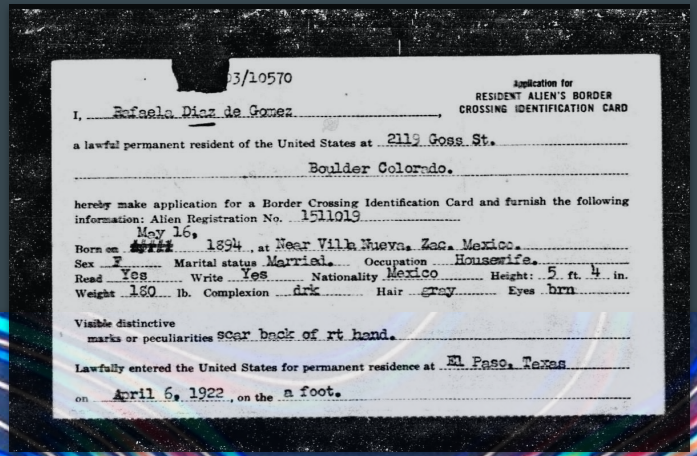
Open Futures:

Education, Workforce, and the Power of Community

ECMC Keynote

September 2023

theopensystem.org



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Application for
RESIDENT ALIEN'S BORDER
CROSSING IDENTIFICATION CARD

I, Rafaela Diaz de Gomez,

a lawful permanent resident of the United States at 2119 Goss St.
Boulder Colorado.

hereby make application for a Border Crossing Identification Card and furnish the following information: Alien Registration No. 1511019

Born on May 16, 1894, at Near Villa Nueva, Zac. Mexico.
Sex F Marital status Married. Occupation Housewife.
Read Yes Write Yes Nationality Mexico Height: 5 ft. 4 in.
Weight 180 lb. Complexion drk Hair grey Eyes brn

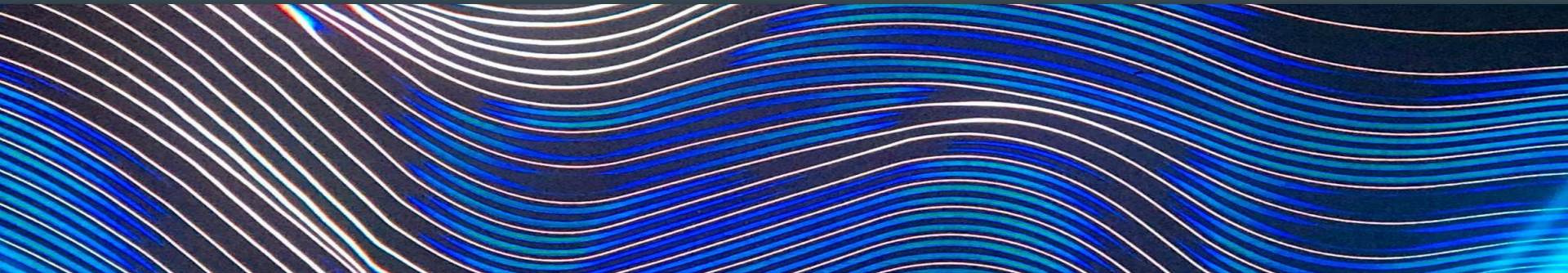
Visible distinctive
marks or peculiarities scar back of rt hand.

Lawfully entered the United States for permanent residence at El Paso, Texas
on April 6, 1922, on the a foot.

Dr. Landon Mascareñaz
Co-Founder

Learn More Here

The question of whether we build open systems is a question of whether or not we are willing to pursue democracy.

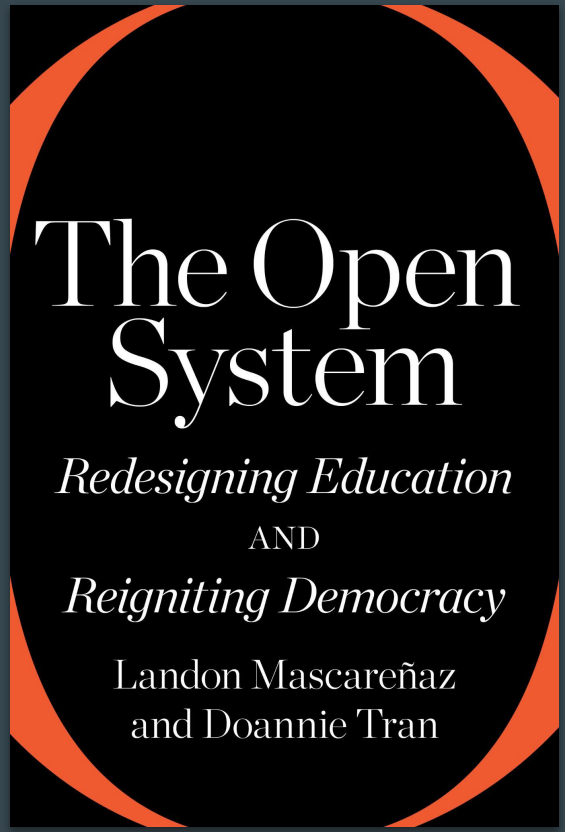


The Open System Institute

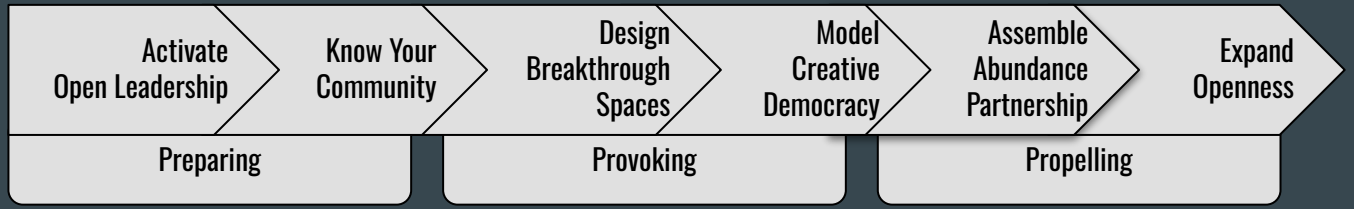
The **mission** of The Open System Institute is to build an emergent discipline for diverse leaders across institutions and organizations to challenge closed systems.

Our **vision** is a transformed education sector that shifts from closed systems to open systems centered on those furthest from opportunity to redesign education, build trust, and reignite local democracy. Our education system demands redesign and must be built by those who never had a hand at building it.

Learn More Here



Open System Principles



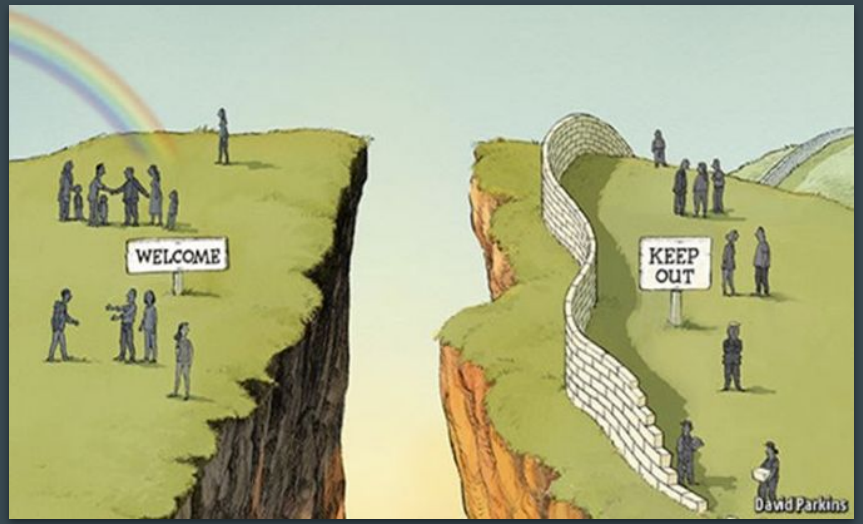
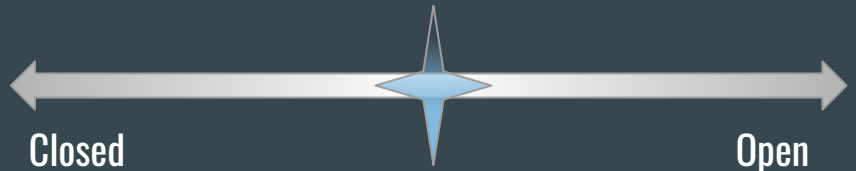


Image Source: The Economist

Learn More Here

Overview

Where is your system or organization on a spectrum of closed to open?

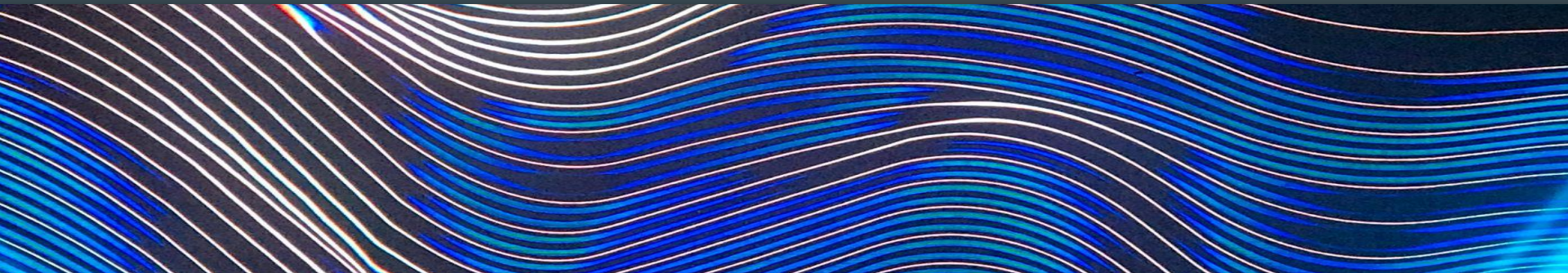


Reflect on:

- How are you partnering with families? Students? Key stakeholders?
- How do welcome them into your schools?
- Are you designing with them?
- Where is it most open and where is it most closed?

We hone our skills naming and analyzing the crises.
I learned in schools how to deconstruct—but how do we move beyond our beautiful deconstruction?
Who teaches us to reconstruct?

adrienne maree brown, Emergent Strategy



Trust & Democracy

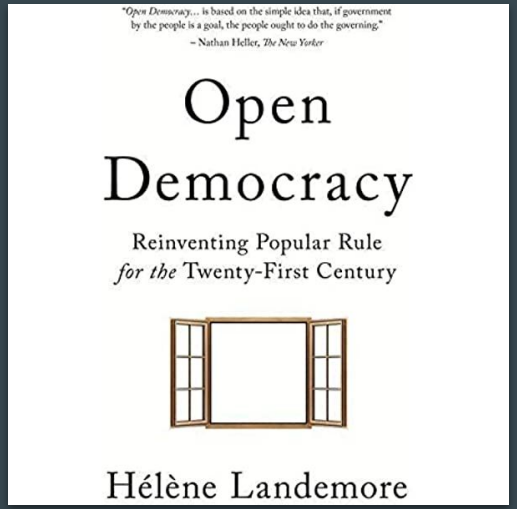
Openers must begin by realizing the dire state of institutional distrust that permeates global society.

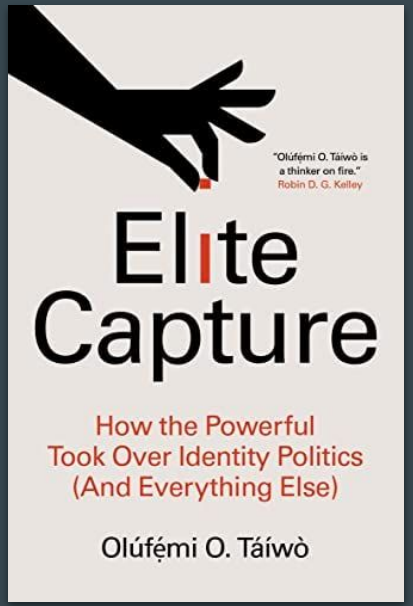
This distrust has major implications in democracies, where the public has shared ownership of institutions.

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer 2022

Trust & Democracy

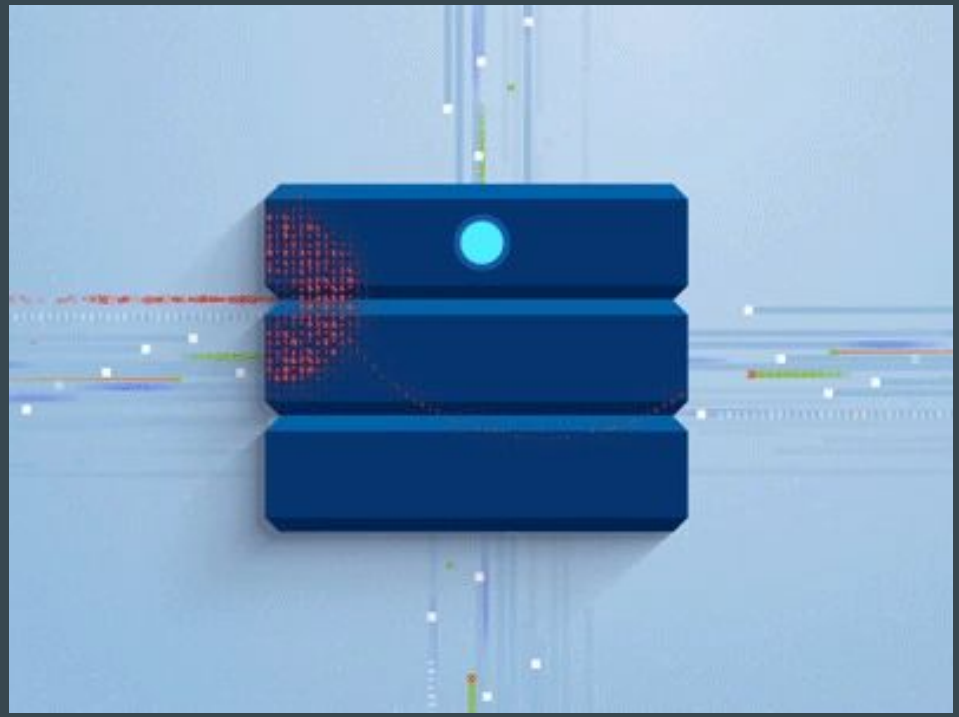
Citizen engagement and participation is a research-driven way of building and reinforcing trust.





Open & Closed As Information

- Open systems allow for the flow of information and energy into their internal system
  - Organic
  - Mechanical
  - Institutional

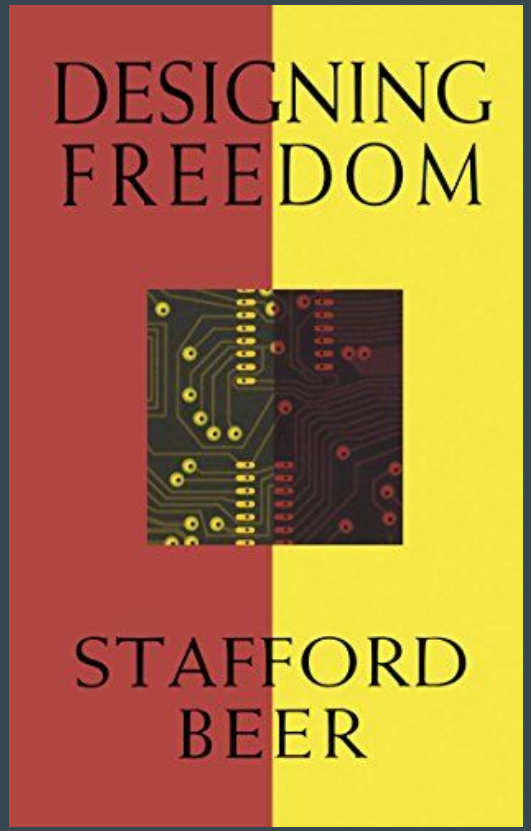


High Variety Systems As Open Systems

- High Variety Systems

  Vs

- Low Variety Systems



The redesign of institutions, from firms to governments, from educational establishments to social services, is the end to which survival-minded people must address themselves.

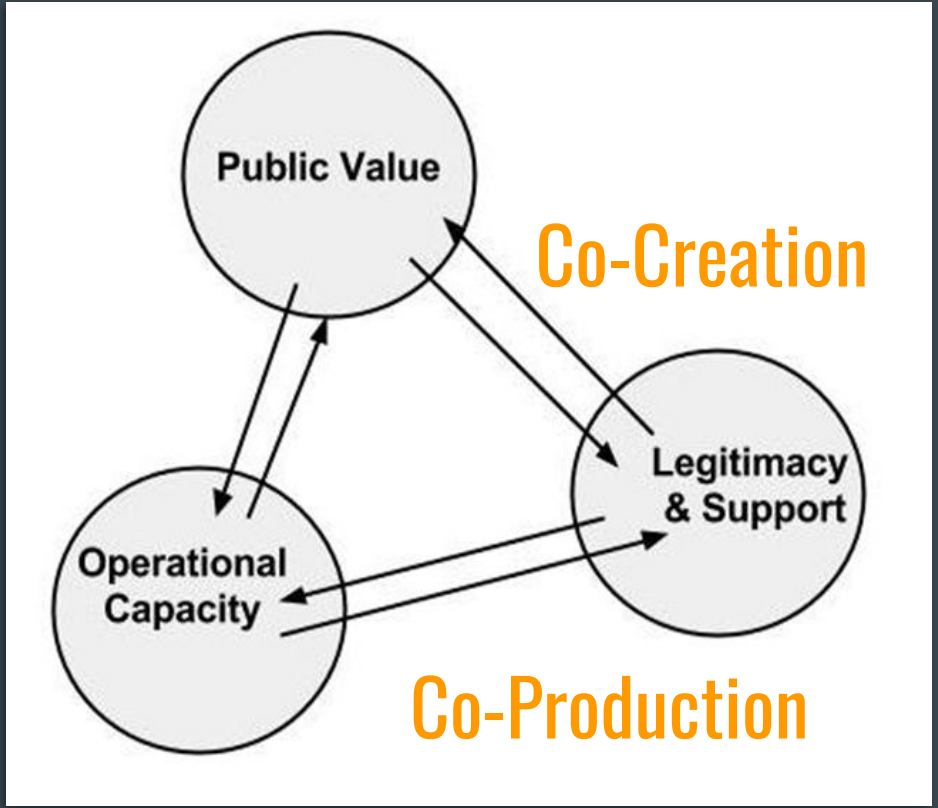
-Stafford Beer, Designing Freedom

How to bring openness to public systems

- Education
- Policing
- Health Care
- Transportation

And yes...

WORKFORCE / EDUCONOMY

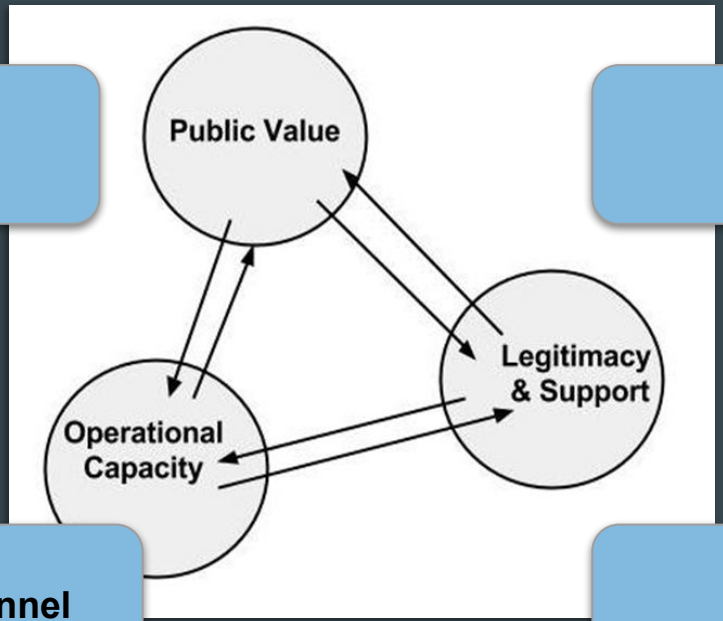


Source: Dr. Mark Moore, Harvard Kennedy School

Strategic Co-Creation/Co-Production

Superintendent

Elected Board

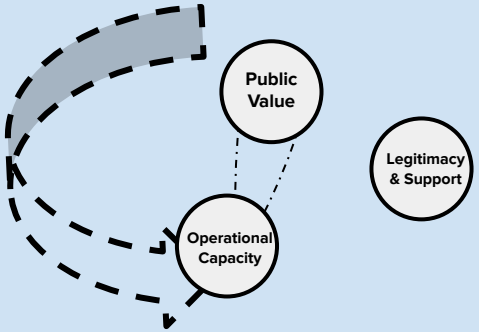


System Leadership/Personnel

Community

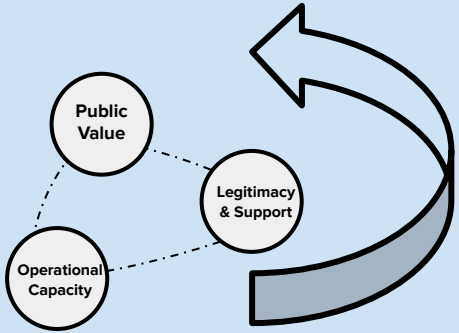
Open vs Closed System Trust & Democracy Spirals

Closed System Trust Spiral



In this model, a public value is named, given operational capacity and then conducted with limited or no legitimacy and support from the authorizing environment. Result: Trust degrades.

Open System Trust Spiral

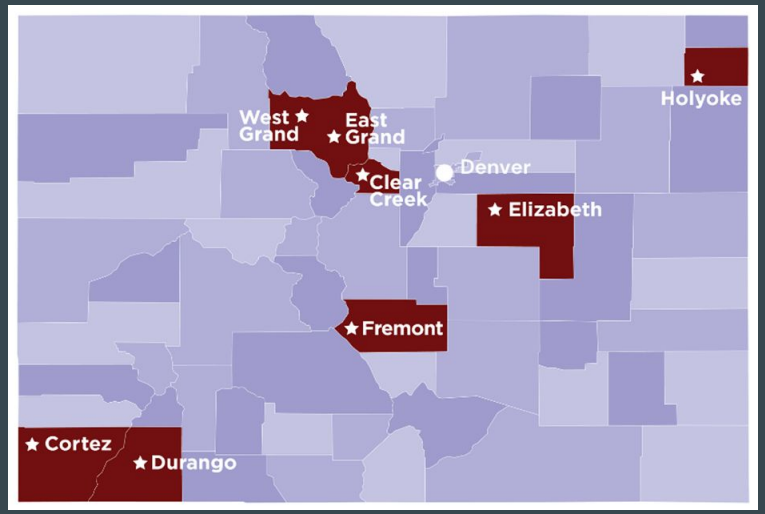


In this model, a public value is named, given operational capacity and then co-created and/or co-produced legitimacy and support from the authorizing environment. Result: Trust generated.

Open Vignette: Homegrown Talent Initiative

Colorado Succeeds & CEI started in 2019 with eight districts across the state.

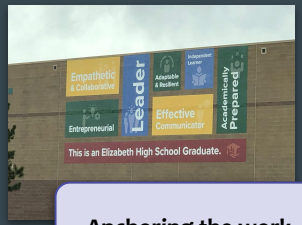
These communities committed to expanding career-connected learning opportunities for students, investing in their **educonomies**, and developing a shared vision of growth based on the strengths, needs, and aspirations of their unique contexts.



educonomy - collaboration among K-12, higher education, and local industry partners to benefit their students, communities, and economies

Learn More Here

Open Vignette: Homegrown Talent Initiative



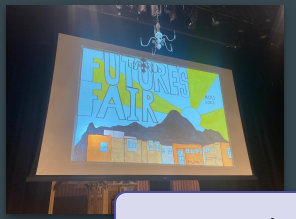
Anchoring the work

Community Accolades

Launching Discovery Site Visits

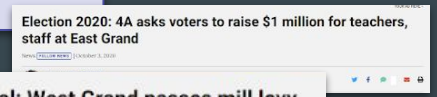
Student Personalization

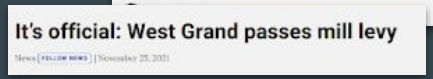
Innovation Centers



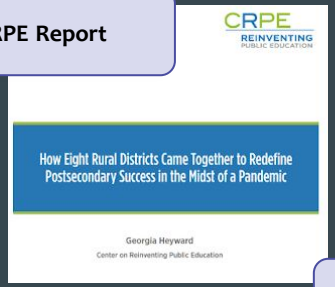
Futures Fair

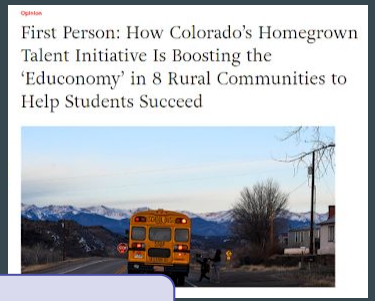
Breakthrough Community Support



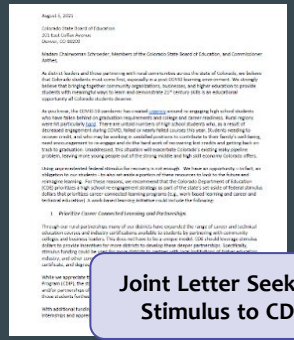


CRPE Report

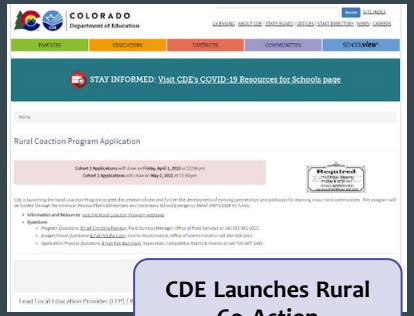




National Press



Joint Letter Seeking Stimulus to CDE

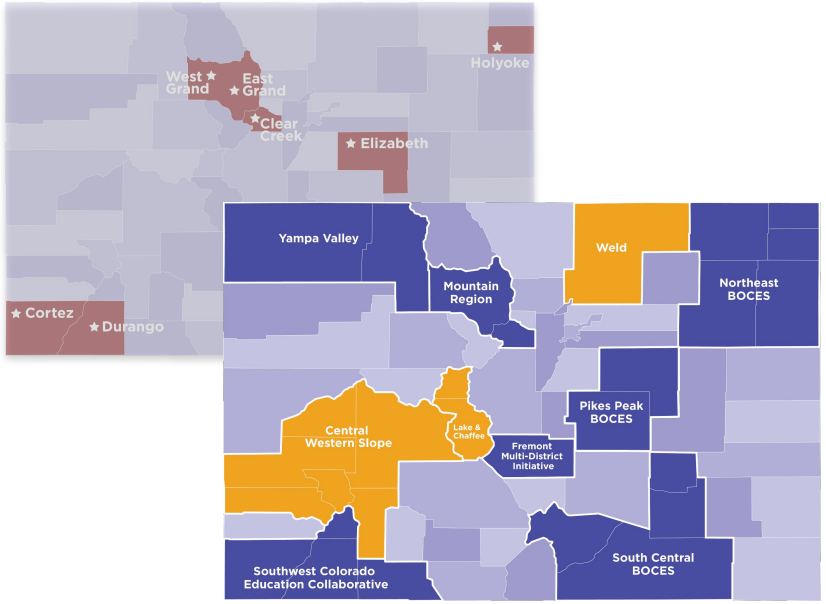


CDE Launches Rural Co-Action

Generating Regional Abundance

Thanks to state and federal investment:

- Adapting from 8 communities to over 70
- 10 regions working on shared abundance infrastructure
- Anchored in community and regional co-creation
- Partners working in abundance together



Colorado Education Initiative

COLORADO SUCCEEDS

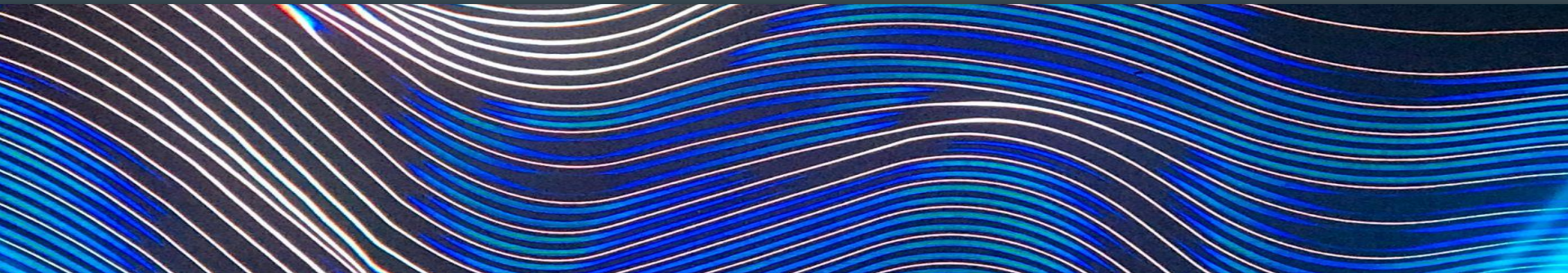
Homegrown TALENT INITIATIVE

EMPOWER schools

lyra COLORADO

The human heart is the first home of democracy. It is where we embrace our questions. Can we be equitable? Can we be generous? Can we listen with our whole beings, not just our minds, and offer our attention rather than our opinion? And do we have enough resolve in our hearts to act courageously, relentless, without giving up - ever - trusting our fellow citizens to join with us in our determined pursuit of a living democracy?

Terry Tempest Williams



Democracy Driven Leadership

"...democratic leaders try to foster political freedom by helping their followers become visible political actors with an equal voice."

-Professor Brian Danoff

Catalyzing Community Leaders

Committing to empowering others in every process.

Building Shared Direction

Committing to multiple stakeholders working together.

Moving Communities Closer to the Democratic Ideal

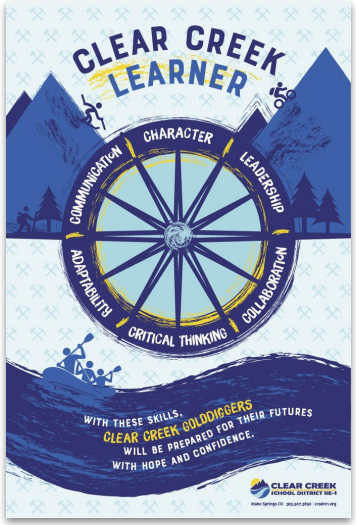
Committing to acknowledging the challenges AND moving communities towards the democratic ideal.

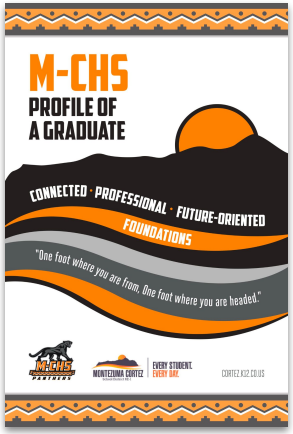
Community Co-Creation

Catalyzing Community Leaders

Building Shared Direction

Moving Communities Closer to the Democratic Ideal



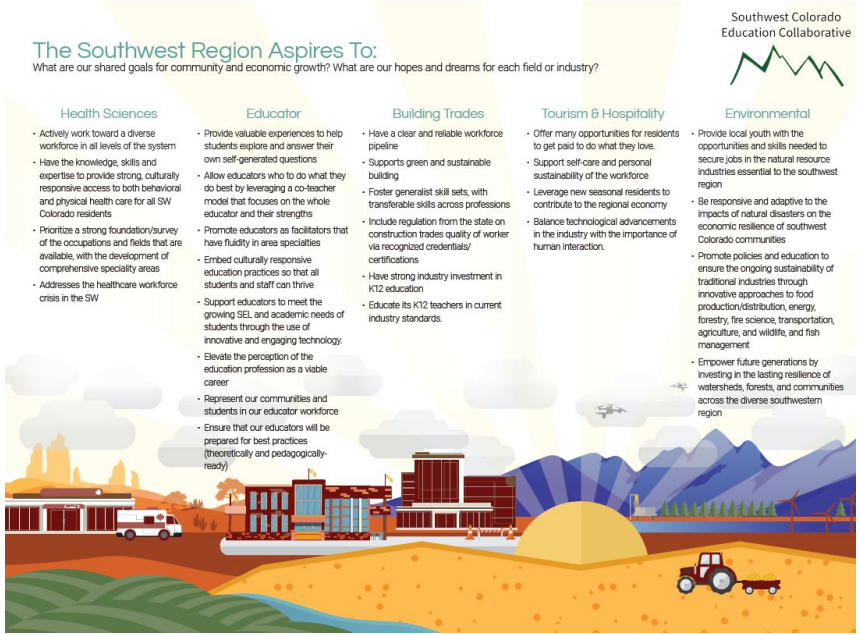


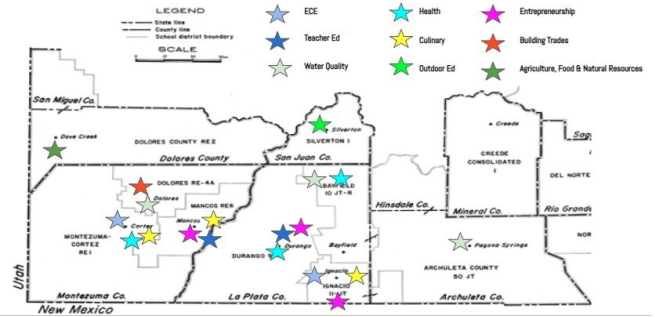
Regional Co-Creation: SW Colorado

Catalyzing Community Leaders

Building Shared Direction

Moving Communities Closer to the Democratic Ideal





Policy Implications

Current Policies Leveraged

- ***ILOP:*** *Innovative Learning Opportunities Program (seat time flexibility)*
- ***CDIP:*** *Career Development Incentive Program (reimbursement for top credentials)*
- **Path4Ward:** Early High School Graduate Program
- **GradCap:** Graduation Guidelines & Capstone Implementation

Recently Passed Policies

- **Employer Incentives:** Expansion of Experiential Learning Opportunities (Resources for businesses to support students)
- **Data:** Authorizing Student Success Dashboard
- **Stackability**: stacking credentials into in-demand pathways
- ***Innovation Fund:*** *Regional CoAction Fund ($20 million state fund)*
- ***Blur Taskforce:*** *Statewide task force on connecting various programs*

Transformative Policies Still Needed

- Transportation
- High School Funding
- Accountability / Quality Measures
- Data Transparency / Longitudinal Data
- Governance
- System Incentives

Profile of Impact

Legal Internship Inspires Daniela Fierro's Career Journey at Northeastern Junior College

Daniela Fierro

Takes on a New Challenge with

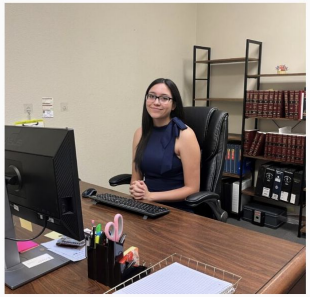
NORTHEASTERN JUNIOR COLLEGE

CCCS News | September 7, 2023

Print

Read the Whole Story

A 'Weight Off My Shoulder'



Daniela Fierro, a first-year student at Northeastern Junior College, works part-time at a local law firm.

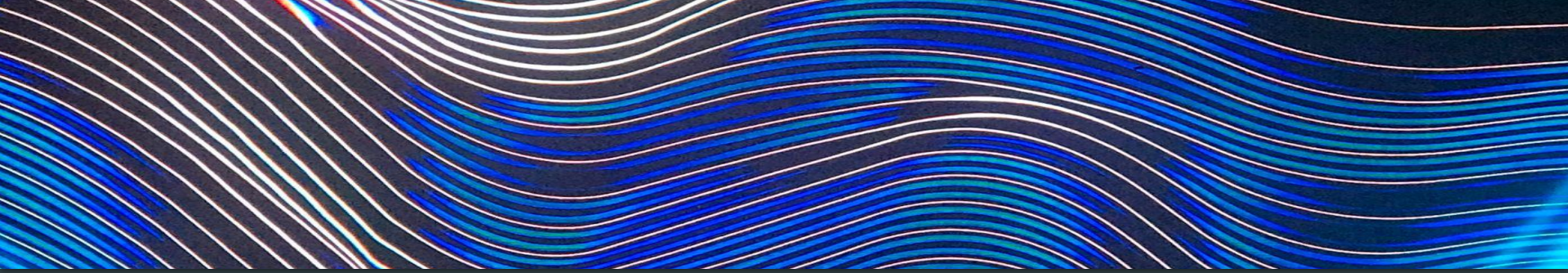
With years of school ahead of her, Fierro is eager to get started as a criminal justice major. The daughter of Mexican immigrants—and a first-generation college student—she said NJC offers a close-knit, supportive environment that will ensure she transfers successfully.

"It had what I wanted in a school—it wasn't super big, it was close to home, and it still gave me the opportunity to work at Kelley Law," she said.

Fierro is no stranger to NJC. As a Holyoke High School student, she took Concurrent Enrollment courses in sociology and political science that further confirmed her interest in law. Now a full-time student, she plans to make the most of her college experience by joining the college's debate team and campus clubs.

"I'm super excited to meet new people and make new friends," she said.

Fierro also earned a scholarship from the Foundation for Colorado Community Colleges, relieving some of the financial pressure as she balances her job and school.

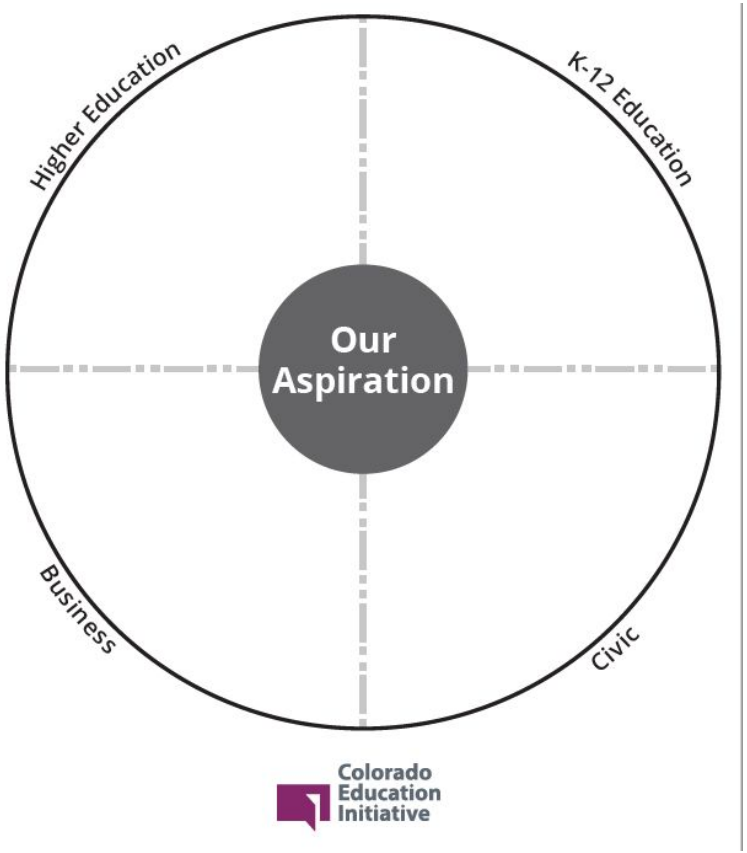


There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

-Margaret Wheatley

MAPPING Your Open Moment

- Place your open moment at the center - your aspiration for co-creation
- Map stakeholders across the four quadrants in relative proximity to the open moment



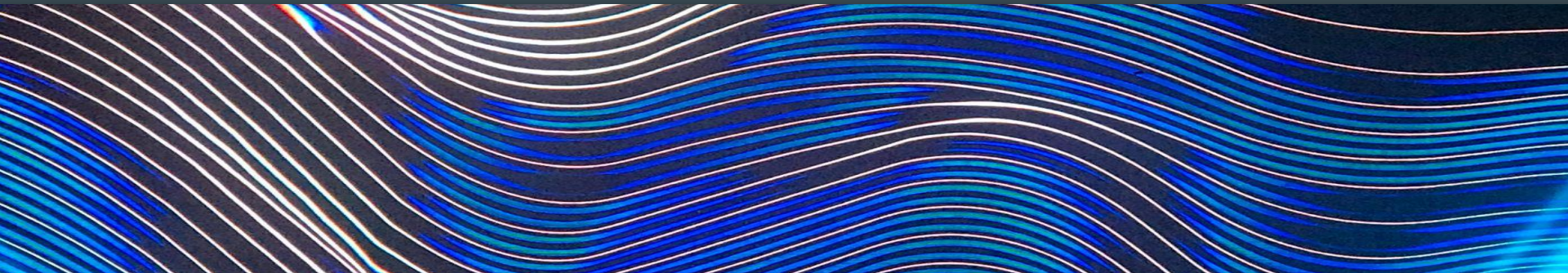
LIBERATE Your Open Moment

- Who is the system most keen on partnering with? Who are YOU most keen at partnering with?
- What are the patterns of affinity at play?
- Are there organizations that disrupt traditional affinity patterns that could transform your open moment?
- What would it take for you to name some of the ~isms that are at play in pursuit of your open moment?

The arrow of time applies to all closed systems in the known universe, but the new sciences reveal this is not the predetermined fate of living systems.

A living system has permeable boundaries and sense-making capabilities. It is an open system, capable of exchanging energy with its environment instead of using up a finite amount.

Margaret Wheatley, Who Do We Choose To Be?



Big Question

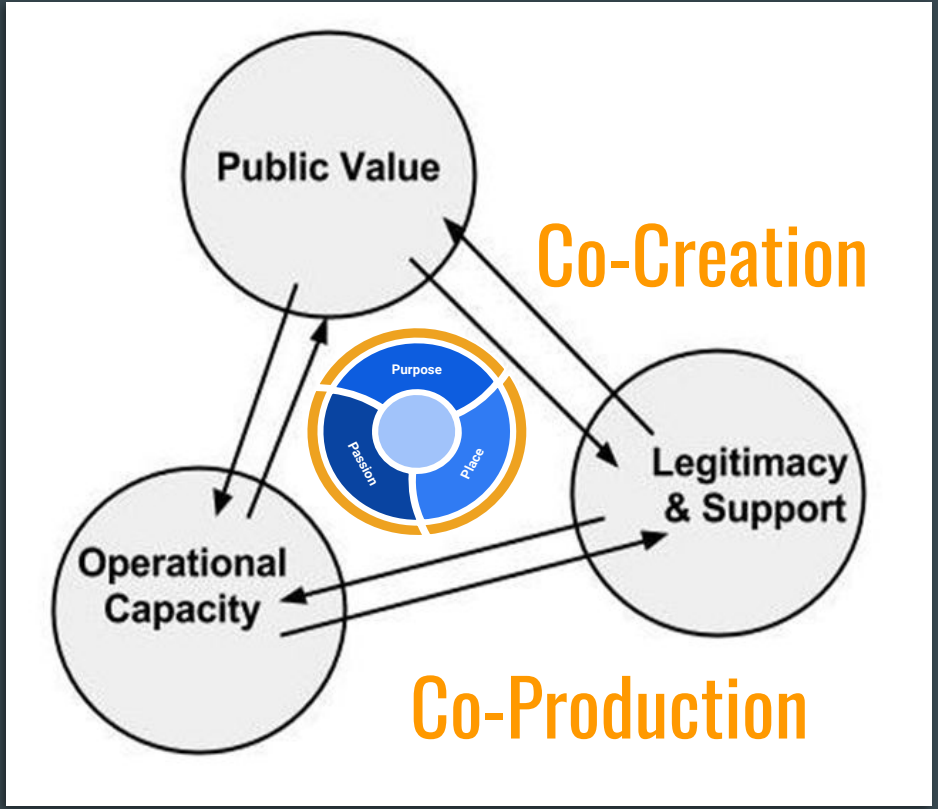
Why do some leaders thrive in openness with their community and others struggle with it?

Reflect on:

- Personality
- Background
- History
- Bias

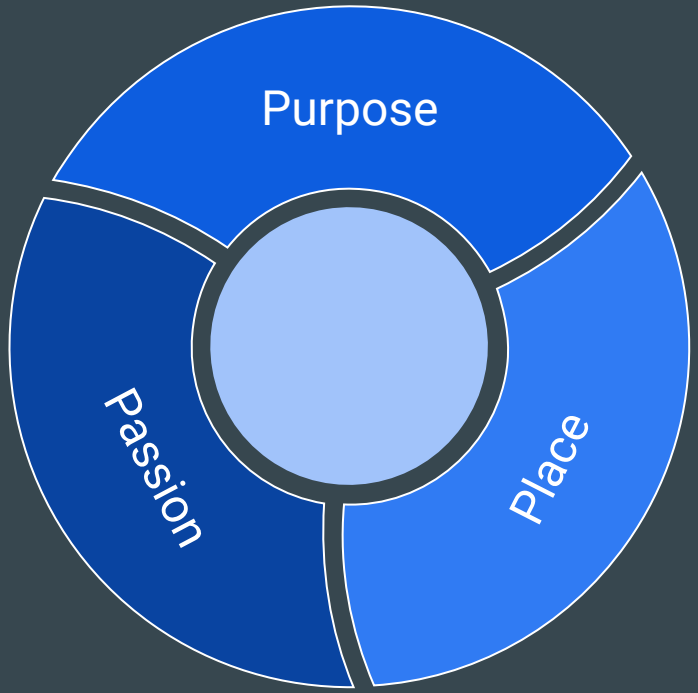
The Role Of The Open Leader

The Open Leader manifests the interaction between their Purpose, Passion & Place to provoke co-creation.

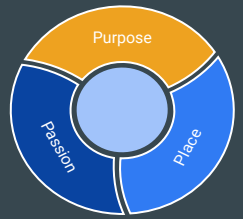


Source: Dr. Mark Moore, Harvard Kennedy School

Purpose, Passion, Place



Purpose



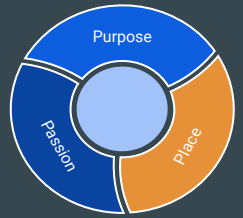
We find that open leaders are very clear about what they are there to do, to achieve, and to build. Another way to consider this is that open leaders understand the question or problem they are interested in solving. If you are afraid of community work or have self-doubt, then uncertainty about your purpose—your why—can be enormously challenging.

Openers are clear that the goal is to work and live with a purpose to build a better community, not just a school system. Rebecca Holmes often refers to this change in mental model as "think like a mayor"—to fully live in the community and public role required. This shift in approach and tactics allows open leaders to be charged with purpose, full of the clarity and energy required to take on the daunting task of community-driven system change.

-The Open System, Chapter 3: Activate Open Leadership

- What are the big questions you are interested in asking?
- What compels you to do what you do?
- How are you able to actualize your purpose in your current, past and potentially future roles?

Passion



Passion is a feature that we see in many openers, striking us as similar to the ancient Stoic maxim "Amor Fati"—love of fate, "not simply to bear what happens, but love it."

Openers with whom we work do not seem to overly despair at the ever-changing environments in which they work, the ebbing and flowing of policy opportunities, the adaptation required to open systems to changing communities.

Many of the events and challenges that come the way of the Opener - a challenging caregiver, a questioning newspaper, etc. - ought not to be seen as challenges, but as great ways to move the community forward.

-The Open System, Chapter 3: Activate Open Leadership

- What aspects of your current life and work give you flow and energy?
- What do you currently get depleted or exhausted from opening?
- Does your passion live in another place or purpose? What could that be?

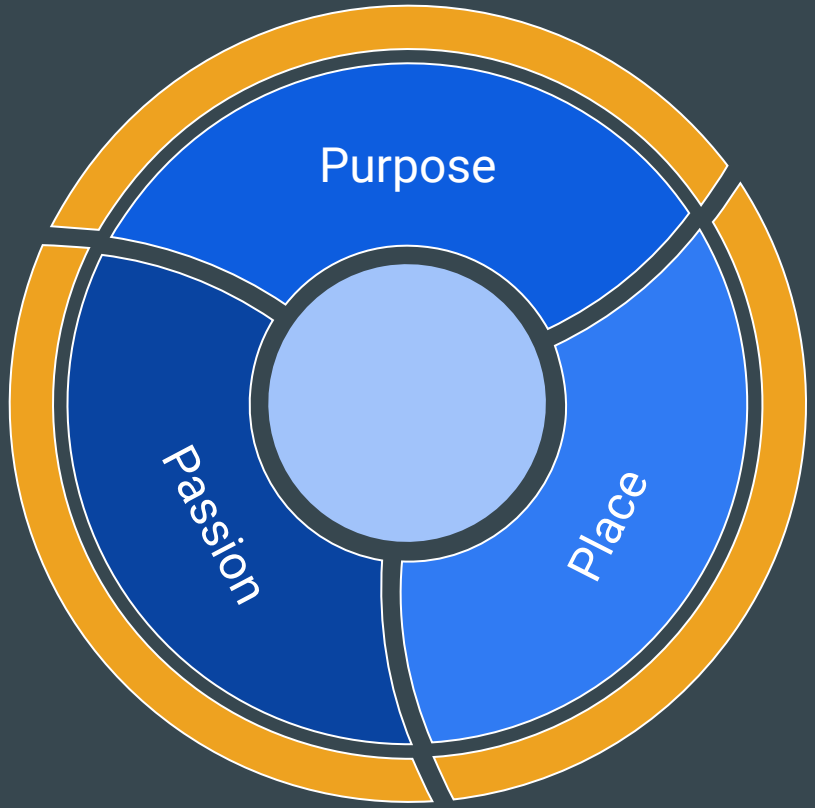
Place

Community-driven work requires a community. It could be a neighborhood, a city, a village, or even an entire state. Opening up a system to a community requires leaders who are centered and connected to the place they serve.

-The Open System, Chapter 3: Activate Open Leadership

- What are you continually curious about in your community?
- What keeps you grounded in your place?
- What are the things you really admire about your community?

Does your wheel spin?



Closing Reflections

Remember - You Are A Democracy Builder

Let us build an open future together