

Communities 'Life Cycle' Matrix

Actualization Phase

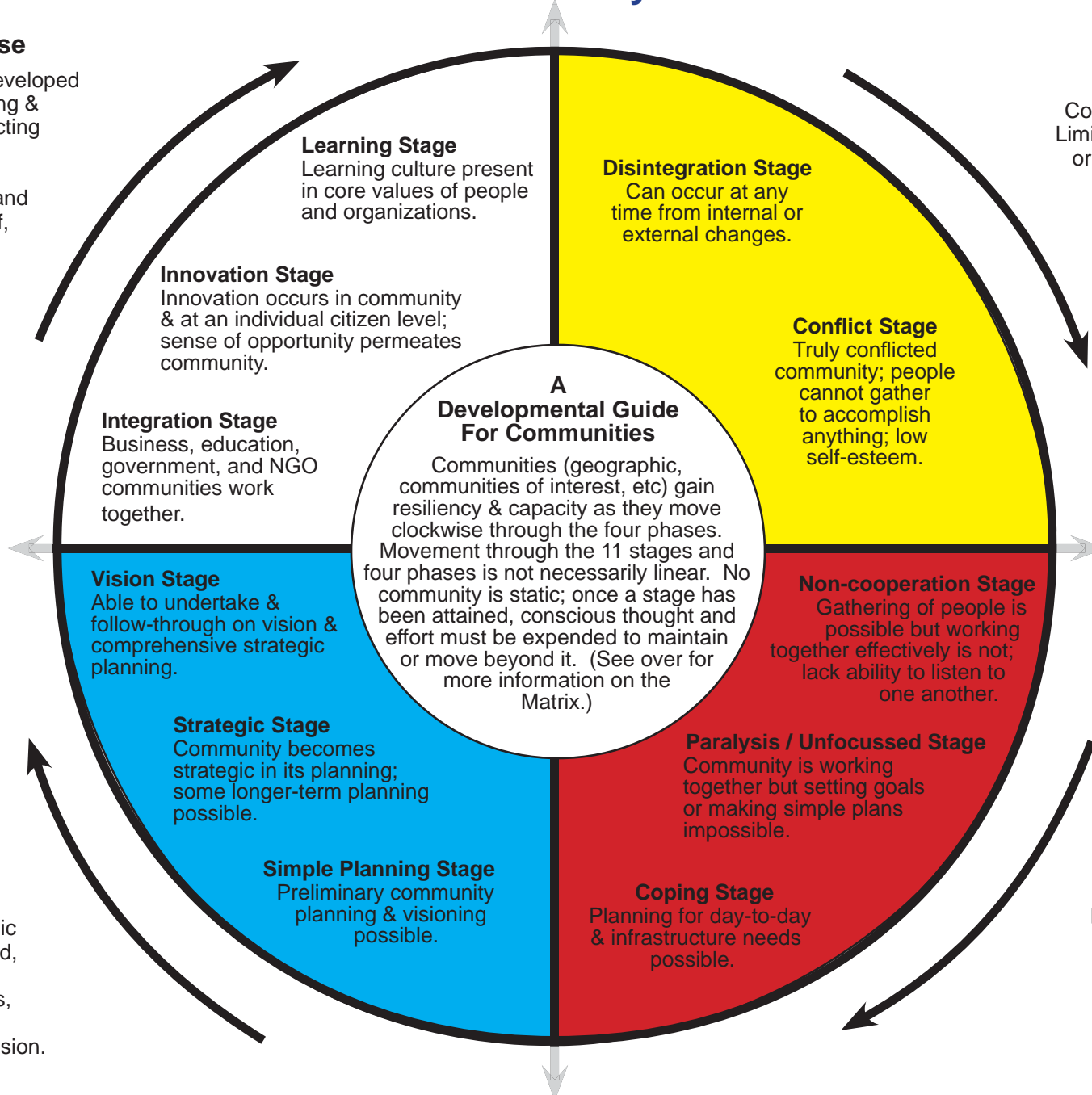
Community is highly developed and encourages learning & innovation while respecting its history and culture. Community shares resources with others and regularly monitors itself, continuing to enhance capacity.

Action: Community undertakes regular reviews and reflection activities to maintain or enhance stage / phase.

Vision Phase

Community recognizes the importance of vision and long-term planning; is able to move in this direction.

Action: Community can engage in planning, meaningful consultation of its members, working towards the development of strategic thinking & planning, and, ultimately, identifying community-wide values, distinct community characteristics and a vision.



Learning Stage
Learning culture present in core values of people and organizations.

Innovation Stage
Innovation occurs in community & at an individual citizen level; sense of opportunity permeates community.

Integration Stage
Business, education, government, and NGO communities work together.

Vision Stage
Able to undertake & follow-through on vision & comprehensive strategic planning.

Strategic Stage
Community becomes strategic in its planning; some longer-term planning possible.

Simple Planning Stage
Preliminary community planning & visioning possible.

Disintegration Stage
Can occur at any time from internal or external changes.

Conflict Stage
Truly conflicted community; people cannot gather to accomplish anything; low self-esteem.

Non-cooperation Stage
Gathering of people is possible but working together effectively is not; lack ability to listen to one another.

Paralysis / Unfocussed Stage
Community is working together but setting goals or making simple plans impossible.

Coping Stage
Planning for day-to-day & infrastructure needs possible.

Pre-Community or Chaos Phase

Community is undeveloped. Limited sharing of resources or recognition of value of a community.

Action: Community can (re)form through the identification of and action of influential and respected leaders (elected or unelected).

Emergence Phase

Community exists but has significant problems, making anything but survival & fulfilling short-term needs impossible.

Action: Community can advance by focusing on small, non-political, trust-building projects to build success, respect, confidence, relationships & skills.



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Communities 'Life Cycle' Matrix Version 2.2
Please tell us how you use the Matrix - e-mail: info@theCIEL.com

Contact us for a free list of 69 tools, techniques & resources appropriate for your community's phase, for CIEL's Community Check-up (see reverse) or to find out about CIEL's training, technical assistance or other strategic tools and action processes.

The Communities Matrix—What Stage is My Community At? What Interventions are Appropriate?

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 moving 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 planning tools were appropriate. Communities were easily able to see their community on the Matrix 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 an extensive literature review, using feedback from top community development practitioners and using the input of 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 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 Community Check-up*

CIEL has added another layer to the Matrix, allowing a community to dig further and gauge its capacity in seven key areas through the fee-based on-line **Community Check-up (CC)**. The CC allows for a quick and useful measure in the critical areas of: *Connections and Co-operation; Vitality; Inclusiveness & Community Values; Leadership; Strategic Capacity; Community Sustainability; and Community Entrepreneurship*. Using the CC, 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. The CC has been used by communities in Canada and the United States.

* Contact CIEL for more information or a sample copy of a CC report. The CC can also be administered using traditional [off-line] survey methods.

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? Where were we two years ago and where do we think we'll be two years from now? How can we get there? Members of the community participate in a facilitated conversation to collectively determine 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 progress.

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 the Community Check-up (CC) to help them determine whether they were ready and determine the issues they needed to address *before* they started an expensive and time-consuming planning process.
- ◆ Suspecting there might not be enough trust and social capital within the community, a community used the Matrix and the Community Check-up (CC) 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. An Oregon organization used the Matrix and the CC to benchmark communities prior to the start of a community-building leadership program. They plan on using the Matrix and CC two years after the program's end to measure the program's impact on the community.
- ◆ 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 the Community Check-up to assist them in identifying tools and interventions appropriate for community context.

Other CIEL Services

CIEL offers conference presentations, workshops and certification in using and facilitating the Matrix. It also has other tools and action-planning processes for communities (business vitality, community vitality, sustainability) and organizations (productivity, leadership, efficiency, organizational vitality, etc.). CIEL's innovative work has been featured by the Canadian Broadcasting Corp., the Australian Broadcasting Corp. and by other media outlets. CIEL continues to refine the Communities Matrix and seeks feedback from those who have used it. Contact us for more info at info@theCIEL.com or visit us on-line at www.theCIEL.com.