FRAMEWORK FOR KINSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS

Our definition of Kinship[1]

Interrelatedness and affinity between entities that extends beyond ancestry and genealogy; when living and non-living beings are interwoven in symbiotic relationships that enhance their capacity to co-operate in mutually-beneficial, holistic and emergent ways.

Why a framework?

"From a framework, one does not derive a precise prediction. From a Framework, one derives the questions that need to be asked to clarify the structure of a situation and the incentives facing individuals."

- Elinor Ostrom, Governing the Commons (p.192)

Organization

An organized body of people with a particular purpose, especially a business, society, association, etc.
The action of organizing something.
- *the structure or arrangement of related or connected items.*
- *an efficient and orderly approach to tasks.*

---

[1] *Inspired by Donna Haraway's writing on "Making Kin"*

ETHOS

- *What are the core values of our organization/group?*
- *What are the intentions of the group?*
- *What is the vision of the organization/group? Concretely, how is this vision being shaped by its constituents at all levels? Identify where the vision is not aligned amongst its constituents.*
- *What is the narrative being uplifted here? And who is or isn't sharing that narrative?*
- *What problems is our community facing that we have a responsibility to and can address as an organization? Who is defining these problems? Whose stories are being heard?*

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

GOVERNANCE & DECISION-MAKING

- *How are decisions made at different levels?*
  - *Are there public meetings?*
  - *Who is invited?*
  - *How frequently are they held?*
- *What are the rules?*
  - *How are they communicated? And to whom?*
  - *What/When/Who/How can one change the rules?*
  - *What is the process for creating rules?*
- *What are the "non-formalized" rules and social norms?*
- *How are people directly affected by decisions given a chance to be heard?*

ACCOUNTABILITY

- *What are the consequences for not following the governing structure?*
  - *Who determines consequences?*
  - *Who enforces consequences?*
- *How is accountability defined and encouraged at all levels?*
- *How are participants holding each other accountable?*

LEADERSHIP

- *Who are the leaders of the organization?*
  - *What are their responsibilities?*
  - *How did they get there?*

- How can someone grow into a leadership position? Is this process transparent?
- Who do people go to for answers to questions about the organization?
- Is leadership accessible?

DIVISION OF LABOR

- *What is the division of labor in the organization?*
- *What types of knowledge and skills are prioritized over others?*
- *Are you reaching out to other organizations/groups and forming stronger networks?*
- *Who can create a working group?*

COMPENSATION

- *Are people receiving compensation?*
- *Are there types of work that are unpaid? What are they?*
- *How are people compensated?*
- *How are resources allocated and to whom?*

ADAPTABILITY

- *How does our infrastructure remain malleable and shift in real time with the needs of the community?*
    - *How do we acknowledge changing conditions when revising and adjusting plans?*
    - *How do we ensure space to adjust practices and structure in accordance with changing conditions?*
- *In what ways are we resilient?*
- *In what ways are we resistant to change?*

COMMON-POOL RESOURCE[2] MGMT

- *What are the resources which are shared? Which aren't?*
- *Who has access?*
    - *What do they have access to? How?*
    - *Are there rules and boundaries? If so, what are they, and why are they delineated as such?*
    - *Is it transparent?*

---

[2] *A common pool resource is a type of good consisting of a natural or human-made resource system that benefits a group of people, but which provides diminished benefits to everyone if each individual pursues his or her own self-interest.*

- *What is the process in case of abuse, overuse, damage, etc by one of the participants? Are there consequences and formalized sanctions?*
- *Who determines and enforces sanctions in that case?*

ACCESSIBILITY

- *Is certain knowledge a prerequisite to participation?*
    - *How are we ensuring that everyone can participate regardless of previous knowledge, skills, and backgrounds?*
    - *How do we ensure tech is not a barrier to entry so the maximum number of people are welcome to participate?*
- *Is the group heterogeneous or generally homogenous (by race, sexuality, gender, age, socio-economic class, ability, etc.)?*
- *How is sexuality talked about and addressed?*
- *How is gender identity talked about and addressed?*
- *How is our language accessible?*
    - *Are there people who speak English as a second language in the organization? If so, what structures, if any, exist for language development, interpretation and translation, to ensure their full and knowledgeable participation?*
    - *Are we offering ASL Interpretation?*
- *Is the organization inclusive to marginalized members? How?*
    - *How could the organization be more inclusive?*
- *How are we acknowledging the limitations of our knowledge?*
    - *How does this relate to the knowledge of our larger cultural history?*
    - *Do we recognize the land we currently occupy?*
- *Is it easy for someone in the audience to locate a staff member?*
- *Are we clearly stating the organization's willingness to make accommodations if anyone needs assistance?*

PROGRAMS

- *Who attends/participates in our programs?*
    - *Why do they?*
- *Who does not attend/participate in our programs?*
    - *Why do they not?*
- *Does the content of our programs reflect the community that we want to bring together?*
    - *Does it address the concerns, needs and discourses of said community?*
- *Do we offer sliding-scale ticketing?*
- *Are our programs engaging with and creating space for multiple intersections of identity?*

- *Are there contacts for specialists who can accommodate a guest in need at the last minute?*

INFRASTRUCTURE

Physical resources, Equipment, Maintenance
- *What types of accommodations can be provided?*
    - *Are the restrooms of the space you occupy gender-neutral?*
    - *Is the space we occupy wheelchair accessible?*
        - *Are we ADA compliant?*
    - *Is Childcare offered and communicated?*
        - *For programs?*
        - *For staff?*
        - *For the community?*
    - *For individuals with air and chemical sensitivities?*
    - *For individuals with dietary restrictions or food sensitivities?*
    - *For individuals with Personal Care Assistants (PCA) or service animals?*
- *Is the space arranged in a manner that is easy to navigate and allows space for mobility?*
- *How is consent integrated into programming and staff initiatives?*
    - *How is training around consent handled for staff and program leaders?*
- *When documenting events, is consent obtained from participants and attendees?*
    - *How is consent obtained?*
    - *Is information clearly posted regarding documentation?*
- *Is closed captioning and image captioning available for visual resources?*
    - *In the space/in-person programming?*
    - *Online?*
- *Are text-based or touch tours available?*
- *Are content warnings available and clearly communicated?*
    - *Do these warnings address both physical triggers (ie. flashing lights or loud noises) and thematic ones?*
- *Is space designated for those who might be triggered by certain aspects of a program or performance?*
    - *Where in the space can someone sensitive to certain lighting setup, loud noise or triggering content retreat?*
    - *Are staff and programming leaders thinking proactively about how programming might be created in a way that avoids such triggers whenever possible?*

- *Are a variety of transportation options (driving, walking, public transit, community carpooling) available and clearly communicated?*
- *Is the space and staff trained to safely handle any health crises that occur within the space or affiliated programming?*
    - *Are staff aware of the location of the nearest urgent care and other local healthcare resources?*
    - *Is training available with principles of harm reduction and overdose preparedness?*
    Some suggested resources include [End Overdose](#), [DanceSafe](#)

COMMUNICATION & COOPERATION

- *How are the values of the organization communicated across all levels of the organization structure and to the public?*

INTERNAL

- *How do we foster spaces for trust building, empathy, and care? How is intimate engagement across difference fostered?*
- *How do we create space for sharing experiences, bring up issues across different levels of the organization?*
- *How is constructive dialogue with divergent viewpoints fostered?*
- *What types of formalized methods, tools, publications are available to the constituents?*
- *Are we committed to a solution-oriented approach in our communication?*
- *Is there adequate space for individual and collective reflection?*
- *In what ways do we create space and boundaries to ideate together?*
- *Structurally, how are folks encouraged to treat everyone sharing space like a friend, with respect and care?*
- *How do we respect individual boundaries within the organization?*

EXTERNAL

- *How are we communicating the organization's activities to the public?*
    - *What methods are used?*

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- *How are tensions, conflicts, and disagreements mitigated when they arise?*
    - *What is the process and who is accountable for ensuring that it takes place?*
    - *How is everyone informed about this process and how is everyone held accountable?*
    - *What are our generative conflict resolution prompts?*
- *How are we defining 'friendly friction'?*
    - *What methods are available to encourage discussion across divergent perspectives?*
    - *How are we making space for people to express their level of comfort?*
- *What mechanisms are in place for conflict prevention?*
    - *How can we anticipate potential obstacles and approach them with agency, thoughtfulness and community input?*
- *How do we actively learn from conflict?*

COALITION-BUILDING

- *How can we use our resources to support organizations and individuals who are already doing the work, rather than claiming space from them?*
- *Are we communicating to groups that are working on similar issues and sharing resources?*

ECOLOGICALLY-FRIENDLY

- *Does the organization have/follow ecologically-friendly practices across all its operations and activities?*
    - *Do we ensure housekeeping staff uses only non-toxic, eco-friendly cleaning solutions and products? Does the staff use reusable cloth towels over paper cleaning towels?*
- *Do we have and follow food & beverage, and event sustainability guidelines?*
- *Are you trying to reduce waste in Communication, Publications, and Printed Media?*
    - *Do you give preference to electronic documentation and digital distribution over printed materials?*
    - *Do you use double-sided copying and printing?*
    - *Do you format any distribution materials to minimize the amount of printed paper?*

- *Do you limit the number of event program books available on-hand, encouraging participants to access the event program online?*
- *Do you use dry erase white boards instead of paper flip charts?*
- *Do you print your Event Materials onsite and/or print any event collateral locally rather than printing material and shipping it to the event.*
- *Do you provide pens and notepads only if requested by participants and use pens and notepads with recycled content when requested?*
- *Do you seek out Forest Stewardship Council certified paper?*
- *Do you print materials on an Energy Star certified printer and use vegetable-based inks.Do you limit the use of paper that is difficult to recycle, such as glossy paper, goldenrod, and fluorescent paper?*

- *Do you use Recyclable & Recycled Materials?*
- *Do you give preference to mailing labels that use water-based adhesives?*
- *Are there clearly labeled recycling and composting bins available alongside every waste bin?*
- *Are we using local sustainable vendors for printers, caterers, e-waste recycling providers?*
- *How can we reduce transportation waste associated with our activities?*
  - *Are there communication tools and methods available to reduce the amount of site-specific meetings/activities? Do you consider remote meetings with video conferencing if the group can do the same work without traveling?*
- *Are we following best practices to reduce single use plastic waste?*
  - *Do you use BPI Certified compostable plates, glasses, cutlery, stir sticks, platters, and serving utensils.*
  - *Do you avoid individually wrapped items, such as ketchup, mayo, mustard, mints, salt, pepper, or sugar. Use bulk containers for condiments instead.*
- *Do you only offer reusable or BPI Certified compostable plates, glasses, cutlery, stir sticks, platters, and serving utensils.*
- *Do you ensure that leftover untouched prepared food is consumed as meals in the facility or donated to local food banks, missions, or charities?*
- *Do you avoid single-use decorations?*
- *Do you try to give preference to vegetarian meal selections?*
- *Can a local service provider or product supplier meet the needs of a project?*
- *Do we clearly outline and communicate food & beverage, and event sustainability guidelines to all contractors and suppliers?*
  - *Are these guidelines included in supplier contracts?*
  - *Have you considered charging a fee for excessive waste left at the event?*

SUCCESS METRICS

- *How do we define success for each aspect of our work?*
- *How can we determine the health of our organization?*
- *How do we gather feedback from the participants at all levels?*