject their own creativity and common sense to this frame and the practices, and, in turn, teach us what they begin to learn along the way.

Winter 2015 Sparking Change Group in Silver Spring, MD

Half Day Retreats: February 12, February 26, March 12

\$ 1,000 per participant; \$1,500 for a team of two participants involved in the same community change moment.