

# OUR THEORY OF CHANGE



We believe that to create **sustainable social change** we need to...

## Think and solve differently

We apply a wide variety of innovation methods that are strategic and human-centered.



## Prioritize the perspective and lived experience of those most impacted by inequity

We co-create from an intersectional and racial justice lens.

## Build leaders who value creativity and inclusion

We develop leaders that embrace a learning mindset, share ownership, and drive connection.

## THEORY OF CHANGE

DI's work is rooted in our theory of change, which outlines that sustainable social change lies at the intersection of creativity, equity, and leadership. This unique combination of perspectives works to empower individuals and teams to develop innovative, collaborative, and inclusive practices in their work.

### CREATIVITY

We use human-centered design: a problem-solving, collaborative, and creative process that any community or organization can apply to design new ways forward. The process is known for its ability to define, explore, and solve problems, and DI applies this approach to complex social issues that require service, programmatic, and systems-based solutions. In order to stretch our thinking and that of our partners, we also build upon human-centered design by incorporating relevant practices from the arts and other creative fields.

### EQUITY

We prioritize the perspectives and lived experiences of those most impacted by the challenges we seek to address. This is modeled in our projects through our deep connection to community voice. By engaging the most affected as co-designers in our processes, we move beyond community feedback to community leadership. Our co-design process allows multiple stakeholders with differing viewpoints to hear one another, find common ground, and design new ways forward. Because decisions are made with transparency, we aim to create equitable buy-in and ownership throughout the work, which in turn leads to sustainable partnership and change.

### LEADERSHIP

We build leaders that value creativity and inclusion, embrace a learning mindset, share ownership, and drive connection. We deeply engage partners through individual and team-based experiential learning opportunities. The work focuses on building leaders' capacity to navigate change. This focus on capacity building, combined with work on meaningful, real world projects in supportive learning environments, helps develop leaders who can move from changing mindsets to changing actions, which in turn changes the conditions we seek to improve.

*DESIGN IMPACT MEASURES OUR IMPACT AND OUR THEORY OF CHANGE BY MEASURING HOW **MINDSETS, ACTIONS, AND CONDITIONS** CHANGE OVER TIME. WE UNDERSTAND THAT IN ORDER FOR **CONDITIONS** TO CHANGE WE MUST CHANGE OUR **ACTIONS AND MINDSETS**.*

# MINDSETS:

DI defines ***mindsets*** as beliefs, values, and attitudes that ***drive actions toward social change***.

## CREATIVITY

- Embrace an open, learners mindset
- Believe that curiosity and wonder are key to creating transformative change
- Value divergent thinking
- Value emerging insights over static plans
- Be comfortable with and embrace ambiguity
- Value playfulness to uncover new possibilities
- Understand when to work alone and when to work together
- Understand the need for both structured and unstructured activities in the change process
- Understand the conditions needed to foster creativity
- Lean into human wholeness as a medium for creativity
- Value multidisciplinary approaches
- Value human-centered design as a powerful change-making process
- Appreciate visualization as a core communication and synthesis tool

## EQUITY

- Recognize one's own positionality and entanglements with white supremacy and systems of oppression
- Understand how oppressive systems harm everyone
- Value equity and inclusion
- Understand implicit bias, and how power and privilege work to uphold inequity and support institutional racism
- Understand the role that bias plays in promoting self-interest
- Recognize trauma caused by systemic oppression
- Gain understanding of root causes of inequity
- Value all people as powerful contributors to the whole
- Value lived experience as a form of expertise
- Understand that diverse perspectives and experiences are necessary for effective and sustainable change
- Value the role that empathy plays in problem-solving
- Value the importance of trust across boundaries in change work
- Value decentralized power structures as means to facilitate co-creation and social change
- Value relationships over profit

## LEADERSHIP

- Understand the health of the "self" drives the effectiveness of action
- Understand the role ego, fear, and self-preservation play in promoting self-interest (at the expense of the whole)
- Understand self as part of the larger whole
- Value vulnerability as a key leadership tool
- Understand that the quality of dialogue shapes action
- Value all living systems as connected and whole
- Believe in transformative power of co-creation
- Value relationships as key to creating all change
- Value open and transparent feedback as critical for growth
- Believe that presence and awareness provide insight that drive transformative action
- Value a strengths-based approach
- Recognize how past trauma, toxic stress, and systemic oppression can prohibit innovation and participation
- Value risk-taking, failure, growth, and change

# ACTIONS:

DI defines **ACTIONS** as behaviors that **ULTIMATELY IMPACT CHANGE IN CONDITIONS**.

- Create conditions that foster creativity, shared leadership and equity
- Apply new skills to social change efforts
- Work with others across differences toward shared goals
- Lead with vulnerability
- Be curious
- Go boldly into the unknown, sit in uncertainty
- Demonstrate willingness to grow and change
- Abandon the plan, if needed
- Recognize fears and triggers to avoid
- Develop and maintain a self-reflection practice
- Practice relationships and connections over self-interest
- Practice presence and awareness to drive transformative action
- Invite and give open feedback
- Identify and leverage strengths over deficits
- Foster quality dialogue across difference
- Continually examine ego and bias
- Resist Band-Aid approaches and invest in root cause solutions
- Speak up about injustice and root causes
- Sacrifice conveniences, comfort, and power to advance equity
- Share power through participatory decision-making
- Create decentralized power structures
- Invest in leadership of historically oppressed groups
- Create equitable and inclusive structures/ programs/processes
- Design approaches that repair the harm and give room to heal
- Know when and how to deepen social change efforts by leaning into relevant fields of study
- Design processes that allow for diverse ways of working
- Apply creative and inclusive process to social change efforts (e.g.: human-centered design)
- Position those with lived experience as co-creators throughout the change process
- Apply different frames in understanding and identifying a problem
- Challenge one's assumptions in problem-solving
- Empathize with others
- Create human-centered data with those most affected by the problem
- Identify underlying human tensions and motivations that drive human behavior
- Combine data to identify patterns, form a theory, and select ways forward
- Act on input from those closest to the problem
- Explore different lenses/ perspectives when problem-solving
- Invest in environments and conditions that foster creativity
- Bring one's full and authentic self to foster creativity
- Generate multiple ideas and solutions for one problem
- Welcome a wide array of ideas
- Create artifacts to explore concepts at a deeper level
- Take risks; try new things
- Invest in small tests of change
- Move from prototypes to sustainable long-term approaches
- Take action in the face of obstacles; push boundaries
- Tell the story of the process/ impact; focus on the "why"
- Collect data to ensure intended impact is actual impact (resist the urge to fix)
- Bear witness to what is unfolding and then create

# CONDITIONS:

DI defines **CONDITIONS** as changes in culture, structure, process, and resources **ACROSS INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND SYSTEMS.**

- Resources needed to thrive are accessible to all people
- Root causes are addressed
- Resources are aligned to reflect community need
- New sources of economic support are generated
- Social capital is increased
- Public discourse has been redefined
- Leaders/organizations move beyond research, ideas, and prototypes to invest in sustainable approaches and keep promises to community
- Culture of vulnerability and risk-taking is created
- Processes for feedback, reflection, and open communication are implemented
- Organizations and systems center creativity, leadership, and equity
- Leaders that operate out of relationship, fearlessness, and emergence are in place
- Adaptive capability is increased to respond to evolving landscapes/context
- Structures that build bridges and facilitate connection are in place
- Co-creative structures that center lived experiences are implemented
- Sustained community-driven action is prioritized
- Decision-making is transparent
- Organizational structures distribute and decentralize power
- Equitable and inclusive policies and practices are in place
- Strengths-based organizational cultures and systems are in place
- Programs and services that meet people where they are and reflect individualized needs are in place
- Diverse, multidisciplinary teams are prioritized
- Human-centered design and innovation is integrated into organizational practices
- Impact is aligned with intention