



# Relationship and trust building in your core group

Building together your  
Wellbeing Economy

## [About the tool](#)

A wellbeing economy cannot be built alone. The process of co-creating transformative solutions and designing a wellbeing economy demands coordination and planning. On this journey, it is important to have a group of engaged and motivated people. Before you jump into the first step of your wellbeing economy process, you need to put together a strong core team that can work together on this project.

A core team is made up of a group of people who represent the diverse needs and interests of the community. They work together to develop and carry out a wellbeing economy project. In order to do this, it is essential for them to build and deepen relationships with each other first. This template offers a session plan that can guide you through this process. Because it is so specific, this approach will not feel appropriate for every group, it is simply an offer of one way to build and nourish relationships within your core group.

The template is based on the [Toronto Imaginal Transitions](#) – an experimental lab hosted by the David Suzuki Foundation which carried out a Wellbeing Economy Policy Design pilot project in collaboration with WEAll from 2021-22. Their design process was inspired by what Donella Meadows describes as [dancing with systems](#).

### **Dancing with systems:**

Donella Meadows's metaphor makes reference to the lack of predictability and control in systems and within systems thinking. In her own words:

“The future can't be predicted, but it can be envisioned and brought lovingly into being. Systems can't be controlled, but they can be designed and redesigned. We can't surge forward with certainty into a world of no surprises, but we can expect surprises and learn from them and even profit from them. We can't impose our will upon a system. We can listen to what the system tells us, and discover how its properties and our values can work together to bring forth something much better than could ever be produced by our will alone.

We can't control systems or figure them out. But we can dance with them!”

## Introducing the tool

This template is about building and strengthening relationships, and creating spaces to learn about the needs and ‘how’ of a transition to a Wellbeing Economy. It aims to help you take the first steps towards imagining and co-creating policies for a Wellbeing Economy. The structure also offers you a place to collectively think about how to grow into a broader network.

The aim is to put together a core group of people interested in connecting with their surroundings and each other and discussing questions of wellbeing economies transitions in creative and fun ways.

### The process moves through four stages:

- 1 – creating sanctuary
- 2 – letting go
- 3 – dreaming
- 4 – forming

### By following this guide you will build:

- An engaged core group
- Strong relationships
- A shared understanding of wellbeing economies
- Find the transition capacities that are needed to move towards wellbeing economies (metaphors, stories, relationships, patterns, behaviours...)

## First steps

All four stages lead you into a “dance” through uncertainty and complexity. The whole process **takes around 2 months**. Each stage needs its own meeting session. You should plan to meet every couple of weeks.

Before you jump into the first one, you will need to **choose and invite a small group of people to be the core team**. The core team will actively participate in all of the stages.

### Things to consider when assembling team:

- Followed desire:
  - Who do we want to be in the room with?
  - Who wants to be in the room with us? Intrinsic motivation and desire from people who are drawn to this work is also key to successfully co-creating change
- Unique gifts: diversity of perspective; different networks in the community / city / region

## Principles

There are 4 main ideas that guide thinking and action through dancing new world into being:

**1**

### **Slowing down**

It takes time to create and get used to new ways of being

**2**

### **Light-heartedness**

We need to keep ourselves going and energized by making transitions fun

**3**

### **Noticing existing wisdom and innovation**

We are not starting from scratch to make a new community around wellbeing economy

**4**

### **Following relations**

We can start with trusted relationships we already have and build from there

## Stages

For initial inspiration, the Toronto group considered the metaphor of a “dance club” – a place without prescribed moves, where they could take joy in the process of being, thinking, feeling, and creating together.

Each of the following stages is flexible and improvisational. The meeting sessions are places where the core team will learn together in an experimental and “alive” way.

### Stage 1: Creating sanctuary

**Time:** 2 hours event

**Structure:** Open air – ideally gather around a firepit

**Goal:** Creating a sense of home and sanctuary

**Atmosphere:** Safety, being yourself, relations, listening, quiet, intimacy, pauses

**Inputs:** Everyone shares a song that evokes home or sanctuary for them

→ Ask participants one week in advance

## Logistics:

- Food (and plates, cups, etc)
- Fire Pit + fire materials
- Prepare workshop materials (print outs, notebooks, pens, etc)

→ Need to arrive 30 mins before to prepare

## Agenda:

Time	Label	Description
15	<b>Arrival &amp; Welcoming</b>	Grab some food  Ask for consent for photos
15	<b>Framing</b>	First Introductions, then explain the project  <b>What is the project?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the aim of coming together – this is an initiation of a longer journey – and the four sessions</li> </ul> <b>Why now?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are in a chaotic, messy time of ecological transition and transformation. To navigate this time between worlds, we need to create sanctuary spaces... to nurture hope, to imagine the future, to co-create alternative stories, worlds and futures.</li> </ul> <b>Why did we invite you?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putting together a band that can jam together</li> </ul> <b>What is the intention and approach?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are we orienting around uncertainty and emergence → it is really easy right now to feel hopeless. We want to activate imagination through friendship, pleasure, trust, desire, dance, music</li> <li>• Experiment with what it is that we desire together, imagine and create the world we want to be in, in this sanctuary here!</li> </ul>
50	<b>Listening &amp; Sharing practice</b>	Present the <b>Triad introduction</b> exercise (see below)  Carry out the exercise
25	<b>Open Discussion on home and sanctuary</b>	<b>Questions to start discussion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having heard all these perspectives on home and sanctuary, what patterns are forming?</li> <li>• Why and how does home/sanctuary matter in times of change and deep transitions?</li> </ul>
15	<b>Wrap up &amp; Closing Remarks</b>	Remind participants about next gathering  Explain <b>home assignment 1</b> (see below)

## Templates & Activities:

### 1 – Triad introduction

First part [20 mins]

- Divide in small groups (ideally 3 people)
- One person asks, one person answers, one person noticing (drawing, sharing)
  - Brief intro: name/pronoun/who are your ancestors?
  - What does **home and sanctuary** look like for you in times of transition/transformation? What are the **felt qualities** of home and sanctuary for you? (feeling safe, at home ect)
  - What has been your journey with **home and sanctuary**? (place – structure; people – relationships; perspective – view)

Second part [30 mins]

- Smalls groups share back with everyone
- 2-5 minutes per person (depending on number of participants)

### 2 – Home Assignment 1 – How do we become intimate with how the city is dancing with us?

- Transition Capacities: get the beat: Listening/Noticing/Paying attention
- Prompts: 30 minute sanctuary time
  - Step 1: Go to a place that feels like home or sanctuary for you
  - Step 2: Get comfortable. Breathe. Locate yourself
  - Step 3: Listen intimately. What are you hearing right now? How is it changing?
  - Step 4: Reflect/Record/Respond
    - Record the sound with your phone
    - Write a poem or notes
    - Draw an image or take a picture

## Stage 2: Letting go

**Time:** 2 hours event

**Structure:** 90-minute Presencing Session + 30-minute Workshop Dialogue

→ This event can be either in-person or online

**Goal:** Holding a container for letting go

**Atmosphere:** Melting, porosity, surrender, interconnection, embodiment

**Inputs:** Everyone shares a song that allows them to fall apart and let go in times of transition

→ Ask participants one week in advance

**Logistics:** Prepare workshop materials

**Agenda:**

Time	Label	Description
5	<b>Arrival &amp; Welcoming</b>	Put music on to create a good atmosphere  Short reminder of what happened in past session  Agenda: Before we get creative [workshop], we want to build relationships, friendships, learn the rhythm of each other [presencing session]
10	<b>Framing</b>	Explain the <b>Collective Presencing exercise</b> (see below)  Carry out the exercise  Posture: Get comfortable, lie down! <i>If online, turn off camera if you would like</i>
40	<b>Group check-in</b>	Check in into the guiding questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How are you arriving into this gathering?</li><li>• What do you find yourself holding on to, that you would like to share into the middle?</li></ul>
50	<b>Sense into the middle</b>	Explain framing (see below)  Carry discussion around inquiry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As we move through these times of transition, what is asking to be grieved and let go of? How are you responding?</li></ul>
15	<b>Wrap up &amp; Closing Remarks</b>	Remind participants about next gathering  Explain <b>home assignment 2</b> (see below)

## Templates & Activities:

### 1 – Collective Presencing ([more info here](#))

#### Aim

- For us to explore the pre-figurative practices we are seeking to embody for the future

#### Principles

- Presencing is to speak from what it is, without knowing exactly what you want to say
- Moving down from the head to sense from the body and the heart – through resonance: this feels moving to me
- A practice of deep listening into each other – rather than speaking from what you know, speak from image, feeling in your body, sensefulness
- Silence is welcome, and in fact, silence invites its own processing
- Anything is allowed, everything is welcome! There is no right way to be, other than sharing what is here
- Piece is in the middle. Sense into the shared field together. Social field is the space between us, so you are not speaking from yourself, but beginning to attune to and speak from the collective

#### Step by step

- Invite group into slowing down, embracing silence, and speaking when one feels moved to speak
- Ask the group to check in into the guiding questions

### 2 –Sense into the middle

#### Framing:

We´re in a liminal time -- a space between worlds: rooting ourselves to the liminal requires us to hospice the death of old systems to midwife the emergence of new systems. But in the process of letting go, grieving is necessary. What are we willing to let go? How do we hold each other through this process of surrender? And what happens when we do?

#### Quote inspiration from Bayo Akomolafe:

*“I think we need room to grieve today. I wonder what might happen if we prepared the conditions for grief by accounting for the material excessiveness that escapes our control, that humbles our attempts to save our planet, that disturbs the idea that we are apart from our environments. Since grief makes tender boundaries, might grieving help facilitate perceptual shifts that allow us to notice the world differently? Might a structured hesitation to jump into solution-ing, and a desire to stay with the troubling effectuate new capacities for engaging our most haunting crises?”*



### 3 – Home Assignment 2 – Melting: how do we hold ourselves and each other through letting go?

- **Transition Capacities:** Paying attention / Letting go / Holding Grief / Holding each other
- **Prompts:** 30 minute letting go
  - **Step 1:** Go to a place that feels like home or sanctuary for you
  - **Step 2:** Get comfortable. Breathe. Locate yourself
  - **Step 3:** Ask yourself three times, slowly, allowing space between each word and question
  - What do I need to let go of?
    - What do I need to let go of?
    - What do I need to let go of?
  - **Step 4:** Now ask, slowly
    - What do we need to let go of?
  - **Step 5:** Listen inwardly. Notice your body. What parts are feeling clenched, contracted, seeking release? What happens if you relax?
  - **Step 6:** Reflect/Record/Respond
    - Record your voice
    - Write a poem or notes
    - Draw an image or take a picture

### Stage 3: Dreaming

**Time:** 3 hours event

**Structure:** In-person workshop, followed by walk, and a fire

**Goal:** Holding a container for dreaming together

**Atmosphere:** Creativity, dreaming, imagination

**Inputs:** Everyone shares a song that opens up longing and desire

→ Ask participants one week in advance

#### **Logistics:**

- Food (and plates, cups, etc)
- Fire Pit + fire materials
- Workshop materials (print outs, notebooks, pens, etc)

## Agenda:

Time	Label	Description
15	<b>Arrival &amp; Welcoming</b>	Grab some food  Short reminder of what happened in past sessions
15	<b>Framing</b>	Invite to dream: rooting the dream  Explain the <b>Dreaming Practice</b> exercise (see below)
30	<b>Dreaming practice</b>	Carry out the exercise – notice that part of the exercise involves going for a walk
30	<b>Group storytelling circle</b>	Gather around the fire pit  In groups of 4, go around in a circle and tell your <b>origin story</b> of the emerging world
15	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Questions to start discussion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having heard all these origin stories, what patterns are emerging and forming around the world that we desire?</li> <li>• How do we begin to prefigure these relationships in deep transition</li> </ul>
45	<b>From Dreaming to Forming</b>	Start thinking together about tangible opportunities to expand into a broader network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the transition moves and muscles that need to be cultivated?</li> </ul> <p>Create a Canvas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who? What? When? How?</li> </ul>
15	<b>Wrap up &amp; Closing remarks</b>	Wrap up discussion  Remind participants about next gathering

## Templates & Activities:

### 1 – Dreaming Practice

#### A - Framing

It is an invitation to dream – The beat or pulse of desire: turning into the beat of desire (the desire that is ecological. The desire that decentres the I), what attracts you towards the world that is emerging?

#### Guiding questions:

- What do you want for the community / city / region?
- What is the process? – the process is the transition

#### How does it work:

- Tell the **origin story** of the world we want to participate in
  - Cast of archetypal actor: the moon, water, cave, plastic, human, squirrel, raccoon, mushrooms, island, mother, child, father, grandmother, teacher, streetcar, etc
  - Role play and tell it from that perspective:
    - What are their relationships?
    - What does it smell like, what does it taste like?
    - What would make this feel effortless? Pleasurable? Desirable? Intimate? regenerative?
    - It is about images and metaphor – stretching our more-than-human imagination

#### B – Individually

- 1. Choose 3-4 archetypal human and more-than human figures/actors** of the community / city / region that resonate with you, that stretches your capacity to empathise

→ The list can be adapted to best represent your locality

Son	Daughter	Mother	Father	Grandmother
Grandfather	Teacher	Elder	Politician	Charlatan
Dreamer	Activist	Artist	Banker	Student
Sun	Moon	Starts	Sky	Earth
Soil	Roots	Mycelium	Maple	Cedar
Womb	Door	Death	Birth	Water
Medicine	Feather	Corn/Maize	Squash	Beans
Coffee	Avocado	Internet	Blockchain	Bodies
Raccoon	Coyote	Squirrel	Robin	Cat
Lake (in the region)	River (in the region)	Valley (in the region)	Park (in the region)	Island (in the region)
Asphalt	Touristic point	Neighbourhood	Another Neighbourhood	Touristic point
Divinity	Source	Mystery	Soul	Life

**2. Ecological desire:** *Go for a walk.* Embody your archetypal. Want their wants. Dream their dreams. Desire their desires. Feel into what gives them joy and pleasure.  
Ask: What do they long for? What do they dream of?

- Write their name and draw them on sticky notes
- Write down how would they respond to:
  - \_\_\_\_\_ just woke up from an incredible dream, where they realise they truly want \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_ is speaking with their best friend after a long day, and confesses that they always wanted \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Relationships/Economy:** Now look at your 3-4 archetypal figures, and their desires. What are their relationships with each other? How do they support each other?

- Draw their relationships on a piece of paper
  - When do they fight? When do they love?
  - How do they support each other to get what they want?
  - When do their desires interweave or come into conflict?

**4. Story:** what is the **origin story** that is beginning to emerge in these relationships?

An **origin story** is the beginning of an emerging world, the unfolding new possibilities, economies, systems in 50 years, 100 years, 500 years.

→ Write your thoughts and reflections on a piece of paper

## Stage 4: Forming

**Time:** 4 hours event

**Structure:** In-person workshop, organised around a brunch

**Goal:** Holding a container for forming together

**Atmosphere:** Learning, reflections

**Inputs:** Everyone shares a song that opens up longing and desire

→ Ask participants one week in advance

### **Logistics:**

- Food (and plates, cups, etc)
  - Workshop materials (print outs, notebooks, pens, etc)
- Need to arrive 60/30 mins before to prepare

### **Agenda:**

Time	Label	Description
30	<b>Arrival &amp; Welcoming</b>	Grab a coffee, eat and hang together  Check-in  Short reminder of what happened in past sessions
15	<b>Framing</b>	Present background and constraints  Within the context of broadening the network: <i>What have we learned that can go into the formation of a transition movement/dance?</i>
30	<b>Reflections – part I</b>	<b>The process [HOW] – guiding questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ingredients: What is our compass for Transitions (through felt sense)?</li><li>• What did you feel was important about what we did over the last three sessions?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ What was surprising? What felt uncomfortable? What felt right?</li></ul></li><li>• What did we need to learn about how we can resource/support ourselves and each other through transition?</li></ul>
30	<b>Reflections – part II</b>	<b>The content [WHAT] – guiding questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the transition capacities / principles / conditions that we need to move toward the wellbeing economies that we desire?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Hypothesis: nurturing relationships, slowing down, following pleasure, letting go, staying with the trouble</li></ul></li></ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is a wellbeing economy for the community/city/region beginning to look and feel like? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Is it regenerative, healing? How do we live within planetary boundaries and be in good relationship with home (deep mutuality and community)?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Where are we trying to go? What if we don't know? How do we dance with transitions?</li> </ul>
60	<b>Dreaming big</b>	<p>Collective brainstorm: What do we want to create together?</p> <p><i>Let's dream big!</i></p>
60	<b>Next steps</b>	<p>Now, discuss and think together about concrete next steps</p> <p>Some thought starters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who else do we want to engage?</li> <li>• How do we want to engage? How do you invite them to participate?</li> <li>• What should we do?</li> <li>• Where should we do it?</li> <li>• What roles might we all play?</li> <li>• What are our elegant / simple next steps?</li> </ul>
15	<b>Wrap Up &amp; Closing remarks</b>	<p>Wrap up discussion</p> <p>Highlight what the group achieved and how this is important for next steps</p> <p>Insights on how to take this forward</p>