

TCL TRANSFORMATIONAL
CHANGE LEADERSHIP

**DISCUSSION &
ACTIVITY GUIDE**

INTRODUCTION

WHY TCL?

Leaders today tackling the world's most difficult problems around equity, resilience, health, education, agriculture, and ecology must focus *not only* on an end-goal; they must also ask critical questions about how to achieve their organization's vision through processes that embody their values. For example, to encourage outside-the-box thinking and risk-taking decision-making among staff or constituencies, the examples in this project can help instill confidence in *how* local groups and individuals can pave new pathways. Combating authoritarian structures requires that leaders understand and value the social fabric and resilient networks that can help them gain power in the face of oppression. The leaders profiled by the Transformational Change Leadership project can provide insights to those who are seeking to help their own communities.

WHO IS TCL FOR?

TCL was created with various sectors in mind, including for-profit and market-driven entrepreneurs, philanthropy, governmental institutions, social movements, NGOs, CBOs, and affected communities themselves. While it might seem that these latter groups — social movements, NGOs, and communities — bear the most obvious connection to TCL, understanding *why* leadership is central to any organizational entity, how leadership occurs, and *how* it can be nurtured unpacks its cross-sector significance.

This particular discussion guide was designed to give current and potential social impact and social justice leaders a tool for understanding collective leadership. Consider the following scenarios:

- You are a **member of an affected community**, seeking to use your existing skills and resources to catalyze impact and scale it with and for your community members. TCL showcases experiences like your own and explains how the process of leadership can be applied to your situation to catalyze change. It also provides an opportunity for you to share your own experiences to help educate other leaders like you.
- You are an **NGO** or a **CBO**, seeking to assess an existing or prospective partnership with another organization, community, or a governmental institution. TCL provides a framework for understanding key qualities that a stakeholder might already possess, whether the partnership is a good match with your organization's strengths.
- You are a student or practitioner in the field of **international affairs or international development**, seeking to understand how best to bolster a local community that builds towards long-term structural change. TCL helps identify what latent leadership strengths a community already has and what key areas can be strengthened.
- You are part of a **faith-based or interest-based group** seeking to build morale, identify your group's unique strengths, and provide support to help your group achieve their values. TCL offers examples of what others like you have experienced.

- You are part of a **loosely-based association or movement** seeking to achieve long-term change and maintain the powerful network that you've helped to create. TCL helps frame how these twin objectives are necessarily intertwined.
- You are an **entrepreneur** or **impact investor** seeking to scale through market-based solutions. TCL functions as a way to understand whether the target community is poised to take advantage of a product or new strategy.
- You are a **philanthropist**, trying to assess where to invest your money and how to deepen the impact of your investment. TCL suggests a new perspective for assessing the quality of the existing leadership (or the opportunities for building leadership) in the communities you wish to support.

In each of these cases, social change and a payoff can be achieved not through investing in a single individual or project, but building leadership among a local community. Understanding and implementing TCL thus translates into an effective investment of your resources (time, money, infrastructure).

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'LEADERSHIP'?

TCL raises key questions to help define **collective leadership**. Throughout the project, we've used individual leaders as storytellers to describe the agency of a community, group, or movement. In doing so, our intention is not to highlight the individual leader as a "hero," but rather to position them as a model of collective leadership -- that is, as an integral part of a movement which inspires others to do and to achieve together. Their actions to mobilize the latent leadership within a whole community illustrate what leadership can mean to groups and to communities.

We see TCL not just as a method of leadership development, but as a means of **building the next better process**. Leadership is an ongoing iterative process, and this project and curriculum encourages frequent check-ins as a group to self-assess growth and change.

You may have encountered some of the frameworks, terms, and strategies that TCL puts forward. In relying upon stories of leadership, we hope this effort brings experiences together in a way that is engaging, constructive, and provides a roadmap to your own collective leadership efforts. This guide invites you to reflect on what your group or community may already be doing, consider new ways of characterizing it, and determine how to strengthen these characteristics. We believe TCL can also help you describe the importance of leadership building to outside stakeholders (such as funders) who may not otherwise understand the process. In other words, this website and guide seeks to characterize leadership through *description* rather than *prescription*.

TO USE THIS GUIDE MOST EFFECTIVELY, VISIT [TCLEADERSHIP.ORG](http://tcleadership.org) TO EXPLORE:

1 The characteristics that we have observed showing up in the process of **Transformational Change Leadership**.

[\(http://tcleadership.org/characteristics/\)](http://tcleadership.org/characteristics/)

These are:

VISION

EMPATHY

PERSEVERANCE

COMMUNITY

RISK

COLLABORATION

MOBILIZATION

2 The stories of transformational change leaders that illuminate these **characteristics**

[\(http://tcleadership.org/characteristics/\)](http://tcleadership.org/characteristics/).

3 a - The context in which transformational change leaders do their work, including
The movements and social issues that concern their work

[\(http://tcleadership.org/movements/\)](http://tcleadership.org/movements/)

b - The innovations, strategies, and tools that leaders employ or need in order to
achieve transformational change in their communities and societies.

[\(http://tcleadership.org/innovations/\)](http://tcleadership.org/innovations/)

APPLYING TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE LEADERSHIP TO YOUR MISSION

PREFACE

These questions in the [Discussion Guide](#) below are designed for you to consider or reflect upon as a group.

The [Activity Guide](#) that follows delves into the same questions but provides tips on how to structure them as group interactions for assessments and evaluations of your progress toward achieving goals and fulfilling your mission. The [Activity Guide](#) provides modules that can be implemented as stand-alone activities — but for more impact, use them as sequential modules that build upon each other.

Should you or your group recognize the need for an outside facilitator who can not only guide the group in these activities and bring in external references, please contact us at info@tcleadership.org.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

I. REFLECTING ON LEADERSHIP PROCESS

You can use the following discussion questions:

- to understand and explore the content on the TCL website;
- to discuss transformational leadership in your own organization, group, movement, or field;
- within your work of movement-building and organizing coalitions.

Q: We've analyzed movements and groups and community-led shifts. In doing so, we've observed seven (7) characteristics of TCL: Vision, Empathy, Perseverance, Community, Risk, Collaboration, and Mobilization. How do you as a group relate to each of these characteristics and the terms we've used to label them?

Q: Aside from the seven characteristics we have identified, what other characteristics of leadership are evidenced in your group and in your work process? Would you add any additional characteristics that define your work? How would you define those? How would you apply those to achieve your mission?

Q: How do the seven characteristics we've identified fit your community? Examining your community or constituencies, what characteristics do you perceive as defining strengths? What are areas of challenge or opportunity?

Q: Which of the individuals and/or communities from our research has inspired you the most and why? Which actions and ideas resonate with your experience and why?

Q: Which of the "movements" we have identified most concern your mission or purpose? How have you exhibited the characteristics of Transformational Change Leadership within the context of these movements and issues?

Q: Which of the innovations, tools, and strategies we have set forth have you used in the commission of your work? Which have been most helpful in achieving goals and fulfilling mission? Which are new to you and present opportunities to support your work?

Q: How does the overall concept of "transformational change" and the process of leadership we have defined support your mission and your communities? How does this frame help you strive for positive change in your specific contexts?

2. CONSIDERING INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

You can use the following reflection questions to:

- consider the ways in which each of the individual characteristics, as defined within the TCL framework, impacts and shows up in your own work and leadership;
- discuss the implications of the stories on the TCL site with your colleagues and partners;
- analyze your own collective leadership and how specific characteristics apply to or enhance that leadership.

VISION

Q: How is vision developed for your work? Who is involved in the process?

Q: How is your vision communicated internally? To external stakeholders?

Q: What are some of the ways you enact your vision? How does it show up in your daily work?

EMPATHY

Q: Does your work develop the leadership and voice of those most impacted? What activities and practices reflect this goal?

Q: Are you part of the affected community? Are you immersed in it? In what ways do you incorporate the voices and perspectives of those most impacted by the injustices you fight or the progress you seek?

Q: Are there ways your organizational systems or structures are at odds with the values you profess? Or do they reinforce your values?

PERSEVERANCE

Q: What events, “failures,” or difficult questions have led to breakthrough thinking in your work? What about your understanding changed?

Q: How do you keep people engaged in a movement for change when they face setbacks or challenges?

Q: What are the ways you stay focused on your ultimate goals and vision? How does that strengthen your daily work?

COMMUNITY

Q: How do you define community? How do you build and engage community? What activities and practices reflect this goal?

Q: How do you acknowledge and incorporate the various skills and knowledge that community members and partners bring to your work?

Q: Does your work break down isolation between communities and community members? How?

RISK

- Q:** How do you assess risk? How do you determine what are smart risks and what are risks that are too large to take?
- Q:** What is your relationship to risk in terms of the concepts of (a) innovation, (b) success, or (c) failure?
- Q:** How do you prepare for the dangers you face (for yourself and others) in challenging the status quo? Where are the lines you are willing to draw for yourself? For others?

COLLABORATION

- Q:** How does collaborating with other groups improve the impact of your work?
- Q:** How do you nurture the relationships the underly your collaborations? How do you engage stakeholders and your community in dialogue and decisions?
- Q:** What values do you need to share with a potential partner (who may not work in the same way that you do)? How would you discover or share those values? How do you collaborate and cooperate in ways that reflect the values of your community?

MOBILIZATION

- Q:** How do you organize people around the shared political, social, and cultural objectives of your work? How does your work support building and stewarding coalitions?
- Q:** In what ways do you live your values and communicate them to those involved in your work? How do you use your influence in positive ways?
- Q:** What forms of leadership do you see emerge among community members and those impacted by your work? How do you mitigate power dynamics amongst traditional and non-traditional leaders?

ACTIVITY GUIDE

Here are some suggestions on how to “use” and incorporate TCL:

- within *assessments* of your group or organization;
- in *planning* how to proceed on a project or campaign;
- within the context of *movement-building* and organizing communities.

In the examples below, we suggest a range of activities that will illuminate your own leadership process. Each of these activities carry varying time commitments.

The modules below build on one another but they are also each designed to function as standalone activities.

1. WARM UP | VERSION A

Objectives:

- To pique initial interest about the 7 characteristics of leadership and engage staff / group members in the activities to come
- For facilitators and individual members to gauge the group’s understanding about the terms

Length of Activity: 30 minutes

Bring printouts of (or project on a screen) the 7 characteristic of leadership. Ask the group to read aloud the short definitions. After reading through all of them, ask individual members to discuss what the characteristics mean to them. Then as the group to briefly discuss the differences they see between the characteristics identified by TCL against their understanding of traditional or existing approaches to leadership.

2. WARM UP | VERSION B

Objectives:

- To pique initial interest about the 7 characteristics of leadership and engage staff in the activities to come
- For facilitators and individual members to gauge the group’s understanding about the terms

Length of Activity: 15-30 minutes depending on group size.

Before the group convenes, facilitators should send out a link via email (or give out printed copies in advance of the meeting) of the 7 characteristics of leadership.

Ask the group to come the meeting prepared to give their reaction to the list of characteristics, asking they reflect on what the definitions mean to them.

When the group has convened, ask them to briefly (e.g. in 3 sentences) describe the one quality that resonates most with them and why. Share out via facilitated group discussion.

3. COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT: UNDERSTANDING TCL IN YOUR OWN COMMUNITIES

Objectives:

- To understand the qualities of TCL in order to relate them to one's own community
- To reflect upon an organization's existing values and cultures
- To assess, strategize, and plan towards a group or organization's aspirational values and fulfillment of mission

Length of Activity: 1 hour, 2 consecutive hours, or 8 half-hour sessions

Important Note: Before the group convenes, facilitators should send out a link via email (or give out printed copies in advance of the meeting) of the 7 characteristics of leadership.

If you have 1 hour (for example, a lunchtime discussion)

- 1 Ask group members to come to the meeting prepared to share a story about when they've seen that characteristic in action in their community. Give each group a limited amount of time (such as 5 minutes).
- 2 Next have the group respond to the following question: "As we think about the culture of our group, and the process of leadership we follow, what are some things we could do to amplify or embody the TCL characteristics in our community/group/organization?" Generate a list as a group and write the suggestions on a whiteboard or visible place.
- 3 In the remaining time, ask the group to prioritize what actions to take as a result of the discussion. Circle the steps that are the most easily achievable. Underline the steps that may be longer-term but still important.
- 4 Have the group vote on the top three.
- 5 Take a photo of the white-board or notes to chronicle your discussion and use for later planning and assessments.

If you have 2 consecutive hours (for example, a staff/board/cohort retreat)

- 1 Following up on the top three votes from steps set out above, break the group into 3 smaller sections and ask participants to design an implementation plan for amplifying leadership within their community/organization. Time the brainstorming session so that you leave plenty of time for share out, discussion, and follow up steps that they can do in the immediate future to amplify leadership.

If you have 4 hours spread over the course of a season

- 1 Pick one quality to discuss for 1/2 hour as a staff meeting opener and spread over a season's worth of group meetings. For example, for the month of January, discuss Empathy. For February, discuss Perseverance, and so on. Assigning a 1-3 case studies to each member and ask them to be ready to present this to the rest of the group. Additionally, for each characteristic, ask them to give 3 examples of when they've seen that characteristic in action in their community.
- 2 As a group, discuss way to further amplify this characteristic within their own community/organization to achieve goals and fulfill on mission.

5. SELF-ASSESSMENT: APPLYING AND INCORPORATING TCL TO STRENGTHEN LEADERSHIP

Objectives:

- To encourage groups to implement TCL in their everyday work and guide them into doing so
- To invite groups to goal-set towards strategic shifts.
- To identify goals that can be achieved and later, evaluated.

Length of Activity: 1-1.5 hours

- 1 Invite the individual to list their community's mission, purpose, or goals — short-term and long-term.
- 2 Use the Figure B chart below. If you have 60-90 minutes, ask them to individually fill out the chart and share their charts with each other in group, in order to digest into one group assessment. If you have less time, break the group into sections of no more than 7 individuals and have them fill out the chart together.
- 3 Ask group members to reflect upon the conditions that would enable their communities to strengthen all of the characteristics. What would it take for them to embrace and embody these characteristics? Referencing Figure B, ask the group to write down the steps it would take and resources (funding, time, people power, tools, technology) needed to strengthen all areas. Ask individuals from the group to share their answers.
- 4 Ask the group to prioritize which of these conditions are the most easily ameliorated/improved upon. Vote on the top 3.
- 5 Reflecting on these priorities, ask someone from the group to volunteer to write out the steps to implement these changes. Ask individuals to share out to the group their steps.
- 6 At the next staff/constituency meeting, evaluate the effectiveness of these steps. Did they contribute to a greater sense of embodying the key value selected?

FIGURE B: LEADERSHIP AND PRIORITIES

Use a new copy of the chart for each group / constituency you are discussing.

	How does this characteristic relate to your mission, purpose, or change you seek?	When has your group demonstrated this quality?	Resources Needed to Strengthen These Qualities
VISION			1. 2. 3.
EMPATHY			1. 2. 3.
PERSEVERANCE			1. 2. 3.
COMMUNITY			1. 2. 3.
RISK			1. 2. 3.
COLLABORATION			1. 2. 3.
MOBILIZATION			1. 2. 3.
(If you find other characteristics of leadership evidenced in your group or organization, add them here.)			1. 2. 3.