



Fit Associates Annual Review

For the year 2022

2022

How did we do? **Summary report and assessment**

We practice “principles-based evaluation” aiming to live out our principles in our work

	HOW'D WE DO?
W ORK TO INCREASE RELATEDNESS	PROJECT 1 Relationship skilling, reduced conflict, increased sense of belonging were all reported results.
	PROJECT 2 Small and large-group gatherings over extended time seeded a community of practice.
	PROJECT 3 Strategy changed by community relationships was the project goal.
W ORK TO EMPOWER OTHERS	PROJECT 1 Scope and schedule based on developing capacity for organizational culture shift, rather than time and budget. Changing patterns of internal power and increased power to self-host were conditions of project completion.
	PROJECT 2 Purpose of “kits” was to support group self-hosting and grow informal leadership capacity.
	PROJECT 3 Community members’ voice was brought to foreground of design innovation program.
M ake joyful gifts H ost spaces of becoming	PROJECT 1 Total of thirty-nine whole-organization sessions, spawning countless informal moments of practice throughout the culture.
	PROJECT 2 First pilot of self-hosting kits, including audio “mixtapes” featuring conversations and interviews with guests, accompanied by reflection and group hosting guides.
	PROJECT 3 First participation in hosting more than 400 people in a listening activity. Field kit for those people to connect with people in their own neighborhood.

We practice “vector management”—trying to move in intentional directions at the best speed we can manage.

HOW'D WE DO?

MORE LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENTS

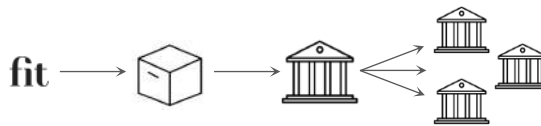
18 months, 5 months, 3 months



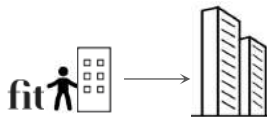
EXPLORE NEW MODELS



Shared ownership with co-facilitator.
Goal: client becomes self-supporting



Institutional re-distribution agreement for self-hosting kits



Partner with social research agency to serve huge cohort

MORE DIVERSE COLLABORATORS,
PRACTICE CULTURE-SHIFTING

All efforts involved non-white collaborators. Half of our projects explicitly engaged with shifting cultural patterns toward greater equity, belonging, and joyful co-creation.

Numbers

	Cohorts	Five cohorts, ~560 direct participants
Audio / video "mixtapes" produced		10
Packaged "kits"		6
Guest voices included in programs		12
Revenue		Up 9%
Debt		Down 9%

We work to live out our intention

How can Fit make joyful inspiring gifts and host spaces of becoming for change leaders to take their place as full participants in creating a world where all belong?

We do this by managing to direction rather than destination

Directions for 2022

Move toward more long-term engagements

Structure the work in ways that make room for the slow work of change.

Move toward new engagement models

Seek structures that equitably share of power, responsibility, and reward, processes that are open to emergence and surprise, and platforms that include many hands and voices.

Increase diversity of our collaborations, practice culture-shifting page 4

Build relationship with non-white collaborators and folks with strong “authority of lived experience.” Practice long-haul, joyful co-creation toward cultures of belonging.

We use principles to guide and assess our work

Principles for 2022

Work to increase relatedness page 5

Make “more and better relationships” an explicit outcome of our work and methods.

Work to empower community and leadership page 9

Make “increased community power to create” and “increased competence and confidence in adaptive leadership” an explicit outcome of our work and methods.

Make gifts, host spaces of becoming Page 12

Do what we love, bring our joy to work. Find or create channels for our creative enthusiasm to flow through our work.

Direction: increase diversity of collaborators

All of our 2022 efforts involved collaborators outside our two principals, and all involved non-white collaborators.

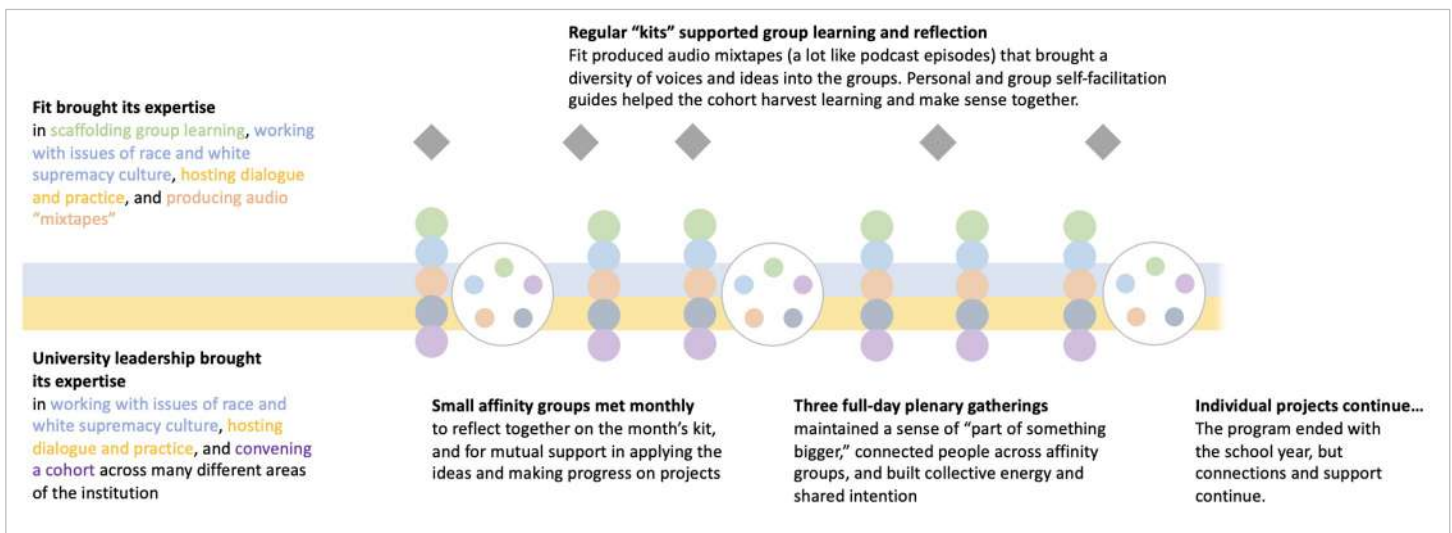


Sheba Gittens
Maurice Stevens
Nicole Nieto
tenderness tierney

Karen Proctor
willi farrales
Michelle King
The “older adults” panel (not pictured)

Direction: practice culture-shifting

Most of our work in 2022 either engaged directly with intentions to shift patterns of relationship and behavior in a community or organization, or helped build leadership and team capacity for such work.



This *Racial Justice Pathways* effort embodied many of our principles and intended directions: empowering, culture-shift work, long-term engagements, engagement models other than client-consultant, and diverse collaborators.

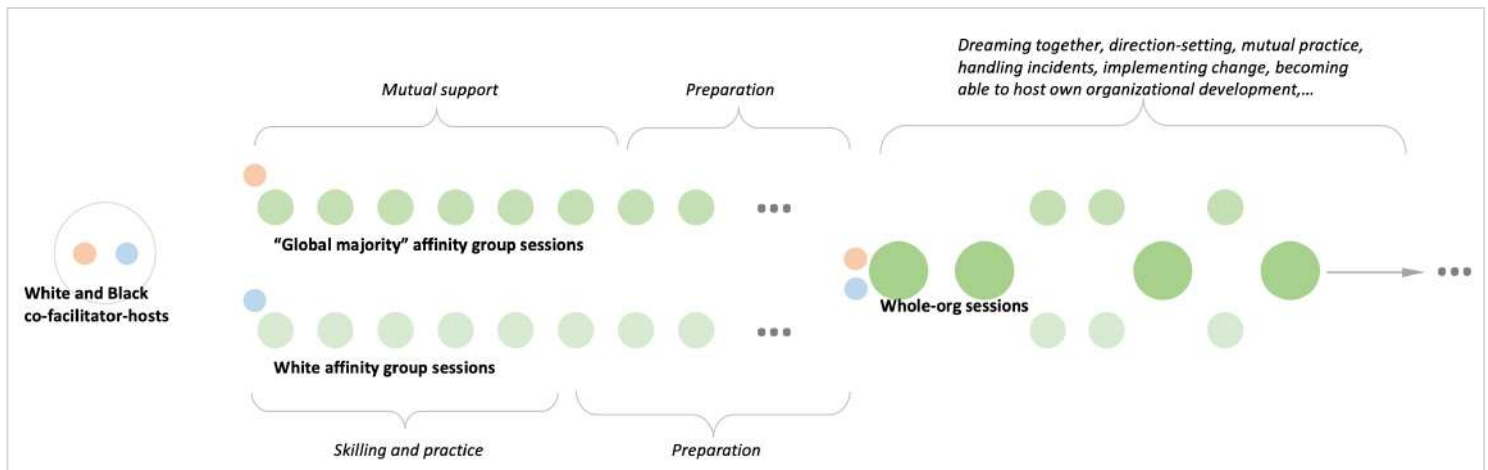
Principle: work to increase relatedness

The reason for this principle is that increased relatedness—the number, quality and longevity of relationships in a community, organization or system—is the roots and soil of most other outcomes.

This is difficult to measure, of course. We assess the degree to which we lived out this principle by noticing how the design and conduct of our efforts were driven by this principle, and through collection of stories.

Relatedness-driven activities

1. Skills for right relationship and work of relationship repair built into process as a necessary precondition for co-creation.



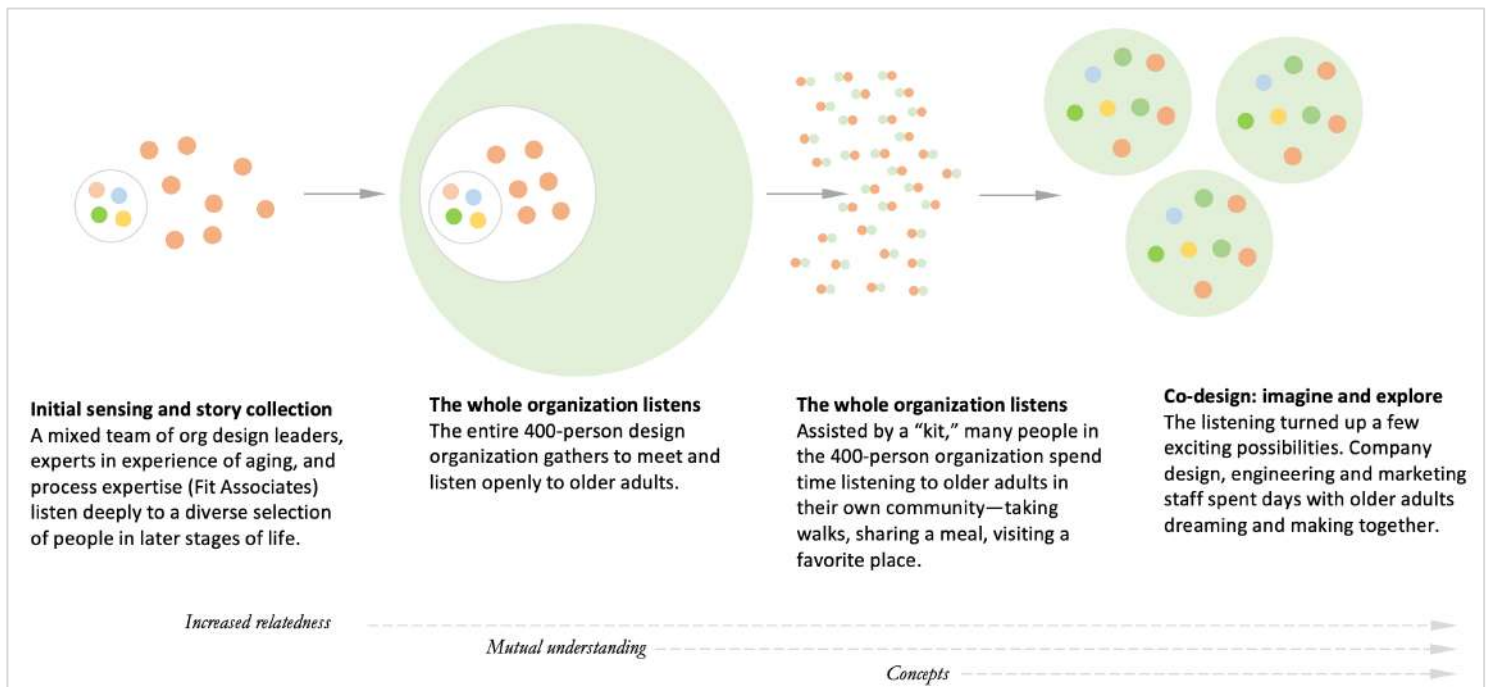
Roughly, the structure of an 18-month whole-organization process to shift the culture from “incidents and patterns of racial inequity and harm are common” to “We actively embody a just, equitable and thriving future.”

The bulk of activities through the first year had to do with repairing relationships and skilling to engage in right relationship.

Principle: work to increase relatedness *continued*

Relatedness-driven activities

2. Whole-organization listening, as a large group and individually, built into process as a precondition for inclusive design and co-creation.



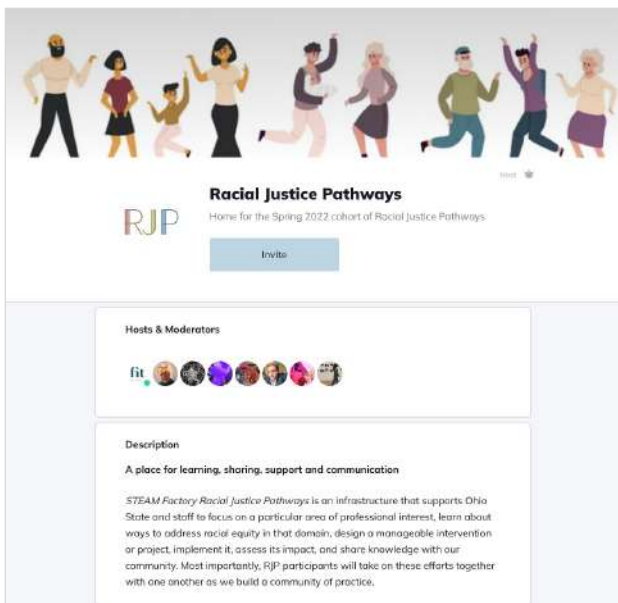
Roughly, the structure of a six-month process to begin connecting the realities of older adulthood to a global consumer product company’s intent to embrace “inclusive design” / “universal design.”

Most of the effort and the nuances of the process design were aimed at increasing relatedness—suspending the urge to “identify needs” and “solve problems” long enough to ground creative work in authentic connection and care.

Principle: work to increase relatedness *continued*

Relatedness-driven activities

3. Small and large-group gatherings over five months seeded a community of practice within a large state university.



We built an online home for a pilot of a “Racial Justice Pathways” program at a major state university. The cohort, numbering nearly seventy faculty, staff and administrators, met monthly in small groups and occasionally all together. This grounded each person’s individual projects and practices in a sense of belonging to a community of learning, development and support.

A set of “kits” provided scaffolding for small groups to host their own learning and reflection. Audio “mixtapes” brought guest voices and perspectives into as input for the entire cohort. Reflection and discussion guides gave structure for self-hosted activities.

Learning and conversation kit

Finding our Way in This Work

What is “the work”? What is my place in it?

Learning and conversation kit

Practicing Bravery and Belonging

How do we learn to foster loving cultures?

How do we create new habits together without reproducing dominance? How do we slow down enough, become aware of our harmful patterns, shift in the moment, and call other people in? How do we replace shallow acts of “distancing ourselves from racism” with a deep long-term movement toward a loving culture?

The work that brings us together in Racial Justice Pathways asks that we unlearn deeply-ingrained personal and cultural habits, then practice our way into something new together. The fact that we’re unlearning at the same time we’re finding new ways means it’s inevitable that old harms will be mixed with our best efforts. We have to do this together, so we need bravery and we need belonging.

Contents

If you haven’t already, have a look at “What are kits, and how do I use them?” Then simply follow the steps below. Try to listen to the mixtape (a little less than an hour), and do the personal reflection (about 10 minutes) before you gather with your group.

- #### Mixtape: Practicing bravery and belonging

A heartfelt conversation on the themes, What is “the work” of social justice? We each start where we are; how do we become able? and, The long haul and the need for self-compassion. Featuring Maurice Stevens, Nicole Nieto, and Hanna du Plessis.
- #### Personal reflection

Here’s a pdf with questions to guide your reflections.
- #### Group activity and reflection

Here’s a guide that suggests a simple two-step way to organize your group conversation about the mixtape and what people took from their personal reflections.
- #### Share one thing

Think of it as our little Instagram, where the shared moments of the 70 or so of us can accumulate into a collage of group learning.

Principle: work to increase relatedness *continued*

Anecdotal evidence of relatedness—two highlights

We're adding a "equity" as a new goal in our strategic plan, and the entire organization believed it mattered and had ideas to contribute, naming how they see the work expressed in their colleagues.

You could see the alignment between fifty people. As one group presented, many others perked up and said, "Yes! Us too!" It came through vividly that we are on the same page. We were doing serious work and we're having fun. We are living the culture we long for.

Just this week, five people told me stories about being "called in." Colleagues were saying, "You know, we are doing this work in the affinity group and that thing you said—can you tell me more? Can you help me see where you come from?" **We are calling each other in, in a curious and exploratory way across lines of power—the accountability is going both ways).**

Principle: work to empower others

The “consulting model” of Fit’s past involves a power dynamic that’s part of our consumer-industrial heritage—we show up as “experts” in partnership with other experts: innovation groups, senior management, etc. We aim to shift that.

We believe our intention to equip people for lasting positive change is best served by working to empower communities to create for themselves. And by supporting leaders and groups to work in and with the dynamics of trauma and oppression, the dynamics of reconnecting and remembering playful co-creation, and working with emergence in complexity.

A project that fostered individual and collective power

Beginning in 2021 and extending throughout 2022, Fit principal Hanna du Plessis partnered with Sheba Gittens on an 18-month collaboration with the CEO of a nonprofit organization.

The work included the entire staff of the nonprofit in a long-term culture-shift—an intentional “crescendo” of shifting responsibility as staff became increasingly able to plan, design and host their own conversations and experiments.

The scope and schedule were based on developing capacity for organizational culture shifting, rather than the usual “time and budget” structure. Changing patterns of internal power and increased power to self-host were conditions of project completion.

Fit brought expertise
in personal and relational skilling, working with issues of race and white supremacy culture, hosting dialogue and practice, and long-term culture shifts

The whole organization met twice a month,
with an agenda that emerged through conversation and practice; first in separate affinity groups, then altogether

Organizational leadership convened
the entire staff, handled communication and logistics

The organization became more able—
over time a small group of staff became increasingly able to host dialogue, practice, and culture work themselves

18 months

Principle: work to empower others *continued*

Anecdotal evidence of empowerment

I believe that the affinity group work has created capacity among our colleagues to be able to shift our culture to be comfortable with each other. We did affinity work together which was uncomfortable, but we worked through it and found a commonality. **That practice helped us build the capacity to work through discomfort together.**

It felt like we were part of the process instead of the process being explained to us. Instead of being told what I am expected to do, my skill and my expertise is significant in the light of the mission.

I don't know of organizations that devote an entire staff meeting to talking about our ideas for the future. I have a sense of ownership, I'm a piece of the pie, I am included and a part of a bigger collective. I felt heard and important. We are all in this together – we are puzzle pieces creating something good together.

These sessions have created a level of comfort in having uncomfortable conversations and pushing back. In the past there was always waiting for someone else to talk. This time it was, "I've got something to say, and I know that I am going to be heard, valued and respected."

Now I'm seeing our own "Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion" group facilitate, and I feel like the organization is hosting itself. So powerful!

Principle: make joyful gifts, host spaces of becoming

How did we do? Here's a collage—glimpses of things we made and gatherings we hosted.

The Racial Justice Pathways mixtapes
Home to the "mixtapes" for the Racial Justice Pathways kit, created by Fit Associates for the OSU STEAM Factory.

- RJP Mixtape 5: Models of Change**
Models of Change
This is mixtape 5 for the Racial Justice Pathways Program...
- RJP Mixtape 4: Leadership in uncertainty**
Leadership in Uncertainty
This is mixtape 4 for the Racial Justice Pathways Program...
- RJP Mixtape 3: Self-protection and learning to return**
Learning to Return
This is mixtape 3 for the Racial Justice Pathways program...
- RJP Mixtape 2: Spaces of bravery and belonging**
Summary
This is the mixtape for the Racial Justice Pathways kit: Spaces of bravery and belonging.
- RJP Mixtape 1: Finding our way in this work**
Summary
This is the mixtape for the Racial Justice Pathways kit: Finding our way in the work. Summary: This mix comes from conversations with Maurice Stevens, Nicole Nieto, and Hanna du Plessis. Maurice and Nicole are part of Ohio.

SVA NYC
Hosted in Design for Social Innovation
School of Visual Arts
Foundations of Design for Social Innovation

Key themes 1

THE NATURE OF SOCIAL COMPLEXITY
Anthrocomplexity
An introduction to the dynamics of complexity, and how social complexity is special
Thought as a system and an introduction to dialogue
The importance of conversation and relationship in understanding human systems, from families to global systems
Oppression and trauma
Our current systems embody painful dynamics—part of the “material” of working socially. We can learn how this effects us and how we can shift and heal.

Key themes 2

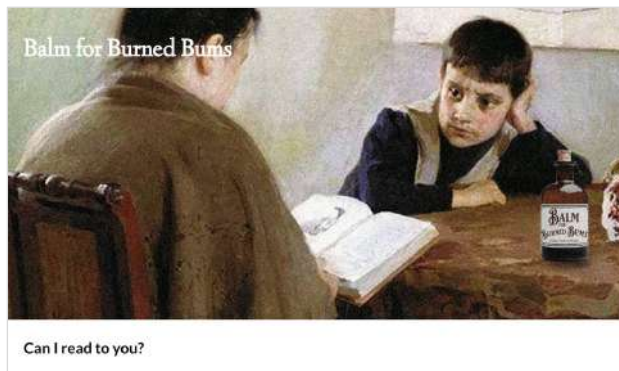
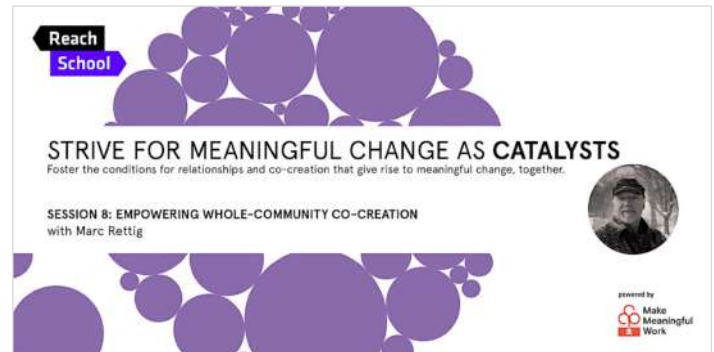
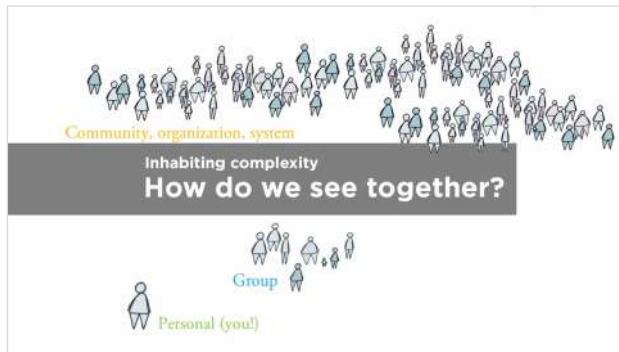
THE NATURE OF SOCIAL CHANGE
Models of large-scale, long-term change
We can't predict change in complexity, but models can help us work wisely.
Models of personal change
Personal, group, and systemic shifts are entangled; it is useful to learn their patterns.
A view of social pattern-shifting as an emergent process
Informed by many sources, we can suggest an approach to the work of social pattern-shifting.

Key themes 3

HOW DO WE WORK? SURVEYING ESSENTIAL METHODS AND SKILLS
Transformation and power
What does it look like when we shift the power of leadership and creation to the people who live the patterns of life we'd like to affect?
Emergent approaches
Overview and stories of approaches such as narrative inquiry, portfolios of probes, asset-based community development, social labs, etc.
Holding space: short-term and long-term
First, a view into a rich world of practice: hosting dialogue and facilitating co-creation. Then, an invitation to practice holding space for yourself, your team and others.

Group play sessions	11
White/BIPOC affinity group sessions	4
Whole-organization joint culture-work sessions	24
Public workshops and courses	6
Grad student Zoom sessions	18
Grad student full-day workshops	3
Story harvest sessions	6
Audio mixes produced	7
Video lecture mixes produced	10
Big Zoom listening session (400+)	1
Student “Hosting Day”	1
Meals and happy hours hosted	we lost count!
Weird little sketches and silly photographs	countless

Principle: make joyful gifts, host spaces of becoming *continued*



Selected group session themes

- Shared longings
- Strategic intentions
- Inequity scenarios
- Apology
- Whose imagination?
- Introduction to dialogue hosting
- Active listening
- Nonviolent communication
- Working with strong emotions
- Notice your autonomic nervous system
- Stories of leadership
- Participatory narrative inquiry
- Complexity habits of mind
- Beautiful questions
- Practicing play

Video series: "Understanding Social Systems"

- You are here: the landscape of engaging with change
- Seeing systems together
- How our worldview influences our approach
- Introduction to Asset-Based Community Development
- Introduction to Social Labs
- Introduction to the Positive Deviance Approach
- Introduction to Vector-based Change and Steering by Stories
- Ways to Try Things Together: Shifting the Way we Imagine and Explore
- A Poetic Lens on Creating in Complexity



Thank you.

Fit Associates LLC
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