

Vision and Learning Principles for the Learning/Action Lab

The aim here is to help outline a shared vision of where we hope to go and how we plan to get there, in the belief that this clarity can help us together work toward common goals.

Aims and Vision of the Learning/Action Lab

Purpose: To work collaboratively to build wealth in Native communities using Community Wealth Building principles and tools.

Definition of Community Wealth Building: Creating local economic prosperity through the democratization of wealth and ownership.

Vision: A successful group of employee-owned Native American enterprises takes shape across the Northwest, supported by appropriate technical and financial resources, as part of a community wealth-building network, whose principles and models can be replicated and taken to scale in Indian Country. The end result is increased prosperity for Native American communities, empowered to control their own economic fate.

Objectives of the Learning/Action Lab, Year One:

- Help participants grasp the Community Wealth Building framework and understand how it might best apply to their community.
 - Help people become empowered with relevant, useful tools and skills.
 - Introduce participants to a valuable network of leaders, both within the Native development community and the broader field of Community Wealth Building.
 - Position participants to pursue enterprise development in Year Two of the Native Employee-Owned Development Pilot Project.
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Theories of Change and of Action

Theory of Change: The change we seek will come about through a combination of factors: internal motivation and empowerment, knowledge acquisition, a community of supportive co-learners, and access to support and resources. In other words, when participants want to launch enterprises and feel success is possible; when they have a community of mutual support, and access to technical and financial resources through a supportive ecosystem, then change can succeed.

Theory of Action: To create these conditions for success, the Learning/Action Lab aims to work with participants to create culturally appropriate strategies, activities and programs that lead to the desired change.

Our Approach

Principles outlined here are aimed at articulating simple rules and guidelines that set the parameters for the kinds of actions we pursue.

1. **Co-learning:** While the Lab team aims to facilitate learning, participants are also encouraged to become teachers, helping the organizers learn about Indian Country and its unique needs, and helping each other learn together.
2. **Co-creation:** The Lab aims to be collaborative in its approach, drawing participants into the work of shaping the agenda, and reshaping the agenda together on-site as needed.
3. **Transparency:** Lab organizers aim to be transparent – with participants, the foundation, and the evaluator – about how we work, what our aims are, what we are all learning, where we have gone wrong, and how future plans are being shaped.
4. **Multiple forms of learning:** The Lab will combine four kinds of learning:
 - a. *On-site meetings in different cities:* Four meetings, held quarterly, will allow participants to visit sites of Community Wealth Building and learn from actual practice.
 - b. *Coaching:* There are three coaches from the Lab, each connected with two teams. Coaching sessions occur between meetings.
 - c. *Webinars:* One webinar is planned for each period between the on-site meetings. These are designed to be responsive to participant needs.
 - d. *Peer learning:* We are committed to creating space in each meeting for participants to learn from one another.
5. **Relationship building:** Key aims are to build relationships among participants and with a variety of experts in Community Wealth Building and in Indian Country economic development, so as to build a growing network of colleagues.
6. **Trust building:** Through the use of circles, site visits, listening, and other approaches, the Lab team aims to create an environment of trust and reciprocity. Trust building includes sensitivity to cultural appropriateness.
7. **Content delivery:** The Lab is about more than employee ownership. It emphasizes that Community Wealth Building is a holistic systems approach, built on a broader set of concepts than creating single business entities. These are outlined in the Principles of Community Wealth Building. Each on-site meeting is designed to deliver content, as well as to build community.
8. **Empowerment:** Content can be put to use only when participants are empowered to prepare for, design, and launch actual enterprises. Empowerment is about deep learning, vision, and belief in the possibility of success.
9. **Customization:** Each team has a unique situation – some are urban, some rural; some have an existing enterprise, others are much earlier in their work. The Lab aims to help each team build on its own unique base, and to customize teaching and coaching to make this possible.
10. **Multi-generational opportunity:** The aim is to create a community of learning and action that reaches across participating groups and beyond, to create multiple generations of learners and practitioners of the Community Wealth Building approach in Indian Country.