

Work Collaborative

Who We Are and What We're Building | *March 2026*

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Why We're All Here

Imagine walking into a school where communities think, talk, and act with genuine confidence about their work. When challenges arise, the community comes together to explore their own challenges rather than waiting for someone else to provide answers. Change happens because people understand why it matters and feel ownership over the process.

This isn't fantasy. We've seen it happen. Educational communities of educators, leaders, parents and students that develop shared clarity about their purpose can pursue multiple initiatives successfully when they sit under a broader understanding of why they're being done. Communities that can say no to competing priorities because they have collective appreciation for what matters most. Leaders who can create space for people to engage in real dialogue about difficult challenges.

These schools create what we call "resonant change" - change that lasts through time, connects through people, and anchors in place. Like a Tibetan singing bowl, the impact reverberates long after the initial action.

What We're Building Together

Work Collaborative exists to restore organisational confidence in educational communities by empowering them to lead sustainable change from within. Not through imposing another external model, but by helping communities recognise and amplify the expertise they already possess.

We're working towards educational communities around the world where change happens because people understand why it matters and feel genuine ownership over the process. Where teachers, leaders, parents, and students feel heard and valued rather than managed and directed. Where every change experience builds rather than erodes a community's confidence in their own capability.

How We're Approaching This Work



We've adapted the [British Design Council's double diamond model](#) from the design world, making it more human for educational settings. It gives us eight stages for moving from someone's perceived challenge to a solution the whole community owns and sustains.

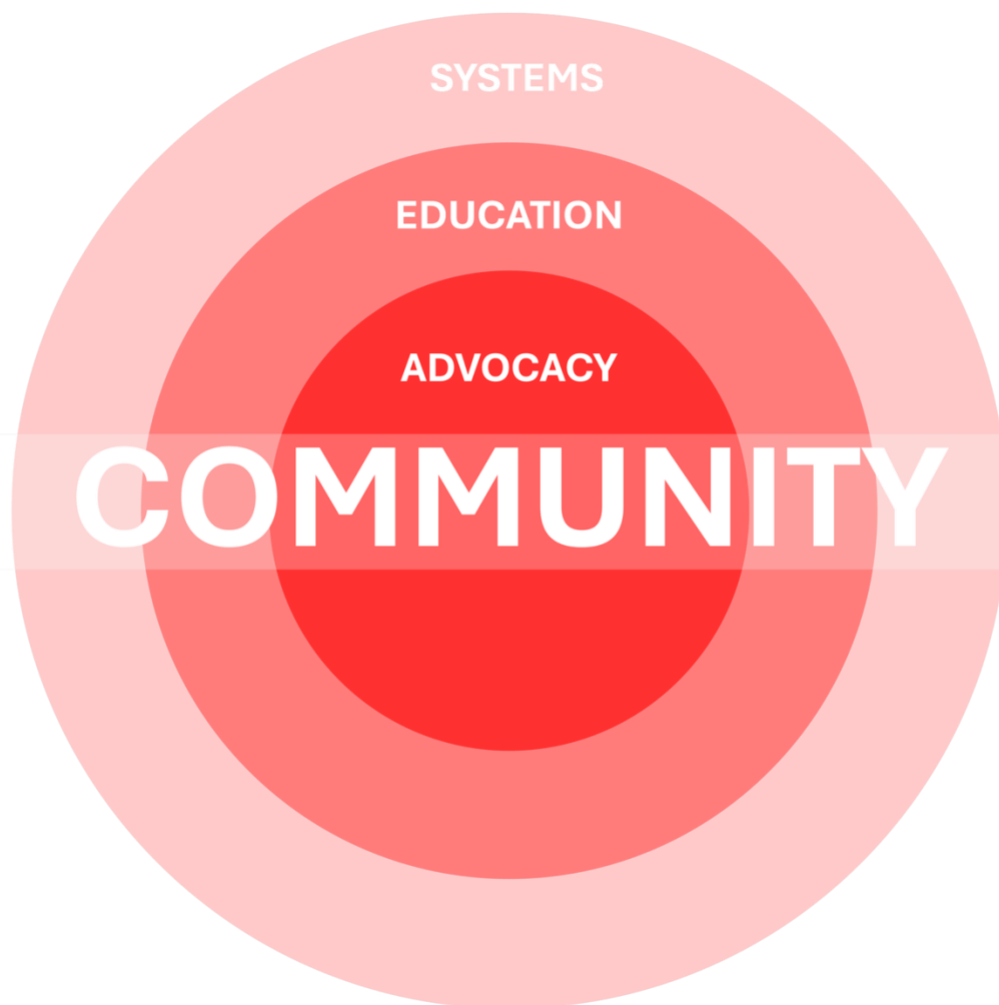
The first diamond focuses on understanding together. We start by connecting and building trust (or rebuilding it where needed), then discover what's really happening from multiple perspectives, define what matters most through shared vision, and align to ensure everyone feels heard, clear on the challenge, and committed to moving forward.

The second diamond is about acting together. We develop possibilities and options, learn what we need to know, deliver what makes sense for the specific context, and sustain changes so they actually last.

The whole process is guided by 40 questions developed and detailed in the book by co-founders, Shane Leaning and Efraim Lerner, [Change Starts Here](#). These aren't questions designed to lead communities somewhere we've already decided. They're questions that provoke insight, helping people uncover their own wisdom and chart their own course.

Our Three Areas of Focus

Understanding how we organise our work is crucial because it protects us from losing sight of our core purpose. We operate through three concentric rings, and the flow must always move from the centre outward, never the reverse.



Research and advocacy sits at our centre and drives everything we do. This is our heartbeat, our non-negotiable core. When we say research, we mean investigating how educational communities can lead organisational change effectively - gathering and synthesising evidence that internally-led change works better than external mandates. There are hundreds of studies showing this, but they're scattered across different disciplines and contexts. We pull this together into compelling arguments with real-life data from researchers investigating schools around the world.

By advocacy, we mean actively campaigning for educational communities to reclaim the narrative about their own contexts. This is about advocating for communities to be in charge of educational discourse for their settings, to have the confidence to trust their own wisdom. This involves bold communications and support, challenging the assumption that external expertise should be sought before there is clarity and confidence about why and where it's needed and what it's aiming to solve. Internal clarity and confidence enables more effective use of external expertise when it's genuinely needed.

This centre must drive everything else we do. It's our mission protection system.

Education creates our middle ring, flowing from our core research and advocacy. Here, education means creating resources that help communities develop capability for leading their own change. This includes courses, coaching programmes, documents, implementation guides, and our [Foundation Certificate in Resonant Change](#).

The crucial point is that these educational offerings must emerge from our research and advocacy work, not drive it. Even if a course becomes wildly successful and starts generating significant interest, that success cannot shift our focus away from the core mission. The education ring serves the centre, not the other way around.

Systems and support creates our outer ring, supporting but never driving our mission. By systems, we mean tools, platforms, products, and infrastructure that support community-led change. This might include digital tools, assessment frameworks, community platforms, or even AI solutions that others create using our open source materials.

Because we're open source, people might create products, technologies, or systems that support our mission. That's wonderful, but these can never influence or drive our core purpose. Even if someone develops a hugely successful digital tool based on our work, that external success cannot change what Work Collaborative is fundamentally about.

This inside-out approach protects us from mission drift. Success in the outer rings serves the mission but never redirects it.

What Success Looks Like for Us

In the short term, we want to become the go-to community for educators globally who believe in leading change from within. We want our [adapted double diamond model](#) tested and refined in diverse educational contexts, with honest feedback about what works and what doesn't. Most importantly, we want to see measurable reductions in dependency on external solutions and genuine increases in internal confidence. The issue isn't using external solutions, but the level of clarity and confidence communities have about why they're doing it.

Over the medium term, we aim to shift policy conversations globally. Instead of more mandates and external pressure, what if governments and system leaders invested in building professional capacity and collaborative culture? We want policy to become more context-specific, less directive, and more of a framework enabling communities to interpret guidelines for their own best practice. We want to train facilitators who know how to ask powerful questions rather than deliver predetermined solutions.

Long term, we want to transform how education thinks about organisational change globally. Not through imposing another model that looks good on paper but fails in practice, but by helping the sector rediscover what many of us already know deep down - that the wisdom for creating meaningful change already exists within our communities.

The Values Shaping Our Work

Through our work, certain principles have emerged as central to how we operate. Instead of arriving with ready-made solutions, we approach everything with curiosity about what we might discover together. Rather than promising quick results, we focus on building foundations for sustainable growth. We believe communities already have the capability they need, rather than positioning ourselves as the experts who'll show them how.

The education sector is currently overwhelmed with preset prescriptive solutions; we advocate for enabling educational communities to explore and understand what works for them. When faced with challenges, we ask what possibilities people see rather than prescribing steps to follow. We explore what works for specific contexts rather than offering one-size-fits-all solutions.

For example, in *Change Starts Here* we share the story of Jordan, a CEO who initially saw a communication problem but discovered through community exploration that the real issue was trust-building. By asking "When was the last time you felt truly heard?" instead of implementing another communication strategy, the community uncovered what actually needed attention.

Our Commitment to Open Source

To anchor our approach in this mission, everything we create gets shared freely through our [open source library](#). Our research, frameworks, tools, templates - all available for anyone to adapt and use. We're not building a business model based on keeping our ideas secret. We're building a movement based on the belief that sustainable change emerges through community collaboration, not proprietary solutions.

This reflects our core belief that if we're arguing for communities to trust their internal wisdom, we need to model the same approach ourselves.

The Questions That Keep Us Learning

Several areas continue shaping our direction. How do we balance thorough community processes with educational realities and tight timelines? How might we help communities recognise which changes are ready for community-led approaches versus those that need different approaches?

We keep exploring how we can ensure we're developing something that genuinely serves rather than burdens educators. What voices might we still be missing in our conversations? How can we better connect theory with the lived experience of communities facing real pressures and competing demands?

Current Challenges We're Addressing

The tension between ideal processes and practical realities continues surfacing in our work. How do you create space for authentic dialogue when everyone's already stretched? How do you balance the aspiration of community-led change with urgent decisions and external pressures?

We're also exploring how we might support communities without creating new dependencies. What would it look like if external providers asked different questions? Instead of "here's what we offer," what possibilities open up when we start with "tell us about your journey" and "what do you already know about this challenge?"

For instance, in our book we describe how Mei's history department initially thought they had a resource-sharing problem, but community exploration revealed it was actually about timetable alignment and communication structures. The solutions they needed were already within their reach once they had space to explore together.

What We're Building Through Community

Work Collaborative develops through the ongoing engagement of educational practitioners worldwide. The questions raised by our community shape our direction. The challenges revealed through real-world experience ground everything we're building.

We're exploring working groups focused on specific initiatives while maintaining alignment under our shared purpose. This allows us to build on diverse expertise - from research to hands-on improvement work - whilst ensuring our efforts remain connected.

Our Foundation for Moving Forward

This document represents our grounding principles and direction. Our approach continues emerging from educational communities' collective wisdom, guided by evidence about what creates lasting change.

We know that change works best when it comes from within, and this principle shapes how Work Collaborative itself develops. Our work grows through practitioner insight, research evidence, and community experience rather than predetermined plans.

For more information about Work Collaborative or to access our open source library, visit workcollaborative.com

This document represents Work Collaborative's foundational approach, developed through forum discussions and grounded in research evidence about community-led change.