

“LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS” IN THE US: 1954-2030

WORKBOOK

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OVERVIEW

1954 TO 2024

Dozens of peace, jobs, and justice initiatives were launched in the US early in this period. In response, Lewis Powell later Supreme Court Justice Powell wrote a memo to Eugene Sydnor at the US Chamber of Commerce on August 23, 1971, that described what could be done to reassert the primacy of what Powell called the “American Economic System,” or, simply, the “American system.” This memo advocated expanded use of the free enterprise system, and assigned responsibility for “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” initiatives to US households.

Today, it is evident the “American System” is failing in five ways.

- 100% of US households are facing environmental disaster.
- 90% of US households are facing economic disaster.
- The US is one of few developed countries that is un-developing.
- Political discourse in the US is increasingly divorced from reality.
- US households are increasingly stressed, fearful, and angry.

2024 TO 2030

You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.

---R. Buckminster Fuller

Continuing to ignore the ways in which the US is failing is neither wise nor fair to future generations. The challenge now is to create a model by 2030 that makes the 1971-2024 model obsolete. This new model will need to describe in detail how the eight INSIGHTS that follow can be used to change the culture of communities, and solve the environmental, economic, and social problems communities face.

CULTURE CHANGE INSIGHTS

1. There are six levels of organizational quality, not three.
2. There are two ways to keep score, not one.
3. Organizations, businesses, and the community need access to a change model.
4. Organizations, businesses, and the community need new ways to work together.

COMMUNITY PROBLEM SOLVING INSIGHTS

5. It will take Big Picture Thinking to make the 1971 to 2024 model obsolete.
6. The community is responsible for recruiting Big Picture Thinkers.
7. Households cannot solve environmental, economic, and social problems they did not create.
8. The way forward is a community-based effort to solve community problems.

PART I. GET STARTED

AGREE THE IMPOSSIBLE IS POSSIBLE

E.M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory suggests that 2.5% of adults are innovators and 13.5% are Early Adopters. In combination this is 16 out of a hundred, eight out of 50, and four out of 25. Put another way, in a room of 25 people four or more are likely advocates for doing tomorrow what is impossible to do today. This is enough to make what seems impossible today possible tomorrow.

The Change Stories and Case Study included below are tools one very low-income community used to make the impossible possible. There is no one right way to do the work involved. The people involved in this change journey set out to *do the right thing right, the first time, every time*. Change Stories emerged as this organization moved three levels of quality beyond excellent.

SHARE CHANGE STORIES

Communities have shared and celebrated Change Stories for thousands of years. This is no less important today. A community setting out on a change journey will have few if any Change Stories to share. Borrow some if necessary. Fifteen of them appear below. These are only some of the Change Stories that emerged during the transformation of a bankrupt, badly run, affordable housing organization and its largest, long neglected, crime ridden family housing complex.

PINE RIDGE RESIDENTS

In a process no one understood, a great deal of work changed the culture of the Pine Ridge community to the point that the adults there decided on their own to take their children "trick or treating" on Halloween. This had not happened in more than thirty years. When the local United Way Executive Director reported this to a civic club one of the members stood up and said: "I grew up there and if my friends and I had done that we'd have been shot." These two stories began circulating in tandem, and when a local business owner heard them, he began providing an annual Halloween Party for the community, adding a third story to the chain.

For the first time in decades Pine Ridge residents began putting up Christmas decorations and holding birthday parties outdoors in the spring and summer.

The first year the School District opened a pre-school in Pine Ridge---Pine Ridge Prep---it took staff going door to door two months to fill the slots. Since then, residents working informally have done most program recruiting.

STAFF

A maintenance worker told his supervisor that before the many changes the organization made neither he nor his co-workers wore their company shirts with their names on them anywhere other than at work. After the transformation they wore these shirts around town because people stopped and complimented them.

When asked what his JOB was (as opposed to his assigned duties) a custodian answered: "I am responsible for the health and safety of all the residents in the buildings where I work."

When asked why she was working at the Pine Ridge Prep Pre-School tears ran down a staff member's face and she said: "Because these children have nothing."

Employees began urging family members to apply for open positions, and extremely capable people working elsewhere in town began calling and dropping by to explore employment opportunities.

THE COMMUNITY

"We have no idea what you are doing over there, but you must be doing something right." ---Civic Leader

"I used to get more complaints about your organization and Pine Ridge than the rest of the complaints I got put together. Now I don't get any." ---Local Elected Official

A local shoe company offered to provide the fifty-one Pine Ridge Prep students shoes and winter boots. The employee sent to get the kids' shoe sizes asked the staff member helping him why every child scrunched up their toes when he measured their feet. The answer was: "That is how they think shoes fit." He shared this story at his company and elsewhere. The shoe company's donation turned into an annual event, and when this story circulated in the community other businesses began calling and offering to support the children and families at Pine Ridge Prep in other ways.

When a group of volunteers at Pine Ridge learned that few Pine Ridge Prep children had their own pillow they asked their company to donate pillows for distribution in the Pine Ridge community. The company purchased and delivered 2,000 of them.

Working alone on his own time and at his expense a local business professional with extensive home remodeling experience renovated and equipped a meeting room for use by pre-school parents and neighborhood groups and organizations.

THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

After the transformation of Pine Ridge was underway the following and other stories began circulating at the Police Department and elsewhere. A police officer working undercover asked a man he met while fishing at a local lake what he did. The man said: "I used to sell drugs at Pine Ridge, but you can't do that anymore."

A police officer jokingly told some PHA staff members they had made the Department's job a lot harder. "Before when we had to pick up someone we would go to Pine Ridge. We always found them there. That doesn't work anymore."

CHANGE STORY BENEFITS

Change Stories are inspiring and the benefits of sharing them are significant. It will never be clear, even to them, why adults decided that they and their children could safely trick or treat at Pine Ridge for the first time in decades. They were right though, and this turned out to be an important milestone in the transformation of their neighborhood and the wider community.

The people who played key roles in the change and problem-solving initiatives that produced these Stories did not know what a Change Story was when they set out to do the impossible, and they did not have the benefit of the eight change INSIGHTS that are the foundation for this paper. With the INSIGHTS as a starting point there are change oriented people in every community whose work will generate Change Stories.

SHARE A CASE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

The work described below involved dozens of public entities, non-profit organizations, and businesses, and was supported by more than 1,000 volunteers annually. The people involved did what none of them had seen done. They did not always understand what they were doing or what they had and had not accomplished. However, they did understand that this work required a new and different level of thinking and sustained efforts to create a new model.

This change journey began as an effort to turn an appallingly bad public housing authority (PHA) into an excellent one. This took a great deal of work and capacity building but in less than three years the HUD designation for this PHA changed from troubled (poor) to average and then to high performing (excellent).

HUD has no quality designation beyond High Performing. To create a just, sustainable community the PHA's board and staff knew their organization had to be better than excellent. This turned into a journey through three additional levels of quality. Quality Level 4 was freeing the board and staff members to do innovative problem solving driven by Big Picture Thinking. Quality Level 5 was a transformed organization---one that was doing the right thing right, the first time, every time. Quality Level 6 was a transforming organization---one that was using eight INSIGHTS to help organizations, businesses, and the community create a different culture and solve environmental, economic, and social problems facing the community in different and better ways. After the fact it became clear that the decisions and learning relating to this journey embodied the eight INSIGHTS described in PART II.

THE CHANGE JOURNEY

After three decades of neglect the PHA was bankrupt, had no reserves, was poorly managed, and was operating under federal court order. Its fiscal records were inaccurate and incomplete, and in the previous year expenditures had exceeded revenues by more than \$400,000. There was only enough cash on hand to make payroll twice. Pine Ridge, a 207-unit PHA housing complex for families, was half

empty, crime ridden, and badly run down. The mayor sent a team to the PHA to identify and make needed changes.

Improvement efforts started the morning the team arrived. Half the staff members, including all supervisors, were terminated. In time most of them transferred to other City positions. The “Reserved for Executive Director” sign was removed from the parking place closest to the front door, and for the benefit of program participants and visitors remaining staff who had parked next to the office were asked to go out and move their vehicles to the last row of the parking lot. It took thousands more large and small changes, but over time an insight driven, innovative organization emerged that was consistently making what had been impossible possible.

STAFF CHANGES

Employees change when they: a) are not fearful, angry, and stressed; b) are treated and treat each other with dignity and respect; and c) are involved in new, uniquely successful problem-solving efforts.

Given the PHA’s financial problems expensive solutions were not an option. Driving out fear, anger, and stress costs nothing. Treating people with dignity and respect costs nothing. And making winners of people---involving them in and giving them credit for creative problem-solving efforts costs nothing. The team started using these three change tactics and urged PHA staff and Pine Ridge residents to join them. The team also designed and provided “dignity and respect” training sessions, events, and activities for residents and staff.

PHA staff, local service providers, and Pine Ridge residents began demonstrating their commitment to the three change tactics in a variety of ways. Community residents, staff, and volunteers walked, talked, ate, played, celebrated holidays, volunteered, and cleaned up the community together. Some months into these efforts the PHA had the funds to distribute T-shirts with the PHA’s new logo on them to participants in these activities. PHA residents and staff began wearing their shirts with pride, and more residents began showing up for events and activities.

As resources became available PHA employees were provided the supplies, clothing, tools, and equipment they needed to do their jobs right, and they received training that emphasized the skills, knowledge, and attitudes they needed to do the right thing right, the first time, every time. In the first two years of PHA’s transformation every staff member served at least two three-month terms on PHA’s organization wide Change Team. By design this Team included staff from all parts of the organization and from every pay level. A salary bonus pool was created every year that included everyone but the Executive Director and Deputy Director. Program, budget, and transformation goals were met annually and when they were all staff received an equal amount from the pool. For lower paid employees their share was 15% to 20% of their annual salary.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

Excellent Level 3 organizations are not perfect. Staff work within small but widely understood error tolerances. One objective that drives these organizations is to make less than an agreed-on number of errors. Another is to fix any errors made in an agreed-on amount of time.

Without understanding the implications, the leadership team established and enforced a different performance standard for the PHA from the beginning. They expected and urged all staff members to do the right thing right, the first time, every time---a 100% standard. When HUD designated the PHA as High Performing this was the end of the known part of the PHA's change journey, and the first step into the unknown of meeting this 100% standard---making the impossible possible. Complicating this, the leadership team also made it clear that as the PHA got increasingly better the right things and what it takes to do them right would evolve.

The extent to which the culture of an organization or business changes when staff start doing the right things right, the first time, every time, soon became clear. In the PHA's case its new culture also included personal integrity, treating people with dignity and respect, justice, sustainability, caring, sharing, and cooperation. In combination these cultural changes gave employees a sense of security and satisfaction and drove out fear, anger, and stress. It also increased employee and board commitment to the many change and problem-solving efforts underway.

Over time the PHA and Pine Ridge changed in ways that enhanced the PHA's capacity to treat people with dignity and respect and to solve community problems. Program delivery changes were made in concert with many physical changes at the PHA and Pine Ridge. The waiting list for the PHA's largest housing program was reduced from seven years to a maximum of eight weeks. All policy documents, manuals, and forms were rewritten multiple times to make them easier to read and more respectful of applicants and participants. An appointment process was adopted that greatly reduced applicant wait times. An appeal process was created for every adverse action the PHA took. Hearings were held weekly, and written decisions were provided promptly. This process assumed that the burden of proof and the obligation to do the right thing right, the first time, every time lay with the PHA. With limited scheduling exceptions walk-ins with an idea or concern were welcome to talk with the PHA's Executive Director or Deputy Director.

The PHA created resident organizations in every complex. These organizations had active, informal leadership teams that assumed responsibility for involving residents in a steadily growing number of events and activities.

COMMUNITY CHANGES

Communities change when local organizations begin doing the right things right, the first time, every time to the point of moving three levels of quality beyond excellent. People want to be part of, contribute to, and talk about something that is new and

uniquely successful, and every organization operating three levels of quality beyond excellent generates broad community interest, support, and involvement.

The PHA's transformation journey produced a variety of new partners that joined with the PHA in taking on the challenge of solving community problems. Within a few years more than a thousand volunteers annually were contributing to the work and changes at Pine Ridge. A new, family centered pre-school with multiple funding sources was opened. Volunteers built a state-of-the-art play area, splash-park, mini-library, and born learning trail. An aquaponics project was built and then staffed and maintained by students from a nearby inner-city high school. An on-site medical clinic was opened. All Pine Ridge rental units were renovated, weatherized, and occupied. Organizations and businesses in the community were suggesting and supporting projects at Pine Ridge and other PHA complexes without being asked.

To the surprise of everyone involved, it turned out that the way to get rid of drugs and crime---problems that had plagued Pine Ridge for decades---was not new and better anti-drug and anti-crime programs. It was PHA staff and residents, police officers, businesses, and local organizations working together to make Pine Ridge a desirable place to live. In a survey done when it had reached this point, the two words residents used most often to describe Pine Ridge were "safe" and "quiet."

There was nothing done at the PHA as part of its change and problem-solving journey that cannot be done in other places. For the first few years the Board and staff did not have a clear idea of what needed to be done or how to do it. It was only later that they came to understand the importance of the eight change INSIGHTS.

The work done to turn the PHA into a Quality Level 6 model encouraged local organizations and businesses to focus less on the problems families faced and more on creating partnerships and teams to address problems the community faced. Over time this new change and problem-solving model produced a neighborhood that was safe and supportive, an array of change initiatives, and a broad range of new opportunities for neighborhood residents.

NEXT STEPS

After reading the Case Study share and discuss your reactions to the following questions.

- 1) What role did Big Picture Thinking play in this Case Study?

- 2) What initiatives and actions appear to have contributed the most to transforming this organization, other organizations and businesses, and the community?

- 3) Is there anything described in the Case Study that cannot be done in other communities? What might be barriers to making this happen?

PART II.

BUILD A NEW MODEL

As R. Buckminster Fuller suggests, community change involves two challenges. One is to build *a new model*. The other is to make this *new model* so different and so innovative that people quickly recognize that it *makes the existing model obsolete*.

TODAY'S ASSUMPTIONS

Lewis Powell's now well-known August 23, 1971, memo to Eugene Sydnor at the US Chamber of Commerce was a response to progressive peace, jobs, and justice initiatives of the 1950's and 1960's. This memo describes in detail what businesses, schools, universities, non-profit organizations, foundations, political parties, and think tanks can do to reassert the primacy of what Powell called the "American economic system" or simply the "American system." Wealthy and powerful people have followed Powell's advice for more than half a century. Working together they have assigned families the responsibility for being self-sufficient, and they have embedded eight assumptions in family problem-solving.

TOMORROW'S INSIGHTS

In combination the eight INSIGHTS in the right-hand column below are the framework for this paper and the Workbook that accompanies it. Communities and neighborhoods can use the paper and Workbook to create a new model that makes the existing model---the eight old assumptions---obsolete. The first four of the eight new INSIGHTS can be used to change the culture of local organizations, businesses, and the community. The next four can be used to solve the environmental, economic, and social problems communities face.

A SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

<u>OLD ASSUMPTIONS</u>	<u>TOMORROW'S INSIGHTS</u>
PROBLEM SOLVING SUPPORT	CULTURE CHANGE
1. There are three levels of quality---poor, OK, and excellent.	1. There are six levels of quality---poor, OK, excellent, innovative, transformed, and transforming.
2. There is one way to keep score---collect and share performance data.	2. Performance data can be used to keep score for quality levels 1-3. Change Stories will be needed to keep score for quality levels 4-6.
3. Competition will drive family problem solving in productive directions.	3. Changing communities will need ready access to an organization or business engaged in a successful culture change and problem-solving

journey.

4. Needed problem-solving support systems are in place.

4. Organizations and businesses will need to find new ways to work together.

ADDRESS FAMILY PROBLEMS

5. Families are responsible for being self-sufficient.
6. The free enterprise system is the most effective problem-solving framework.
7. Families can solve the environmental, economic, and social problems they face.
8. To the limited extent that families need it problem-solving assistance is available.

SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

5. Big Picture Thinking will need to be a feature of all efforts to solve community problems.
6. Communities will need to recruit and support Big Picture Thinkers.
7. Families cannot solve the environmental, economic, and social problems they face.
8. Communities cannot solve the problems families face, but they can solve the problems communities face.

NEXT STEPS

- 1) Communities can use the eight INSIGHTS to solve problems and drive and shape culture change. Who might be interested in doing this in your community?
- 2) It takes courage and humility to embrace change---to candidly explore and discuss doing something completely different in a completely different way. Identify and enlist the involvement of people who have these characteristics.
- 3) Make a special effort to recruit young people. They have nothing to lose and their future to gain by participating in a community-wide change effort.

PART III.

INSIGHTS FOR TOMORROW IN DETAIL

INSIGHTS 1-4

CULTURE CHANGE

INSIGHT 1: SIX LEVELS OF ORGANIZATIONAL QUALITY

THE JOURNEY TO QUALITY LEVEL 6

Three levels of organizational quality---poor, OK, and excellent---were common in the 20th century. It is going to take three additional levels of quality to solve problems in the 21st century. Organizations and businesses that operate at Quality Levels 1 and 2 cannot do effective problem-solving. They are too busy dealing with the fallout from their own organizational shortcomings. These organizations and businesses will need help to get to Quality Level 3. Then, they and other Level 3 organizations and businesses will need help as they set out on a journey from Quality Level 3 to as close to Quality Level 6 as they can get.

THE MATH OF PROBLEM SOLVING

U.S. environmental, economic, and social problems are getting worse. Going forward, the organizations and businesses now addressing these problems that aspire to operate at Quality Level 3 and continue to provide versions of the same programs and services they have provided for decades will not be successful 21st century problem solvers. They may be as good as they were decades ago, but the math of problem-solving and organizational change is now dramatically different.

Half a century ago the organizations and businesses that were operating at the top of Quality Level 3 were the best of the best. They were at the hundredth percentile of all problem solvers. Today, with three more levels of quality factored in, the top of Quality Level 6 is now the hundredth percentile, and what was excellent yesterday is now, at best, at the fiftieth percentile. Put another way, organizations and businesses setting out on a journey from Quality Level 3 through Quality Levels 4, 5, and 6 have the potential to be twice as innovative and effective as the best organizations and businesses four decades ago. They will need to be to solve tomorrow's community environmental, economic, and social problems.

NEXT STEPS

- (1) The best, fastest, path to success in creating a future for a community is for

local organizations and businesses to help and support each other as they set out on the journey to Quality Level 6 (see INSIGHT 7). What forms of help and support will be needed in your community?

- (2) Local funding sources can find ways to support local organizations and businesses that are actively working to help other local organizations and businesses reach and then move three levels of quality beyond excellent. Who in the community might initiate this? What funding sources might be involved?

INSIGHT 2: TWO WAYS TO KEEP SCORE

Data driven scorekeeping tracks success for Quality Levels 1, 2, and 3. Scorekeeping for Quality Levels 4, 5, and 6 is a matter of collecting and sharing Change Stories.

SCOREKEEPING TODAY

Most scorekeeping for today's efforts to address the environmental, economic, and social problems families face is data driven. These data are mostly of interest to funders, program providers, and program participants. (The goal of the XYZ Job Search Program last year was to help 8 of the 15 participants find jobs. We exceeded our goal; 10 participants found jobs.)

Today's scorekeeping for addressing problems families face does not describe results from the perspective of the community. "There were important, short-term employment related accomplishments here and there, but overall, our community lost 100 jobs last year. This led to a variety of negative outcomes including..."

SCOREKEEPING TOMORROW

Scorekeeping for the three levels of quality beyond excellent consists of collecting and sharing Change Stories. These Stories track problem solving, but they also document changes in people, organizations, businesses, and communities. They bring more people into change and problem-solving efforts. And they attract additional change and problem-solving resources.

There can never be too many people collecting Change Stories, and there can never be too many ways Change Stories are shared.

CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Telling Change Stories in any forum or context is a form of celebration. Telling Change Stories at celebrations has twice the impact. Celebrations that feature the sharing of Change Stories can be large, medium, or small events. They can take place in person, virtually, or both in person and virtually. Two people can celebrate; so can two thousand. Small celebrations can be daily events.

NEXT STEPS

- (1) Who in the community might serve on a Change Stories and Celebrations Team that collects and shares Change Stories and sponsors change and problem-solving celebrations, events, and activities? What will these people do? Who will track and ensure that this happens?

INSIGHT 3: REGULAR ACCESS TO A CHANGE MODEL

At least one organization or business that is making the journey from Quality Level 3 through Quality Levels 4, 5, and 6 will need to open its work to the community. This will ensure changes in its organization and culture and accelerate community problem solving efforts. In time this will make efforts to address the problems families face obsolete.

A THREE LEVELS OF QUALITY BEYOND EXCELLENT JOURNEY

The innovation and change journey described below began as an effort to turn an appallingly bad public housing authority (PHA) into an excellent one. This took work and capacity building but in less than three years the HUD designation for this PHA changed from Troubled (weak) to High Performing (excellent).

HUD had no designation beyond High Performing, but to solve community problems PHA's board and staff knew their organization had to get even better. This turned into a journey through three additional levels of quality. Level 4 was freeing the board and staff members to do Big Picture Thinking and to be creative and innovative. Level 5 involved transforming the organization to the point that it was driven to do the right thing right, the first time, every time. Level 6 was creating a transforming organization---one that was using insights and creativity to help organizations, businesses, consumers, and the community build a different culture and solve community environmental, economic, and social problems in different and better ways.

REPLICATING THIS JOURNEY

There was nothing done at the PHA and in the community described in the Case Study in PART I that cannot be done in other communities. In fact, it is fair to say that for the first few years the Board and staff of the PHA did not have a clear idea of what needed to be done or how to do it. It was only later that they came to understand that they had begun an effort to create a new community problem-solving model that made the old model obsolete.

The work done at the PHA to build a Quality Level 6 model encouraged local organizations and businesses to focus less on problems families face and more on creating partnerships that address problems at the community faced. This change and problem-solving model produced a neighborhood that was safe and supportive, an array of mutual support initiatives, and a range of opportunities for neighborhood residents.

NEXT STEPS

- (1) How will one or more local organizations or businesses that commit to moving three levels of quality beyond excellent be identified? Will this be a new organization or business? Existing organization or business? Some combination of new and existing organizations and/or businesses? How will this new entity be staffed? Who will serve on the board? What will it do? As it begins to move three levels of quality beyond excellent what challenges is it likely to encounter?
- (2) Which local organizations and businesses will play what roles in creating and sustaining this organization? What will these organizations and businesses do? How will young people be involved?
- (3) Who will do what to encourage and support this work? Who will track and ensure the success of this effort?
- (4) Might an effort be made to create a new organization that is on a Quality Level 6 journey and does community problem solving also be a vehicle to develop new, more effective ways community groups and organizations can work together (see INSIGHT 4 below)?

INSIGHT 4: NEW WAYS TO WORK TOGETHER

Organizations and businesses setting out to do something completely different in a completely different way will need to help and support each other. They will need to find innovative ways to support efforts to cycle and recycle through the eight INSIGHTS. And, acting individually and collectively they will need to provide support for new community problem solving ideas and projects, community-based ventures and initiatives, monetized and non-monetized investments in the community, and other creative approaches to community problem solving.

FIND VOLUNTEERS AND EXPERTS

Skilled, knowledgeable people from throughout the community will want to volunteer. Invite everyone to do so who expresses an interest. Seek out additional volunteers. This is a unique opportunity for people from a broad range of community organizations and businesses to work together to create something new, different, and uniquely successful.

BUILD MOMENTUM FOR CHANGE

The eight INSIGHTS can be used to drive and shape an effort to do something completely different in a completely different way. Everyone involved will need to participate in building momentum for a journey to doing the right things right the first time, every time.

A change journey that is not systematically building momentum will not be a journey for long. Building momentum is a matter of people saying YES and assuming other people will say YES when it is easier to say NO. It is a matter of inviting and embracing change. It is a matter of continually opening doors to change. It is freeing

people to do Big Picture Thinking---to generate solutions, pursue innovations, and do what is currently impossible. It is creating and sharing a change vocabulary.

Building momentum is also a matter of insuring that the community gets credit for all accomplishments. Momentum for a change and problem-solving journey cannot be allowed to attach itself to organizations or individuals. If the same people are appearing in the media and being given awards they need to step back and find new, fully inclusive ways to involve and recognize community residents. Finally, building momentum is a matter of embedding change in the community in a way that everyone can nurture it.

It is easier to encourage others to step forward if the people involved in a change and problem-solving journey continually remind each other that...

- Things are the way they are because they got that way.
- Without Big Picture Thinking things will get more “that way.”
- Some circling may be needed before it is clear what direction to take. What matters most is getting a journey off the ground.
- There is no way to tell who is good at creating something new until people leave the old behind.
- Change catalysts will appear if they feel they are welcome.
- With every pair of hands, you get a free brain.

PART III.

INSIGHTS FOR TOMORROW IN DETAIL (CONT.)

INSIGHTS 5-8

COMMUNITY PROBLEM SOLVING

INSIGHT 5: BIG PICTURE THINKING

INTERNET RESOURCES

George Monbiot's 4 minutes and 34 seconds video "How Wolves Change Rivers" is an excellent introduction to Big Picture Thinking. Have large and small groups watch and then discuss it. Collect and share similar videos and discuss them.

COPERNICUS AND DARWIN

The challenges Copernicus faced in getting people to accept the idea that the earth orbits the sun were career and life threatening. Darwin faced similar but less extreme challenges in getting people to accept the reality of natural selection. Even today Big Picture Thinking is not for the faint hearted.

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)

From 1995 to 1997 and continuing through 15 years of follow-up Vincent Felitti and a team he led used Big Picture Thinking to identify and measure the life-long impact of ten Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES). Among other outcomes their data suggest that compared with adults who experienced 1 or no ACES in their childhood adults who experienced four or more ACES are...

- Three times more likely to experience adult alcoholism
- Three times more likely to be chronically depressed
- Twice as likely to be a smoker
- Twice as likely to miss two or more days of work per month
- Twice as likely to experience serious financial problems
- Nine times more likely to attempt suicide
- Twice as likely to be a teen parent
- Twice as likely (women) and 4 times more likely (men) to initiate domestic violence

This work should have but has not prompted people in several fields to rethink the problem solving they are doing.

FATHER JOHN WANDLESS

Prior to entering the Catholic priesthood Father Wandless created, operated, and sold a successful business. When he completed seminary, he was assigned to an inner-city parish in Kansas City, Missouri at his request. One of his many initiatives there was to find ways to reduce the financial pressures on residents in one block of low-income households. As he got to know residents, he began to ask them about their financial challenges. Over time he learned that every household on the block was trapped in some sort of payment default/collection process. The most common form was pay-day loans, but unpaid fines, needed and unneeded home repairs, and used car sales and repair were also represented. Some of these disputes were resolved quickly at little cost. Others had reached the point that the only way to extricate the families involved was to buy their way out. Father Wandless raised the funds needed.

For decades, the social service providers operating in this neighborhood had been asking income questions, not expenditures questions. None of them recognized that the need for financial assistance was growing much faster than the amount of support their network was providing.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

In 2005 *PLOS Medicine* published “Why Most Public Research Findings are False,” a Big Picture Thinking driven essay by John Ioannidis, MD. In this essay Ioannidis demonstrated that given no more than details about the design of a research study he could accurately predict how frequently its findings would be proven false within five years. The pushback to his work was immediate, wide-spread, and extremely negative. In time most researchers have come to accept that the factors Ioannidis identified do contribute to false research findings, but they tend to minimize the impact this has on their work and the work of their colleagues.

TIME AND MASTERY IN SCHOOLS

Increments of *time*---minutes, hours, academic quarters, academic semesters, school years, recess, lunch periods, and more play a far more prominent role in what goes on in schools than subject *mastery*. There is substantial evidence that this focus on *time* detracts from rather than contributes to learning.

GRASSHOPPERS

Big Picture Thinking even applies to catching some types of grasshoppers. Catching these grasshoppers need not involve mad dashes after them when they are disturbed and jump into the air. Following a series of what will be seven increasingly shorter jumps it is possible to walk after them and simply pick them up. They may jump six times or eight times, but seven is by far the most common number.

THE OPPOSITE OF BIG PICTURE THINKING

It is also helpful to collect and distribute examples of the opposite of Big Picture Thinking. For example, for centuries textbooks in U.S. schools taught students that Columbus “discovered” America. These same textbooks described the people he encountered. It makes no sense to say Columbus encountered people on an island he “discovered.” This is the opposite of Big Picture Thinking. Their ancestors arrived on

this island four hundred years before he did. Columbus could not and did not “discover” an island that had been inhabited for centuries.

EXERCISE 6

BIG PICTURE THINKING

The questions that follow do not have simple answers. Their purpose is to encourage a new, Big Picture Thinking level of idea sharing and learning.

- 1) Estimate the extent of permanent damage done to date to the environment and to economic and social systems in your community.

None ☐ Limited ☐ Substantial ☐ Extinction Threatening ☐

- 2) Does the wealthiest 10% of the U.S. population dominate efforts to create just sustainable communities? Yes ☐ No ☐

How does their financial status impact the decisions they make in this regard?

- 3) Why does current U.S. environmental, economic, and social problem-solving focus primarily on problems families face? (See Lewis Powell's August 23, 1971, Memo to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Part II, Today's Assumptions.)

- 4) In your community what is the percent of current environmental, economic, and social problem-solving efforts that focus on...

Problems families face ____%; Problems communities face ____%

- 5) Do these approaches assume families are largely responsible for solving the environmental, economic, and social problems they face? Yes ☐ No ☐

- 6) Estimate the percent of problems family face that are being solved?

Less than 10% ☐ 25% ☐ 50% ☐ 75%+ ☐

- 7) Is 90% of the U.S. population getting relatively less wealthy? Yes ☐ No ☐

- 8) Does an increasing inability to solve the problems they face create frustrated, angry, and stressed U.S. families? Yes ☐ No ☐

NEXT STEPS

- (1) Encourage people to think about, talk about, and share their favorite examples of Big Picture Thinking. Also, do this with their favorite examples of small, poorly focused thinking.
- (2) Who in the community and what groups and organizations can encourage community residents and local organizations to make extensive use of Big Picture Thinking? Who will track and ensure the success of this effort?
- (3) Before watching Monbiot's video did you think wolves could change rivers? Do you now?
- (4) How did Monbiot arrive at the idea that wolves change rivers?
- (5) If Columbus did not "discover" America why has the myth that he did been so enduring?

INSIGHT 6: BIG PICTURE THINKERS

A TWO-PART PROCESS

Encouraging and driving cultural change is demanding work. Solving community environmental, economic, and social problems in new ways is also demanding work. Recruit at least some young people. They have nothing to lose and their future to gain. Empower people doing culture change and problem-solving to use Big Picture Thinking. This will attract progressively more change advocates.

CHANGE ORIENTED PEOPLE

Do not just "round up the usual suspects." Some young change-oriented people will find your change effort, but you will need to recruit more. Share your intent to find new, innovative ways to do something completely different in completely different ways. Distribute information widely. Invite change-oriented people to participate.

CHANGE ADVOCATES

E. M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory suggests that 2.5% of adults are Innovators, 13.5% are Early Adopters, 34% are the Early Majority, 34% are the Late Majority, and 16% are Laggards. The 16% of the population Rogers calls Innovators and Early Adopters are natural contributors to an effort to use the eight INSIGHTS.

Lawrence Kohlberg estimated that 85% of the population is in the first four stages of his six stages of moral development. These people take their moral views from people around them. The 15% in his fifth and sixth stages think through ethical principles for themselves. Attracting these people is another essential element in the success of any community change effort.

FIVE ROLES

Every successful effort to make a culture change and problem-solving journey has capable, committed people who play five roles. There are Silent Partners---

connected people who have the interest and capacity to intervene behind the scenes when necessary to keep a change journey moving forward. There are committed Change Catalysts who create new ways to promote change, solve problems, and refine organizations and businesses. There are dozens of capable Change Advocates who find ways to say YES instead of NO. There are dozens of dedicated front line Problem Solvers. And there are some capable advisors from outside the change and problem-solving effort who help identify and remove barriers to success.

A LEADERSHIP TEAM WITHOUT LEADERS

Identify and loosely organize a group of 6-12 change-oriented people who will provide shared leadership for a successful community problem-solving and organizational change and journey. Make a special effort to include people under the age of 35. Make it clear that everyone involved will make important contributions to this effort. Agree that members of the group will...

- Leave the past behind
- Embrace change
- Share leadership and other responsibilities
- Welcome people who find their way to the group
- Share tasks
- Share information
- Use a broad understanding of the word “community”

Without starting on a change and problem-solving journey there is no way to tell in advance who has the will and capacity to be an effective team member. In retrospect it will become clear that the people involved in successful change and problem-solving efforts share the following characteristics.

- A commitment to change and problem-solving
- A sense of urgency
- The capacity to do Big Picture Thinking
- Persistence
- Quiet confidence
- Humility

THE NEXT GENERATION OF CHANGE ADVOCATES

The people who will graduate from high school and college over the next twenty years will enter a far different world than graduates of the past twenty years. Unless transformation at the level described in this Workbook occurs their world is likely to have the following features. The poorest 90% of the U.S. population will get even less wealthy. The middle class will shrink even more. Robotics, artificial intelligence, and other forms of technology will reshape society and the job market. Even families with two full-time wage earners will be priced out of most housing markets. People at all income levels will be increasingly anxiety driven, stressed, and angry.

Grim as all this seems, there is an upside. There will be more people open to change in the next generation than there are now. Rapid, substantive change will not be optional. It will be imperative.

Almost certainly next generation change agents will make use of economist Hazel Henderson's observation that half of the U.S. economy is monetized, and half is non-monetized. As monetized compensation becomes less available to low- and moderate-income people, they will have no choice but to grow the non-monetized portion of their local economy.

EXERCISE 7 CHANGE ADVOCATES, ROLE PLAYERS, AND TEAMS WITHOUT LEADERS

Begin identifying change advocates, find people who can play change roles, and create teams to do something that has not been done before in the community. Start building the capacity of community residents to create a just sustainable community.

INSIGHT 7: FAMILIES CANNOT SOLVE THE PROBLEMS THEY FACE

There is a growing disconnect between the problems families are expected to solve and the problems they can solve.

The idea that U.S. families are responsible for solving the environmental, economic, and social problems they face made some sense in a nation of small towns, local banks, and healthy local economies. It makes no sense today. The population of rural areas is shrinking, big metropolitan areas with jobs but limited affordable housing are growing, and multi-national corporations dominate the economy.

A FRAMEWORK FOR ADDRESSING PROBLEMS FAMILIES FACE

Most organizations and businesses that address problems families face do not work from a complete set of definitions and most do not use a logical problem-solving framework.

If the labels below do not work for your organization or business, substitute those you prefer. The *vision* that drives most efforts to address family environmental, economic, and social problems is often some version of assuming that families are responsible for solving the problems they face. The *mission* that flows from this *vision* typically involves some combination of family self-reliance, support for free enterprise economic principles, and a limited role for government. The *problem* and *strategy* choices that flow from this *vision* and *mission* are intended to identify and fix problems individuals and families face.

An example follows of a *vision*, *mission*, *problems*, and *strategies* framework for addressing problems families face.

Vision

Self-reliant families that successfully address the problems they face

Mission

Encourage and promote free enterprise,
family self-reliance, and limited government

Problems and Strategies

Environmental Problems

- A. Environmental damage to family members and their property
 - Civil litigation
 - Compensation for victims
 - Prosecute criminal offenses
 - Ensure reliable household supplies of energy/water

Economic Problems

- B. Unemployment and underemployment
 - Increase years of school completed
 - Job related training and assistance
 - Encourage and support entrepreneurs
- C. Unmet basic needs
 - Cash and non-cash support
 - Provide direct and indirect subsidies
- D. Unaffordable housing
 - Create a housing market
 - Provide direct and indirect subsidies
- E. Unaffordable health care
 - Create a health care market
 - Provide direct and indirect subsidies

Social Problems

- F. Unsafe households
 - Fire and police services
 - Social programs and services
 - A criminal justice system
- G. Discrimination
 - Provide compensation
 - Prosecute criminal offenses
 - Civil litigation
- H. Poorly prepared K-12 students
 - Make students and families responsible for student success

EXERCISE 8
RESULTS

Work from the list above or a similar list to identify problems families face that local organizations and businesses are addressing and strategies they are pursuing. Have any of these problems been solved? Using what strategies? If not, why not?

EXERCISE 9 ADDRESSING FAMILY PROBLEMS

Again, the questions that follow do not have simple answers. Their purpose is to familiarize people with family problem solving. Specifically, this Exercise combined with Big Picture Thinking can be used to explore the assumption that US families at all income levels can and should solve the environmental, economic, and social problems they face. Share and discuss your answers.

- 1) How much permanent damage will be done to the environment and to economic and social systems in the U.S over the next 50 years? (Check one box)
None ☐ Limited ☐ Substantial ☐ Extinction Threatening ☐
- 2) In fifty years what percent of today's children who are still alive will have suffered significant financial, physical, and emotional damage relating to environmental, economic, and social change? (Check one box)
Less than 10% ☐ 11-25% ☐ 26-50% ☐ 51%+ ☐
- 3) How important is it to involve young people in efforts to create just sustainable communities. (Check one box)
Not important ☐ Somewhat Important ☐ Important ☐ Very important ☐
- 4) What is the best way to create a just sustainable community?
☐ Improve the current model; or
☐ Create a new model that makes the current model obsolete.
- 5) In 2030 what percent of environmental, economic, and social problem-solving will need to focus on... Problems families face __%; Problems communities face __%
- 6) All community problems are interrelated. Would this make it possible for organizations and businesses with different visions, missions, and problem-solving objectives to work together to create a just, sustainable community?
Yes ☐ No ☐
- 7) Are families that are getting less wealthy more or less likely to solve environmental, economic, and social problem problems they face? More likely ☐ Less likely ☐
- 8) Are there people now creating problem-solving approaches that address a mix of

problems families face and a mix of problems communities face. Yes ☐ No ☐

Is this the path forward? Yes ☐ No ☐

- 9) Does the path to creating just sustainable communities involve solving problems communities face in ways that have the active support of the entire community.

Yes ☐ No ☐

- 10) Before reading the Change Stories and Case Study did you think it is possible to engage people from across a community in efforts to solve environmental, economic, and social problems? Yes ☐ No ☐

- 11) After reading and discussing the Change Stories and Case Study do you now think this is possible? Why or why not? Yes ☐ No ☐

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PROBLEM-SOLVING COMPARED

Organizations and businesses can use the columns below or columns of their design to get a sense of the relative success of their efforts to address problems families face and their efforts to solve problems communities face.

Addressing Family Problems

Vision

Self-reliant families that solve the problems they face

Mission

Encourage and promote free enterprise, limited government, and family self-reliance

Problems and Strategies

Environmental Problems

A. Environmental damage to families and personal property

Civil litigation

Compensation for victims

Prosecute criminal offenses

Reliable, affordable household supplies of energy/water

Economic Problems

Solving Community Problems

Vision

Create one of 250 just sustainable communities by 2030

Mission

Successfully promote culture change and solve some problems the community faces by 2027. Solve an array of these problems by 2030.

Problems and Solutions

Environmental Problems

A. Environmental damage to the community

Rural/urban remediation initiatives

Rural/urban sustainability initiatives

Economic Problems

B. Unemployment and Underemployment
Build a strong economy
Increase years of school completed
Job related training and assistance

C. Unmet basic needs
Cash and non-cash support
Provide direct and indirect subsidies

D. Unaffordable housing
Create a housing market
Provide direct and indirect subsidies

E. Unaffordable health care
Create a health care market
Provide direct and indirect subsidies

Social Problems

F. Unsafe, insecure individuals/households
Fire and police services
Social programs and services

G. Discrimination directed toward individuals
Provide compensation
Prosecute criminal offenses
Civil litigation
A criminal justice system

H. Poorly prepared K-12 students
Make students and families
responsible for student success

B. A weak local economy (monetized
and non-monetized)
Cooperative initiatives
Non-monetized initiatives

Social Problems

C. An unsafe community
Treat people with dignity, respect
Expand opportunities to interact
Create and link safe
neighborhoods

D. Communities limit access to life,
liberty, and happiness
Identify causes, design and
implement community based
solutions
Community health initiatives
Education opportunities for all

E. Access to citizenship is limited
Identify causes; design and
implement community based
solutions
Education opportunities for all

NEXT STEPS

- (1) Most funding sources pay for short term family problem solving. Why?
- (2) Why and when did funders and program delivery organizations begin working from variations of the vision, mission, list of problems families face, and strategies to address the problems that appear above? (Note: Lewis Powell's August 23, 1971, Memorandum to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is a useful resource here.)
- (3) In the face of trend data that confirm that the strategies organizations and businesses use to address problems families face do not solve these problems why has the commitment to using these strategies been so enduring? (Note: Lewis Powell's August 23, 1971, Memorandum is also a useful resource here.)

- (4) Few public and non-profit funding sources pay for solving the problems communities face. Why? Many funding sources confuse family and community problem solving. Why?
- (5) Why is so little attention given to comparing the differences between efforts to address the environmental, economic, and social problems families face and efforts to solve the environmental, economic, and social problems communities face?
- (6) Communities can use the eight INSIGHTS to solve the problems they face, and to drive and shape culture change. Who might be interested in doing this in your community?
- (7) It takes courage and humility to embrace change---to candidly explore and discuss doing something completely different in a completely different way. Identify and enlist the involvement of young people who have these characteristics. They have nothing to lose and their future to gain by participating in a community-wide change effort.

INSIGHT 8: NEW WAYS TO WORK TOGETHER

The 90% of US families who are losing ground financially and being battered by external and internal barriers to doing the impossible are not going to overcome the environmental, economic, and social problems they face but did not create. In contrast, the environmental, economic, and social problems communities face have affordable, local solutions. Making a transition from trying unsuccessfully to solve problems families face to solving the problems communities face is the most realistic way forward.

EXERCISE 10

PRIORITIZE PROBLEMS THE COMMUNITY FACES

Add any additional benefits of solving problems communities face to the list above. Rearrange this revised list of benefits in priority order for your community.

PRIORITY ORDER		
<u>CURRENT ORDER</u>	<u>WITH ADDITIONS</u>	<u>REASON(S) FOR THESE CHOICES</u>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

5.

EXERCISE 11 NEW SOLUTIONS FOR COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Examples of new solutions for community problems in urban and rural areas appear throughout this WORKBOOK. Use this EXERCISE to identify potential local solutions for community problems. Identify people, organizations, and businesses in your community that might help implement these solutions.

<u>NEW PROBLEMS</u>	<u>NEW SOLUTIONS</u>	<u>POTENTIAL TEAM MEMBERS</u>
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ENVIRONMENTAL

- A. Environmental damage to communities

ECONOMIC

- B. A weak local economy (monetized and non-monetized)

SOCIAL

- C. The community is unsafe
- D. The community limits access to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness
- E. The community limits access to citizenship

THE BENEFITS OF SOLVING PROBLEMS COMMUNITIES FACE

When organizations and businesses switch from addressing problems families face to solving problems communities face this produces the following benefits.

- (1) Successful community problem solving eliminates the need to address problems families face.
- (2) Advocates of holding families responsible for solving environmental, economic, and social problems they face either assume that families acting alone can solve national and global problems, or they believe that there is benefit in these problems not being solved. A more just, realistic, and promising starting point is assuming that communities are responsible for solving community problems.
- (3) Efforts to address problems families face generate competition between providers and require monetized solutions. Community problem solving relies on inexpensive, inclusive, cooperative, monetized, and non-monetized solutions. It

allows organizations and businesses to build a stronger, more caring community that offers everyone an improved quality of life.

- (4) Efforts to address problems families face assume that these problems are not related and that there is no reason to work cooperatively. Community problem solving assumes that community problems are related, and it encourages local organizations and businesses to work together to find solutions.
- (5) The efforts of organizations and businesses to address the problems families face are increasingly controversial. Community problem solving can be framed in ways the entire community supports.
- (6) Data driven program scorekeeping for family problem solving does not consider the overall impact on the problem or the community. Sharing Change Stories does this and more.
- (7) Solving community problems transforms organizations, businesses, and the community.

COMMUNITY PROBLEM SOLVING OPTIONS

There are relatively few strategies available to address the problems that families face, and these strategies tend to be expensive. The problem of unemployment and underemployment is an example. The options available are largely limited to providing subsidies for businesses, making applicants more attractive to employers, and supporting entrepreneurship.

In contrast, there are dozens of inexpensive, local solutions for the community-wide version of this problem---a weak local monetized and non-monetized economy. Examples include micro-lending programs, rural/urban food partnerships, local currencies, aquaponics projects, community lending, seniors/youth technology partnerships, community gardens, greatly expanded library services, community owned ventures, and more. This work can include any form of promoting strong local economies, encouraging mutual support initiatives, and creating opportunities for community residents.

Similarly, there are few strategies available to help families feel safe and secure. Typically, this is limited to expanded social programs and services, expanded fire and police protection, and criminal justice initiatives. The community version of this problem is unsafe communities. There are many inexpensive ways organizations can use Big Picture Thinking to promote resident interaction that makes everyone safer.

The economist Hazel Henderson has usefully pointed out that half of all US economic activity is monetized, and half is not. The half that is not is a combination of caring, sharing, sustainable practices, home based production, volunteering, and more. It also includes contributions from Mother Nature. It is easier, cheaper, and faster to

design and implement effective non-monetized community-based solutions for environmental, economic, and social problems than it is to create monetized solutions.

EXERCISE 12

COMMUNITY PROBLEM SOLVING EXAMPLES

Two examples of additions to a local economy follow. Discuss them then suggest and explore other ideas.

LABOR POOLS

It is easy to imagine communities organizing labor pools at the request of community residents and local employers and signing contracts with these employers to provide a specified number of employees daily, weekly, or monthly. Depending on the preferences of these workers the compensation communities provide them can be monetized, non-monetized, or both.

COOPERATIVE LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

It is also easy to imagine families living cooperatively year around in what are now family summer camps that have cabins for families surrounding a shared meal site, shower and bathroom facilities, and indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities.

OTHER IDEAS

Sketch out the work that will be done to identify and recruit people who make up Rogers' 16% and Kohlberg's 15% of the population who do Big Picture Thinking.

PROBLEM SOLVING

Any effort to solve one community problem contributes to the solution of others. The following are examples of Big Picture Thinking about community problems.

- In today's global economy the idea that households are solely or even largely responsible for generating household income is unrealistic. One just sustainable alternative is for communities to expand the non-monetized aspects of their local economy---promoting co-ops, encouraging labor exchanges, building mutual support networks, and expanding local opportunities to create non-monetized financial security.
- The form community problem solving takes can change when necessary. For example, as its financial situation deteriorated over time the same café in a small town has been a moderately successful business; a popular, money-losing investment; and a much-appreciated civic club activity.
- No one needs to own everything they use. If fees and donations cover the costs there is no limit to what a local library could check out---lawn mowers, snow blowers, health care equipment, artwork, and camping equipment are among the many possibilities.
- A hundred dollars paid to a neighbor for providing a service potentially turns into thousands of dollars of community economic activity if this \$100 passes through many hands before it leaves the community.

URBAN AND RURAL PROBLEM-SOLVING EXAMPLES

The ideas that are most likely to be implemented successfully are those that are generated locally. What follows is not a script. It is simply a list of ideas and examples that might help a community generate its own ideas or versions of these ideas.

URBAN EXAMPLES

Old Rex

A hit and run driver knocked down part of the fence around old Rex's yard and the driver fled. Rex's owner worked nights and could not afford to fix the fence so she started chaining Rex outside when she went to work. He barked until she came home.

It can take a city months to solve a problem like this, and it will aggravate the dog owner and neighbors and cost the city far more than it gets back in fees and fines. Neighbors could solve this problem the next day at no cost. In older communities there are fence posts and fencing in yards that are free for the asking. A volunteer Community Repair Team could easily obtain what it needed to repair Rex's fence simply by asking. Rex's owner will appreciate this as will the neighbors and Rex. The team members will feel good. The next community project will involve more people.

Trash

Local governments view getting trash, dead limbs, and assorted junk out of yards as an expensive, ten-mile problem---or whatever the distance is to the local landfill. When voluntary compliance is not enough, they use housing and nuisance codes and city staff or contractors to get this material to the landfill. Invariably, this costs more than the fees and fines the city collects, and the burden of enforcement falls on people who are least able to comply---elderly residents, single mothers with limited incomes, and people with disabilities.

Often when citations are issued homeowners, landlords, tenants, or the next-door neighbors have paid for trash service. If this trash had been in the proper bags or containers and put out in the right place on the right day, it would have been picked up.

Viewed this way trash is an inexpensive 50-foot problem, not an expensive 10-mile problem. Neighbors cannot solve 10-mile trash problems, but they can move trash 50 feet to the curb or alley. For the money now spent on code enforcement cities could support community efforts in to recruit volunteers to put out trash. Community groups and organizations could use these funds to support activities and events that improve their community's appearance and build community cohesiveness.

Iris, Lilacs, Vegetables, and Motion Lights

An urban neighborhood could announce and celebrate its cohesiveness at minimal cost. Flowers, bushes, and trees could be planted the same distance from the street in every front yard or in pots on every porch. These rows of plantings would tie neighbors to neighbors. It would also be possible to plant, raise, and share vegetables and fruit in a way that ties neighbors to neighbors. Installing motion detector lights in

alleys is another way to build cohesiveness. These lights can be placed so that alleys light up from end to end as someone walks or drives down them.

Cinnamon

A big city was having trouble mowing the vacant lots owned by the city's Community Development Department. In looking into this a reporter found a block where city owned lots were well maintained. Cinnamon the horse was the reason. Rather than complaining Cinnamon's owner lets her graze in city owned lots.

RURAL EXAMPLES

Evolving Ventures

Rural communities are finding that local, long accepted roles of the private, non-profit, and public sectors are blurring. Here is an example.

The cafe in a small town was never hugely profitable, but for decades it produced a reasonable living for its owners and created part-time employment for residents. During these years the local bank provided financing for a series of owners.

After decades of declining revenues and rising expenses the cafe reached the point of producing annual revenue that was \$10,000 short of providing a fair return for the owners. The local banker approached 50 area residents and asked them to invest \$200 annually in the cafe guaranteeing them they would lose their money. This annual infusion of cash worked for a while, but this arrangement could not be sustained.

The local bank took possession of the café and donated it to a civic club on two conditions. The club agreed to open it from 6 to 10 every morning and serve breakfast. Town residents still have a place to meet and talk, and with an all-volunteer staff the cafe generates enough revenue to cover expenses and support civic events and projects.

Aquaponics

There is indoor space in small towns and inner cities that could be used for an aquaponics site---fish grown in tanks and herbs and vegetables grown in beds above the tanks fed by water pumped from the tanks. School staff and project partners, and local businesses could recruit and support the efforts of 14- to 18-year-olds who would "own" and operate this project. Some food could be sold, and some could be distributed to community residents. Any proceeds would go back into the project. In time the youth involved could start business ventures installing and maintaining aquaponics tanks. This could generate enough capacity to make it possible to provide herbs, vegetables, and fish under contract to high end restaurants in urban areas.

Technology Access

A civic organization could pay for internet access and communication devices for elderly residents and residents with disabilities that would allow them to communicate electronically with each other and with friends and family members across the country. Local high school students could help their neighbors use this

equipment and technology. Friends and family members living out of the area could make donations to this project to cover its operating costs, and, potentially, to make community improvements of interest and benefit to the participating youth. (Note: this idea surfaced at a community improvement meeting one evening and was fully funded by eight o'clock the next morning when a meeting participant dropped by the local cafe and asked people there to join him in putting up the money needed.)

Expanded Library Services

No one needs to own everything they use. There is no limit to what a small-town library could make available, check out, or distribute to residents. In addition to checking out books, magazines, and electronic media and games a library could check out boats, lawnmowers, snow blowers, power washers, health care equipment, artwork, camping trailers and equipment, etc. Fees and donations could cover the costs associated with distributing these items.

Family Space

Closed schools, churches, commercial spaces, and adjacent land could be converted to recreation areas for residents. This could include space for a climbing wall, bounce house, miniature golf course, croquet court, splash-park, driving range, putting green, horseshoe pit, bocce court, handicrafts, a fitness center, and more.

EXERCISE 13

THINKING ABOUT COMMUNITY PROBLEM SOLVING

- (1) Why do most organizations and businesses largely overlook the long-term benefits of solving the problems communities face?
- (2) Is it time to increase neighborhood and community problem solving efforts and reduce family problem solving efforts? Do young people view this differently than older people? If so, why? If not, why not? If this is not the time to switch to community problem solving, what will be done to reach this point? Who will lead this effort? Who will ensure that this happens?
- (3) What is the current mix of family problem solving and community problem solving being done in the community? What will this mix be in one year? Five years? What are the barriers to making this happen? Who will do what to overcome these barriers? Who will track and ensure success?
- (4) Explore what would happen if your community made a concerted effort to increase the non-monetized percentage of its economic activity. How would its economy and culture change?
- (5) Who will be involved in creating, supporting, and tracking the success of community problem solving teams?

EXERCISE 14

SOLUTIONS FOR COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Suggest possible solutions for the following problems. In these examples half the Big Picture Thinking has been done. Your task is to do the rest.

1. There are all sorts of vacation rentals. Could shrinking rural communities be converted to multiple era dude towns? If so, how might this work?
2. Could senior citizens and teenagers create two-person micro-business partnerships? If so, what might each of the parties contribute, what would they sell, and how might they market their products or services?
3. What win-win arrangements could senior citizens with limited technology skills and teenagers looking for part-time work who have no job experience and/or students who need community service hours create?
4. How could snow removal be done in mid-town areas with large numbers of senior citizens, residents with disabilities, and a homeless shelter?
5. Could volunteers that include capable gardeners plant and harvest vegetables and fruits grown in yards in upscale neighborhoods for donation to local food programs?

EXERCISE 15

SOLVING PROBLEMS COMMUNITIES FACE

Considering the benefits of solving problems communities face---permanent, low-cost local solutions, justice, and sustainability---it is worth exploring why this problem-solving approach is not widely used. Ask yourselves. Ask other people. Share what you find. Prioritize the reasons. Consider the implications.

NEXT STEPS

- (1) Who in the community might help recruit and support innovators and change agents? Who will track and ensure the success of this fort?
- (2) What roles might innovators and change agents play in using the eight INSIGHTS? In the way the community addresses the community environmental, economic, and social problems it faces? What might these role players do? How will they be recruited and by whom? Who will track and ensure the success of these efforts?
- (3) Who in the community might become capable members of change and problem-solving teams? Who in the community will do what to recruit members and support these teams? Who will track and ensure the success of these efforts?

- (4) The change-oriented people involved in the initial stages of a change and problem-solving journey will need to solicit and produce increasingly insightful answers to three questions.
- a. Does the problem solving we are doing focus on the right things?
There is no right way to do the wrong thing. Have we clearly and logically described what we have chosen to do? Is this the right thing to do? If so, why? If not, why not?
 - b. Are we doing the right things, right?
It is not enough to do the right things. Successful problem solving necessarily involves doing the right things, right. Are we doing this?
 - c. Are we doing the right things, right, the first time, every time?
It is not enough to do the right things right sooner or later. It is necessary to do this by design the first time, every time. Are we doing this? This requires different values and a different change, problem solving, and organizational culture. Are we creating these values and this new culture? If not, what will we need to do differently?
- (5) Community groups and the boards and staff of community organizations engaged in change efforts have great latitude in deciding how often and in what context to ask follow-up questions such as the following. Did we do what we intended to do? Could this have been done better? Is there a way we can involve more people, particularly more young people? Are there better ways to produce and share the results of these efforts?
- (6) Periodically repeat this work. Compare your initial and later responses.

A FRAMEWORK FOR SOLVING PROBLEMS COMMUNITIES FACE

The labels for elements of community problem solving frameworks vary. Again, if the labels below do not work for your community, substitute labels you prefer. The *vision* that drives most community environmental, economic, and social problem solving is some version of communities being responsible for creating just and sustainable solutions for community problems. The *mission* that flows from this *vision* typically involves some combination of culture change, creating strong local economies, community wellness, sustainability, and a major decision-making role for residents, organizations, and local businesses. The *problems* and *solutions* choices that flow from this vision and mission focus on solving problems the community faces and changing the community's culture. The following is a sample framework for solving problems communities face.

Vision

Create one of 250 just sustainable communities by 2030

Mission

Successfully promote culture change and solve some problems the community faces by 2027. Solve an array of these problems by 2030.

Problems and Solutions

Environmental Problems

- A. Environmental damage to communities
 - Urban/rural remediation initiatives
 - Urban/rural sustainability initiatives

Economic Problems

- B. A weak local economy (monetized and non-monetized)
 - Build a strong local economy
 - Create and support cooperative initiatives
 - Create and support non-monetized initiatives

Social Problems

- C. The community is unsafe
 - Treat everyone with dignity and respect
 - Expand opportunities for people to interact
 - Create and link safe neighborhoods
- D. The community limits access to life, liberty, and happiness
 - Identify causes, design and implement community-based solutions
 - Prevent premature deaths
 - Education opportunities for all
- E. The community limits access to citizenship
 - Identify causes, design and implement community-based solutions
 - Education opportunities for all

PART IV. TROUBLE SHOOTING

EXTERNAL BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Directly and indirectly wealthy and powerful people in the US are the principal beneficiaries of the family problem solving strategies they advocate. They minimize and obscure the role they play in this regard, and they minimize mistakes they make. In combination this is what led R. Buckminster Fuller to conclude that “You never change things by fighting the existing reality.” Four important elements of “the existing reality” in the US follow.

100% AND 90% FAILURE

If it seems unfair to suggest that 100% of US communities are facing environmental disaster and 90% of US households are facing economic disaster, ask people interested in these topics to participate in an “Is the US Failing” work session. Mountains of relevant data are available. Have this group create lists of questions about environmental problems US communities face, and economic problems US households face. Include some atypical but revealing questions. For example, what percent of US college graduates move back home when they graduate, and what percent of households have the cash needed to cover a \$400 emergency. Reject questions that are not fact based. Have participants share and discuss their work.

WEALTH INEQUALITY IS GROWING

Collecting and sharing trend data relating to wealth inequality in the U.S. is a useful starting point for understanding what has happened in the U.S. since the early 1970s. Ask people interested in creating just sustainable communities to do this and share their findings. Explore global, national, state, and local aspects of environmental, economic, and social problems over time. The following are examples.

- The U.S. rank among UN member nations in meeting seventeen UN Sustainable Development Goals is declining. Currently the U.S. ranks 41st among UN member nations, just behind Cuba and just ahead of Bulgaria, both of which are widely considered to be developing nations. (Rankings---UN Sustainable Development Report 2022---SDG Index.)
- “The share of [U.S.] adults who live in middle-income households fell from 61% in 1971 to 50% in 2021...In 1970 adults in middle-income households accounted for 62% of aggregate income, a share that fell to 42% in 2020.” (How the American Middle Class Has Changed in the Last Five Decades; Pew Research Center paper, Rakesh Kochhar and Stella Sechopoulos, April 20, 2022.)
- “The difference between 1975 and 2018 in terms of income taken home by the bottom 90%, is 17 percentage points---or \$2.5 trillion in a single year. That is so large it becomes difficult to interpret. But that is what happens when incomes at the bottom grow at a rate that’s about 20 percent of GDP, and top incomes grow at 300% of GDP over four decades.” (A \$2.5 Trillion Question: What If Income Grew Like GDP Did; Rand Corporation paper, Carter C. Price and Kathryn Edwards, October 6, 2020.)
- From 1979 to 2021 earnings of the top 0.1% of U.S. households increased by 465%. Earnings of the bottom 90% increased by 29%. The share of all earnings going to the top 0.1% of earners increased from 1.6% to 5.9% (Gould and Kandra, Economic Policy Institute paper, December 2022.)

THE US IS UN-DEVELOPING

The United Nations characterizes countries as either developed or developing, and the UN has taken on the challenge of helping developing nations become developed nations. There is a third category the UN does not recognize that deserves attention---The US and some other developed nations are un-developing.

POST-TRUTH DISCOURSE IS INCREASINGLY COMMON

The Oxford Dictionary Word of the Year in 2016 was post-truth. Post-truth relates to or denotes “circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal beliefs.” Post-truth thinking has not and will not produce innovative problem solutions. It will not create just sustainable communities. And, it will not address 100% and 90% failures.

FAMILIES CANNOT SOLVE THE PROBLEMS THEY FACE

For half a century a dominant assumption in the US has been that families can and should address the environmental, economic, and social problems they

face. In the last two decades it has become increasingly clear that this is not possible for a growing number of families.

INTERNAL BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Half of the work involved in transforming a community involves transforming the culture of the community and the organizations and businesses there. The other half is switching from unsuccessfully addressing environmental, economic, and social problems families face to solving problems communities face. Announce at the outset of any community change effort that going forward it will be based on the eight INSIGHTS, and that in time everyone involved will be doing the right thing right, the first time, every time. Then, help each other make this happen.

LOW EXPECTATIONS

People do not do the right thing right the first time every time for five reasons. They do not expect to and no one around them expects them to either. Three other reasons they fail to do this have to do with labeling, sorting, and problem-solving framework deficiencies. It makes sense to address these shortcomings now no matter what choices are made later in terms of an appropriate mix of addressing family problems and solving community problems.

LABELING MISTAKES

Compare written definitions, if any exist, for the sets of family and community problem-solving work the organizations and businesses represented in a change effort are doing. Few communities make clear distinctions between the two approaches to problem solving. The following is a generic framework for both sets of problem-solving elements.

Target Population(s)

Some organizations and businesses identify a high priority target population.

Vision

A vision is larger than a mission. It is an aspirational statement regarding the future circumstances and/or fate of some or everyone and/or some or everything now hurtling through space on planet earth.

Mission

A mission is smaller than a vision. It is an aspirational statement that describes what an organization, community, or business will do to realize its vision.

Values

Some organizations and communities set out what they consider to be important values. Generally, these have to do with the nature and quality of relationships people have with other people and the planet.

Problems

A problem is a quantifiable condition. Communities that are addressing both

should have separate lists of family problems and community problems. In practice, this rarely happens. Improbable as this seems, most of the organizations and businesses that exist to address problems that communities face are working in whole or in part from a list of problems that families face.

Causes

Causes are reasons problems exist. Causes of family problems have to do with the behavior of individuals and households. Causes of community problems have their origins in environmental, economic, and social systems.

Solutions and Strategies

Organizations and businesses tend to use the words strategy and solution interchangeably. Organizations and businesses that choose to address problems communities face can successfully design and implement long-term solutions. It makes sense for them to talk about and seek problem solutions. It is reasonable to limit the use of the word strategy to efforts to address the problems that families face because these problems rarely have long-term solutions.

Is your organization, business, and community making clear distinctions between the problems families face and the problems communities face? Is it doing different scorekeeping for the two sets of problems? Share your responses.

SORTING MISTAKES

Participants in a community problem-solving exercise identified the following “housing problems” in their community.

HOUSING PROBLEMS

- A. Affordable housing is not close to where the jobs are
- B. Discrimination
- C. Limited availability of housing tax credits
- D. We are not doing enough for single moms with kids
- E. The bus company needs to add routes to areas with jobs
- F. The Human Relations Commission does not have enough staff
- G. There is not enough affordable housing
- H. Interest rates are going up

Use the four elements of problem-solving frameworks below to sort the “problems” listed above. Then, compare the results with those on the next page. If possible, link solutions or strategies to the problem causes they address.

Target Population(s)

Problem(s)

Problem Cause(s)

Solutions/Strategies to Address Problem Causes

Target Population(s)

(D) Single moms with kids

Problem(s)

(G) Not enough affordable housing

Problem Causes

(B) Discrimination

(H) High Interest rates

(A) Job locations

Solutions/Strategies to Address Problem Causes

(F) More Human
Relations staff

C) Expand the affordable housing
tax credit program

(E) Add bus routes

UNCLEAR, INCOMPLETE PROBLEM-SOLVING FRAMEWORKS

The following is a real but modified for anonymity example of confusion and uncertainty about problem solving frameworks.

Mission Statement

The XYZ Center for ABC University inspires ABC to realize a more just and sustainable world through service, scholarship, and community partnerships.

As the set of problem-solving definitions above makes clear this “Mission Statement” is more than a mission. It is an incomplete problem-solving framework.

Problem solving frameworks should flow downward from a target population (if one is identified) through a vision, mission, problems, problem causes, and either solutions or strategies. This rarely happens. The “Mission Statement” above is an example of two common shortcomings. It blurs the distinctions between the three (or four) problem solving elements it contains, and it is an incomplete problem-solving framework.

To the extent possible, work from the generic set of definitions to array the words in this Mission Statement in a vision, mission, problem solving, problem causes, and solutions/strategies framework. Then, compare your results with the results on the next page.

VISION

MISSION

PROBLEMS

PROBLEM CAUSES

SOLUTIONS/STRATEGIES

VISION

...a more just sustainable world...

MISSION

...Inspire(s) ABC to realize a more just sustainable world...

PROBLEMS

PROBLEM CAUSES

SOLUTIONS AND/OR STRATEGIES

...service, scholarship, and community partnerships.

PART V.

SET OUT ON A CHANGE JOURNEY

“Alice laughed. ‘There’s no use trying,’ she said: ‘one can’t believe impossible things.’ ‘I daresay you haven’t had much practice,’ said the Queen. “When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day.”

Through the Looking Glass

---Lewis Carroll

THE QUEEN IS RIGHT

It is appropriate to end this paper with Lewis Carroll’s Queen. It is possible to believe impossible things because it is possible to do tomorrow what is impossible to do today.

Communities that use the eight INSIGHTS can set out on a journey to create a new model that makes their existing model obsolete. Specifically, they can create a national network of 250 just sustainable communities by the year 2030.

THREE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Three questions drawn from R. Buckminster Fuller’s insights about change in the Overview need to be continuous topics of conversation.

- How soon can we stop “fighting the existing reality?”
- What features will our “new model” need?
- How and why will our “new model” make the current model “obsolete.”

SEVEN CHANGE BUILDING BLOCKS

It takes seven building blocks to create a solid foundation for change. It is not possible to put all seven building blocks in place immediately, but it is possible to develop them as they are needed to create a just sustainable community.

WHO

1. Big Picture Thinkers and Early Adopters
People who think and act at levels of culture change and problem solving one, two, or three levels beyond excellent.
2. People with a sense of urgency
People who acknowledge that the time available to solve environmental, economic, and social problems is running out.

WHAT

3. A new vision
Create at least 250 just sustainable communities by 2030.
4. A new mission
Change the culture and capacity of the community. Solve some environmental, economic, and social problems the community faces by 2027. Solve an array of these problems by 2030.
5. A tipping point
Create at least 20 just sustainable communities nationwide by 2027.
6. A national network
Build a national network of 250 just sustainable communities by 2030 that encourages and supports the creation of a steadily growing number of just sustainable communities.

HOW

7. A new model
Organizations, businesses, and communities are trying unsuccessfully to solve problems families face. The path forward is creating a new model---solving the environmental, economic, and social problems communities face. This will involve using four culture change INSIGHTS and four problem-solving INSIGHTS simultaneously.
8. Capacity building
The organizations and businesses creating a new model will need a new culture and problem-solving vocabulary. They will need access to a local

organization or business that is on a journey to three levels of quality beyond excellent. And they will also need change and innovation ideas and support from a variety of sources.

VOLUNTEERS

At the outset of a change journey identify and empower individuals and organizations that want to take on particularly difficult problem solving and culture change projects and tasks. Agree on timelines. Join them in tracking progress and in securing whatever assistance they need to succeed.

A COMMUNITY CHANGE WEBSITE

This paper and the Workbook that accompanies it are designed so that answers to NEXT STEPS questions, EXERCISE results, and discussion notes can become part of an ever-growing community change website. This website can be used to encourage, document, and celebrate efforts to create just sustainable communities, solve environmental, economic, and social problems, and change the culture of communities.