

# Communities Matrix

**A Developmental Guide For Communities:** Communities (geographic, communities of interest, etc) gain resiliency & capacity as they move upwards through the phases. Movement through the stages and phases is not necessarily linear. No community is static; once a stage has been attained, conscious thought and effort must be expended to maintain or move beyond it. (See over for more information on the Matrix.)

	Stage	Characteristics	Potential Action
Actualization	<b>Learning Culture Stage:</b> learning culture present in core values of people and organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflection &amp; scanning to see ways of learning and improving</li> <li>Empowered individuals and organizations</li> <li>Can easily come together and make decisions</li> <li>Integration of community, individual and business values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain &amp; enhance capacity</li> <li>Evaluate &amp; assess community wellness</li> <li>Share excess capacity, resources &amp; models with others</li> </ul>
	<b>Innovation Stage:</b> innovation occurs in community & at an individual citizen level; sense of opportunity permeates community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sense of community entrepreneurship &amp; opportunism</li> <li>Innovative community-sponsored opportunities &amp; projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build commitment to constant learning &amp; improvement for individuals, organizations and community</li> </ul>
	<b>Integration Stage:</b> Business, education, government and NGO communities work together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-operation among business, government, education and community to further mutual self interests</li> <li>Shared decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foster a culture of innovation &amp; entrepreneurship which recognizes opportunities for community</li> </ul>
Vision	<b>Vision Stage:</b> Able to undertake & follow through on vision & comprehensive strategic planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regularly update comprehensive planning &amp; visions</li> <li>Able to access \$ from outside the community &amp; resources from within</li> <li>Able to look years in advance to determine community vision</li> <li>Less reacting - more proactive approach</li> <li>Priorities well understood by members of the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase networking opportunities to build social capital &amp; to recognize synergies between community organizations and citizens</li> </ul>
	<b>Strategic Stage:</b> community becomes strategic in their planning; some longer-term planning possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Able to take strategic decisions; significant community consultation</li> <li>Some reaction, more proactive approach</li> <li>Community recognizes its strengths &amp; weaknesses; strategically builds on assets; sets some priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop &amp; follow-up on commitment to strategic &amp; long-term planning &amp; visioning</li> </ul>
	<b>Simple Planning Stage:</b> preliminary community planning & visioning possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some simple planning undertaken; community still reacts</li> <li>Some citizen consultation</li> <li>Community chases funding without really recognizing its needs or setting priorities</li> <li>Starting to look to other communities for examples and lessons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize need to be strategic</li> <li>Develop ability to recognize community assets and priorities</li> <li>Seek financial resources to support planning</li> <li>Engage in simple planning process</li> </ul>
Emergence	<b>Coping Stage:</b> planning for day-to-day & infrastructure needs possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Able to manage issues as they arise</li> <li>Little community consultation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocate financial &amp; human resources to meaningful planning</li> <li>Build commitment to move community ahead</li> </ul>
	<b>Paralysis / Unfocussed Stage:</b> community is working together but setting goals or making simple plans impossible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No community plan and/or consultation</li> <li>No obvious direction for community; lack of shared vision</li> <li>Paralysis in decision-making</li> <li>New issues can cause crises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training in goal-setting, meeting management</li> <li>Leaders bring people together; outside facilitation</li> <li>Assessment of where community stands</li> <li>Success in small projects</li> </ul>
	<b>Non-cooperation Stage:</b> gathering of people is possible but working together effectively is not; lack ability to listen to one another	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can gather but cannot work together</li> <li>Deep-seated divisions in values</li> <li>Lack ability to listen to one another</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake small non-political projects with win-win outcomes (i.e. downtown beautification)</li> </ul>
Chaos	<b>Conflict Stage:</b> truly conflicted community; people cannot gather to accomplish anything; low self-esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can't get together to accomplish anything</li> <li>Community has experienced extensive change</li> <li>Self-esteem low; no or little sense of pride</li> <li>People feel stuck; sense of community stagnation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conflict resolution skills development</li> <li>Individuals or organizations getting together</li> <li>Outside facilitation</li> </ul>
	<b>Turmoil / Disintegration Stage:</b> can occur at any time from internal or external changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-community stage ~ OR ~</li> <li>External or internal factors bring about disruption in community</li> </ul>	



# The Communities Matrix — What Stage is My Community At?

## Introduction – A First-Step for Community Planning

The one-page **Communities Matrix** is a quick and intuitive 'first-step' for communities thinking of planning or taking action. It allows for an 'eye-opening' assessment of a community through four phases (or eleven stages) of development using a simple circular model. From very challenged (**Conflict Stage**) to thriving (**Learning Culture Stage**) communities, the Matrix assists in determining a community's stage or phase and then links it with stage-appropriate tools and resources. Whether your community is considering a comprehensive community plan or struggling with entrenched conflict, the Matrix can help determine the next step.

## 'Constipated' Communities - The Matrix Story

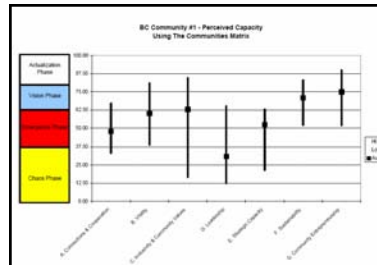
No two communities are alike or at the same stage. Why then are all communities asked to use the same tools or processes, regardless of the stage they are at? Several years ago we encountered 'constipated' or stuck communities where there was little trust and respect. Trust and respect are essential foundations for all community development. Yet many of these communities were trying to undertake strategic planning without this foundation, actually moved their communities backwards. There had to be a better way.

In 2003, CIEL's **Mike Stolte** and **Anne Stacey** analyzed the characteristics of many of the dozens of communities they had worked with, developing the original Communities Matrix of 10 community stages (a simple grid). When meeting with a community for the first time CIEL asked community members to identify which stage of the Matrix they were at. This helped to determine whether CIEL's tools were appropriate. Communities were easily able to see their community on it and liked its simplicity, relevance and accessibility. Through word of mouth, the Matrix soon found its way into the hands of many communities, organizations and governments (provincial, federal and First Nations) across Canada. In 2005, three departments of the Government of Canada commissioned CIEL to refine the Matrix incorporating the latest research, and using feedback from community practitioners and a broad-based steering committee. A refined circular version of the Matrix, the 'Life Cycle' version, soon followed.

By the end of 2006, CIEL had developed **Tools, Techniques and Resources for Communities** (a free 30-page on-line publication that classifies 69 different commonly-used tools according to Matrix phase, key area, etc.) and received Matrix enquiries from every continent except Antarctica.

## Taking the Matrix Further—The Matrix On-Line Diagnostic (MOD)\*

CIEL has added another layer to the Matrix, allowing it to measure capacity in seven key areas through the fee-based **Matrix On-line Diagnostic (MOD)**. The MOD allows CIEL to quickly gauge a community's phase in terms of *Connections and Co-operation; Vitality; Inclusiveness & Community Values; Leadership; Strategic Capacity; Community Sustainability; and Community Entrepreneurship*. Using the MOD on a small community sample, CIEL's team can quickly analyze and efficiently gauge community readiness and capacity in these seven key dimensions, recommend the best tools, resources and techniques for their phase/stage, and provide a highly useful report and benchmark for community planning. (\*Contact CIEL for more information or a sample copy of a MOD report. The MOD can also be administered using hard copies and traditional survey methods.)



The MOD allows for a deeper analysis of capacity in key areas like Leadership and Co-operation.

## Using the Communities Matrix

*Where are we? Where do we want to be? How best can we get there?*

The one-page Matrix can be used to stimulate conversation in your community: Which phase are we at? Are different sectors of the community – youth, arts, business, etc. – at different stages? How far have we come? Members of the community participate in a conversation to determine together what phase or stage their community is at on the Matrix. This can be a formal or informal process. Community members can identify where they want the community to be (there is an alternative!) and the incremental steps that can be taken in order to get there. Our experience has taught us that communities, like families, feel they are more dysfunctional than they really are. Knowing there are others out there like you can be a liberating thought! The Matrix also provides some common language and terminology that allow those conversations to take place. It can also serve as a benchmark and an excellent way to show community progression.

## Real World Examples - Using the Matrix

- ◆ A First Nation wanted to engage in comprehensive community planning but didn't know if they were ready to engage in a process that would eat up considerable time, effort and money. They considered the Matrix and Matrix On-line Diagnostic (MOD) to help them determine whether they were ready and determine the issues they needed to address *before* they started an expensive planning process.
- ◆ Suspecting there might not be enough trust and social capital within the community, a community used the Matrix and the Matrix On-line Diagnostic (MOD) to measure their readiness to form a social planning council and find out where there might be problems. In this way, they could enter the planning process with their eyes 'wide-open'.
- ◆ Forty-two communities in BC used the Matrix to assess whether they were ready to host a collaborative community leadership program CIEL was piloting.
- ◆ One community found the Matrix useful for showing it had made slow but steady progress (from non-co-operation to simple planning stages) over a period of years. It plans on using the Matrix stages as targets for the future.
- ◆ Other communities have used the Matrix and Matrix On-line Diagnostic as pre-planning tools to assist them in matching tools, techniques and resources to community context.

## Other CIEL Services

CIEL offers training, workshops and certification in using and facilitating the Matrix. It also offers the Matrix On-line Diagnostic (MOD), other strategic processes (**Business Vitality Initiative** for communities, **Community Vitality Initiative**, collaborative and entrepreneurial leadership training, etc.) and technical assistance. Contact us for more info at [info@theCIEL.com](mailto:info@theCIEL.com) or visit us on-line at [www.theCIEL.com](http://www.theCIEL.com).

CIEL, a not-for-profit organization based in Nelson, BC, Canada, continues to refine the Communities Matrix seeking feedback from those who have used it to make it a more practical and useful tool for communities. Please send your feedback to [info@theCIEL.com](mailto:info@theCIEL.com).