

# LEADERSHIP FOR NAVIGATING CHANGE

LEARNER COMMENTS AND Q&A

 TAMARACK  
INSTITUTE

**Chat Box Comments**

Resources:

- You can learn more about the Civic Canopy here: <http://www.civiccanopy.org/>
- Here's a link to the paper, Leadership for Navigating Change: <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/paper-leadership-navigating-change-liz-weaver-bill-fulton-jodi-hardin-civic-canopy>
- You can learn more about Policy Link here: <https://www.policylink.org/covid19-and-race/actions>

How Communities have responded and Leadership Challenges:

- British Columbia government ensured that child care spaces were kept open, you didn't lose your spot and didn't have to pay for months your child wasn't there, but child care facility was paid so there (available) afterwards
- Mixed Company created a weekly zoom meeting to create collaboratively a number of presentations such as The Protest, Pandemic Roommates etc. and catalyzed a tremendous amount of dialogue. We have adapted forum theatre and newspaper Theatre into Newsfeed Theatre. We found flexibility and adaptability is what is necessary to create open heart communication.
- Perhaps change agents need to be comfortable calling out that the leaders are in the room and in the community. The question that occurs to me is, how do we equalize the power dynamics so those voices can be heard and listened to?
- Leaders do need to take calculated risks to pivot and disrupt. How do you create a broader understanding and synergy with Boards when the current COVID environment is causing so much fear and worry?
- Consider a triangle diagram with two-way arrows (or plus signs) between the 3 leadership styles would aid the concept that it's ideal to flow between the leadership styles depending on the situation.

**Follow Up Questions**

- Hi Liz - is it possible to get the link to the Case Study you spoke of?

**Response:** [Vibrant Communities – Cities Reducing Poverty – Cities Responding to COVID - https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/cities-reducing-poverty-responding-to-covid-19](https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/cities-reducing-poverty-responding-to-covid-19)

- I love your paper and these leadership concepts. I now feel like I've been less aimless in my mindset & community building work because it's been fitting into these styles (even if it hasn't fit into my pre-conceived/pre-pandemic goals). Learning from past labels/names that can trigger retaliation

from people who don't understand the concepts before reacting, could the term "disruptive"/emergent veer down the divisive path that other phrases like "defunding the police" or other well-intentioned phrases? I work on Vision plan implementation within a rural city government organization and bringing up "disruptive" leadership seems like it could ruffle some feathers before the entire concept gets across.

**Response:** Thanks for this thoughtful comment. I wonder if you have some suggestions. We did look at several other words but in the end, landed on disruptive-emergent. We are still not fully settled here but did not feel that systems leadership really reflected the concepts raised. We have begun to think that holding the tension between disruption and emergence might be part of all levels to a certain extent—do any terms come to mind that convey that productive tension?

- What is your sense post-pandemic related to some of these leadership changes? How do you think systems will revert back or want to revert back to pre-pandemic ways (thinking government not being as nimble/responsive). How can we curve this?

**Response:** As we discussed briefly, there is always a potential for “snapback” in any system change effort, where the internal resilience of a system asserts itself to maintain the status quo. This is a good thing when healthy systems face threats, but problematic for systems change efforts. Two strategies we noted on the call include anticipating that possibility and making commitments to remain accountable to goals in the future and publicly taking stock of our progress toward those goals to prevent sliding back, and to reframe our mental models from pendulums swinging back and forth in zero-sum fashion, to upward spirals that may appear to be “back in the same spot,” but which in fact have made progress along a different access. What other strategies have people considered?

- What role does this thinking play in de-colonizing our systems?

**Response:** The paper reflects leadership which is currently addressing equity and social injustice. Addressing decolonization is important and was missed in this paper. We will review and include in the next version. Do you have resources to share?

- Maybe its a function of living in the DC metro area, but what seems foremost around here is how to (a) maintain and support collaborative spaces while some are looking to disrupt some of what is unfolding (the anti-maskers, the protests against shut downs, etc) and (b) how to create tents and safe spaces that bring in those operating within different paradigms (COVID is serious, COVID is a hoax). Thoughts?

**Response:** This challenges seems to be everywhere, and in some ways relates to the snapback question above. We will be more likely to succeed in changing systems for the good if we reduce the resistance to those changes, which requires expanding the level of consensus on the why and how we might do that. Spaces that promote listening across our differences, especially our current political polarization, is vital to that. The three forms of leadership we have identified don't provide

an obvious answer to how to do that, but hopefully they offer new spaces that are likely to generate common ground—around immediate human needs, lasting collaboration, and collective action to achieve community-defined goals.

- As you point out, some of these leadership types (Responsive in particular) recreate/reinforce some of the inequities of our existing systems by leaving people with lived experience of the issues out of the decision-making process. I love your suggestion that self/group reflection is one way to course-correct. Do you have practical suggestions for how to integrate reflective practice into leadership (if this is what you're suggesting)?

**Response:** Tamarack engaged individuals with the lived experience of poverty to contribute to a guide about engagement. This resource is a useful reflection about how to effectively engage lived experience individuals. It is one of the most popular resources downloaded from the Tamarack website. <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/ten-2019>

- Have you thought about how to enroll the voices in the positions of power into this broader, distributed, disruptive way of doing things? They are still very important voices.

**Response:** Great question. All the forms of leadership described recognize different leadership expressions – both content and context experts. As you noted, those with decision-making power have shifted resources during the pandemic. The important thing is to ensure this flexibility and rapid decision-making process is recognized and valued. This was highlighted in a paper by Tim Brodhead titled: On Not Letting Another Crisis go to Waste - <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/not-letting-another-crisis-go-waste-tim-brodhead>