

# Begin With Community™

## A STRATEGY FOR CHANGEMAKERS IN COMMUNITIES, ORGANIZATIONS, & GROUPS

### Does this sound familiar?

*You see an issue of concern in your community, organization, or group.*

*You step up to try to address it.*

*You invite others to join you.*

*You convene a planning meeting.*

*And that's when it can begin to go sideways.*

### How does THAT happen?

It happens because too often change begins with “Content Experts” – those with training, knowledge, resources, status, and authority. They are usually the first to the planning table and they default into the “business as usual” strategies of needs assessment and analysis, creating logic models, writing work plans, and then using these to seek funding from other Content Experts.

**Finally, once everything is ready to go, THEN they engage the “Context Experts.”** Context Experts are those within your community, organization, or group with lived experience of the issue of concern you saw. Because they were not present at the beginning, the Content Experts, now firmly in charge, go to work selling the Context Experts on their idea and try to get them to “buy-in” to the plan. Sometimes the Context Experts “buy-in.” Sometimes they don't. Whether they do or not, the Content Experts are usually so deep into their planning they will go forward anyway.

**What usually happens next is tragic.** The Content Experts solution is usually short-lived. Their funding ends. They lose interest. Something else catches their attention. **Whatever.** They end their project and the Context Experts are left to struggle on as best they can or simply clean up the mess.

### At Tenacious Change, we offer a solution...Begin With Community.

Begin With Community is a strategy for centering **Ownership-based Change™** and effectively using **Collective Change Leadership™**.

Begin With Community is both a **mindset** and an **adaptive process** created by Tenacious Change. We teach and coach changemakers how to use the strategy to help their organizations, communities, and groups achieve **aspirational change**.

Begin With Community is neither “top down” nor “bottom up” change. Both have deficits. “Bottom up” change can be chaotic, messy, time consuming, and frustrating. “Top down” change ignores, pushes aside, or tokenizes Context Experts.

Begin With Community is “**everyone together**” change. It brings Context Experts and Content Experts together in a way that honors the expertise each brings. It establishes guardrails to ensure meaningful, equitable participation for everyone who wants to work on aspirational change with others. Begin With Community helps communities, organizations, and groups achieve wider adoption and durability of aspirational change.

**Read on for an overview of the Begin With Community strategy.**

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**Mindset:** *Anchors change in the philosophy of Ownership-based Change.*

**Adaptive Process:** *Collective change leadership tailored to each group, community, or organization.*

**Aspirational Change:** *A change which addresses an issue(s) of concern and reflects the needs, wants, and will of the whole community, group, or organization.*

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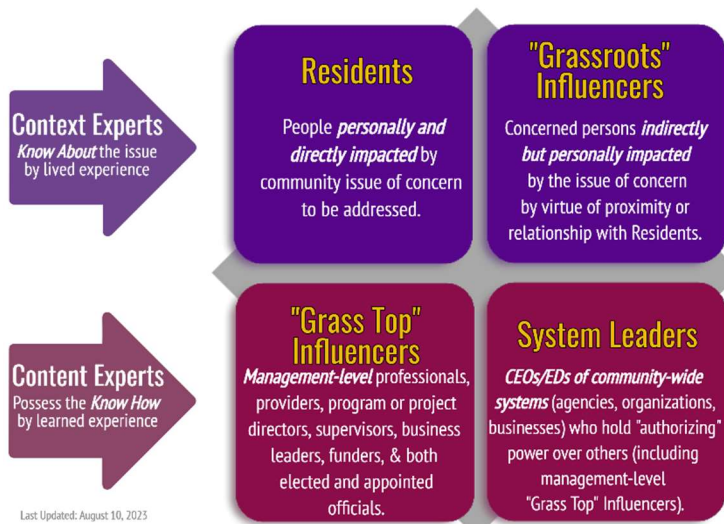
# The Overview

Begin With Community is a **community level intervention**. We use the term “community” broadly to mean a **geographic area** (e.g., town, city, county, region, etc.), **organization**, or **group**.

As a community level intervention, Begin With Community provides the scaffolding upon which attitudes, policies, practices, and systems can be changed. It supports the creation and implementation of programs, projects, and interventions to help communities achieve their aspirational change.

Begin With Community:

- ✦ Starts with learning the philosophy of **Ownership-based Change** from Tenacious Change, featuring in-person training (remote and/or on-site), utilizing a level-setting original video series, *Creating a Change Movement: Getting Started with the Tenacious Change Approach*.
- ✦ Animates the Ownership-based Change through **Collective Change Leadership**, a team, workgroup, task force, coalition, cadre, crew, etc. (you name it!), that prioritizes equitable, meaningful participation of members of the **Whole Community**, both **Context Experts** and **Content Experts**.
- ✦ Prepares the Collective Change Leadership for **self-leadership** and **self-governance** and empowers the group to practice collective leadership as the Tenacious Change team withdraws from the engagement.
- ✦ Offers the use of **the Tenacious Change Assessment and Monitoring (TCAM)** tool to monitor Whole Community engagement, mobilization, and progress toward achieving the aspirational change and identify ways to improve the process.



The philosophy of Ownership-based Change includes a set of **essential operating principles and core tasks** that changemakers learn during training with Tenacious Change. By learning and following the essential operating principles, changemakers can ensure remaining anchored in the philosophy as they complete the core tasks, even as they **tailor the tasks** for their situation.

Collective Change Leadership offers equitable, meaningful participation by everyone who wants to work on aspirational change with others. Together they participate in **co-learning** to identify community issues of concern as well as the aspirational change desired. Together they **forecast** both the challenges to change and opportunities for change. Together they **co-create** solutions and support implementation of them. Together they create and institutionalize a durable, yet resilient, movement for change.

The Tenacious Change Assessment and Monitoring (TCAM) tool is available to track and monitor engagement and change. It is a proprietary tool that can be adapted, tailored, and administered by Tenacious Change for use in a variety of change projects. Its development was described in the article [“Using Collective Impact in Support of Communitywide Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiatives,”](#) by Tom Klaus and Edward Saunders.

## HOW IT ALL HAPPENS

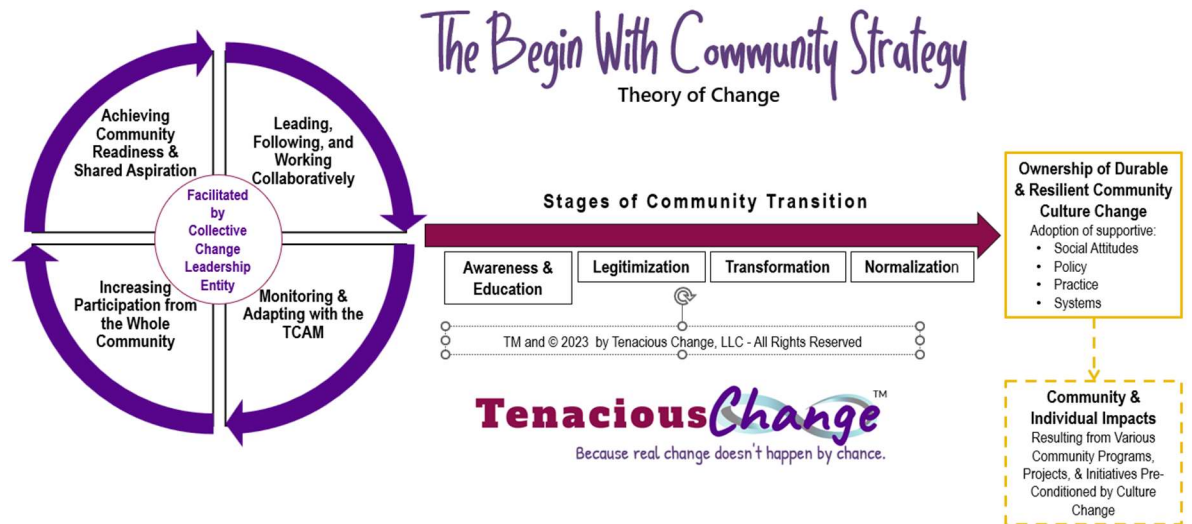
Begin With Community is designed to be used with changemakers within communities, organizations, or groups. A group of changemakers (e.g., funders, grantees, community-based organizations, coalitions, business or agency leaders, etc.) will engage and contract with Tenacious Change to **collaboratively facilitate** the Build With Community strategy. This may include, but is not limited to: identifying, recruiting, training, and facilitating the Collective Change Leadership entity; clarifying the issue(s) of concern and defining the desired aspirational change(s); tailoring the strategy; coaching and mentoring implementers of the strategy; administering the TCAM and providing an annual progress report; providing additional or continuous training and consultation as needed; and preparing, equipping, and empowering the Collective Change Leadership for autonomous self-leadership and self-governance.

# The Process

The process follows a general pattern which is visualized in the strategy's theory of change. The process begins with one-on-one meetings to learn more about the community and hear about its aspirations. Then recruitment for the Collective Change Leadership entity begins. By design, this entity is diverse and inclusive of Context Experts and Content Experts representing the whole community. Anyone who expresses a desire to work on

aspirational change with others and is willing to engage and participate, is eligible for the entity. The Collective Change Leadership entity learns the philosophy of Ownership-based Change and the strategy of Begin With Community before beginning its work. This preparation is key to the success of the strategy. It is our observation that "top down" is the default

approach used by many changemakers. The purpose of the training provided by Tenacious Change is to introduce the changemakers who have engaged us and members of the Collective Change Leadership entity to a new default approach – "everyone together," which we also call the Tenacious Change Approach. The training is essential for "level setting" to ensure shared understanding and a common language. The training uses a 4-hour video series created by Tenacious Change and in-person meetings (remote or on-site). Overall, the most basic training can take as little as 30-days.



Once the Collective Change Leadership is finally convened to begin its work, its focus throughout the engagement includes strengthening the capacity and resilience of the group by: 1) **increasing participation from the Whole Community**; 2) helping the community **achieve readiness for change and a shared aspiration**; 3) **leading, following, and working collaboratively together**, and 4) **monitoring progress** of the group and the change initiative and **adapting as needed**.

However, it also includes facilitating the **Stages of Community Transition**. Through collective leadership, it leads the way to "Normalization," the point at which the change has been adopted as the new normal for the community. At the end of the process, the community genuinely owns the change.

At Tenacious Change, we are committed to helping communities address issues in ways that achieve a sense of equity, meaningful participation, and belonging for all. We are especially attuned to those who have lived experience with the issue of concern and are most impacted by the aspirational change, whether they are residents, workers, members, and partners. When we begin with community, the participation of Context Experts is as least as important as the participation of Content Experts if "everyone together" is to own the change. When a community owns the change, it will protect the gains made and do everything it can to prevent it from "snapping back" to the way it was before. It's experience with Begin With Community strategy and embrace of Ownership-based Change supports the community's resilience and its ability to adapt again as needed in the future.

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When forming the Collective Change Leadership entity, the **LAST THING** we do is convene a meeting. We know...that's counter intuitive and not how things usually work.

Our experience has shown that a quick, effective way to undermine Ownership-based Change is to start by calling a meeting.

## Why is that?

It attracts primarily Content Experts and, in so doing, it can create a barrier to participation from Context Experts. It can reduce, or even exclude altogether, participation of Context Experts from the start.

In addition, it can signal the start of work on the change process before adequate preparation is complete. Also, when dominated by Content Experts, it becomes easier for the group to resort to the default strategy of driving change from the "top down."

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# Sample Work Plan by Phase

This sample work plan illustrates what to expect from Tenacious Change. Our work is accomplished in-person, both on-site and virtually.

## 1) GETTING STARTED

The Start Up goals 1) build solid, positive relationships for engaging the whole community, 2) establish a Collective Change Leadership Group, and 3) strengthen the capacity and competencies of this group to use the Begin With Community principles to accomplish the core tasks of the approach.

- ✦ Tenacious Change meets with changemakers and community members to learn more about the community and its aspirations.
- ✦ Collaborate with changemakers to identify and recruit Collective Change Leadership entity members from among both Context Experts and Content Experts.
- ✦ Train the changemakers and the Collective Change Leadership entity in the philosophy of Ownership-based Change and its essential principles and core tasks.
- ✦ Convene and facilitate meetings of the Collective Change Leadership entity to refine understanding of the issue(s) of concern and explore possible aspirational change(s).
- ✦ Collaboratively identify, co-create and tailor specific tasks for the Collective Change Leadership entity to undertake for strengthening the capacity and resilience of the group and to lead the community through the Stages of Community Transition to achieve its aspirational change.
- ✦ Administer the TCAM to establish a baseline for monitoring progress.

**Anticipated Length of Phase: 6 to 12 month.**

*Notes: Success is found in this phase by establishing the Collective Change Leadership entity with a common language and understanding of how to facilitate change through training and coaching provided by Tenacious Change.*

## 2) COLLABORATIVE DOING

The goals of Collaborative Doing are to 1) identify and define the community's aspiration change(s); 2) expand participation to strengthen community ownership in achieving its aspirational change; 3) continue to strengthen and hone the capacity of the Collective Change Leadership entity to use the Begin With Community strategy to complete tasks related to achieving the aspirational change; and, 3) continue progress on the Stages of Community Transition in support of the aspirational change. The Collective Change Leadership entity, with additional training, support, guidance, consultation, and coaching from the Tenacious Change staff will:

- ✦ Facilitate a process to help the Collective Change Leadership entity identify and clarify, with the larger community, the desired aspirational change(s).
- ✦ Lead ongoing community engagement efforts to increase support for achieving the community aspiration.
- ✦ Continue to co-create, and implement with the community, strategies for achieving each of the Stages of Community Transition to create ownership of and progress toward the community aspiration.
- ✦ Tenacious Change will administer the annual TCAM to monitor progress.

**Anticipated Length of Phase: 12 to 36 months**

*Notes: Collaborative Doing is the essence of the work to be done by the Collective Change Leadership entity. In this phase, it co-creates, co-designs, and co-implements tasks to help the community achieve its aspiration and ensure its durability by moving through the Stages of Community Transition. This is iterative work and is typically the longest of the phases. Throughout this time, Tenacious Change walks alongside the Collective Change Leadership entity in its work.*

## 3) GROUNDING DURABILITY & RESILIENCE

The goals of Grounding Durability and Resilience are the same in Collaborative Doing **PLUS** moving the Collective Change Leadership entity to a status of autonomous self-leadership. This includes, but is not limited to:

- ✦ Restructuring of the Collective Change Leadership entity (if needed).
- ✦ Establishing or refreshing group agreements.
- ✦ Strategy planning.
- ✦ Creating a group charter (if not previously accomplished).
- ✦ Assisting in the development of policies, procedures, and protocols which are essential for the entity to be effective.
- ✦ Transfer the knowledge needed for the Collective Change Leadership entity to sustain its work and continue to grow in community influence.
- ✦ Transfer skills and strengthen capacity for self-leadership and governance of Collective Change Leadership entity as Tenacious Change withdraws from regular engagement.
- ✦ Tenacious Change administers final TCAM.

**Anticipated Length of Phase: 12 to 24 months**

*Notes: With the completion of Grounding Durability & Resilience, the Collective Change Leadership entity should be able to fully function autonomously as a diverse, inclusive whole-community collaborative. It should be able to achieve the community aspiration, normalize it as part of the fabric/culture of the community, forecast when further adaptation may be needed, and facilitate additional change using the Begin With Community tools it has acquired. Tenacious Change will prepare and guide the entity to achieve self-leadership.*

Please Note: The anticipated length of each phase can vary by client and the phases can overlap. Factors impacting length of each phase include group readiness, level of commit to the strategy and process, and context or environment. And, of course, unforeseen disruptions can appear and be either opportunities or challenges.

**To Learn More:**

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